

Pen and Printing-Block:

William Morris and the Resurrection of Medieval Paratextuality

by

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Abstract

My dissertation, *Pen and Printing-Block: William Morris and the Resurrection of Medieval Paratextuality*, considers William Morris's influence on the rise of paratextual awareness, his negotiation strategies for Victorian England's social identity, and his rhetorical construction of an idealized past through textual artifacts. The effect of Morris's growing social awareness on his transition from illumination to print is reframed by considering his calligraphy as paratextual experiments, based on medieval examples, in combining graphic and discursive meanings with rhetorical and social dimensions. The varied and less ambitious agendas of those printers who followed Morris's Kelmscott Press, however, limited Morris's legacy in the book arts. The full significance of his illuminations' meaningful interplay between text and image, and the social intent of these innovations applications in print, has received little critical attention.

The opening chapter frames Morris's visual work in light of his philosophies and introduces the major concerns of material art, the role of history, the limits of language, and the question of meaningful labour. The second chapter surveys select predecessors of Morris's developing conception of the Gothic, the significance of architecture as its defining form, and the irreplaceability of the physical past. The third chapter considers the role of the illuminated manuscript in Pre-Raphaelite art, tracing Morris's calligraphic experiments chronologically while identifying medieval inspirations and examining his artistic development. These experiments led to his final collaborative manuscript, the illuminated *Aeneid* which is the fourth chapter's focus. The sophistication of its paratextual elements is discussed in light of its unique physicality and limitations. The fifth chapter asserts the Kelmscott Press's role in balancing craftsmanship and aesthetic paratextual strategies with reproducible models. The Kelmscott *Chaucer* is the culmination of these strategies, and it is compared to the visual rhetoric of its predecessors. The final chapter compares the philosophies and calligraphic elements of major private presses that followed Kelmscott's legacy. This evolution of aesthetic, social, and practical considerations is also identified in the work of selected Canadian printers, and a final note considers the implications of the rise of immaterial digital text (radiant textuality) for the continuation of material paratextuality's role in the future.

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During a bibliography class taught by my MA thesis supervisor Henry Summerfield at the University of Victoria, I was prompted by his love of fine press-work and careful analytical methodology to examine the Kelmscott editions in the library's Special Collections, and to present a paper on Morris's press while handing around the books themselves. I later presented a paper on bpNichol's art books, again using the Special Collection's resources so I could include the physical documents in the discussion. Rare books librarian Christopher Petter was always enthusiastic and helpful during my fruitful hours in the archives.

William Whitla's seminal article on Morris's illuminations introduced me to the range of his calligraphic work, and I became fascinated by the strange relationship between Morris's manuscripts, medieval texts, and the rise of paratextual awareness as a study and strategy. I am further indebted to Dr. Whitla for his helpful advice while I was determining where to pursue my thesis and for gifting me with actual samples from the Kelmscott Albion press. Richard Landon, director of the Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library, was very helpful to me, as were the staff at the Special Collections Room of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library, Dalhousie University's Killam Library, the McGill University Library, the National Gallery of Canada, and the John S. Graham Library at Trinity College and Robertson Davies Library at Massey College, both at the University of Toronto. I owe a special thanks to Beloit

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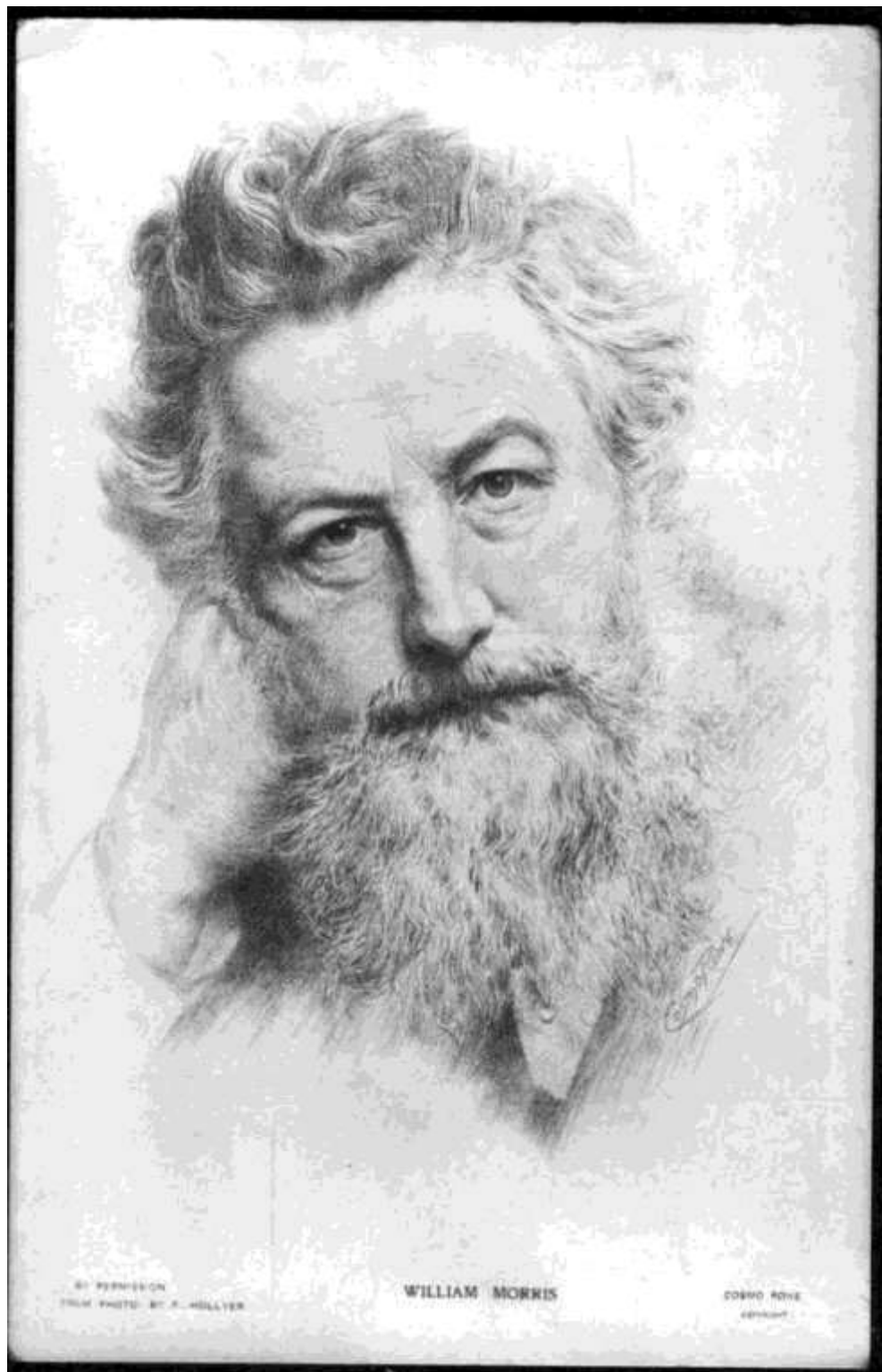


Figure 1.1 *William Morris*, pencil drawing after photogravure by Frederick Hollyer, 1886. Artist unknown.

Chapter 1

A Visible Praxis:¹ Morris's Artifacts of Change

Let us consider what the real state of art is. And first I must ask you to extend the word art beyond those matters which are consciously works of art, to take in not only painting and sculpture, and architecture, but the shapes and colours of all household goods, nay, even the arrangement of the fields for tillage and pasture, the management of towns and of our highways of all kinds; in a word, to extend it to the aspect of the externals of our life. For I must ask you to believe that every one of the things that goes to make up the surroundings among which we live must be either beautiful or ugly, either elevating or degrading to us, either a torment and burden to the maker of it to make, or a pleasure and a solace to him.²

In his lifetime (1834-1896) William Morris saw England undergo the most dramatic social and technological changes in its history, and he tried fervently to guide its path towards his vision of a medieval craftsmen's paradise. In the use he made of words and images, he was widely influential, but it was in the space *between* those media that he was truly revolutionary. My thesis specifies the importance of Morris's illuminated manuscripts in developing his social role as a conduit of medieval aesthetic and social models. Morris distilled specific aspects of the Gothic Revival movement and combined them with historical studies into a rhetorical strategy for reforming Victorian England's art, architecture, and society. Key figures in the Gothic and ecclesiological movements convinced Morris that physical objects were inscribed with the vital teachings of their makers, and so he created his own Arts and Crafts as he did his poetry and prose, with persuasion and assertion the central functions, and the necessity of aesthetic fulfillment for societal health the primary argument. The study and creation of illuminated manuscripts gave Morris insight into the operation of hermeneutics in

¹ "Like Jeffersonian agrarianism, Arts and Crafts is a way of life, praxis. Furthermore, it is a visible praxis, one that transforms one's surroundings and builds character and community." Andrew King, "William Morris Arts and Crafts Aesthetic Rhetoric," *American Communication Journal* 10: S (Special Issue 2008): 3.

² William Morris, "Art Under Plutocracy," [1884] in A. L. Morton, *Political Writings of William Morris* (New York: International Publishers, 1979), ends with the firm uppercase assertion that "ART IS MAN'S EXPRESSION OF HIS JOY IN LABOUR."

the interpretation of documents, which could function as artifacts of either a past age or a desired future. His illuminations were aesthetic triumphs, but were also singular originals which could not be easily disseminated, so a compromise became necessary as Morris's Socialist agenda developed and dominated his ideology. The translation of medieval paratextuality into print recreated the tensions between medium and message and between original and reproduction that had existed five centuries earlier between incunabula and calligraphic documents. Morris's Kelmscott Press illumined the overlapping rhetorics of image, substance, and text, and began the British Private Press Movement. The books printed by Morris's successors responded to this new artistic awareness, but did not sustain his reformation beyond their own medium, and the diffusion and fragmentation of paratextual models weakened their ability to convey oppositional propaganda as artifacts of visual rhetoric. Ultimately, Morris's exposition of the ambiguity and potential power of paratextuality has produced more academic discourse than widespread modern awareness, but that discourse is an important legacy. The study of books' material semiotics has developed into a widespread interdisciplinary field, and it is important to recognize Morris's role as a reformer of the page. Morris did take time for some theorizing on printing, but it has fallen to later scholars to clarify and formalize the field of paratextuality, to evaluate the semiotic relationship between the art-forms, and in so doing consider what *print* culture studies might owe to *written* illuminations. The materialist aesthetic of the Pre-Raphaelites did not begin with Morris alone, but his commitment and skill in creating books that broadcast a coherent aesthetic and social argument through their design and materiality remain unmatched. My analysis of this material argument builds on the work of Jerome McGann, William Whitla, Johanna Drucker, and Michaela Braesel, but gives Morris's illuminations a central role in his social crusade that they have not previously been afforded, and draws a

connection from Kelmscott to the use of calligraphy in the presses that followed it, and to the considerations of materiality in modern paratextual studies.

Recent studies³ have examined the unique relationship of Victorian British culture to the reproducible image: its increased usage, employment for endless purposes, and, most importantly, the exploitation of that tension between text and image that generates meaning. A myriad of signifiers were explored that moved narrative in a non-narrative direction, enhanced reader impressions, and increased the semiotic richness of documents. Due to profit-motivated considerations of material, economies of scale, and a distancing of authorial intent from actual publishing, this tension operated in impoverished form: illustrations were created without reference to text authors, and then reused for other narratives; typeface, layout, and even paper were chosen for expediency, rather than reflecting any paratextual considerations; and ornament was a stock device, inserted haphazardly to fill space or lavished on pages that had no relationship to such devices.

By beginning his page-work with years of painstaking calligraphy and illumination training, Morris brought all aspects of the page into focus for consideration. The materials used moved beyond simple variations of pulp or linen paper, lampblack ink or lithographic colours. All proportions and textures were measured against a revived medieval model, and the dialogue became one of classic sensibilities versus contemporary adaptation and need. It is acknowledged that Morris reforged the connection between incunabula printing and Victorian bookmaking and was instrumental in the revival of calligraphy. We must now look at the broader crucial role his actions had in empowering these potential signifiers, both of materiality and of historical reference, and letting them speak as profound aesthetic, social,

³ Notably by Gerard Curtis, *Visual Words: Art and the Material Book in Victorian England* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002); Julia Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians: the Inscription of Values in Word and Image* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004); Caroline Arscott, *William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: Interlacings* (London: Yale University Press, 2008).

and political critiques. This technique of imbuing hand-crafted items with a complex dialect which changed the norm simultaneously on many levels represents not a radical departure from the spirit of his age, but rather a refinement, firmly grounded in historical precedent, of the expanded Victorian use of word and image, one which would be the model for all makers of books to follow, and be instrumental in the rise of academic print culture studies. After Morris's Kelmscott Press, no printers or authors could easily ignore the overlap in their own roles, or the significance of their choices. T.J. Cobden-Sanderson's theologically-motivated agenda of a pure simple page of type ornamented by coloured calligraphic flourishes for his Doves Press, Lucien Pissarro's elaborate woodcuts and use of complex colour block printing for his Eragny Press, indeed the entire rise of the Edwardian private press and gift book industries, all show the revived energy of a generation of artists fiercely engaging with levels of meaning which had largely grown dormant in the centuries since the first printers worked alongside the last hand-letterers. Morris expanded the considerations and scope of paratextuality, revealing a living matrix which reconstituted the meaning of the page on a fundamental level.

Morrissean Artifacts

As befits the Victorian gentleman once dubbed "half-a-dozen giants,"⁴ Morris explored a remarkable breadth of creative endeavor in his life. He was at various times an architect, furniture maker, wallpaper and interior designer, an artist, a writer of poetry, prose, politics and art theory, a leading socialist, co-founder of the second manifestation of the Pre-Raphaelite Movement and of the English Arts and Crafts Movement, a calligrapher and painter, a translator, dyer, glazier, tile-maker, weaver, embroiderer, rug and tapestry-maker, an

⁴ Frank Colebrook, *William Morris: Master-Printer* (Council Bluffs, IA: Yellow Barns Press, 1989). The original lecture was given November 27, 1896 (just weeks after Morris's death), and was first published in *The Printing Times and Lithographer* (a British trade publication) that same month.

illuminator and, finally, the printer who began the private press movement in England.

Although Morris's was one of the most powerful voices in Victorian art and politics, and his influence is still felt today, the relationship between his illuminations and his profound effect on printing has not received the critical attention it merits. With a figure as widely studied as Morris there are no fully unexplored regions, yet there are still certain 'slants of light' to be considered: new perspectives and connections that can be revealing to several areas of study, and the role of illumination in the formation of Morris's particular paratextual strategy is an important and neglected one.

This study examines the manner in which Morris revitalized his society's relationship with books, and the roots of his convictions and strategies. Inspired by the social role of medieval buildings in his era, and the debates of authenticity and the necessity of artifacts to guide future artists, he entered the Gothic Revival as champion of an idealized past that could inspire contemporary art. Translating the social impact of architecture to the rhetorical potential of books shifted his focus to paratextuality as aesthetic propaganda. When Morris applied his own agenda and interpretation to his private revivals of medieval illumination and printing, he strongly reconnected those two arts in terms both of design and of theory, and he was instrumental in resurrecting and returning them to popular notice and artistic consideration. It was Morris's creation of textual artifacts by pen and press which inspired a growing awareness of paratextual considerations and changed the future of books, and hence this study's use of the term "resurrection"—the root *resurgere* meaning to rise again. The Biblical associations deal with the return of a soul or immaterial concept into material being. Morris, however, was quite an opponent of the established church in his adult years.

The crucial role of Morris's hand-made artifacts in embodying meanings has philosophical implications that extend into both his aesthetic and Socialist agendas. Marx

speaks of cultural heritage as the *material* foundation that produces the arts, and so places it in binary opposition to content.⁵ Margaret Rose notes Marx's point that "art demonstrates the unequal development of economic and artistic production within society" and that the loss of the social context that birthed an art does not invalidate the art because it has a continuing role to play as a record of the particular historical development that engendered it, it underscores the reflective value of art.⁶

Yet Morris goes further: in order to recreate medieval art, he must to some degree recreate medieval life and knowledge, and vice-versa, as his examples of contemporary medievalist art are agents of a quasi-medievalist social reform. For Schiller this attempt is a return to a lost or ideal harmony between society and nature, but Marx rejects such recreations as sentimental nostalgia. The material needs of those receiving the art must be fulfilled, and the needs of those creating the art. In this sense Morris asserts that art must be of contemporary societal relevance not only in content (message), but in the materiality of production and use. Art teaches the lessons of the past by fulfilling the needs of the present. In this sense, Morris presages later Socialist Realism, which claimed its role as the "reflection of historical reality in artistic images which express the perception of reality," and its task, the "ideological conversion and education of the workers in the spirit of socialism."⁷ Morris's material art attempts to influence consciousness on a fundamental level, and it is fitting that so much of his visual style derives from specifically ecclesiastical medieval art. Like the

⁵ "Greek art presupposes Greek mythology, i.e. nature and the social forms already reworked in an unconsciously artistic way by the popular imagination. This is its material. Not any mythology whatever, i.e. not an arbitrarily chosen unconsciously artistic reworking of nature (...) From another side: is Achilles possible with powder and lead? Or the Iliad with the printing press, not to mention the printing machine? Do not the song and the saga and the muse necessarily come to an end with the printer's bar, hence do not the necessary conditions of epic poetry vanish?" Karl Marx in Margaret A. Rose, *Marx's Lost Aesthetic: Karl Marx and the Visual Arts*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 84.

⁶ Ibid., 85-92.

⁷ Ibid., 145.

church architects he so admired, and the illuminators he emulated, Morris strove to be an “engineer of the human soul,” the term Stalin would use for writers and other cultural artists, and Mao for teachers. To recognize art as propagandist is not to doubt its sincerity or even its inherent spiritual aspects: it merely leads to an insistence on considering the material and aesthetic elements in tandem with Morris’s words. His unique visual rhetoric constituted a *graphesis* or morphemetic typology⁸, drawing from medieval and incunabula traditions for inspiration, but original in execution. The effect of Morris’s experiments with books was to some extent not what he had hoped for, as his own books and manuscripts became a primary model or antagonist for printers, effacing study of the ancient texts he considered the essential starting-point for any designer trying to create books which were beautiful and not merely derivative. This changing signal is the ironic danger of Morris’s work, and he himself was aware of this negative aspect of his influence:

If we do not study the ancient work directly and learn to understand it, we shall find ourselves influenced by the feeble work all round us, and shall be copying the better work through the copyists and *without* understanding it, which will by no means bring about intelligent art.⁹

Contemporary twenty-first-century paratextual considerations, at a time when the relationship of text with materiality and static design is highly unstable due to the rise of digital media, are nonetheless still influenced by the page design principles of the Middle Ages through Morris, though partially in the manner he had feared rather than as he had hoped. Morris felt that one must work within the limitations of a material or medium happily, with a full understanding and acceptance of its nature, but the ramifications of computers

⁸ *Morphemetic* is my own term for designs, symbols, or visual elements with both visual and linguistic significance, discussed in more detail in the third chapter. Similarly, Johanna Drucker uses the term *graphesis* to describe visually embodied information.

⁹ William Morris, “The Lesser Arts” [1877], Norman Kelvin, *William Morris on Art and Socialism* (New York: Dover Press, 1999), 10.

and their radiant text are still in their infancy, and the manner in which this new medium reflects or shapes contemporary society is only beginning to be explored. Morris believed that “the nature of a society’s applied arts and architecture was a litmus test for its moral health and wellbeing. Poor design and gratuitous decoration were the natural results of a workforce divorced from creative decision-making within the process of fabrication.”¹⁰ He undertook through his own craftsmanship, and arguments based on Ruskin and Carlyle’s examples, to prove that the moral and intellectual attitudes of designer, craftsman, and their surrounding society were reflected in the art and design they produced. Hence, the poor state of art and design in his day was not only a symptom of all Victorian social problems, but the key to solving them, and Morris was determined to solve them. Indeed, if Robert Frost, as his epitaph states, “had a lover’s quarrel with the world,” it is fair to say that Morris had a lover’s quarrel with his *age*, and the remarkable artistic and political output of his life confirms that his position was well argued. Morris’s life and work were a sustained debate with his community, and by extension, his world and the manner in which it was evolving. Morris’s calligraphic illuminated texts and Kelmscott press editions are the most complex artifacts that carry his ideology, because they combine aesthetic, material, textual and paratextual elements to generate their message.

Paratext is the increasingly popular term Gérard Genette accorded to typefaces, titles, prefaces, and other marginal elements of book culture that nevertheless greatly influence meaning.¹¹ I expand it here, as other theorists have done, to include all elements of a particular book’s materiality and design, that “fringe of the printed text which in reality

¹⁰ Brian Allison, “Dreamer of Dreams, Born Out of My Time,” *Kelmscott: A Medieval Adventure in the Age of the Machine* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Press, 2005), 9.

¹¹ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.

controls one's whole reading of the text"¹² Paratexts are usually seen as subservient to the text by casual readers, but they introduce tensions and instabilities that complicate the message, blur the boundaries of meaning, and offer alternative symbolisms for the viewer to unravel. The ability to read the language the words are written in is scarcely more important than reading the meaning of book design and construction, and for Morris's books, the heart of this meaning is the conveyance of his social vision of an ideal past and future for England. Given the attention placed in my analysis on visual elements such as ornament and illustration, it would be reasonable to call this study's focus *aesthetic* paratextuality, which quickly parts company from Genette's main concerns and moves into questions of a book's visual rhetoric aspects.

Morris's central role in shaping modern concepts of book design and paratextual awareness was part of his grand agenda of social and artistic reform. The argument that Morris rediscovered and rewrote medieval strategies of conveying meaning through material and ornament during his investigations of calligraphy and illumination, and that it was this experience that guided Kelmscott, has been articulated before.¹³ Both illuminations and Kelmscott volumes, however, must be considered as textual artifacts created by Morris to shift the cultural values of Victorian England by presenting physical evidence that the medieval community as he interpreted it could reform his England. The medievalism of Morris and his circle partially obscured actual historical knowledge in public perception, conflating Pre-Raphaelite sensibilities and aesthetic with those of the tenth to sixteenth centuries (often in a very inaccurate manner) that has nonetheless changed our perception of the medieval world to this day. As Michael Naslas says,

¹² Philippe Lejeune, quoted by Gérard Genette in *Paratexts*, 2.

¹³ Notably by William S. Peterson, Joseph Dunlap, William Whitla, and Peter Faulkner.

[Morris] looked back to the Middle Ages for an integration of taste, style, and social purpose, but he was no mere revivalist. His critical examination of the past enabled him to criticize his own time by standing in the pre-capitalist sphere of the Middle Ages and observing his society from a new position.¹⁴

Morris's passion for anti-industrial societal and artistic reform was articulated through a bewildering variety of media, but the singular nature of a unique handmade codex, such as *The Aeneid of Virgil*, is his most profound statement against mass production and utility, and for the artistic and social role of books. The relationship between message and media has become even more crucial in the internet age, as information begins to lose all physical form in the technology age. The implications of text without physical presence must be considered against traditional codices and incunabula and the richness of meaning they accommodate.

Roger Chartier restructures the foundation for establishing history as a specific kind of knowledge, one “capable of inscribing the diverse modalities of the discursive construction of the social world within the objective constraints that both limit the production of discourse and make it possible.”¹⁵ Responding to Foucault and others, he insists on a radical departure from models of universal categories and the accompanying formalistic structures. By articulating the nature of history-as-story, “describing the perceptions, representations, and rationalities of history’s actors and identifying the unconscious interdependencies that both limit and inform the strategies of those actors,”¹⁶ it becomes possible to bypass the classical opposition between subjective singularities (raw documents and artifacts) and collective determinations (imposed categories and models of interpretation such as division by country, social class, or theoretical models such as

¹⁴ Michael Naslas, “Mediaevalism in Morris’s Aesthetic Theory,” *Journal of the William Morris Society* V (1982): 16.

¹⁵ Roger Chartier, *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), i.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Structuralist or Marxist). Chartier's model gives a strong insight into Morris's work and the uses he put history to. Indeed, Morris himself claims in an 1877 lecture that he is living "at a time when history has become so earnest a study among us as to have given us, as it were, a new sense: at a time when we so long to know the reality of all that has happened, and are to be put off no longer with the dull records of the battles and intrigues of kings and scoundrels."¹⁷ The Pre-Raphaelites and Arts and Crafts Movement achieved an important but partial and short-lived stylistic influence as the Gothic Revival waned, but the incoherence between the technological and political reality of late nineteenth-century Britain and Morris's proposed new Victorian identity was already strained to breaking point even as it was being manifested. The tension between "objective social properties and their internalization in individuals"¹⁸ is an ongoing negotiation for a community's social identity, its "perceived being," and though inspired by Carlyle and Ruskin, Morris's negotiations eventually moved beyond them into distinctly radical political and artistic territory. He presented a template for a new representation of Victorian Britain which was multifaceted and controversial. Ultimately it would be adopted more in style than in substance, and this outcome tells a great deal about how the models of self-representation evolved from his time. Even had Morris lived longer, the descent of his philosophy into misunderstood and seemingly antiquated medievalism could hardly have been prevented. Yet that incoherence, the width of the chasm between Morris's Utopian England *Nowhere* and the reality of "six counties overhung with smoke,"¹⁹ is the key to his fame and importance then and now.

¹⁷ William Morris, "The Lesser Arts," Norman Kelvin, *William Morris on Art and Socialism*, 4.

¹⁸ Chartier, *On the Edge of the Cliff*, 5.

¹⁹ "Forget six counties overhung with smoke,/ Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke, Forget the spreading of the hideous town ;/ Think rather of London, small, and white, and clean, The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green." Prologue to *The Earthly Paradise* (Hammersmith: Kelmescott Press, 1896).

Morris offered an identity rich in connections to the historical period when England began to forge its medieval cultural identity following the Norman Conquest, and which used a model inspired by that paradigm to engage with contemporary social concerns of his day, such as poverty, pollution, crime, workers' rights, corruption, and imperialism. His writings and art must be considered first and foremost as *artifacts* created to shift the cultural values of Victorian England by presenting physical evidence that the medieval community as he interpreted it could educate and reform his own age. Morris, inspired by Carlyle and Ruskin, used the achievements of the Middle Ages as a basis for an attack on his contemporary society. He idealized his reconstructed medieval model so it might better contrast with the flaws of industrial capitalism and offer a position, as E.P. Thompson says, to force his society to judge its own time by standards other than its own.²⁰ It is characteristic of Morris that his Utopia, so specific in time and place, is an idealized refiguring of his own home, not a "brave new world" created from whole cloth.²¹ Lionel Johnson said in his review of *News from Nowhere* that "the picture of London, embowered in orchards and set with gardens, is very inviting" and he longed to see the Thames "with eyes clear of city smoke."²²

In everything Morris offered for public consumption, this interpretive model was authorized. His writings and art shared a remarkable viewpoint, that of a highly educated liberal and environmentally engaged medieval mind called up to pass judgment on Victorian England (and by extension, the Western world entire), to offer solace for the many ways in

²⁰ E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London: Merlin Press, 1976): 28-9.

²¹ The trip taken by the narrator of *News From Nowhere* after he awakens in the future, beginning in Kelmscott House, Hammersmith, and ending at his beloved Kelmscott Manor (in the Cotswold village of Kelmscott, Oxfordshire), is the trip that Morris's body would take six years after the story was written, as he died in the House and his body was taken some 75 miles West to be buried in Kelmscott village.

²² Quoted by Peter Faulkner, ed., *William Morris: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 342.

which it must be found wanting, and to propose a Utopian reconciliation which would conduct much of its healing Ruskin-style by aesthetic re-education. Yet Morris was not Ruskin, who never went so far as to consider demolishing the class structure or abolishing religion, and also unlike Ruskin, Morris believed that machines might find their place in his society to do “what mere human suffering would otherwise have to do.”²³ It was his wish to elevate as much labour as possible into useful and creative work, which humans should naturally take pleasure in, and leave the worst to machinery.²⁴ Most human endeavours, guided by Nature and History, might be made worthy occupations if societal reform could teach respect and appreciation for each undertaking, and for those who worked at them.²⁵ Morris was highly aware of the social and political significance of art, and he extends that meaningfulness to every detail of practical design and craftsmanship. Thus aesthetics are a fundamental part of the equation of life: “I cannot forget that, in my mind, it is not possible to dissociate art from morality, politics, and religion. Truth in these great matters of principle is of one and it is only in formal treatises that it can be split up diversely.”²⁶

Morris resurrected a vision of England’s history so that it might serve as an effective model for his own hoped-for society. This is not to suggest that he was naïve enough to believe that profound and lasting change could be effected through Art alone, but that, unlike even Marx, he understood that human nature would have to change before his quasi-medieval socialist Utopia could be realized. His idealism lies perhaps in his insistence that this

²³ William Morris, *Some Hints on Pattern- Designing* (London: Chiswick Press, 1899), 10.

²⁴ Even in Morris’s Utopia, *News from Nowhere*, there are huge mechanical barges moving along the Thames, though they are silent and non-polluting.

²⁵ “The true secret of happiness lies in the taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life.” William Morris, “The Aims of Art” in *Signs of Change: Seven Lectures* (London: Reeves & Turner, 1888), 71.

²⁶ William Morris, “Art and Society,” in *Hopes and Fears for Art: Five Lectures Delivered in Birmingham, London, and Nottingham, 1878-1881*. 2nd ed. (London: Ellis & White, 1882), 180.

was possible, and his own nature seemed proof of it. This “oppositional Englishness,” as Stephen Yeo calls it,²⁷ escapes the sentimentalism of mere ruralism by combining a great love of place with principled resistance to many aspects of society. There is, paradoxically, a strong tradition of English radicalism. Morris, as Peter Faulkner notes,²⁸ argued for a self-determined definition of what it meant to be English through the twin influences of landscape and history:

The enemy will say, “This is retrogression not progress”; to which we answer: All progress, every distinctive stage of progress, involves a backward as well as a forward movement; the new development returns to a point which represents the older principle elevated to a higher plane; the old principle reappears transformed, purified, made stronger, and ready to advance on the fuller life it has gained through its seeming death. As an illustration (imperfect as all illustrations must be) take the case of advance on a straight line and on a spiral—the progress of all life must be not on the straight line, but on the spiral.²⁹

The following chapters consider William Morris’s influence on the rise of paratextual awareness, the negotiation strategies for his community’s social identity and his construction of an idealized past through texts. Morris believed that popular awareness of books as objects of beauty had been lost at the crucial moment when publishing and book consumption were growing at an unprecedented rate. The formal and material aspects of Victorian books were failing to fulfill the social role Morris considered essential to a larger desperately-needed shift in the relationship between the Victorian public and the Arts and Crafts it consumed, just as they failed to respect unity of design, integrity of materials, the dignity of those who laboured to make them, or their targeted readership. With his circle of artists and craftsmen, Morris used a medieval-socialist hybrid model as an ideal to be articulated through both the content

²⁷ Stephen Yeo, “Socialism, the State, and Some Oppositional Englishness,” *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1910*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 360.

²⁸ Peter Faulkner, *William Morris and the Idea of England: The Annual Kelmscott Lecture of the William Morris Society given at the Art Worker’s Guild on 13th November 1991* (Nottingham: Russell Press, 1992).

²⁹ William Morris, *The Manifesto of the Socialist League*, 2nd Ed (London: Longman & Green, 1885), 5.

of his literary work and the physical form it was presented in. This concern for paratextuality's potential, as opposed to questions of content or general design, evolved slowly through his work with calligraphy, privately-published journals, and his dealings with commercial publishers before it took a fully-realized form at his Kelmscott Press workshop. By changing the material considerations, means of production and aesthetic considerations of books, Morris made them into exemplars of his desire for social change: tangible artifacts of his proposed reality.

The unavoidable malleability of design models caused his legacy and message to change even as it was disseminated, and today the modern Canadian private press community subtly demonstrates both Morris's profound influence and the manner in which it was adapted over time and geographic displacement into modern society. The North American cultural relationship with the Arts and Crafts movement and a perceived medieval heritage is much more tenuous, so the reliance on Morris's books as primary sources was more complete, the imitations based more heavily on second-hand investigation rather than replicating Morris's process of studying ancient models to develop a personal voice. Morris's books, though physical evidence of his artistic and social ideals, must negotiate their meanings with each new environment and audience.

The roles of both Morris's "typographic adventure" at Kelmscott Press and his earlier calligraphic work in the establishment of a new relationship between medieval craftsmen and contemporary design, need new appraisal. Morris and Edward Burne-Jones made medieval hand-illuminated manuscripts the theoretical model for his books, and embedded that model into modern book design, a fact which has received less critical investigation than his acknowledged debt to early printed books. His physical icons of a 'new medievalism' rewrote history in the service of his peculiar vision for England's future. The eventual global

outcomes of the manifold representations of identity Morris constructed in lecture, writing, and art were shaped by the constant presence of modifiers to his message, including the mass media, his followers and their interpretive idiosyncrasies, quickly-changing technology, and the limits of society's acceptance of Morris's proposed models. As Morris manipulated the history and artistic strategies of the Middle Ages as a concept to serve his social agendas, so his own rhetoric and artifacts were quickly manipulated to fit practical and commercial agendas as well as the valid artistic responses of his successors in the book *Arts and Crafts*.

Recovering and Effacing the Past

Morris's textual negotiation of this proposed social identity, this making the past part of the present, resulted in his calligraphic and printed work, two bodies of work that are now beginning to be considered in tandem.³⁰ The Victorian/Edwardian rebirth of printing, in the flowering of private presses after Kelmscott, followed the fifteenth-century printmakers' model of deriving the first fonts and page designs from scribal hands and illuminations, but this derivation, both practical and theoretical, came from the hand of Morris. He may have intended his final *Aeneid* manuscript to "put an end to printing,"³¹ but it instead forced a rebirth at Morris's own hands, because the singularity of illuminated documents resists reproduction and dissemination, and so cripples their broad influence. The unfinished state of the *Aeneid* stands in contrast to the later Kelmscott printed volumes, which in their multiple forms are triumphs of practical concerns balanced with precise artistic expression.

³⁰ It seems fitting that Chaucer, the author whose writings are championed as the first widely popular tales from England actually written in English, should be the writer given the final (in Morris's lifetime), and most lavish, paratextual treatment at Kelmscott Press.

³¹ "Every Sunday morning,' Burne-Jones wrote to Charles Eliot Norton in 1874, 'you may think of Morris and me together. He reads a book to me and I make drawings for a big Virgil he is writing—it is to be wonderful and put an end to printing.'" Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones II* (New York: Macmillan, 1904), 156.

Reproduction is an act of compromise, one that weakens the aura of the original art object (as Walter Benjamin famously describes³²) in order that an imperfect rendering might convey meaning beyond the unique physical presence of the manuscript. A reproduction is almost *de facto* a collaborative effort (even in such an operation as Kelmscott, and certainly when distribution is considered), and the creation of a reproduction implies the seeking of multiple and simultaneous audience, so the radiant nature of the message's movement begins even before the audience is engaged. A manuscript can be received only by a single recipient, but a published book expands to thousands, and a virtual text has no firm audience limits, as long as its supporting technology is available. As texts have moved from singular expressions, written by one person to be read by one person at a time, to increasingly radiant messages, the danger of losing the more subtle and material levels of meaning and expression has similarly increased. The conditions of the construction of the books are the plural constructions of their meaning, and the meaning of any Kelmscott volume, let alone one of Morris's illuminated manuscripts, owes more to paratextual and social context considerations than it does to content. It is the physical existence of a *newly created* Victorian incunabula or illumination that changes the discourse. In many ways, Kelmscott books obliterate the textual history of their contents as much as they pay homage to it because the book forms derive from a reconstruction of their inscribing. With a fame far exceeding his incunabula models, Morris's books replace the history of print for all but the most expert of audiences. This is the most dangerous part of Morris's effect on popular knowledge: imperfect understanding of his work easily supplants a fragile and vague sense of the historical period and the medieval art that inspired him. By interpreting the Middle Ages, Morris changed them forever. By reinventing his contemporary Arts and Crafts, he effaced much of the continuity

³² Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2008), 5.

and evolution between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, not least because he personally hated most of the art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and consistently ignored or disparaged it. *Incunabula redux*, or, as the Archdeacon Dom Claude Frolo once predicted, “This will destroy that. The Book will destroy the Edifice.”³³ Largely because the Arts and Crafts revival did not sustain and grow long after Morris’s passing, his life’s work now occupies the same perceptual space as medieval artifacts: relics of a bygone era in some manner conflating the societies that inspired and provoked their creation.

Even in areas where Morris’s designs do not greatly resemble authentic medieval crafts, such as his furniture and wallpapers, they maintain an air of legitimacy and authenticity which derive as much from Morris’s public persona as from stylistic sensibilities. In areas where the new art follows its predecessors closely, such as Morris & Co.’s stained glass church windows, they become, in popular perception, indistinguishable from the originals (see fig. 1.2). Morris *is* an aesthetic history of Britain, fully edited, expurgated, revised and adapted for the perceived needs of the age, the revival of medievalism conducted on his terms and by the force of his symbols. The timing of Morris’s rise to public authority, coming at the end of the Gothic Revival, allowed him to ‘have the last word,’ and that word served his own social agendas.

Morris replaces the gap between history and its representation with what Eric Hobsbawm describes as anachronism, “reading the desires of the present into the past...

³³ Speaking of Gutenberg’s first printed Bible and Notre Dame Cathedral: “It was a premonition that human thought, in changing its outward form, was also about to change its outward mode of expression; that the dominant idea of each generation would, in future, be embodied in a new material, a new fashion; that the book of stone, so solid and so enduring, was to give way to the book of paper, more solid and more enduring still. In this respect the vague formula of the Archdeacon had a second meaning—that one Art would dethrone another Art: Printing will destroy Architecture.” Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* [*Notre Dame de Paris* 1831] (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1917). The entire section (Book V Chapter II) is a remarkable extended essay on the historical relationship between architecture, religion, and printing, and dovetails with the second chapter of this thesis. <http://www.bartelby.com/312/0502.html>



Figure 1.2 "David's Charge to Solomon" (1882), a stained-glass window by Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, in Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts.

the most common and convenient technique of creating a history satisfying the needs of what Benedict Anderson has called imaginary communities or collectives, which are by no means only national ones.”³⁴ Yet Morris strives for a level of both authenticity and originality not equaled by the other figures of the Gothic Revival. Mere appearance of medieval art, however accurate, is not sufficient if the materials and methods of production are modern, because the true virtue of such art is not its aesthetic, but the social implications of the craftsmanship required to create it. Perfect medieval work made by machines is anathema to Morris’s rhetoric. In this sense, Morris insists that the refiguring of his community reject easy ‘facelifts’ and strive for the honesty of a fundamental shift in society.

Morris understood the problematic relationship between history and his idealized construction of medievalism, but, as discussed in the next chapter, he was no more ‘objective’ or neutral than Carlyle, Ruskin, or Pugin. His medieval discourse is aesthetic and socialist first, and his intent was never to educate his audience on how their ancestors had lived, but how Morris wanted the people of his *own* day, and of the future, to live. Unwanted features of this heritage, such as religion or imperialism, are set far in the background as issues not to be fully addressed. Some important aspects of his proposed society, such as education and global trade, are underdeveloped and not clearly visualized. His lifelong work to bring people to a consciousness of the ugliness and degradation of nineteenth-century culture warranted such editorial efforts, from his impassioned perspective.

Morris used a twin dialectical strategy: designing narratives and artifacts which could represent each artistic tradition as he believed it had been before the tradition was degraded, while simultaneously demonstrating through his own handiwork that the intervening corruption could be reversed, and each art restored to its glory. Universal awareness and

³⁴ Hosbawm cited in Chartier, *On the Edge of the Cliff*, 8.

concern for beauty and design would lead naturally to improved social conditions and reforms: a respite from poverty that in turn would allow workers access to the necessary models of beauty that their own work would then reflect, “a more life-giving art and a true spirit of craftsmanship.”³⁵ With humanitarian intentions, Morris nonetheless made a palimpsest of history. Morris’s later years gave him access to fifty years of serious scholarly exploration of the literature, art, and society of the medieval period, but his use of that scholarship is shaped by his hatred of the industry of his own age. Thomas Carlyle’s suggested reforms in *Past and Present* focus on urging the manufacturers and businessmen of his day to take up a modern “noblesse oblige,” to care for their employees in the tradition of the landed gentry’s concern for their tenants’ wellbeing. Unlike the earlier pro-agricultural medievalists, Carlyle does not dispute the inevitability of industrialization, though he in some respects mourns it. Ruskin and Morris, however, claim that a neo-feudal society based on agriculture and craftsmanship is possible and necessary for post-Victorian England. This dream, and Morris’s passionate nature, forbade compromise. Sadly, in many of his undertakings he was attempting to explain the spirit of the Middle Ages to people who rarely considered the past, and had little knowledge or understanding of the few artifacts they did see. It is hardly surprising that his most profound and direct influence was on highly educated men who shared his love of the arts.

Morris was of course much more than a retrograde historian or Luddite; he was a highly influential thinker, writer, artist and designer at the centre of a movement. Far from unfolding independent of the perception and intention of culture and society, Morris’s Pre-Raphaelite response to his age did assist a widespread shift in awareness. His vision of a

³⁵ From an interview with Morris in *Bookselling* magazine [1895] quoted by William S. Peterson, ed. *The Ideal Book: Essays and Lectures on the Arts of the Book by William Morris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 108.

redeemable past fundamentally changed the relationship between the two eras involved. “The work of art is the product of a negotiation between a creator or a class of creators and the institutions and practices of society,” as Stephen Greenblatt says,³⁶ but this world is governed by more than discourse. Meaning is contextual and must inevitably shift with time and action, as each society negotiates a reception.³⁷ The place Morris is situated in by the discourse of today is a reflection of the present age, not his, and the material encoding of a Kelmscott book is such a profound and precise response to the London of 1890 that accusations of simple anachronism miss the point entirely.

Hybrid Language

Kelmscott book design was remarkable largely because of Morris’s illumination work decades before, which had simultaneously developed his deep intuitive sense of the importance of all aspects of a page’s material design and his vision of medieval society and art. Morris was attempting to distil the spirit that had seen the apex of both the dying art of calligraphy and the newborn art of printing into a form that could be accessible and useful to his own age. His translation and reprinting of ancient texts is a parallel endeavour: as William Whitla says, the nature of Morris’s “sympathetic translation” as a scribe and illuminator is manifold.³⁸ The ancient sagas and their meanings, the words and language, the letterforms and materials of production, are all part of his deeply personal interpretation of the past and his considered

³⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, “Towards a Poetics of Culture,” in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veesser (New York: Routledge, 1989), 12.

³⁷ Texts go on pilgrimages and fulfill destinies beyond any intended or even possible at the time of their creation. Yet because they always carry with them a reflection or reaction to the conditions of their making, they operate as artifacts of social history, and more importantly though less well-recognized, as challenges to later contextual readings. Victorian literature may represent the authors’ lives and society, but the modern reception of these it invites scrutiny of contemporary biases—and in a few generations, such responses will be used to provide valuable historical insight into the fears and mores of this period.

³⁸ William Whitla, “‘Sympathetic Translation’ and the ‘Scribe’s Capacity’: Morris’s Calligraphy and the Icelandic Sagas,” *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 10 (2001): 27-108.

construction of an unfamiliar model. Through laborious translation, illumination, hand-printing, and binding, he refutes Victorian economies of scale and obsession with mechanical efficiency. The labour and idealism lavished on this reconfiguring of what a book was in his day versus what it might be (and according to Morris, had been once) challenged contemporary definitions of writing, text, and design. Fully intertwined with that challenge were the agendas Morris put in his designs: the aggregation of paratextual and social meaning. But what is the nature of this transmission of meaning? Jerome McGann and Johanna Drucker's writings on the page as a semiotic unit offer an approach to evaluating the sensory aspects of communication:

A language of usability, rather than compositional form, has appeared in parallel with the growth of graphical user interfaces and the realization that their design principles give the lie to the static nature of print artifacts. Books and graphics, after all, are interfaces through which readers interact with a document to produce a text.³⁹

Meaning does not result solely from the automatic functioning of language; such a concept would ignore most of the factors through which meaning is shaped. When Chartier quotes Vico from 1725 speaking of hieroglyphs as “the divine characters of the age of gods” he claims “humans tried to represent ‘certain imaginative universals’” and that “since they could not achieve this by logical abstraction, they did it by imaginative representation.”⁴⁰

This is how Morris articulates the Middle Ages and his utopian future. He creates a physical symbol system⁴¹ – a hybrid language, partly visual, partly literary, and partly concrete

³⁹ “Visual imagery becomes more stable and more useful when interpreted in combination with a linguistic gloss or statistical base...” “No image is self-evident...” “Books and graphics, after all, are interfaces through which readers interact with a document to produce a text.” –Quotes from Johanna Drucker, “Graphesis: Visual knowledge production and representation” (Unpublished. University of Maryland, 2005). <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/drucker/>

⁴⁰ Chartier, *On the Edge of the Cliff*, 6.

⁴¹ A physical symbol system, or formal system, combines physical patterns (*symbols*) into structures (*expressions*) and further manipulates them (*processes*) to create further expressions.

– to designate his vision. “Alphabetic writing breaks with every form of representation”⁴² but it is still semi-phonetic in nature. Morris’s visual typologies balance that phonetic system with typologies which take their aesthetic cues from both nature and medieval design. It is a form of visual rhetoric Morris rebuilt at a time when most people were unaware of its existence. Language can only be dismantled so far before it loses the ability to reliably convey any information. The smallest linguistic unit that retains semantic meaning is a morpheme. In spoken language, morphemes are constructed of phonemes (units of sound), but in written language morphemes are made up of graphemes (the smallest units of written language—letters, in the languages that use Roman alphabets).⁴³ Yet most letters derive from representational graphics, if traced back far enough, so their origin involves visual representation as well as phonetic. If Chinese characters, for instance, can be consciously understood as both morphemes and morphosyllabic because they can represent syllables of spoken sound as well as meaningful concepts, then both words and hieroglyphs can convey visual and linguistic meaning simultaneously. Given that the relationship between visual representative symbols and the objects they stand for is much more intuitively accessible than the mostly random relationship between alphabetic symbols, their sounds, and the meanings of words composed of those sounds (with the dubious exception of onomatopoeia), graphic characters define the relationship between concept and sound. If Morris’s ornaments can be seen as a hybrid alphabet, the question is one of interpretation. Because the typology of Morris’s art is being interpreted through a combination of learned context, prior knowledge of related or similar symbolic systems, and intuition, it functions without limits, both in terms of how many aspects of the artifact are used to support or augment received meaning and in

⁴² Chartier, *On the Edge of the Cliff*, 8.

⁴³ See Andrew Spencer, *Morphological Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

the possible variations of that received meaning. This is not to say that no constants can be predicted, or that the grammar of design and materiality is incapable of transmitting meaning—far from it, as we shall see in later chapters. Morris's book design features are paratextual ideograms.

Put more simply, a poet, a professional printer, a British Victorian or a twenty-first-century Canadian will receive different meanings from Morris's manuscripts or Kelmscott volumes, but there are in each case aspects—some overlapping, some unique to the viewer—of the received meaning which have a strong relationship with Morris's intentionality as a creator, and his social and political agendas. Morris's art is rhetorical because it seeks always to convince and compel, not merely to convey. The aesthetic of a carefully designed floriated capital or decorated border is an argument for Morris's principles, and any appreciation of his art is positioned to act as confirmation of the worth of his ideals. To admit the beauty of anything Morris offers, from lecture to wallpaper, is to express sympathy, however limited, with his viewpoint, and that admission is tantamount to acceptance. The acceptance may be interpreted as a simple aesthetic preference, a longing for a past that never was, or an educated choice.

Whatever the reasons, some vestiges of Morris's constructed identity and aesthetic are adopted and internalized. Communities, histories, and even human nature have been defined through documents since widespread printing began, and there is periodically a need for renegotiation with their paratextuality. When the nature of sight changed with the advent of printing, a new level of mechanical reproduction and a new form of reproduction without interpretation, it prompted a backlash on behalf of the subjective forms of artistic reproduction. Morris's illuminations are also a kind of rebuttal of the nascent art of photography, as his Kelmscott volumes are a refutation of increasingly industrial printing.

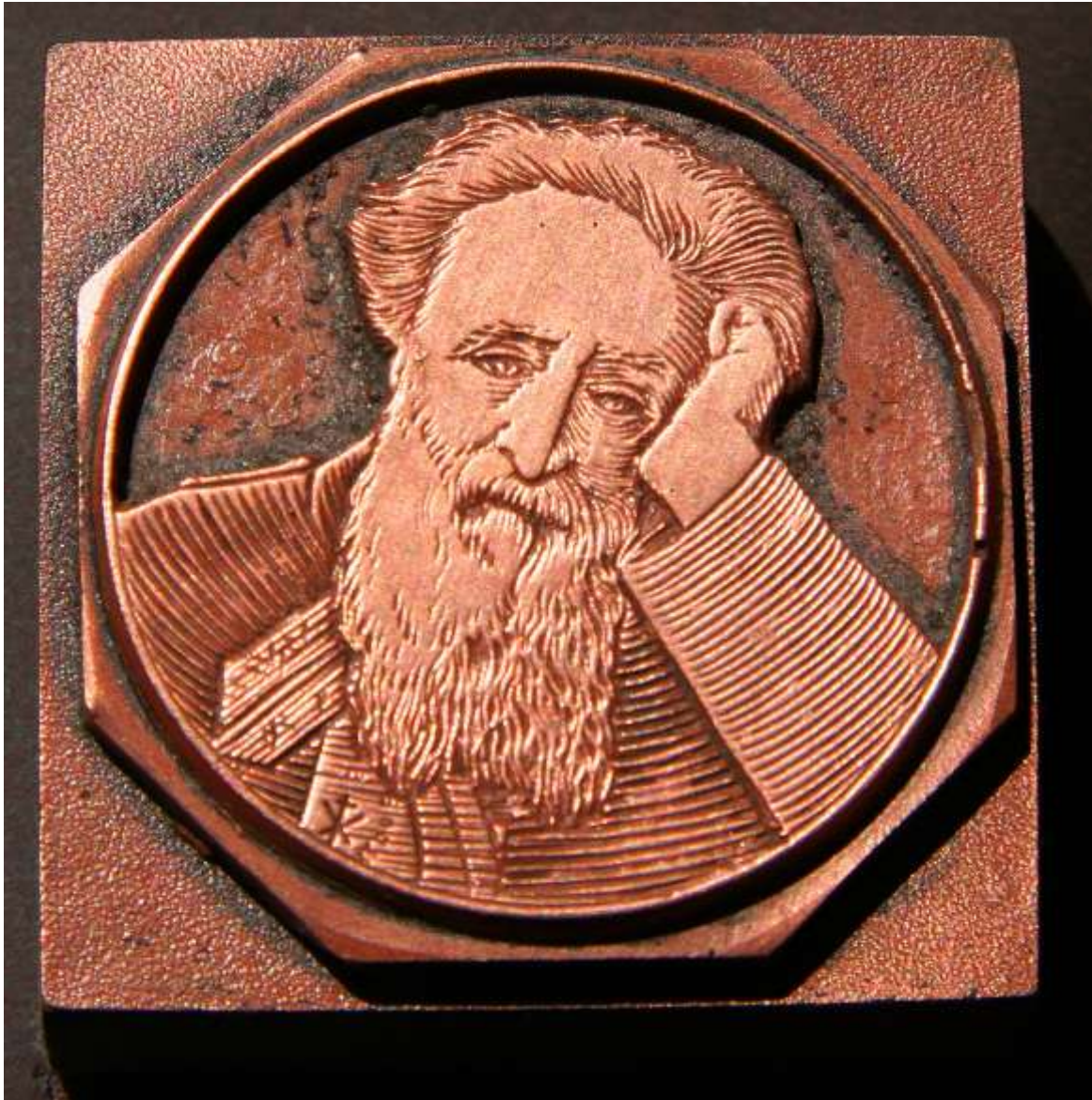


Figure 1.3 Printing-Block Portrait of William Morris (engraved after 1886 photogravure by Frederick Hollyer). Copper & wood, date unknown.

In both cases Morris is championing human intervention in the processes that help to define humanity, and increasingly in Morris's time, to judge artistry. For Morris to begin by mastering calligraphy and illumination, reintroducing letterforms and script hands that had not been used in England for centuries, and from there to progress into printing books in a manner so similar to that of incunabula printers that Caxton would have been comfortable at the Kelmscott press inside an hour, reproduced in miniature the birth of printing itself, and reformed the connection between pen and press.

Meaningful Labour

One cannot understand the moral intensity of Morris's typographical writings, without realizing that he does not merely wish to improve the printing of books; in fact (as was true throughout his career) he wants to alter the course of Western history Deeply though he desires to create books that are works of art, Morris is even more deeply pre-occupied with the loss of humane values generally in the modern world.... It is possible ... to concentrate entirely upon Morris's sensitive analysis of the medieval book and his wonderfully perceptive advice about typographical design. But we will hear only half of what he is telling us if we ever forget that lending order to the printed page is, for Morris, ultimately one way of lending meaning to human existence.⁴⁴

There is no purity of the discipline of textual or bibliographic studies: nor is such a concept desirable, as it implies a silencing of the dialogue between referential, indexical, and symbolic aspects of documents, a condition that would cripple analysis by imposing a false sense of hierarchy, where each level of meaning might be evaluated in isolation, and where the ordering of levels denotes value.⁴⁵ McGann praises Morris's understanding that no distinction should be made between the conception of the poem and its physical text as one of his

⁴⁴ Ray Watkinson, "Review: The Ideal Book: Essays and Lectures on the Arts of the Book by William Morris," *Journal of the William Morris Society* 4:5 (Winter 1983/84): 73.

⁴⁵ D.F. MacKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), 17.

greatest insights.⁴⁶ As Morris would refuse to separate authorship from design and production from artisanship, the social process of transmission and consumption, however complex, must be acknowledged as part of the extrapolated (or *radiant*, in McGann's use of the term⁴⁷) meaning of the text. The stages of production can be scrutinized in both disciplines, and who better than Morris to demonstrate the similarity between manuscript drafts and compositor's test sheets, since he was willing to change lines of his own text to facilitate page layouts?⁴⁸ As McKenzie states plainly, forms effect (and affect) sense.⁴⁹ The argument that authorial intent is irrecoverable or irrelevant because it cannot be perfectly known or separated from received/imposed meanings is flawed: if an author's intent guided the creation of a text, it cannot be called irrelevant. The origin of a text does not constitute its entire meaning, but it is the act of a personal utterance in the discourse between history and actor. Bibliographic studies as sociology of texts give us great access to social motives, to "show the human presence in any recorded text."⁵⁰ Morris's creations are what we can recover of him, remnant and revenant, and without that starting point—the work of the author's own hand and mind – we cannot contextualize the evolution of that message.

Like the wonderful hand-marbled pages in the third volume of *Tristram Shandy* or William Blake and his wife's hand-tinted colouring of the engraved pages of his books of verse, the differences between a Kelmscott original and any subsequent reprint serve simultaneously to underline the indeterminacy of text (since the non-textual elements enrich

⁴⁶ Jerome McGann, *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 46.

⁴⁷ Jerome McGann, *Radiant Textuality: Literature after the World Wide Web* (New York: Macmillan, 2003).

⁴⁸ *The Kelmscott Press and William Morris, Master-Craftsman* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1924), 52.

⁴⁹ MacKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 18.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

and complete the meaning of the book) and confirm authorial intent as a distinct meaning.⁵¹ Nor can a facsimile ever replace the original in such cases, because the original bears both the mark of its creator and the weight of its age. Every page presents unique information about the process of its creation as an artifact, and Morris above all spent his life trying to make others come to terms with the work of hands, with the meaning of the physical act of creation of art. His fierce opposition to the restoration of medieval buildings, discussed in the next chapter, proves in what high esteem he held the singular authentic continuity. The textual artifact is just one manifestation of that effect, and nothing illustrates the point quite as clearly as his illuminated manuscripts. No work of Morris's can be reproduced any more than his Victorian audience can: shifting and loss of meaning is integral to the nature of living art, and proof that cultural products are incomplete without their audience. Yet Morris first created unique illuminated manuscripts, laid them aside to become, for a time, the most politically active British Socialist of his age, and finally took up an art of reproduction.

The conceptual space between the 1875 *Aeneid* and the 1896 *Chaucer*, two ambitious textual projects which were seemingly similar yet fundamentally different, is the key to understanding Morris's evolving sensibilities. The intervening years brought him to his final convictions in three areas: the necessity of a public role for his artistic artifacts so they might affect social reform; the rhetorical potential of the incunabulum book form, if redesigned on manuscript models, to speak to his age; and the crucial importance of returning creative control and economic dignity to craftsmen, so that future generations might lead fulfilling lives and be able to find the authentic artistic voice of their age.

⁵¹ "A book that we chose by instinct at this time, for reading aloud in the studio, was Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*, and again Edward [Burne-Jones] said what he had said before about Chaucer and Morris: "There is so much that is alike in all those great creatures. Blake and Morris resemble each other in so many things — in their splendid simplicity above all." Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones II* (New York: MacMillan & Co., 1904), 290.

The next chapter locates the primary philosophical influences on Morris: those influential figures that shaped the Victorian Gothic Revival and provided him with the conceptual frameworks he would first champion and then critique. Architecture, the arena where restoration and replacement strategies were publicly and physically debated, was of central importance in forming Morris's artifact strategy and relationship with the past. Following this the third chapter traces the evolution and abandoning of Morris's calligraphy, examining his stylistic changes and influences. Both medieval work and contemporary work such as the art of Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti shaped Morris's studies in paratextuality. Combined with his growing Socialist concerns, this study gave birth to the compromise of Kelmscott's fine printed books as educational artifacts. The fourth chapter focuses on Morris and Burne-Jones's design work on the *Aeneid* manuscript, showing it to be his most sophisticated paratextual and design strategies for the unique illuminated vellum page. The fifth chapter examines Morris's reconfiguration at Kelmscott of the printed page's role, and the importance of materiality and graphic elements to the rhetorical role of his books. The final chapter examines the fate of Morris's paratextual teachings, and the manner in which his textual artifacts were interpreted and redefined by the presses that followed Kelmscott. Woven through this, the use of calligraphy alongside print and the persistence of graphical elements deriving from hand-illumination into modern books is traced and considered in light of the newest manifestation of text: immaterial digital documents without firm paratextual or design features. If awareness of paratextuality's role in shaping the meaning of a text is Morris's greatest legacy as a book-designer, how can it survive the coming century?



Figure 2.1 *Red House*, Bexleyheath. Designed by William Morris & Philip Webb (1859).

Chapter 2

Praisers of Past Times: The Gothic Revival's Rewriting of Medieval and Victorian Society

As for romance, what does romance mean? I have heard people mis-called for being romantic, but what romance means is the capacity for a true conception of history, a power of making the past part of the present. I think that is a very important part of the pleasure in the exercise of the intellectual faculties of mankind which makes the most undeniable part of happiness. I say, then, that to disregard these two things does not indicate progress, is not practicality, but degradation.¹

William Morris's paratextual artifact strategy was the final marriage of the visual and textual rhetorical forms he had been engaged with all his life. Highly adept at many genres of art, Morris was able to create all aspects of an environment that he hoped might combine to transmit the medieval social spirit to his age. The sources of this strategy must be explored in order to understand his hopes that manuscripts and printed books might act as exemplars for a socially and artistically vital England. His textual inheritance was the pervasive debate that began with the German Romantics on the importance of aesthetics in the redemption of society. As Christopher Shaw asserts, "Schiller, Coleridge, Carlyle and Ruskin: this was the path by which German romantic idealism became part of Morris's heritage."² Though Morris's strongest direct influence was John Ruskin, Ruskin and the other Romantic writers worked mainly through written rhetoric. Although Ruskin argued for the creation of artifacts, he made little himself aside from drawings and watercolours which were technical or naturalistic. The Romantics offered creative writings and theory, but Morris needed tangible design examples to respond to as well, and the debate between the art of the past and the present was most clearly presented to the young Morris in the art and architecture around

¹ William Morris, "Address at the Twelfth Annual Meeting, 3 July, 1889," in May Morris ed., *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist I* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1936), 146-147. This version omits the first paragraph, the first sentence of the second paragraph, and the final paragraph of the original speech.

² Christopher Shaw, "William Morris and the Division of Labour: The Idea of Work in News from Nowhere," *The Journal of the William Morris Society* IX: 3 (1991): 19-30.

him: the churches and art extant from the Middle Ages, and the new forms of the Gothic Revival, exemplified by the buildings of Pugin and Viollet-le-Duc. The path of Morris's theoretical development must be traced through both media in order to see his artistic strategy in clear perspective, and to understand why he felt it necessary to resurrect and reconfigure multiple art forms.

Architecture was the first concrete battleground in the struggle to determine England's relationship to its past, and the future direction of Victorian art, design, and literature. Although the debate would never be fully resolved, Morris became convinced that good aesthetics reflected morality, that such morality required a social structure that allowed all classes to enjoy and be fulfilled by their work, and that mere imitations of medieval craft would not suffice to embody a true spirit of the modern age.

Among cultivated people at present there is a good deal of interest felt or affected in the ornamental arts and their prospects. Since all these arts are dependent on the master-art of architecture almost for their existence, and cannot be in a healthy condition if it is sick, it may be worth while to consider what is the condition of architecture in this country; whether or no we have a living style which can lay claim to a dignity or beauty of its own, or whether our real style is merely a habit of giving certain forms not worth noticing to an all-pervading ugliness and meanness.³

Just as Morris has been endlessly accused of hypocrisy for proclaiming egalitarian ideals while making handcrafts that were enjoyed primarily by the wealthy, the paradox of Morris's relationship with the past seems complicated by his socialism. As Anna Vaninskaya points out,

Many revolutionaries, whether in the arts or in society, have declared their resolution to wake up from the nightmare of history, to slough off the dead hand of tradition and tear themselves from the stranglehold of the past. Making a new social order usually (in theory) entails destroying the old, razing to their foundations the accumulated excrescences of bygone ages so as to build upon the

³ William Morris, "The Revival of Architecture," [First published in *Fortnightly Review*, May 1888] *Architecture, Industry and Wealth: Collected Papers* (New York: Reitel Press, 2008): 198.

finally cleared ground the happy community of tomorrow. To such a mindset, the romantic temperament, with its longing for the golden days of a non-existent, or at least fanciful past, can seem positively reactionary.⁴

Morris saw England's past as the model for its future (as *News from Nowhere* makes clear), and insisted the Victorian need for drastic societal change could be answered using the principles of medievalism. He held the term Gothic, properly applied, to mean no less than the *living* art of a society. His love of all things medieval greatly predates his Socialism, and it is true that the two did not always comfortably co-exist, as when Morris sold much of his library of rare books and manuscripts and donated the money to Socialist causes, only to begin collecting books again shortly thereafter. These efforts to reconcile Victorian views and explorations of England's Middle Ages with a future healing of society's ever-increasing abuses of labour, the environment, and aesthetics preoccupied Morris. He felt hopeful enough in 1893 to write:

[W]hereas in the beginning of the romantic reaction, its supporters were for the most part mere *laudatores temporis acti* [praisers of past times], at the present time those who take pleasure in studying the life of the Middle Ages are more commonly to be found in the ranks of those who are pledged to the forward movement of modern life; while those who are vainly striving to stem the progress of the world are as careless of the past as they are fearful of the future. In short, history, the new sense of modern times, the great compensation for the losses of the centuries, is now teaching us worthily, and making us feel that the past is not dead, but is living in us, and will be alive in the future which we are now helping to make.⁵

⁴ Anna Vaninskaya, "The Bugle of Justice: The Romantic Socialism of William Morris and George Orwell," *Contemporary Justice Review* 8:1 (March 2005): 110.

⁵ William Morris's preface to Robert Steele's 1893 edition of *Medieval Lore from Bartholomew Angelicus* (London: Elliot Stock, 1893), v-viii. A fascinating extract from Princeton University's Louis Clark Vanuxem Foundation Lecture of 1920 by Maurice DeWulf might well be a response to Morris's preface:

"If the above principles of internal criticism are necessary in discerning the spirit of mediaeval civilization, they are no less indispensable for arriving at a just estimate of that spirit. While this civilization is different from our own, it is not to be judged as either worse or better. To determine its worth we must not compare its institutions with those of to-day. It is positively distressing to see historians, under the spell of special sympathies, proclaim the thirteenth century the best of all centuries of human history and prefer its institutions to our own. Such *laudatores temporis acti* really injure the cause which they intend to serve. But it is equally distressing to see others, more numerous, decry thirteenth century civilization, and strenuously declaim against the imprudent dreamer who would carry certain of its ideas and customs into our modern world. To go back to the Middle Ages is out of the question; retrogression is impossible, for the past will ever be the past. To prefer to our railways, for instance, the long and perilous horseback rides of that age is of course absurd; but in the same way, to depreciate the Middle Ages by contrasting them at all with our modern ways of living, thinking, or

Morris argues that the past offers lessons and models which may warn of dangers as well as offer solutions. The best of the past must be discerned through careful study, and then adapted into a functional modern paradigm. This strategy is somewhat different from the nostalgic interpretations of the Middle Ages championed by the early Gothic Revival's most famous figures in arts, philosophy, and architecture, though it has its roots in them. Though it has often been asserted that Morris's interests began with a preoccupation, an aesthetic obsession that gradually took on political facets, this is only half of the truth. Morris's political and aesthetic agendas were intertwined from the beginning, and his growing social awareness and political engagement are an expansion of his strategic repertoire. His art and writings were always political, in the sense of being carefully considered critiques of his society, creations with a rhetorical agenda. The move to direct Socialist activism should be seen in the same light as Morris's taking up dyeing, or printing: a new medium being appropriated as part of his lifelong quest for persuasive communication. In both message and artistry he was building on the work of his predecessors and contemporaries; what truly made him remarkable was the degree to which he was able to twine political and aesthetic messages into coherent artistic statements, objects that argued for societal transformation.

Even today, as Ruth Kinna observes, "Morris's interest in the question of national identity and his attempt to join the struggles of the past to a progressive vision of the future is both cogent and relevant."⁶ The oppositional Englishness Morris was engaged in existed within the Victorian conflict between preservation and revival, between effacing and

feeling seems to me meaningless. This would be tantamount to reviving the errors of the Renaissance, which was infatuated with its own world and disdained everything mediaeval. This error has been strangely persistent, and it merits examination because of the lessons entailed. Disdain for the past begot ignorance, ignorance begot injustice, injustice begot prejudice." *Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages* [1920] (London: Dover Publications, 2005), 7.

⁶ Ruth Kinna, *William Morris: the Art of Socialism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 96.

replacing medieval artifacts. The love of the medieval began with the Romantic authors and philosophers, as Morris argues:

The revival of the art of architecture in Great Britain may be said to have been a natural consequence of the rise of the romantic school in literature, although it lagged some way behind it, and naturally so, since the art of building had to deal with the prosaic incidents of every day life, and is limited by the material exigencies of its existence. Up to a period long after the death of Shelley and Keats and Scott, architecture could do nothing but produce on the one hand pedantic imitations of classical architecture of the most revolting ugliness, and ridiculous travesties of Gothic buildings, not quite so ugly, but meaner and sillier; and, on the other hand, the utilitarian brick box with a slate lid which the Anglo-Saxon generally in modern times considers as a good sensible house with no nonsense about it.

The first symptoms of change in this respect were brought about by the Anglo-Catholic movement, which must itself be considered as part of the Romantic movement in literature, and was supported by many who had no special theological tendencies, as a protest against the historical position and stupid isolation of Protestantism. Under this influence there arose a genuine study of medieval architecture, and it was slowly discovered that it was not, as was thought in the days of Scott, a mere accidental jumble of picturesqueness consecrated by ruin and the lapse of time, but a logical and organic style evolved as a matter of necessity from the ancient styles of the classical peoples, and advancing step by step with the changes in the social life of barbarism and feudalism and civilization.⁷

The visual medium in which Victorian Medievalism first spread, and which created the template for the imitation, was therefore architecture, though Morris saw the spirit that led to the Gothic Revival as a legacy of the English Romantic poets. It was England's churches and public buildings that first bore the brunt of the varied strategies of imitation and eclectic use of the past, to which Morris would strive to bring some order. Architecture is the living record of each age's debate with its own past, and to a trained eye the welcome and unwelcome changes and restorations to an ancient building reveal a microcosm of local history. It is no accident that Morris began working for a prominent Gothic Revival architect, G.E. Street, upon leaving Oxford, and though he soon realized he could not be contained by

⁷ William Morris, "The Revival of Architecture," 1-2.

that craft alone and was not wholly suited to this work, he would later become arguably the most active defender of ancient buildings in England's history.

It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of the Gothic Revival to architecture or vice-versa. The movement began perhaps a century before Morris's birth, but by his university days was inextricable from the Oxford Movement's championing of a higher ritual and religious solemnity in the land. The early revival-inspired churches were ostensibly public symbols of repudiation of the industrialization and secularization of England's society, and the movement gave new meaning to the surviving authentic medieval churches. Pugin⁸ used medieval art and architecture as evidence of the moral and spiritual superiority of that time over his own. Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (first published in three volumes 1851-53, expanding on 1849's *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*) expounded this with writings which spread throughout the world. Indeed, more Gothic Revival buildings were built in the Victorian era than original Gothic buildings had been in the Middle Ages.

After their 1855 tour of Gothic architecture in France, Morris and Burne-Jones swore to dedicate themselves to a life of art, leaving their earlier dream of founding a monastic order. The shift from religion to art was not such a profound one in the climate at Oxford in their day, and they abandoned their university education (Morris with a bare Pass degree, Burne-Jones a term short of his graduation). In this period, Morris began his first writings, both fiction and nonfiction, centering on medieval architecture. "The Story of the Unknown Church," his first contribution to *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* was his first published story. He visited Belgium and North France in 1854, and he and Burne-Jones spent the summer of 1855 traveling on the Continent. Both trips certainly influenced this tale and the

⁸ See especially Pugin's *Contrasts* (London: A.W.N. Pugin, 1836).

closely-related essay “The Churches of North France,” which appeared in the February 1856 issue.

Morris’s reaction to the Gothic Revival, to his own art, and to that of his beloved past changed in tandem. Select major figures of that movement established new stages in the evolution of the Revival and influenced Morris’ attitudes towards the past. This chain of influence moves from aesthetic philosophies of Schiller and the chivalric dreams of Scott, the architecture of Pugin and Viollet-le-Duc, through the Schiller-inspired philosophies and social critique of Carlyle and the artistic criticism of Ruskin, culminating in Morris’s own lectures and writings at the end of the century. Morris’s ability to look backward and forward simultaneously did not spring merely from his natural talent or personality, and his views shifted as experiences informed him.

Friedrich Schiller 1759-1805

[M]any, following Schiller’s lead, did look to art as a means of reconciling philosophical oppositions, harmonizing social and psychological conflicts, rehumanizing men at a time of increasing specialization and division of labour, and bringing peace and order to society.⁹

Friedrich von Schiller is rarely mentioned in critical investigations of Morris’s views, a surprising oversight when the strong common ground of their philosophies is considered. In Schiller’s writings are the philosophical underpinnings of Ruskin and Morris’s impassioned arguments that participation in the production of beautiful things might revive and repair a society they see as teetering on the brink of total inhumanity. Schiller’s *Sturm und Drang* fiction may seem to have little in common directly with Morris’s romances; and indeed Morris acquired most of his Schiller-esque concepts from Ruskin, who in turn learned them

⁹ Lionel Gossman, “Beyond Modern: The Art of the Nazarenes,” *Common Knowledge* 14:1 (Winter 2008): 66.

from Thomas Carlyle. All three, however, believed in the desperate need for a cultural rebirth:

Admittedly, Ruskin did not read either Hegel or the German idealists as a group, but he was acquainted with the ideas of Schiller. And although Ruskin rejected the terminology used by Schiller such as ‘Spieltrieb’ and ‘aesthetic,’ he shared an actual concern for art theory and philosophy. For example, Ruskin and Schiller agree that in the desire for perfection, accuracy and symmetry, in the drive for imitation of such abstractions as circles, spheres, and triangles which do not exist naturally in Nature, man is reduced to a machine.¹⁰

While still a young man at school, Schiller wrote his first play, *Die Räuber* (1781), which was a great success. Schiller is today considered one of the country’s most important playwrights. His “Ode to Joy” became part of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, and his famous admonition to “live with your century; but do not be its creature”¹¹ is a decree which would be widely interpreted. Morris almost certainly read the play. In *Die Räuber* Captain Mendoza meets John Tanner, a well-off traveler reminiscent of Morris on holiday, and describes himself as a brigand: one who lives by stealing from the rich. Tanner, who unsurprisingly is a gentleman with some Socialist sentiments, replies, “I am a gentleman. I live by robbing the poor.” In Morris’s *A King’s Lesson*, a captain of war explains his craft to the king in identical fashion: “as the potter lives by making pots, so we live by robbing the poor,” and the king’s own trade is merely “to be a king of such thieves, yet no worsen than the rest.”¹²

¹⁰ John T.F Lang, “Art and Life in Nineteenth-Century England: The Theory and Practice of William Morris.” *Canadian Aesthetics Journal* 15 (Fall 2008): 1.

¹¹ “Live with your century, but do not be its creature; render to your contemporaries what they need, not what they praise... Think of them as they ought to be when you have to influence them, but think of them as they are when you are tempted to act on their behalf.” quoted by V.A. Howard, “Schiller: A Letter on Aesthetic Education to a Later Age” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 20:4 (Winter 1986): 11.

¹⁵ Stanley Weintraub, “Shaw’s *Don Juan in Hell* and Schiller’s *Die Rauber*.” *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 50:4 (2007): 396-7.

Thomas Carlyle was largely responsible for spreading German Romanticism and philosophy through the intellectuals of England, and in 1825 he published the first serious biography of Schiller:

Among the writers of the concluding part of the last century there is none more deserving of our notice than Friedrich Schiller. Distinguished alike for the splendour of his intellectual faculties, and the elevation of his tastes and feelings, he has left behind him in his works a noble emblem of these great qualities [...] Perhaps the time may come, when all his writings, transplanted to our own soil, may be offered in their entire dimensions to the thinkers of these Islands; a conquest by which our literature, rich as it is, might be enriched still farther.¹³

Schiller is at his most influential to the Gothic Revival with *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a series of Letters* (1794). Here he argues that each human is potentially a “beautiful soul” and that the urgent task is to restore the modern fragmented human state to the wholeness that was once its birthright. Schiller equates aesthetics with morality in one sense, arguing that aesthetics make a harmony possible between the opposed halves of the human psyche. Nature pulls towards the sensuous feelings, experienced sensations, impulses and desires. Reason pulls towards morality, logic, sensibility and freedom from desire. Aesthetics formed by enlightened art and taste, allow a rational concept of Beauty to be formed from its two opposite aspects (relaxing and energizing) which can suitably act on the two opposing aspects of human nature, reconciling them into the ideal enlightened human.

Schiller’s philosophy was most concerned with the question of human freedom, and though this preoccupation with beauty and freedom prefigures much of Morris’s passions, in the end the natural world and art ultimately exist just to serve the advancement and education of humanity. Like Ruskin and Morris after him, Schiller argues that aesthetic experience is distinctive in its freedom from obsessions with purpose and utility, but that freedom is not the simple contemplation of beauty, with no further concerns or implications, but rather a

¹³ Thomas Carlyle, *The Life of Friedrich Schiller: Comprehending an Examination of His Works* (London: Chapman and Hall, [1825]. 2nd Ed., 1845), 3, 378.

means to develop our imaginative and cognitive capacity in order to gain knowledge of ourselves and others and to imagine new ways of life. Thus the freedom offered by a sensory appreciation of art must be valued for the benefits it can bring to our lives and society. Art is essential, apart from utility, because it creates an aesthetic response which is the foundation of aesthetic education, and hence necessary for the eventual establishment of a ‘society of beautiful souls.’ Similarly, Ruskin warns that labour which does not allow for creativity will wear away “soul and sight” simultaneously:

And observe, you are put to stern choice in this matter. You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both. Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cog-wheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanize them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves.¹⁴

Ruskin analyzed the principles of Carlyle, and laid the foundations of a new system, both an artistic theory and a social theory.¹⁵ Ruskin’s observations reach farther and attempt more, but they are not yet the socialist clamor for change Morris will raise.¹⁶

The tension between the needs of the individual and those of society parallels the tension that exists on an individual level between the physical needs (which quickly become financial needs in a capitalist society, since the means of production are not universally accessible) and the spiritual needs (which can be subsumed in the doctrine of organized church). In a Utopia populated entirely by healthy and eager workers, such as in Morris’s *News from Nowhere*, these tensions might be negotiated, and a balance more readily achieved. In a less perfect world, negotiation between these concepts begins with the aesthetic

¹⁴ John Ruskin, “The Nature of the Gothic,” *Selections From the Works of John Ruskin* (Boston: Riverside Press, 1908), 161.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁶ W.G. Collingwood, *The Life and Work of John Ruskin I* (London: Methuen & Co., 1893), 53.

principle. “By means of beauty sensuous man is led to form and thought; by means of beauty spiritual man is brought back to matter and restored to the world of the senses.”¹⁷

Contemplation of beauty provides humanity with a viewpoint that separates appreciation from need. One may contemplate beauty without being directly involved with the object regarded without being enslaved directly by a need to possess. Thus the aesthetic principle is egalitarian and socialist in nature, allowing art to become a useful balm and tool for an entire community, a shared and uplifting experience. A communally shared building, such as a Gothic church, suits such an impulse perfectly. The idea expressed by Morris in late interviews, of beautiful books both ancient and contemporary held in library-museums for free communal appreciation, will be examined in a later discussion of Kelmscott Press.

Rising from a life which provides recreation enough for the imagination to seek outside itself for inspiration, yet is connected enough (through work and society) to the environment that it is happy to find such inspiration in nature, the creative impulse is cultivated by a balance of work and freedom. “It must be a gift of Nature,”¹⁸ Schiller says:

And what sort of phenomenon is it that proclaims the approach of the savage to humanity? So far as we consult history, it is the same in all races who have escaped from the slavery of the animal state: a delight in *appearance*, a disposition towards *ornament*, and *play*.¹⁹

Here we have the fundamentals of Morris’s aesthetic: art inspired by the natural world, a balance between design and playfulness, and the use of ornamentation to enrich daily life. All of these elements serve artistic creativity, which, as Christopher Shaw points out, should

¹⁷ Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 109.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

rightfully be the central pursuit of humanity, and integrated into all endeavours.²⁰ Such a societal model will allow for multiculturalism, as each culture's art, expressed through the craft of traditional forms, will enrich the material surroundings of all people. A centralized aesthetic experience serves to reinforce reality, as Schiller and Morris saw a culture's art as its true essence: "Art is not a decoration of the present, nor a retreat from that present, but an authentic form of reality itself."²¹ If the art of England's nineteenth century was fragmented and insincere, and had not evolved from the past forms it mimicked, what did that say of the society? Art is a response to the environment in which it is created, but it is also the force that shapes that environment. When Morris tirelessly retrieved techniques and designs from medieval sources, rediscovered lost crafts and breathed new life into archaic forms of expression, it was to provide forgotten modes through which artists could speak to their age, and thus effect political and social change. If Morris's ideas betray Schiller's in their details (conflating art and craft, happiness and spiritual fulfillment, reality and aesthetic appearance), this divergence does not represent any failing on Morris's part. These ideas had been interpreted not only by Carlyle and Ruskin in highly individual ways, but also by Coleridge and Keats, and Morris received all these philosophies in the formation of his own. Add to this the facts that Morris was a visual artist and craftsman with far greater power and variety of means to express practically his own aesthetic socialism than any of his predecessors, and that his art is the articulation of the principle that Schiller identified a half-century earlier: art must be self-expression because it has the responsibility of informing a society of its own nature, and because it cannot be a fully satisfying act for the creator otherwise. This dynamic

²⁰ "[T]he execution of an artistic project is the physical achievement of a concept through the manipulation of the resources of the material world. Mental and manual labour were to be reciprocally determined in the service of art: neither would dominate the other. Schiller amplified this vision until it had become the model of the good society," Shaw, "William Morris and the Division of Labour: The Idea of Work in News from Nowhere," 26.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

balance between human nature, need, and the environment seemed tangible to Morris in medieval art and architecture, and this quality made such art the ideal model to resurrect artistry in his day. As an interviewer of Morris concluded,

The work that is to be its creator's delight must demand all the resources of one's being – hands, heart, and head. Only in such wise is labour worthy, and only after such fashion may the craftsman become an artist also. *Soll das Werk den Meister loben* ["The work is to praise the master"]. Surely the same spirit which gives meaning to Schiller's words, must be the same spirit which Mr. Morris feels, and feeling it, reveals his worth and finds his joy in being ever faithful to its wisdom.²²

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

Although Morris was born just two years after Scott's death in 1832, and was still a baby when his family bought the entire authoritative Scott set, he knew and loved the author's writings. The casts of Scott's novels are a wide social cross-section, showing the influence of dramatic political and social events as felt by an entire society. His novels display a keen interest in all people, and assert a common basic worth despite differences of class, faith, or allegiance—a philosophy Morris would permanently associate with the Middle Ages. Tolerance is a common theme in Scott's work, and his novels look for social reform while still championing tradition and awareness of history. His sympathetic portrayal of poor characters was a revelation in the evolution of the realistic novel.

The British Gothic Revival began, in one sense, with the novels of Sir Walter Scott, and would end with Morris's own books and their imitators. These last vestiges of the Arts and Crafts material aesthetic were soon subsumed into newer forms, finally turning away from the past and towards Modernism. When Shaw points out that art is an authentic form of reality itself,²³ his observation is also a refutation of the endless debate on whether Morris

²² Peterson, ed. *The Ideal Book*, 117.

²³ Shaw, "William Morris and the Division of Labour: The Idea of Work in *News from Nowhere*," 26.

was authentic or consistent either as an imitator of medieval arts or as a Socialist. The questions are misplaced. Morris *defined* British Socialism, as he defined Arts and Crafts, the two movements were joined from their conception. His influence was immense, and his legacy persists despite accusations of internal inconsistency or biased research. He entered the Middle Ages through a mixture of contemporary, often anachronistic, writings and artworks which existed under the broad aegis of Victorian Gothic, and through personal study of authentic works from the medieval period. Similarly, his hero Scott created quasi-medieval romantic settings through a mixture of imagination and knowledge, inspired by the past but no slave to it. Morris may have learned this lesson early, since it is said that he was reading Scott's novels at age four and had finished them all by seven.

What did he find in Scott? Small figures in spare landscapes of the mountains and deserts; bright colours, strong emotions, mystic rituals, fierce crowd scenes; the cult of the outlaw; the swelling upon violence, 'the clang of the scourge and the groans of the penitent'; the idealized woman, intense love unconsummated; the concept of manliness and chivalric self-sacrifice seized upon by Morris as a kind of battle-cry.²⁴

The parallels between Scott's fiction and Morris's later writings have been discussed, as has Morris's conception of labour and its implications for the relationship between humanity and nature.²⁵ The two subjects might be fruitfully combined, as Scott, like Morris, is an author who might have been lauded for realism in his own day, yet is now convicted *in absentia* by modern scholars as a careless dreamer.²⁶ In C.L. Eastlake's 1872 *A History of the Gothic Revival*, the author names Scott as one of the founding fathers of the Gothic movement and as England's first historical novelist:

²⁴ Fiona McCarthy, *William Morris: a Life for Our Time* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), 5-6.

²⁵ Marcus Waithe, "The Stranger at the Gate: Privacy, Property, and the Structures of Welcome at William Morris's Red House," *Victorian Studies* 46:4 (Summer 2004): 567-595.

²⁶ For the remarkable rise and fall of Scott's popularity and critical respect as a realist, see John Henry Raleigh, "What Scott Meant to the Victorians," *Victorian Studies* 7:1 (1963): 7-34.

Manifold as the influences are to which the modern revival of Gothic Architecture have been referred, they may, if taken broadly, be classed under three heads, viz. literary, religious and antiquarian. To the first may be assigned the taste for medievalism, which was encouraged in this country by the writings of Sir Walter Scott, Bishop Percy, and Dr. Lingard; in France by those of Chateaubriand; and in Germany by those of Friedrich von Schlegel. It is impossible to read either the poems or the novels of Scott without perceiving how greatly their interest depends on that class of sentiment, half chivalrous and half romantic, which is centered in the social life and history, the faith, the arts, and the warfare of the Middle Ages. ‘Ivanhoe,’ ‘The Abbot,’ ‘Woodstock,’ ‘The Fair Maid of Perth’ and ‘The Monastery,’ abound in allusions to the Architecture, either military or ecclesiastical, of a bygone age. It forms the background to some of the most stirring scenes which the author depicts. It invests with a substantial reality the romances which he weaves. It is often intimately associated with the very incidents of his plot.²⁷

Eastlake goes on to argue that there is much evidence that Scott had no more than a superficial knowledge of the art he so enthusiastically admired:

On the contrary, the descriptions which he gives of Mediæval buildings not unfrequently betray an ignorance of what have since been called the true principles of Gothic design. The poetic but erroneous notion that the groined vault of a cathedral church had its prototype in the spreading branches of a tree — the comparison of clustered shafts to bundles of lances, bound with garlands — may raise a smile from those who have studied with any attention the real and structural beauties of old English Architecture. The truth is that the service which Scott rendered to the cause of the Revival was to awaken popular interest in a style which had hitherto been associated, except by the educated few, with ascetic gloom and vulgar superstition.²⁸

This accusation of shallow knowledge of Gothic architecture has also been leveled against Morris. Yet Scott’s writing brought public attention to history and architecture, placing a romantic vision of the past before the reader that used such detail judiciously and was not overly restrained by it. This halo of romance that illuminated the past had a massive and sustained influence on England’s relationship to its medieval period, and inspired the level of dedicated study Ruskin and Morris bring to the nineteenth century. If Morris embraced a romanticized image of what the past was and what his own age might learn from it, he came

²⁷ Charles L. Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival* (London: Longmans, Green, 1872), 112.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 112-3.

by it first through Scott, before studying churches or manuscripts, and before encountering Ruskin or Carlyle. The medieval revival influenced theory, interior design, literary arts, architecture and politics through most of the nineteenth century. Jennifer Harris notes that “much of its art and literature reflected a sense of loss for a pre-industrial society with a coherent system of beliefs, and became, in one sense, a retrospective search for solace, inspiration and ideals.”²⁹ Although Morris was born into this revival, and cannot be considered a founder of it, he expanded the influence of the Gothic into people’s daily home lives and eventually championed an immediate and radical social philosophy, which he considered to be based on medieval ideals. Indeed, Morris is given much credit by his early biographers for being naturally gifted with inherent good taste and love of medieval things:

The love of the Middle Ages was born in him. Any slight remnants of the mediaeval tradition in the daily life of Woodford did not go deep; and it was only some years later that the Oxford movement spread over England, and deepened or replaced the superficial mediaevalism brought into fashion by Scott.³⁰

The silly implication that Morris was *born* with a deeper appreciation of the Middle Ages than Scott achieved is immediately undermined by a quotation from Morris himself:

Well I remember ... the impression of romance ... that always comes back to me when I read, as I often do, Sir Walter Scott’s ‘Antiquary,’ and come to the description of the Green Room at Monkbarne, amongst which the novelist has with such exquisite cunning of art imbedded the fresh and glittering verses of the summer poet Chaucer.³¹

The authenticity of Morris’s historical vision has been much debated, and though the work he and Burne-Jones did is more true to its sources than that of the first Pre-Raphaelite painters or Dante Gabriel Rossetti, it was still born as much from a constructed romantic

²⁹ Jennifer Harris, foreword to *William Morris and the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 1984), ix.

³⁰ Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* I, 10-11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

vision as from scholarly studies. The *Waverley* novels and the romance of chivalry were childhood loves of Morris, who, as a young boy clad in custom-made armour and astride a Shetland pony, jousted with shadows in Epping Forest and played among its ruins.³² By the time Morris was a young man, the Gothic Revival had already changed the face of England, and his childhood reflected that fact.

The desire was formed in late eighteenth-century England for a return to an ordered, vitally organic society which could endure the social change that had begun to remake all aspects of the country.³³ Coming at the end of the Victorian era, Morris is in many ways the zenith of the movement. The multifaceted evolution and shifting nature of medievalism began with an emphasis on the pastoral and romantic. Here the medieval embodies a preoccupation with the past, the movement from an age of reason to an age of history. Crumbling authority and the increasingly permeable class systems spurred a strange appropriation of Sir Walter Scott by an aristocracy seeking moral sanction from medieval codes of chivalry. This image of the romantic medieval period became tied to efforts to uphold the status quo, the opposite of what Morris would call for using similar inspiration. Scott's knowledge of the art and architecture of the Gothic period was superficial compared to that of those who followed, but the accuracy of his individual observations was hardly the point. As England's first major historical novelist, he drew public attention and sentiment towards existing medieval buildings and relics, giving them an appeal beyond the haunted crypts and castles of earlier Gothic novelists. His medievalism is not intended as strong social criticism, except perhaps where the loss of chivalric codes of honour is concerned. The

³² Morris's family moved from Elm House in Walthamstow to Woodford Hall, next to Epping Forest in 1840, when Morris was six, and they lived there until his father's death in 1847 compelled the family to move, and Morris to be sent to Marlsborough College in 1848. MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, 6-20.

³³ This argument is also made by Alice Chandler in *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971).

various religious, moral and social agendas would be imposed by the individual personalities who came after him. Yet even in Morris's later political writings, the shadow of Scott can still be glimpsed. In his speech "Equality" (written in 1888 and delivered eight times in the following year and a half), he uses lines from *Rob Roy's* epigraph to mourn the growth of social inequality:

... the ideal of commercial society which puts forward the acquirement of riches as the one aim of life, i.e. [,] bids every man struggle to attain a position of social uselessness as the reward of labour: which means in plain terms that our Society ignores all society but that of club-law:

"That those shall take who have the power
And those shall keep who can."³⁴

Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879)

For Morris, the balance between past and present was most crucial in the forms of architecture and printing:

If I were asked to say what is at once the most important production of Art and the thing most to be longed for, I should answer, A beautiful House; and if I were further asked to name the production next in importance and the thing next to be longed for, I should answer, A beautiful Book. To enjoy good houses and good books in self-respect and decent comfort, seems to me to be the pleasurable end towards which all societies of human beings ought now to struggle.³⁵

Morris's views are partially situated between Carlyle and Ruskin, but as noted earlier, they were not architects, though they had a great deal to say about buildings. The most influential figures of the Gothic Revival, Augustus Pugin in England and Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc in France, the architect/restorer who rebuilt Notre-Dame Cathedral and who clashed sharply with Ruskin on principles, were creators of important public buildings. The first and fiercest

³⁴ Noted by Florence S. Boos. "William Morris's 'Equality': A Critical Edition," *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 20:1 (Spring 2011): 66, 69n8.

³⁵ These are the opening words of a draft of Morris's lecture *On the Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages*, given in 1894, when the Kelmscott Press was in full production and already exerting a powerful influence on other printers. Peterson, ed., *The Ideal Book*, 1.

debate about how to define the relationship between the medieval period and the modern creations that claimed to be in its spirit begins here, between the men who had to decide whether to destroy or to restore ancient structures, and how best to go about it.

Viollet-le-Duc has been called the first theorist of modern architecture, though Augustus Pugin provided a controversial moral and theoretical basis for Gothic Revival architecture in the 1820s, which John Ruskin developed in the 1840s into the manifestos of *Seven Lamps* and *Modern Painters*. Morris did not write about architecture for almost twenty years, between leaving his apprenticeship with the noted Gothic Revival architect George Edmund Street in 1857 and the forming of the Anti-Scrape in 1877,³⁶ and during this time Viollet-le-Duc published his most famous works on architecture. Viollet-le-Duc's influence as an architectural historian was pervasive, even extending to Morris's crafts. When Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co began designing grand armoires like little churches, painted with scenes of legend, they were inspired by William Burges's decorated cabinets, which were in turn modeled on two ancient armoires recently rediscovered by Viollet-le-Duc at Bayeux and Noyon.³⁷

Viollet-le-Duc went beyond historical Gothic traditions to create a personal Gothic dream, notably at the fortified city of Carcassonne. He slowly created the *Encyclopédie médiévale*, an umbrella term for his lifelong series of printed work on the Middle Ages, most of which was published between 1854 and 1877.

³⁶ "Anti-Scrape," The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, was founded in 1877 by William Morris and his close friend and architect Philip Webb in response to the extensive and often reckless restoration work carried out on medieval buildings. Committee members included Sidney Cockerell, Emery Walker, Ernest Gimson, Webb & Morris.

³⁷ MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, 120.



Figure 2.2 The Château de Pierrefonds Castle. Drawing by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, 1857.

Contemporary English architect William Burges said of his fellow designers “we all crib from Viollet-le-Duc, although probably not one buyer in ten ever reads the text.”³⁸ His determined restoration of the badly neglected French cathedrals like the Abbey of Saint-Denis and Notre Dame itself (to which he added most of the now-famous gargoyles) brought him both accolades and fierce criticism. Gothic Revival designers followed his practical use of contemporary materials such as cast iron, concerning themselves with the appearance and surface of their projects. He was convinced that there were ideal forms for each material, and so the forms of a building would dictate the materials to be used, and vice-versa. Viollet-le-Duc claimed that these materials should be used honestly, a concept central to Ruskin’s *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and that a building’s appearance should honestly demonstrate the materials of its construction.

Viollet-le-Duc’s highly idiosyncratic restoration work made buildings over into his ideal Gothic image, at the cost of the actual visible history of the centuries that had shaped them. Ruskin strongly opposed this policy.

Neither by public, nor by those who have the care of public monuments, is the true meaning of the word restoration understood. It means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered; a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed. Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter; it is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture.³⁹

Morris’s involvement with the anti-restoration movement illustrated his firm belief that Gothic Revival work should not replace the actual medieval originals. His larger strategy as an artist and writer was based on a clear protocol of taking inspiration and creating

³⁸ J. Mordaunt Crook, “Early French Gothic,” Sarah Macready and Frederick Hugh Thompson, eds., *Influences in Victorian Art and Architecture* (Society of Antiquaries of London: London, 1985), 55.

³⁹ Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 179.

something distinct, despite the fact that some of the artists who came after him degenerated into mere imitation and unexamined appropriation.

Augustus Pugin (1812-1852)

The Gothic Revival style that influenced Morris's Arts and Crafts movement was first given a notable public display at the "Medieval Court" at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, set in that highly incongruous edifice the Crystal Palace, designed by Joseph Paxton.⁴⁰ The exhibition included furniture and a variety of interior crafts, designed almost entirely by Pugin.

The Medieval Court, in the strikingly-harmonious combination of its stained glass, hardware, wood-carving, hangings, encaustic tiles—all successful repetitions of Gothic models—will at least have the merit of suggesting to many, who would not otherwise have heard of such facts, the fullness of beauty and character, and the homogeneity, of medieval design, however applied to domestic as to ecclesiastic purposes.⁴¹

Amid all the modern and technological marvels of the Crystal Palace, it was ironically Pugin's court that won the prestigious 1851 Great Exhibition Prize Medal. Sadly, Pugin himself, the leading English architect and theorist of the Gothic revival, died within a year of his triumph at "The Greatest Show on Earth." In his self-published manifesto of 1836, *Contrasts, or A Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages and Corresponding Buildings of the Present Day*;

⁴⁰ The Gothics were generally not enchanted with the amazing glass structure. Pugin dubbed it "a glass-monster" and told Paxton, "you had better keep to building green-houses, and I will keep to my churches and cathedrals". Ruskin complained that its contents were trivial and Thomas Carlyle compared it to a "big glass soap bubble." <http://spencer.lib.ku.edu/exhibits/greatexhibition/fairy.htm> See also Michael Bright, "A Reconsideration of A. W. N. Pugin's Architectural Theories," *Victorian Studies* 22: 2 (Winter 1979): 151-172.

⁴¹ *The illustrated exhibitor ... comprising sketches ... of the principal exhibits of the Great Exhibition of ... 1851*. London, 1851. 30 v. (pull-out no. V; between pages 90 & 91). The next Great Exhibition, of 1862, would include a room by a new company, Morris, Marshall and Faulkner & Co. A anonymous critic in *Building News* complains, "Their works are almost perfect, their hangings, their music stand, their sofa, their chests would all suit a family which might suddenly be awakened after a sleep of four centuries, and which was content to pay enormous prices suitably to furnish a barn...but they are no more adapted to the wants of living men than medieval armour would be to modern warfare, middle-aged cookery to civic feasts, or Norman oaths to an English lady's drawing room." "The Mediaeval Court, International Exhibition, August 8th, 1862," *The Building News and Architectural Review*, Vol. 9 (London: The Proprietors, 1862): 12.

showing the Present Decay of Taste, he compares the ideal medieval city with the grim nineteenth-century factory town, illustrated with facing drawings of buildings from the two periods. The mere title of the final chapter, “The Wretched State of Architecture at the Present Day,” makes his allegiance clear. It is worth noting that the design of *Contrasts* as a book, driving its points home by allowing visual and textual elements to support each other, may not have been lost on Morris. Here he was exposed to a volume that strove to reform contemporary art and society through a mingling of text and image in a fashion that, while cruder than Morris’s later books, clearly showed an understanding of the persuasive function of image and text together when tightly controlled by a single author. Pugin’s drawings of medieval and Victorian buildings are no objective records of fact, but careful stagings. The medieval drawings are rendered in darker lines and greater detail, more easily viewed and appreciated, and often populated by serene ecclesiastical figures; whereas the modern scenes are sketchy, unfinished, and flat. The twenty-four year-old author demonstrates his passion by making the past more animate—more real—than his own age. Like Morris, Pugin uses both his own words and art to provoke a particular aesthetic experience, and then designates it as the domain of the medieval past.

Pugin’s love of rich decoration, enthusiasm for adapting medieval styles through resurrected craftsmanship, careful study of Gothic ornament, and sophisticated use of pattern are all further points in common with Morris, though even Morris would later admit there were reasonable objections to such idealism:

The architects in search of a style might well say [...] ‘the working man cannot afford to live in anything that an architect could design; moderate-sized, rabbit-warrens for rich middle-class men, and small ditto for the hanger-on groups to which we belong, is all we have to think of. Perhaps something of a style might arise amongst us from these lowly beginnings, though indeed we have come down a weary long way from Pugin’s *Contrasts*.

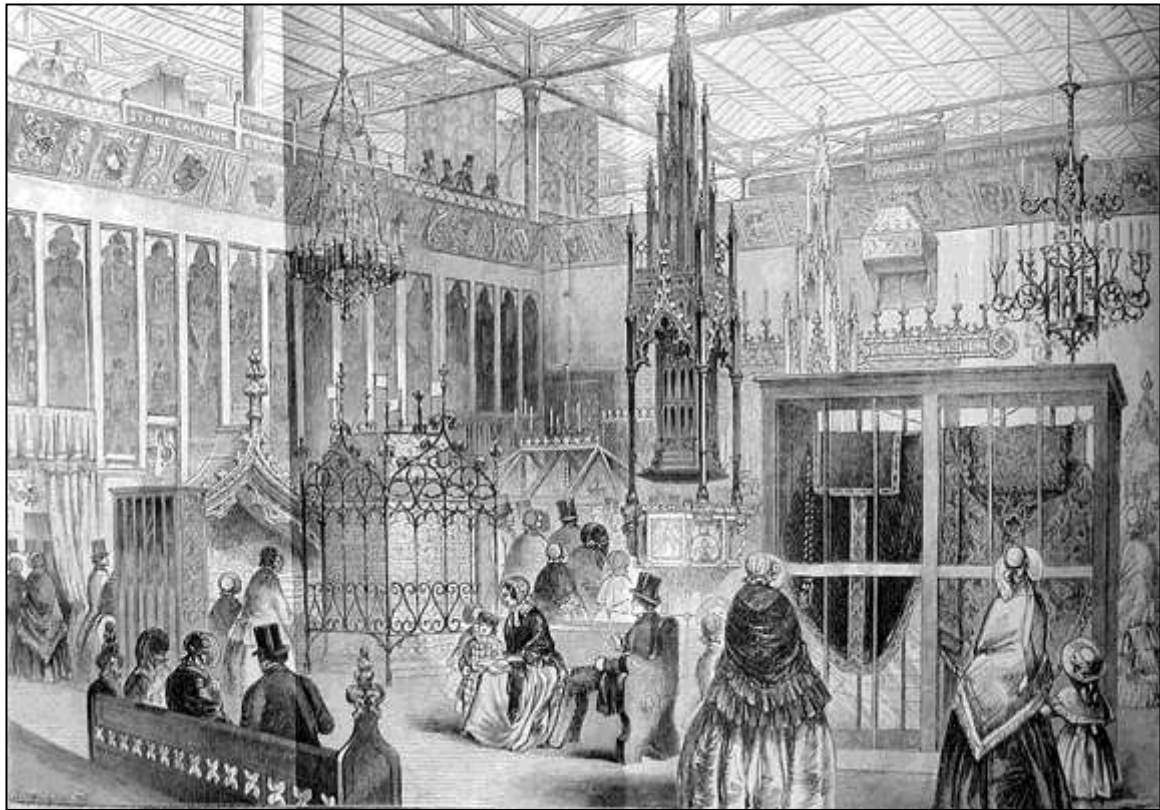


Figure 2.3 "Pugin's Medieval Court," engraving from *The illustrated exhibitor comprising sketches of the principal exhibits of the Great Exhibition of 1851*.

We agree with him still, but we are driven to admire and imitate some of the very things he cursed, with our enthusiastic approbation.’⁴²

Pugin’s celebrated 1834 conversion to Roman Catholicism following his restoration work on Salisbury Cathedral, and the related study of ancient ecclesiastical architecture, gave his architectural views a religious weight which was at least in keeping with the spirit of the originals. Pugin saw medieval architecture and design as a tool for moral and spiritual reform, and in this he resembles Morris by arguing that craftsmanship might heal modern society, though Morris was far from desiring any return to a church-dominated social structure. Pugin’s full effect on Morris is hard to measure, as Morris rejected him so vehemently, though some early influence would hardly have been avoidable. His most famous project, the Palace of Westminster (the Houses of Parliament), done with Charles Barry, was considered a triumph, with their holistic doctrine uniting the interior and exterior stylistically. Pugin, however, had no fear of modern construction techniques and no vested interest in authentic methods except when they would yield a result more true to the medieval models. In Morris’s *News from Nowhere*, those restored buildings are considered too ugly for any use but that of communal manure-house. Similarly, Ruskin denied having read Pugin’s books and publicly criticized his work, leading painter Frank Howard to present a paper in 1852 to the Liverpool Architectural Society entitled “Stones of Venice and Principles of Art,” in which he accused Ruskin of plagiarizing Pugin, and abusing Pugin to cover up the fact, a charge which also might be laid against Morris.⁴³ Both men were often neither forthright nor fair regarding their debts to their immediate predecessors.

⁴² William Morris, “The Revival of Architecture,” 1.

⁴³ Linda Cluckie, *The Rise and Fall of Art Needlework: Its Socio-Economic and Cultural Aspects* (London: Arena Books, 2008), 26.

Much more than Ruskin (who never actually built anything) or Morris (who did not last long as an architect's apprentice, and only co-designed one house for his own use), Pugin knew the constant frustrating limitations and endless compromise imposed on architects by circumstances of funding and external control. He realized, towards the end of his life, that his writings and books had been much more influential than his actual buildings. Michael Bright, analyzing Pugin's four major books as an architectural theorist, identifies his art as pragmatic in intention: to be judged by its success in provoking from the public the reaction envisioned by the architect. Joined to this rational approach is the functionalist ideal, which closely resembles Morris's desire to make decoration closely follow the utility and meaning of that which it adorns.⁴⁴ To some degree, however, arguments of functionality are dubious when used to defend ornate nouveau-medieval crafts being sold to middle-class Victorians. The post-conversion arguments made by Pugin and Ruskin that architecture must express the ethical truths of its makers reflect a highly Romantic concept of art, situating art and design as opportunities for moral sincerity. This informs Morris in all his crafts, as he believed that art, in reflecting the true spirit of its maker, could only be noble if the artist's life was good. In order to have beautiful works made in his time, then, Victorian working conditions and social injustices must be fully addressed. This chimerical project ended with Kelmscott, but it was made manifest in all the art and writing Morris undertook.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

In books lies the soul of the whole Past Time; the articulate audible voice of the Past, when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Michael Bright, "A Reconsideration of A. W. N. Pugin's Architectural Theories," *Victorian Studies* 22: 2 (Winter 1979): 154-5.

⁴⁵ Thomas Carlyle, "Lecture V: The Hero as Man of letters: Johnson, Rousseau, Burns [May 19, 1840.]" *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: Norman and Charlotte Strouse, 1993).

Morris's inspirations distilled Romantic ideology in several different ways, particularly connecting aesthetics with ethics and religious values. Unlike Pugin or Ruskin, the mature Morris seemed to have little interest in religious faith's reformation or even survival, and so he refused to argue the superiority of medieval art as a question of Christian spirituality. His concerns were aesthetic education and social reformation, grounded completely in the quality of life that might be experienced in the future if his precepts were adopted. His humanism is focused on finding a meeting ground between industry and individual labour which allows for a universal participation in culture and beauty. It is worth noting that Morris was therefore unique among all this company in being an atheist who did not undergo a dramatic conversion to faith during his life (as did Pugin, Carlyle, and Ruskin). Given Morris and Burne-Jones's early plans to join the church, however, it might be argued that the contemporary structure of organized religion in nineteenth-century England, coupled with Morris's ever-growing socialism, placed him in a position where he felt it necessary to deny allegiance to any public faith regardless of his private spirituality.⁴⁶

One of Morris's early influences was Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843), which he read while he was studying at Oxford. *Past and Present* was partly written as a response to the economic crisis of the 1840s, but it condemns the growing industrialization of Britain

⁴⁶ The debated ambiguity of Morris's faith is too large a subject to address here, but it seems to me that Helen Timo's analysis of "A Night in the Cathedral," a short prose tale published in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* in May 1856 (anonymously, though the evidence for it being by Morris is convincing), is interesting. She sees the narrator as "grappling with the problem of loss of religious faith" (Helen Timo, "A Church Without God: William Morris's A Night in a Cathedral." *Journal of the William Morris Society* 4.2 (Summer 1980): 29), and notes that the story was written very close to Morris's decision not to take Holy Orders in late 1855. Morris was a deeply private man where his loves were concerned, and perhaps his lifelong friendship with Burne-Jones (who, though he also decided against taking Holy Orders, was always an avowed Christian) is a mark of some quiet sustained unorthodox spiritual faith. Certainly, as Christine Poulson points out in "Burne-Jones, Morris and God," *Journal of the William Morris Society* 13.1 (Autumn 1998): 45-54, neither Morris nor Burne-Jones could long tolerate their Evangelical upbringings, but when Burne-Jones, late in life, wrote, "I never doubt for a moment the real presence of God, I should never debate about it any more than I should argue about Beauty, and the things I most love," (*Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* II, 325) it is tempting to feel that he is in some measure articulating Morris's private views as well, though a belief in a guiding power would not necessarily imply solidarity with any church doctrine, and Morris was openly critical of the church as an institution.

with a much broader stroke than simply bemoaning working conditions and poverty in the fashion of Blake. Famous for his passionate vocal opposition to the industrial society that was emerging in Britain, Carlyle compares the money-grubbing leaders of his day with an ideal medieval figure: the Abbot Samson who worked selflessly to improve the monasteries under his charge and to better the lives of the inhabitants. Carlyle's book contrasts the contemplative life at the St. Edmundsbury monastery in the twelfth century with the values of industrial capitalism. He sharply criticizes the materialism of Victorian society and its obsession with maximized profits, comparing it to the rather idealized vision of monks whose work is a spiritual endeavour, a form of self-improvement and striving towards the divine. Morris, though critical of some aspects of Carlyle's writing, was excited by it. In a letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones he calls it "perverse, repetitive, and arrogant," filled with "white-hot moral indignation," and "among the greatest quarries of ideas in the first half of the nineteenth-century, shot through with occasional gleams of profoundest revolutionary insight."⁴⁷ As E.P. Thompson writes, "It is in Carlyle's disgust at the reduction by capitalism of all human values to cash values that his greatness lies: it is this which exercised most influence over Morris, and, while it ran underground awhile, found full and constant expression in his later years."⁴⁸ As for the mutual respect that eventually grew between the men, Morris asked William De Morgan in 1877 to persuade Thomas Carlyle to join the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which Carlyle hesitated to do, until Morris wrote him a personal appeal.⁴⁹ Carlyle, like Morris in later years, is respectful only of those

⁴⁷ Norman Kelvin, ed., *The Collected Letters of William Morris. Volume IV 1848-1880* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 286.

⁴⁸ Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, 31.

⁴⁹ Kelvin, Norman, ed., *The Collected Letters of William Morris. Volume IV 1848-1880*, 361.

who look to the past for lessons on the betterment of modern society. In his scornful estimate of the writings of Sir Walter Scott, he declares,

Much of the interest of these novels results from contrasts of costume. The phraseology, fashion of arms, of dress, of life belonging to one age is brought suddenly with singular vividness before the eyes of another. A great effect this; yet by the very nature of it an altogether temporary one. Consider, brethren, shall not we too one day be antiques and grow to have as quaint a costume as the rest? . . . Not by slashed breeches, steeple hats, buff belts, or antiquated speech can romance-heroes continue to interest us; but simply and solely, in the long run, by being *men*. Buff belts and all manner of jerkins and costumes are transitory; man alone is perennial.⁵⁰

Carlyle was not the first prominent English writer to become obsessed with German philosophy, of course. Samuel Taylor Coleridge had tried to introduce German Romantic literature to Britain a generation before, but Carlyle was to have greater success in spreading his philosophies.⁵¹

Carlyle took themes from Schiller and emphasized them in isolation from the coherent whole of the original. For example, the theme of aesthetic activity as answering the needs of human nature became coarsened into a panegyric on all and any work: “Blessed is he who had found his work; let him ask for no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose....Labour is Life.” Both Schiller and Morris would have had something to say about the nature and quality of that work, but for Carlyle effort and intensity were central.⁵²

⁵⁰ Thomas Carlyle, “Sir Walter Scott,” *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1869), 71. Carlyle’s contemporary Heinrich Heine (1797 – 1856), while speaking of Baron Fouqué (Friedrich Heinrich Karl de la Motte, 1777 –1843, a German Romantic writer with a taste for ancient and medieval subjects, known best for *Undine* and the first modern dramatization of *Nibelungen* saga), also criticizes Scott in the same terms: “Like the works of Walter Scott, so also do Fouqué’s romances of chivalry remind us of the fantastic tapestries known as Gobelins, whose rich texture and brilliant colors are more pleasing to our eyes than edifying to our souls. We behold knightly pageantry, shepherds engaged in festive sports, hand-to-hand combats, and ancient customs, charmingly intermingled. It is all very pretty and picturesque, but shallow; brilliant superficiality. Among the imitators of Fouqué, as among the imitators of Walter Scott, this mannerism of portraying not the inner nature of men and things, but merely the outward garb and appearance was carried to still greater extremes. This shallow art and frivolous style is still [in 1833] in vogue in Germany as well as in England and France.... In lieu of knowledge of mankind, our recent novelists evince a profound acquaintance with clothes!” Quoted by Henry Beers in *A History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1901), 36.

⁵¹ Michael John Kooy’s *Coleridge, Schiller, and Aesthetic Education* (London: Palgrave, 2002), is an excellent study of Coleridge’s knowledge of, and debt to, Schiller. Reading Schiller helped Coleridge conclude that “through the aesthetic illusion of tragic action ... we are drawn to recognize our own moral freedom” (22).

⁵² Shaw, “William Morris and the Division of Labour,” 27.

The influence of Schiller and Goethe can be discerned in most of Carlyle's writings, but his close friend Ruskin's theories are more practical and idiosyncratic. Ruskin is at once more closely allied with the physical manifestations of art and more directly influential in social reform than Carlyle or Schiller.⁵³ Carlyle, Ruskin, and Morris shared a vision of the future of work and art in life, but their strategies for bringing about these changes varied. Morris was the only active Socialist instigator in his class who was giving inflammatory political speeches and being (on one occasion at least) arrested for his part in demonstrations. Indeed, the evolution of Victorian social policy owes a surprising amount to a handful of artists and art critics.⁵⁴

Richard Schoch, distinguishing Carlyle's interpretation of the German Romantic philosophical tradition, notes that he is guilty of betraying the spirit of German realist historical writings. Like Morris after him, Carlyle never wrote anything resembling a disinterested factual narrative, but imaginatively shaped his expressive accounts in the name of making plain a previously-determined moral truth.⁵⁵ This, while having the effect of making his historical writings only marginally more reliable than *Sartor Resartus*, does allow Carlyle to enact scenes that are dramatically effective. In the process, Carlyle aligns his text with the immediate non-linear spectacles of illustration. *Past and Present* depends heavily on its

⁵³ See Dinah Birch, ed., *Ruskin and the Dawn of the Modern* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), especially Jose Harris's essay "Ruskin and Social Reform", which details how Ruskin's lectures and writings influenced many leading reformers of the day on such subjects as the need for fixed and guaranteed wages, public health and education, employment programs, and holidays and vacations.

⁵⁴ See also Rob Knowles, "Carlyle, Ruskin, and Morris: work across the 'river of fire'," *History of Economics Review* (Published online. June 1, 2001).

⁵⁵ Richard W. Schoch, "'We do Nothing but Enact History': Thomas Carlyle Stages the Past," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 54.1 (1999): 27-29. Schoch is particularly interested in Carlyle's use of theatrical conventions within his prose.

constant use of visual metaphors in its ever-shifting vivid polemic. Stylistically, it is similar to Pugin's *Contrasts*, but Carlyle provides his own imagery to underscore his philosophies.

John Ruskin 1819-1900

At last one man, who had done more than any one else to make this hopeful time possible, drew a line sternly through these hopes founded on imperfect knowledge. This man was John Ruskin. By a marvelous inspiration of genius (I can call it nothing else) he attained at one leap to a true conception of medieval art which years of minute study had not gained for others. In his chapter in *The Stones of Venice*, entitled "On the Nature of Gothic, and the Function of the Workman therein," he showed us the gulf which lay between us and the Middle Ages. From that time all was changed; ignorance of the spirit of the Middle Ages was henceforth impossible, except to those who willfully shut their eyes. The aims of the new revival of art grew to be infinitely greater than they had been.⁵⁶

Morris did not begin to consider himself an original thinker on these subjects until late in his life and rarely claimed expert credentials. Yet when he claims that Ruskin taught him "that art is the expression of man's pleasure in his labour,"⁵⁷ he is finding his own philosophy in Ruskin, not accurately reporting the author's. Ruskin was not focused on democratizing the pleasure of crafting works of art.⁵⁸ Morris's reaction to art and architecture is emotional, and his rationalizations come from an analysis of that instinctive response. Because his interest is not primarily analytical, Morris gives architecture a centrality to life and to the other arts which is remarkable. As Chris Miele notes,

He preferred to treat architecture as a kind of shorthand for the totality of the manmade environment, and whenever Morris used the word he was only a few breaths away from issues outside of architecture as we normally think about it: environmental pollution, landscape conservation, consumer activism, advertising, public provision, transport and town planning.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ William Morris, "The Revival of Architecture," [1888], 1.

⁵⁷ From Morris's preface to the Kelmscott Press edition of Ruskin's *The Nature of Gothic* (1892).

⁵⁸ This point is made by Mark Swenarton in *Artisans and Architects: The Ruskinian Tradition in Architectural Thought* (New York: St. Martin's Press. 1989), 72-73.

⁵⁹ Miele, ed. *Morris on Architecture*, 4.

If Morris has a clear advantage over Scott, it is that his fascination with the Middle Ages began with Scott's writings, and so his childhood visits to Canterbury Cathedral, the church of Minster in Thanet, and the Essex churches with their brasses and monuments were the beginning of his lifelong occupation of "trying to realize the face of mediaeval England."⁶⁰ Ruskin's famous manifesto against Classical tradition, *The Stones of Venice*, immeasurably influential on Morris and Burne-Jones, chained aesthetics and morality together as Pugin and Schiller before him, but was much more the champion of architecture as an organic expression of the people. Ruskin's insistence that irregularity, asymmetry and imperfections were actually signs of the builder's freedom of thought and hand is a crucial aspect of his argument, because it treats each building not as an expression of the architect's piety, but as testament to a societal freedom that once included designers, builders, and the entire community. Human effort, striving towards not a mechanistic perfection but a willingness to work intuitively and to go beyond established rules, is the proper spirit of creation, and for Ruskin was greatly at odds with the rigid era of mass-production he lived in. "The demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art," Ruskin asserts, equating the vitality and change in Gothic architecture with the dynamic natural relationships between builders and guild, and between substance and form. True art teaches the artist through the process of conception and realization, and then that realized work remains to teach the public and future generations.

Ruskin's "The Nature of the Gothic" further conflates the Gothic builder with the illuminator into one anonymous artisan-figure. "Gothic Naturalism" connects the underlying design principles with direct inspiration from nature, particularly foliage. "On a small scale, in his sculptures & his missal-painting, he copied the leaf or thorn itself; on a large scale he

⁶⁰ Ibid., 12.

adopted from it its abstract sources of beauty, and gave the same kind of curvatures and the same species of subdivision to the outline of his arches, so far as was consistent with their strength.”⁶¹

The last line of the essay returns to this comparison of the two media: “the criticism of the building is to be conducted precisely on the same principles as that of a book; and it must depend on the knowledge, feeling, and not a little on the industry and perseverance of the reader.” Ruskin’s emphasis on both book and building as means by which the artist might influence and educate their community was a vital part of his influence on Morris.

In “How I Became a Socialist” [1894], Morris proclaims

I cannot help saying, by the way, how deadly dull the world would have been twenty years ago if not for Ruskin! It was through him that I learned to give form to my discontent, which I must say was not by any means vague. Apart from my desire to make beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization.⁶²

Morris discovered Ruskin during his Oxford years and read aloud from his writings to his fellow students as they toiled on the Debating Hall murals. Ruskin would soon publicly defend the nascent second wave of Pre-Raphaelites from critical condemnation in the press, and Morris would follow Ruskin’s strivings to connect the arts to daily life in execution, appreciation and use. Ruskin saw fine studio art and handicraft as fundamentally joined by considerations of design and the possibility of awakening the human spirit. Both Ruskin and Morris believed that the contemporary Capitalist society had destroyed the circumstances necessary for art to flourish, and that this was a fatal flaw. Indeed, Morris would become a

⁶¹ From the Kelmscott Press edition of Ruskin’s *The Nature of Gothic* (1892), 107.

⁶² Noted by Peter Faulkner in “Ruskin and Morris,” *Journal of the William Morris Society* 14.1 (Autumn 2000): 6-17. Faulkner also provides evidence that “Morris continued to respect Ruskin’s ideas even when he had come to believe that they were inadequate to solve the huge problems of his society,” 14.

Socialist largely from his growing conviction that modern industrial capitalism was not compatible with creative integrity.

In *The Stones of Venice*, almost a Bible to Morris and Burne-Jones (“one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century,” Morris calls it in his introduction to the Kelmscott edition of Ruskin’s *The Nature of the Gothic*⁶³, which had originally been a chapter of *Venice*), Ruskin identifies art as the expression of the entire society that gave birth to it. The integrity of the original labourers cannot be duplicated by later imitation, and so it is better to preserve where possible, but never better to obscure. In *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Ruskin enjoins society,

Take care of your monuments, and you will not need to restore them; watch an old building with anxious care; count its stones as you would the jewels of a crown; bind it together with iron where it loosens, stay it with timber where it declines. Do not care about the unsightliness of the aid; better a crutch than a lost limb; and do this tenderly, reverently, continually, and many a generation will still be born to pass away beneath its shadow.⁶⁴

There is a difficulty inherent in maintaining a reverence for the past while still moving forward, and both the arc of Morris’s creative career and the violent rejection of much of his work and ideals illustrate this. Ruskin identified the centre of art as the expression of an age’s social coherence, and the sad imitations of earlier periods that typified his Victorian age underscored his conviction that there was no modern social coherence and no shared artistic vision that could be born of industrial capitalism. Where previous artistic styles had evolved naturally from one era to the next, sometimes flawed in conception or execution but always reflecting their own age, nineteenth-century artists had failed to find a new style that could reflect their own world.

⁶³ From Morris’s preface to the Kelmscott Press edition of Ruskin’s *The Nature of Gothic* (1892).

⁶⁴ Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 163.

Yet the essence of what Ruskin then taught us was simple enough, like all great discoveries. It was really nothing more recondite than this, that the art of any epoch must of necessity be the expression of its social life, and that the social life of the Middle Ages allowed the workman freedom of individual expression, which on the other hand our social life forbids him.⁶⁵

This lack of a true Victorian style could be seen as symptomatic of the unprecedented speed at which society was changing, which did not allow for the contemplation and response that had always been the spirit of artistic dialogue, but when the Gothic style was championed above all others, it fixed public perception in a flawed and fragmentary dream of a single era to the detriment of all other periods. The twelfth-century tower of Canterbury Cathedral had been torn down in 1834 to make a *faux* fifteenth-century one, an act which horrified Morris.

To Morris and the Arts and Crafts proponents, the integrity of past craftsmen was the important issue. It was irrelevant whether this craftsman was from the tenth, twelfth, or fourteenth century. What mattered was that a group of people built a monument or a building in their own time with their own motives and ideas and that this structure was beneficial to the present because it was a representation of the past.⁶⁶

Conversely, the eclecticism that characterized most nineteenth-century architecture was deeply divided in foundation and manifestation. Each country formed a stylistic relationship with the periods of architecture that had most strongly shaped their pasts: England began the

⁶⁵ Morris, "The Revival of Architecture," 5.

⁶⁶ Andrea Elizabeth Donovan, *William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* (Ebook: Published 11 Jun 2007), 33. The extreme difficulty involved in the repairs undertaken to Canterbury in 1824 by the architect George Austin may have convinced even Morris that the action was unavoidable, had he investigated matters further: "The erection of this structure was a work of great difficulty, and only consummated by great skill and perseverance on the part of Mr. Austin. After separating the nave walls from the falling tower, he raised the crippled groinings and strained the walls into their upright condition, fixing them there until the new tower could be erected. The old Norman Tower was then taken down and its substitute erected in exact uniformity with its sister tower. According to our creed on the matter of restorations, we should have preferred that the old Norman tower had been replaced entirely, but this was impracticable, as it was necessary to support the centre window, then in a tottering condition, and so it was decided to have a companion tower to that at the south angle. It is a work which, considering the very great difficulty of producing a harmonious union of new with old work, reflects the highest credit on the architect. And when it is known that this tower stands on what is little better than a bog; that since its erection it has not started or sunk a single inch, and that no accident whatever happened in its construction, we think it may be called justly a work of first-rate ingenuity." [FS 1843] <http://www.machadoink.com/TheCathedral.htm>

nineteenth-century building in various eclectic Romantic, Italian Renaissance, and Greek Revival styles as well as Gothic, but the last soon became dominant. Pugin, for example, attempted to standardize and codify the use of Gothic elements with greater historical accuracy and a more coherent response to the neoclassical elements of the time. As noted earlier, his medievalism was deeply religious in nature, and so he held himself apart from the Romantic medievalism of the earlier Gothic Revival, though the result was rather similar: modernized and idealized dreams of the Middle Ages, expurgated and selected by Pugin himself. His counterpart in France, Viollet-le-Duc, also felt it perfectly acceptable to tear down actual ancient buildings and replace them with their replicas. By the time the first Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed in 1848, this was an established practice.

The past can never be recreated through copies or restoration. The removal of later revisions and alterations destroys the living history that defines an ancient building. Morris's views, as expressed through many lectures and the *Anti-Scrape*, are a refinement of both Viollet-le-Duc and Ruskin. The paradox of Morris—a man who loathed “copies” of medieval works and insisted his own creations were something different—is important in precisely that light, as a figure who managed to differentiate between the spirit of imitation of the past, and that of inspiration.

From Scott, Schiller, Carlyle, Pugin, Viollet-le-Duc and Ruskin the world of the English Gothic Revival was formed, and it fostered the growth of Morris's own romantic vision. Romanticism on a cultural level strove to rediscover and reshape something of the medieval spirit, though its basic precepts were much more focused on individualism and that idealistic/nostalgic view of the past which continues strongly to this day. It was guided by humanism and the German Romantic philosophers, whose influence on Carlyle and Ruskin was transferred to Morris, who, unlike any of his predecessors, put into practice the theory of

aesthetic reeducation first proposed by Schiller. The paradox of Morris's replacing the popular contemporary perception of the Middle Ages with his own work and that of his fellow Aesthetic Pre-Raphaelites is often understood as a failure of theory once put into practice. Morris, however, wanted only inspiration and knowledge from the medieval period, detesting mere imitation. His unique position as craftsman, poet, artist, and philosopher, allowed him not only to create new artifacts, but to understand deeply the relationship between his work and that of the medieval period. His success as a teacher of that dynamic however, was much more limited.

In Morris's attitude towards architectural restoration, we can clearly discern his priorities. Rather than replacing or rebuilding a medieval building in a misplaced and anachronistic approximation of the style of the original, the original should be maintained precisely because it is **not** replaceable. When changes or repairs are absolutely necessary, they should be undertaken in the style of the time when they are being done, so that the repairs become part of the age and visible history of the structure. Art is a dynamic entity, and its meaning is negotiated with every generation it survives, but the relationship of the art to its original community and the contemporary community should be kept as discrete as possible. Similarly, Morris's writings and art speak of the tradition they respond to, but they also are a response to the time of their own creation. Although a poem by Morris may have medieval aspects in subject and language, it does not closely resemble medieval poetry. To replace an authentic artifact with a modern approximation, a "feeble and lifeless forgery," is to give the erroneous name of restoration to an act of destruction. As Morris's fellow "anti-scrape" Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings member W.R. Lethaby wrote of the trend towards restoring ancient buildings, "the crude idea seems to have been born in the root

absurdity that art was shape and not substance; our ancient buildings were appearances of what was called ‘style.’”⁶⁷

For Morris, the physicality of medieval artifacts is the most precious aspect of them. Victorians led an existence which was continuously being purged of history, and restorers contributed to this crime by eagerly replacing actual history with imitation. Although the style of the medieval period might be imitated to some degree, the substance cannot be. Morris’s views support Ruskin’s credo: “for, indeed, the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, nor in its gold. Its glory is in its Age.”⁶⁸ The Industrial Revolution gave rise to a Medieval Revival which originally intended not so much to inspire new art as merely to reflect on past glory. The attempt to forge a connection with England’s past had the positive effect of giving social critics of the mid-nineteenth-century a framework for their attacks, but the comparisons between medieval and industrial times lacked rigour or accuracy because the popular images of the Middle Ages were at best taken out of context, and at worst, in Morris’s view, gave birth to wholly manufactured forgeries. The Gothic Revival combined an idealized view of the medieval period with modern escapism, and its championing of style over substance led architects such as Viollet-le-Duc to believe that modern technology could use the aesthetic lessons of the past as tools to *improve* on antiquities. His practical approach to Gothic was far from the Revival’s romantic roots, and the results are buildings and art which seem to challenge modernity on an aesthetic level, but completely support it ideologically, since they are examples of modern industry triumphing over ancient craft. Such building practices fail to support reformation of workers’ societal position because they give the builders no authority or respect as artisans. For modern “medieval” crafts to have a

⁶⁷ Quoted in Donovan’s *William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings*, 11.

⁶⁸ John Ruskin, *Collected Works*. VIII (New York: Kelmscott Society Publications, 1900), 233-34.

positive influence, they have to be created by hand, and not be merely a product of factory labour masquerading as handicraft. In the end, Morris, with the advantages of all the research and experiments of the first half-century of the Revival at his disposal, as well as his own scholarly nature, had to create such hand-made art himself, and it was then immediately copied and reproduced by others in factories.

Imposing Aesthetics

Daunting questions arise when we evaluate Morris's realization of Schiller's theories into practice: whether such a late interpretation of the medieval spirit could realistically serve as the basis for a modern aesthetic standard, and whether Ruskin and Morris actually proved the existence of a 'natural connection' between their desired social reforms and the making of Gothic art. Is Morris's agenda valid, or have subsequent generations merely responded as Yeats did to another impassioned group: "We know their dream; enough/ To know they dreamed and are dead;/ And what if excess of love/ Bewildered them till they died?"⁶⁹

The subjectivity of aesthetics has often been the elephant in the room when scholars discuss Morris's artistic theories. The championing of a socialist-style cooperative political model is commonplace, but wedding this social model to an aesthetic model—a sort of pure artistry which should be simultaneously taught—is perhaps the feature which most undermined Morris's attempts to keep his doctrines intact as they were disseminated. It was necessary for him to spend a good deal of energy lecturing about what *he* preferred visually, and his taste, even among those who shared his love of medieval crafts, was personal and strongly idiosyncratic. Many of the Victorian works Morris detested are now, more than a century later, thought of as classic art, and the general movement of taste in popular art has

⁶⁹ William Butler Yeats "Easter, 1916," *Selected Poems and Three Plays of William Butler Yeats*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1987), 85.

broadened immeasurably since Victorian times, becoming eclectic on a scale unprecedented, and in no way confining itself to Morris's favorite periods or styles, even among the craftsmen of England. As long as Morris's attempted reforms remained preoccupied with handcrafts and natural materials versus industrialization and mass production, the debate could be described as ideological and political. To focus on the effect of Morris's arts on society, however, the discussion must move beyond questions of whether personal expression is best situated in non-industrial labour and the importance of creativity to work satisfaction, to an analysis of the nature of that particular creative expression and the reception it finds. Put simply: making art by hand may be good for people, but why should that art follow medieval traditions in appearance? How are we to find a universal standard of taste?

Aesthetic judgments claiming to be universal or mandated by fundamental natural laws are doomed to failure. As thinking entities, humans are grounded in a subjectivity that sees them profoundly moved by aesthetic perceptions while incapable of objectively measuring the experience. Yet the core physical structure of the universe, both microscopic and macroscopic, contains the very forms and mathematic interplay that could be called the only true objective aesthetic—and being formed of such aesthetic relationships even in their subjective individual variations, humans must inevitably reflect through their limited perceptions this higher order of objective aesthetic symmetry that can never be fully grasped.⁷⁰ Yet any specific human conception of beauty is at least partially illogical and indefensible; there is no universal aesthetic standard that crosses time and cultures, though there are broad areas of tradition and popular agreement. No work of art can exist that would find favour with all viewers, nor one that would be universally despised.

⁷⁰ I am indebted to Lauriat Lane III for discussions related to this analysis.

When Schiller speaks of the effect of striving towards artistry and aesthetic experience, he invokes a universal concept of Beauty. When he descends to human terms, however, the analysis immediately becomes fraught with difficulties and unconvincing assumptions. For Schiller, Beauty rises from the interplay of two opposing principles in Nature with two corresponding principles in Man. The highest ideal of the Beautiful is to hold perfect equilibrium between reality and form, a striving that can never be fully achieved.⁷¹ The two qualities of the Beautiful are Melting and Energizing, acting on the twofold need of Man, who must balance the harmony and energy within himself through an oscillation with the experience of Beauty, which restores harmony in the tense individual and energy in the languid one, and so in accordance with natural law, makes us whole.⁷² This is done through an evolution in our relationship with Nature. “Man in his *physical* condition is subject to the power of Nature alone; he shakes off this power in the *aesthetic* condition, and he controls it in the *moral* condition.”⁷³ As already noted, through *contemplation*, humans step outside of nature and consider themselves as entities separate from the world of sensations. Thus the qualities of an object can be appreciated outside of mere desire in an abstract manner. The creation of art allows for an indirect contemplation, not only revealing aspects of the natural world but also translating insights of the artists. As Nature becomes an object rather than a force, and thus loses dominance over humanity, the creation of art embodies principles of Beauty into a manufactured creation which may be appreciated separately from the environment, as an object related to, but distinct from, Nature.

⁷¹ Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 81.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 86.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 113.

The problem lies in the paradoxical views taken of Beauty and Nature. The former is described both as an aesthetic experience, of experiential value because its contemplation leads to enlightenment, and also as an end to all striving, a work of Reason, of absolute value. Similarly, Nature is the fount of all inspiration, since all aesthetic experience must derive either from the environment or from contemplation and creation of art which is an abstraction of human perception being acted on by the natural world. Yet it is also ‘mere’ Nature to be overcome and to some degree transcended. Is the evolution of humanity a movement into the ability to interpret the environment aesthetically, or a movement leading from a savage state to freedom *from* that environment? If Nature and Reason act together on the senses to produce the synthesized form of Beauty, then the aesthetic experience is unstable, and the evaluation of art impossible. Yet Morris argues that an understanding of art can be achieved by considering the people who create it, the natural world that inspires it, and the history that informs it. The art that rises naturally from the mingling of these influences will reflect its roots. True beauty is the work of free craftsmen and craftswomen, living in harmony with the natural world, and drawing upon the history of their culture. This is why the best of medieval art is, for Morris, an irresistible argument proving the superior conditions which gave birth to it.

In structuring an ‘aesthetic typology of propaganda’, Michelle Weinroth compares Kant’s assertion that an aesthetic judgment can be considered universal only if it asserts itself as such and refuses to allow critical dialogue, with Terry Eagleton’s claim that aesthetic judgments are non-referential, posing as objective systems without any ultimate proof or justification.⁷⁴ This subjective universality is equally true of Ruskin or Morris’s assertions of

⁷⁴ Michelle Weinroth, *Reclaiming William Morris: Englishness, Sublimity, & the Rhetoric of Dissent* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 34-49.

taste: they are indeed propaganda, and Morris's art is simultaneously ornamental and rhetorical, acting as perhaps the most compelling of his aesthetic arguments precisely because it cannot be clearly refuted in the manner of writings or speeches. This is why Ruskin and Morris fought the restoration and effacement of genuine medieval architecture, because they considered the surviving artifacts of that past age to have rhetorical and instructive dimensions which could not be apprehended through any other teaching strategy. Once again, the substantial argument is non-verbal, and concerned more with authenticity than recreated style. A consensus of taste is dependent not only on assertions of stylistic rankings but also on the reinforcement of the surrounding environment. Without widespread extant examples to provide inspiration, Morris's crusade to change popular conceptions of beauty could not succeed. Schiller might argue that a rose would be found beautiful by all humans, but that argument applied to manufactured art fails instantly. Considering art as a rhetorical assertion is an extension of its accepted role as a record of individual perception.

Beauty is, therefore, an argument, but never a fact. For Pugin, art expresses faith, and for Viollet-le-Duc, honesty. For Ruskin, art is moral, and for Morris, art is above all social, a quest for the ideal social identity from his political and artistic standards. Morris saw his art and writings, as he saw Ruskin's, as "serious and solid work towards that new-birth of Society, without which genuine art, the expression of man's pleasure in his handiwork, must inevitably cease altogether, and with it the hopes of the happiness of Mankind."⁷⁵ Carlyle provided a critique of modern society based on a medieval model, but he only rarely addressed art, because it had no centrality in his social philosophy. Ruskin believed that the art of his age could only be imitative and fragmented because each generation is learning by copying the previous, and so the original inspiration, direct contact with nature, must be

⁷⁵ From Morris's preface to the Kelmscott Press edition of Ruskin's *The Nature of Gothic* (1892).

reforged. The source of Morris's methods is certainly medieval, as is his choice of medium and material, but his art and relationship with nature are original and primary, a point which separates him from Viollet-le-Duc. Pugin's belief that the virtues of art are dependent on the qualities of the society that produced it was supported by his Roman Catholic beliefs. Ruskin followed this concept, but his beliefs shifted from Evangelicalism, through "the religion of Humanity," and finally into a broadly defined Catholicism in his later years, a conversion partly brought about by his inability to reconcile the glories of Catholic architecture with the supposed moral failings of the faith. Morris does not share Ruskin and Carlyle's views that a revival of religious faith is essential to recreate an ideal neo-medieval society, but instead sees the quality of social life as the missing key, particularly the inhuman nature of manufacturing labour. Sufficient class reforms can provide space for a spiritual revolution, and the availability of modern examples of medieval understanding of the nature of beauty (and vice versa) is crucial to this. In 1883 Morris wrote, "I have gradually been driven to the conclusion that Art has been handcuffed by it [capitalism] and will die out of civilization if the system lasts."⁷⁶ Morris's true genius lay in his ability to translate a Gothic spirit into forms (visual, literary, tactile, and abstract), which not only were received and loved by the people of his day, but bore a depth of design and original artistry to match that of the Middle Ages themselves.

⁷⁶ Norman Kelvin, ed, *The Collected Letters of William Morris: Volume II 1881-1884* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 202.

RUBÁIYÁT OF OMAR KHAYYÁM



Sometimes I think that never blows so red
 The rose as where some buried Cæsar bled
 That every hyacinth the garden wears
 Dropped in its lap from some once lovely head
 XIX
 And this delightful herb, whose tender green
 Fledges the river's lip on which we lean —
 Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
 From what once lovely lip it springs unseen!
 XX
 Ah, my Beloved, fill the cup that clears
 To-day of past regrets, and future fears!
 Tomorrow? Why, tomorrow I may be
 Myself with Yesterdays' seven thousand years.

Figure 3.1 *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1872).

Chapter 3

Illuminating the Word: Developing a Visual Rhetoric of the Page

The last quarter of the thirteenth century brings us to the climax of illumination considered apart from book-pictures. Nothing can exceed the grace, elegance, and beauty of the drawing and the loveliness of the colour found at this period in the best-executed books; and it must be added that, though some work is rougher than other, at this time there would appear, judging from existing examples, to have been no bad work done. The tradition of the epoch is all-embracing and all-powerful, and yet no single volume is without a genuine individuality and life of its own. In short, if all the other art of the early Middle Ages had disappeared, they might still claim to be considered a great period of art on the strength of their ornamental books.¹

William Morris's decisions to abandon his grand illuminated *Aeneid* manuscript project for a mass-printed English translation, and to begin Kelmscott Press rather than return to hand-lettering books reflect his ideological struggle between socialist and aesthetic agendas. Morris championed idealism as a significant artistic and political discourse, but there was a limit to how effectively he could enter public debate while his book work remained private. Neither Morris's illumination techniques nor his theories could serve as ethical models until they were resurrected (and made public) in a modified printed form by Kelmscott Press. To be blunt, the *Aeneid*, and all of Morris's other illuminations, were persuasively a dead end because they could only serve as training for more influential strategies. In an immediate sense they were an abdication from the practical concerns of mechanical book production because they utilized materials, techniques, and strategies far removed from the print industry. Unique manuscripts might be fine art, but without reproduction they make poor propaganda. With such high goals for societal reformation, however, Morris could not long confine himself to his swan quill and gilder's tools.

This chapter examines the place of the illuminated page and calligraphy in Victorian England, particularly among the Pre-Raphaelites and Morris's circle of artists, and provides an overview of his calligraphic career with specific analysis of strategies that would inform

¹ Morris, "Some Notes on the Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages," 6.

later work. The evolution of Morris's conviction that a full artistic message could be best conveyed through multidisciplinary works of art, similar to those developed by Blake and the Rossetti siblings, was fed by his contemporaries but was ultimately based on his understanding of medieval illumination. This period in Morris's life is, as Joseph Dunlap dubbed it, "the road to Kelmscott,"² and every page that Morris put his quill to taught him lessons that would influence his private press years later. McGann, speaking of the Rossetti archives, emphasizes that the material form of a text always signifies that "apparitions of text—its paratexts, bibliographical codes, and all visual features—are as important in the text's signifying programs as the linguistic elements."³ The significance of medieval methods of creating documents, of the place of such processes in their own time and place, could be properly explored only by Morris creating similar works in his own era. "The goal is to rethink the work's textuality by consciously simulating its social reconstruction," McGann asserts, and this too describes Morris's path and motivation.⁴ In the process, Morris made himself not an expert printer or calligrapher, but an expert on the collective rhetoric of paratextuality, the potential of which was not acknowledged in Victorian reading strategies (and only rarely acknowledged by printers) in his day.

It is this complex awareness of the more subtle meanings of a book, particularly its physical form and design, which makes Morris's pages so important. The interaction between form and content begins as primitive experiments in calligraphy and reaches the limit of what could be accomplished by hand in the folio *Aeneid* manuscript, begun by Morris and Burne-Jones in late 1874. The relationship between specific authentic manuscripts and Morris's

² Joseph R. Dunlap, *The Road to Kelmscott: Morris and the Book Arts before the Kelmscott Press*, unpublished diss. (New York: Columbia University, 1972).

³ Jerome McGann, *Radiant Textuality: Literature after the World Wide Web* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 11-12.

⁴ McGann, *Radiant Textuality*, 160.

copies must be considered in light of questions of effacement and restoration. The *Aeneid* project is both the pinnacle of the illumination revival of the Victorian era and the project that caused Morris to lay aside his quill and to found his own press.

The desire within the Pre-Raphaelite circle to expand print culture into paratextual fields by refining and manipulating graphical and design elements alongside the text had several sources. First and most obviously, this reworking of page design was an effort to revitalize another aspect of medieval culture amidst the general examination of the treasures of the past. Illumination had vanished as an art with the ascendancy of printing, and even calligraphy had been suffering since the sixteenth century. The novelty and medieval flavour of calligraphy and illumination helped to revive the arts as popular Victorian hobbies before they were taken up by serious artists as ways of incorporating multiple levels of meaning in art by combining word and image. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "double works of art" and his sister Christina's first published books were deeply influential examples of how poetry and painting, or story and woodcut, might interlace and aid the search for a new artistic vocabulary. The Pre-Raphaelites tried their hands at all the medieval art and craft techniques they could discover or revive, striving for meaningful relationships between material, style, and content.

A third point must also be considered: the 'negative capability' afforded by such juxtapositions of word and image. Paratextual and material elements support and transmit knowledge, but that knowledge is not stable or fixed. Response to visual communication is not clearly determined, and its message cannot easily be measured. Nonetheless, graphic schema have elaborate and sophisticated structures, and so, like the ambiguities of meaning in language that poetry exploits, a great deal of information can be contained and transmitted, despite the impossibility of summarizing it. The vocabulary of a page is based on the

positioning and interplay of elements on a topological surface. The ordering of the relations between graphical entities is complex enough: to attempt to measure the tension between graphic and word, material and design, is a rewarding but endless process. The ambiguity is an essential part of the equation, and the manifold work defies reduction or disambiguation. There are many assumptions and traditions surrounding graphical marks and other paratextual elements; thus an illuminated page evokes a rich cultural history as well as less overt responses. The point is not that graphical systems are flawed in transmitting data that existed prior to being put to paper, but that, as with poetry, the sum of the parts is much more than the whole, and that meaning is multiplied and expanded by such a translation of form and material.

Graphical and typographical elements do not present a stable formal semiotic system, and, as Johanna Drucker points out, graphical structures are in fact rhetorical arguments.⁵ They remind us again that knowledge is formed by discourse, not simply revealed by it. This is of particular relevance because of the Pre-Raphaelite agenda: the revitalization of their culture and forming of a new, medieval-inspired paradigm. To present a framework pervasive enough that it might have such a transformative power, it was necessary not only to create an array of cultural artifacts representing the proposed aesthetic and value systems Morris and his circle wanted to see germinate in Victorian England, but to instill the processes of creation with a relevance that could be apprehended, though not easily explained. Double works of art, or “bitextual” works as Kooistra calls them,⁶ are ineffable: they are unresolved and so capable of provoking a state of intentional open-mindedness that might be called

⁵ Johanna Drucker, “Digital Ontologies: The Ideality of Form in/and Code Storage: Or: Can Graphesis Challenge Mathesis?” *Leonardo* 34:2 (2001): 141-145.

⁶ Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, *The Artist as Critic: Bitextuality in Fin-de-Siècle Illustrated Books* (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press, 1995).

receptiveness, or even a search for the sacred. As in hierology, studying the tension between materials and messages involves an assumption that there is a profound truth to be formed or revealed in the interplay. ‘Illuminating text,’ no accident of wording but the true intent of such work, is how Morris developed and experimented with the paratextual vocabulary in calligraphy and illumination before turning to printing, and why those experiments were so crucial to later artistic engagement with the page.

Victorian Illuminations

Early Modern printing killed calligraphy, and soon began to suffer from the death of that art, because it had removed the individual artisan, specifics of material, and the scribal hand, layout and ornamentation that had made up medieval paratextuality from chancery scribe to missal-painter. In the pre-incunabula world, no two copies of a literary work could be closely similar. By Morris’s day, however, virtually all copies were similar, as the flexibility and idiosyncrasy of hand work were being sacrificed for the reproducibility of the press. The relationship between calligraphy and printing, which had suffered from three centuries of estrangement, had to be re-established in reverse, as the advancements in commercial printing allowed for the first tolerable reproductions of illuminated manuscript pages to be published in handbooks and instruction manuals for Victorians hoping to render letters gracefully and to ornament their documents with paratextual elements. At its best, the chromo-lithography process included application of metallic inks to simulate the hand-gilding that made medieval pages the “leaves of gold” that inspired the name of illumination.⁷

Auction records of the sale of Morris’s library after his death show that he owned several of

⁷ In the stricter definition of illuminated manuscript, only manuscripts decorated with a precious metal (gold or silver) are considered illuminated. Some books published in the 1830s featuring reproduction plates of illuminated manuscript pages still had the gold and silver applied by hand.

these popular books. Owen Jones's *Grammar of Ornament* (1856), Victor Touche's *The Handbook of Initial Letters* (1863), W.R. Tymms & Matthew Digby Wyatt's *The Art of Illuminating as Practised in Europe From the Earliest Times* (1860),⁸ Henry Shaw's *The Art of Illumination in the Middle Ages* (1847), *The History, Theory, And Practice Of Illuminating* (1861) and similar works began a fashion for illumination and calligraphy among the leisure classes of Victorian England, particularly among women, and the concept of a careful artistic hand-rendering of text developed through the century. One of these, *The Art of Illumination and Missal Painting: a Guide to Modern Illuminators* (1849) by Henry Noel Humphreys, was probably used by Charles Allston Collins as his source for a book of hours held by a nun in his 1851 painting *Convent Thoughts*, a work seen by Morris and Burne-Jones in 1855.⁹ As Treuherz points out, "the period of the emergence of Pre-Raphaelitism coincided with the widespread publication of facsimiles of mediaeval miniatures."¹⁰

The distinctly Victorian love of amateur pastimes assisted in the spread of this craft, as it did with photography, horticulture, embroidery, and butterfly collecting. Simultaneously, cheaper methods of mass-production in printing were being established which allowed the lowest quality books possible to be made and sold in the streets of London: the pulp "penny dreadfuls." The range of quality in material and design had begun a process of expansion both upwards and downwards, and by the end of the nineteenth

⁸ Morris owned the 1868 edition.

⁹ Collins was probably the first associate of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to refer to missal-painting/illuminations in his own work. Besides *Convent Thoughts*, which depicts one page of a Florentine late fifteenth-century Book of Hours from the Soane Museum, *Berengaria's Alarm* (1850) also includes a detailed rendering of an illuminated medieval text: the first page from the Gospel of Saint John in the *Arnstein Bible*, a twelfth-century manuscript in the British Museum. The page had been reproduced in colour in Owen Jones and Henry Noel Humphreys's *Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages* (1844-49).

¹⁰ See Julian Treuherz, "The Pre-Raphaelites and Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts," Parris, Leslie, ed., *Pre-Raphaelite Papers* (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1985), 155.

century England would have produced both the best and the worst examples of the book arts. The rise of popular interest in calligraphy and two-dimensional ornament was part of the larger design reformation that would pave the way for projects like Morris & Co. Morris himself, particularly during his last years (Morris was president of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society from 1893 to 1896, while Kelmscott Press was flourishing) would be instrumental in establishing the modern revival of calligraphy in early twentieth century England: *fin-de-siècle* works such as Edward F. Strange's 1895 classic *Alphabets, a Handbook of Lettering* are united in their praise of Morris and acknowledgement of debt to him as a pioneer of calligraphy, typefaces, printing, and page design. Strange's book reproduced lettering by Morris and others associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement, such as Walter Crane and C.F.A. Voysey, and it was commended by famed calligraphy teachers Edward Johnston and Graily Hewitt (a close friend of Morris's who collaborated on several manuscripts with him, and an early and celebrated pupil of Johnston). Morris's friend William Lethaby began the spread of calligraphy as an important discipline throughout England's art schools when he appointed Edward Johnston to teach at the new Central School of Arts and Crafts in 1899.

There is a longstanding tradition that claims Morris was a savant or expert in practically all things to which he turned his hand, and this myth has come frustratingly close to obscuring the truth. Morris was a poor easel painter, no kind of practical architect at all, had distinct strengths and weaknesses as an author and designer, and his calligraphic efforts, though they achieved some distinction, were never perfected and, in the earliest days at least, were quite clumsy. Even while living he was often given credit for a much higher level of knowledge or expertise than he possessed, and Rossetti and Ruskin can be blamed for some of this. Commenting on Morris's calligraphy in an 1856 letter to Irish poet William Allingham, Rossetti asserted, "in all illumination and work of that kind he is quite unrivaled

by anything modern that I know—Ruskin says, better than anything ancient.”¹¹ The few surviving examples from this period of Morris’s calligraphic work show such claims to be absurd. Although both Rossetti and Morris had Ruskin, the most famed and respected art critic of their day, championing them as medievalists *par excellence*, they were far from that as young artist-scholars, and only Morris can be said to have merited that lofty title towards the end of his life. As Jennifer Harris notes,¹² even Ruskin came to regret championing the quaint-mannered pseudo-medievalism of his admirers so uncritically. In a letter responding to popular artist George Frederic Watts, who had complained about Rossetti’s bad influence on his pupil Val Prinsep, Ruskin admitted himself “answerable for a good deal of this fatal medievalism at the beginning of it—not indeed for the principle of retrogression—but for the stiffness and quaintness and intensity as opposed to classical grace and tranquility,” and he even wrote that he was “sickened of all Gothic by Rossetti’s clique.”¹³ Ruskin’s own expertise was in painting, and to a lesser degree, architecture, however, and despite his love of “grotesques” (the figures found in medieval miniatures and historiated or figured capitals), he was no manuscript expert. In general, Morris and Burne-Jones were ahead of their elders in having assimilated the spirit of the Gothic Revival from a young age (Rossetti was six years older than Morris and seven older than Burne-Jones, and Ruskin seven years older than Rossetti—significant differences at this stage of their careers). Both had benefited from the publishing and popularity of all things medieval in the first half of the nineteenth century and, in Morris’s case at least, from having been exposed to authentic textual artifacts since childhood. The language of these artifacts was more deeply integrated into their personal

¹¹ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham, 1854-1870*, ed. George Birkbeck (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897), 193-194.

¹² Jennifer Harris & Joanna Banham, *William Morris and the Middle Ages* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984), 93.

¹³ *Ibid.*

aesthetic, as opposed to a conscious affectation. Morris's love of the Middle Ages far predates any and all justifications or rationalizations he would later assign to it, and the joy he took in old books and pages was an intuitive and essential part of his personality and his thirst for the visual beauty of the past.

Collecting Models

As a youth, Morris first experienced the beauty of illuminated manuscripts as an undergraduate at Exeter college in Oxford. Of particular note was the *Douce Apocalypse*¹⁴ (written circa 1270 for Edward I and his wife, Eleanor of Castile), which is in an unfinished state, showing unpainted drawings, construction lines, and layout markings. This gave him insight into the process of composition for illuminated manuscripts, which would aid him in his own experiments. Another favoured older tome, *Gerard's Herball* [1599], actually belonged to his own family; the third edition [1633], with its hand-rendered watercolours fostered his love of plants, design, and beautiful books. The greatest storehouse of beautiful books for Morris, however, was Duke Humphrey's fabled library at the Bodleian. The *Ormesby Psalter* (1320), known to Morris as the *Normich Psalter*, was another revered text: its opening page can be compared to Morris's own bed hangings from Kelmscott, woven decades later by May Morris and featuring lines of her father's verse. Manuscripts of the *Roman d'Alexander* (written in French, from 1338- 44), *Alexander and Dindimus* (written in Middle English), *Li Livres du Graunt Caam* (written in French around 1400),¹⁵ and Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*¹⁶ were objects of close study. Burne-Jones also used to take people to the

¹⁴ Bodleian Library, Bodley MS Douce 180. In Morris's day it was on display in the Douce Exhibition Room.

¹⁵ Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264 contains both *Roman d'Alexander* (the Romance of Alexander) and *Li Livres du Graunt Caam*.

¹⁶ Bodleian Douce 195: *Roman de la Rose*, in a manuscript made for Louise of Savoy, mother of Francis I, in the late fifteenth century.

Bodleian to gaze upon the *Rose* manuscript, and he made extensive notes and drawings from it. The influence of Morris's book collection on his illuminations and on the development of Kelmscott Press's style must not be overlooked. William Morris was one of the most distinguished collectors of early printed books and medieval manuscripts of his day. His private library gave him the opportunity to closely study the techniques of his predecessors in the book arts, and the means to revitalize them. Initially studying the books of the Bodleian Library, and Ruskin's private library, Morris turned to amassing his fine private collection in 1864 after Swinburne brought him to a book-seller to see a copy of Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus* (made in Ulm in 1473¹⁷), and his analysis of the letterforms in his manuscripts and incunabula continued for more than three decades, taking on revitalized importance once Kelmscott was conceived. He openly acknowledged the debt of his own typefaces to Gothic and Roman scribal letterforms:

The "Troy" and "Chaucer" types are what students of the subject call Fere-humanisticas, one of the three traditional kinds of Gothic letters used in the fifteenth century. By the thirteenth century, Gothic, of course, had already become a distinct style. The medieval scribes, such as Chaucer's "owne scribeyn" Adam, using a reed pen to write Roman letters, gave Gothic its distinct character. Gothic letters are essentially written forms made with one stroke of the slanted pen. The curves of the Roman letters were reduced to straight lines, very narrow, angular, and

¹⁷ In Morris's essay "On the Artistic Qualities of the Woodcut Books of Ulm and Augsburg in the Fifteenth Century" he refers to many of his own acquisitions: "The earliest of these picture-books with a date is Gunther Zainer's *Golden Legend*, the first part of which was printed in 1471; but, as the most important from the artistic point of view, I should name: first, Gunther Zainer's *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* (undated but probably of 1471); second, John Zainer's Boccaccio *De Claris Mulieribus* (dated in a cut, as well as in the colophon, 1473); third, the *Aesop*, printed by both the Zainers, but I do not know by which first, as it is undated; fourth, Gunther Zainer's *Spiegel des menschlichen Lebens* (undated but about 1475), with which must be taken his German *Belial*, the cuts of which are undoubtedly designed by the same artist, and cut by the same hand, that cut the best in the *Spiegel* above mentioned; fifth, a beautiful little book, the story of Sigismund and Guiscard, by Gunther Zainer, undated; sixth, *Taberinus, die Geschichte von Symon*, which is the story of a late German Hugh of Lincoln, printed by G. Zainer about 1475; seventh, John Bämmler's *Das Buch der Natur* (1475), with many full-page cuts of much interest; eighth, by the same printer, *Das Buch von den 7 Todsünden und den 7 Tugenden* (1474); ninth, Bämmler's Sprenger's *Rosencranz-Bruderschaft*, with only two cuts, but those most remarkable." [1895]. Peterson, ed. *The Ideal Book*, 46.

stiff, until the written page was made up of rows of perpendicular thick strokes connected at the top and bottom by oblique hair-lines.¹⁸

The Fere-humanisticas form attained its brief dominance in books by Ulrich Zeil of Cologne and Gunther Zainer of Augsburg. Morris claimed John Zainer's *De Claris Mulieribus* was "the first book that gave me a clear insight into the essential qualities of the mediaeval design of that period."¹⁹ This first treasure was soon joined by other incunabula and fifteenth-century books such as Aretino's *Historia Fiorentino* (Venice 1476), which contained the Nicholas Jenson-designed typeface that would serve as the prime model for the development of Morris's own Golden type. Using Jenson's model 'roman' typeface was a return to the source for Morris. Morris's drawings of Jenson's type, along with punches, matrices, and proofs, are in the Cambridge University Library.

In his first twelve years of book collecting (1864-76), Morris acquired 291 volumes, including Pliny's *Natural History* (1472), the famous *Nuremberg Chronicle* printed by Anton Koberger in 1493, Francesco Colonna's *Hypneratomachio Poliphili* (the second edition, printed in Venice by Aldus Manutius in 1545, which Morris used as a model for typography and capitals), a French bible from 1269 (now in the Morgan-Pierpont Library), Sebastian Brant's *Stultifera Navis* ("Ship of Fools," printed by Johann Zainer in Ulm 1473), the *Speculum um Vitae Humanae* ("Mirror of Human Life," printed by Günther Zainer Augsburg 1475), and Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* ("Golden Legend" printed by Wynkyn de Worde in London in 1527, and thought to be the last medieval printing in English of this historic

¹⁸ Richard Titlebaum, "The Creation of the Kelmscott Chaucer," *Howard Library Bulletin* 27:4 (1979): 471-88 is an analysis of the format, paper, type illustrations, and binding of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*.

¹⁹ "On the Artistic Qualities of the Woodcut Books of Ulm and Augsburg in the Fifteenth Century," Peterson, ed. *The Ideal Book*, 52.

text).²⁰ Famous manuscripts that Morris owned or loved also remained strikingly influential to his Kelmscott design choices: the *Morgan Bible*, *Huntingfield Psalter*,²¹ *Grey-Fitzpayne Book of Hours*, the *Windmill Psalter* (1270-1280, which was the last book Morris bought), and the *Golden Psalter* (St. Albans), which was brought to Morris on his death bed and was the last book he looked at in his life. This Psalter was written at St Albans Abbey in the first half of the twelfth century and each psalm, canticle and collect begins with an initial in burnished gold.²²

In one sense, speaking of Morris's use of paratext must be qualified, as he always made conscious effort to minimize the presence of non-visual paratext in his Kelmscott volumes, and it is almost entirely absent in his calligraphic manuscripts (aside from colophons that serve mainly to give credit to collaborators). Morris bridled against introductions, contents, indices, glosses, and most scholarly apparatus. His aim was to preserve the direct encounter with the story, enhanced by design and ornament rather than fragmented by intervening text. In this sense, it is *aesthetic* paratextuality that Morris practices, rather than practical, though his design choices certainly affect the readability and organization of his books, and the best guiding examples of such approaches were found among his library. The shape of Morris's letters has been given close scrutiny by several experts—not least Graily Hewitt, who asserted that the script Morris used in his *Aeneid* (which is to say the last calligraphic hand Morris used on any substantial project) was

²⁰ For a complete account of Morris's own efforts to reprint the Legend, see William S. Peterson, ed., *The Kelmscott Press Golden Legend, a Documentary History of its Production Together with a Leaf from the Kelmscott Edition* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland and the Yellow Barn Press, 1990).

²¹ Pierpont Morgan MS. M.43. Created c. 1212-1220.

²² See B.S. Cron, "The Recent Owners of the Golden Psalter," *The Quarterly Journal of the Private Libraries' Association* 5:3 (July 1964): 4-5.



Figure 3.2 Psalter, London, late 13th century. Pierpont Morgan Library MS M.100.



Figure 3.3 Kelmscott *Froissart*, specimen page, 1896.

modeled specifically after a fifteenth-century manuscript of the works of St. Jerome.²³ Some of Morris's greatest manuscript treasures, such as the *Tiptoft Missal* (c. 1325)²⁴ and *Windmill Psalter* were purchased so late in his life (1895) that there can have been little specific design inspiration drawn directly from them. Yet they serve to indicate the taste and aesthetic of Morris during the Kelmscott period, and that his passion for collecting illuminated manuscripts was never as strong as in those last years.

Around 1892 Morris had purchased a small English Psalter,²⁵ and commented in his unfinished library catalogue about the "great thickness of the black boundary lines,"²⁶ a feature Morris never applied to any of his own illuminations, but made great use of in the most heavily ornamented Kelmscott facings. However, there is perhaps a specific inspiration that was never fully realized: a two-page facing from the unfinished Kelmscott folio of the *Chronicles of Froissart*, of which only a handful of specimen pages were pulled. It features the Press's first cusped initials, one of which is connected organically to the border, and three adjacent shields along the widest lower border, reminiscent of the heraldry surrounding the great **B** in the old psalter (see fig. 3.2). Morris has made the design elements his own, finding unusually bold graphic elements from manuscript that could sustain the monochromatic woodcut aesthetic of his *Froissart*.²⁷ The extending of floriated initials into the margins and ornamented borders and the strong spiky cusping of the facing lower border make it clear that Morris had found a rich vigorous style perfectly adapted to this new project, as he

²³ British Museum. Ms. Harley 45309. Alfred Fairbank disagrees with this attribution.

²⁴ Now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 107.

²⁵ Psalter, London, end of the thirteenth century, 8 5/8 x 6 3/8 in. Pierpont Morgan Library MS M.100.

²⁶ Quoted in *William Morris and the Art of the Book*, 14.

²⁷ See *William Morris and the Art of the Book*, 100, Plate VI & LXXXII, and Linda Perry, ed., *William Morris*, 339.

doubtless would have found endless innovations for his other unrealized Kelmscott books, had he lived longer (see fig. 3.3).²⁸

Rossetti's Influence

Morris gradually turned from the contemplation and making of art to the remaking of society, and, as Mackail says, “towards no less an object than the reconstitution of the civilized life of mankind.”²⁹ His life’s work was the bringing together of aesthetic and social discontent, and the dissemination of art which might prompt Victorian society to heal itself. Morris felt, as Clutton-Brock says, that “beauty was a symptom of happy work and ugliness of unhappy,”³⁰ and so one could not be improved without the other. To foster this societal transformation, he would eventually turn his hand to dozens of crafts, but in his early career he greatly admired Rossetti and Ruskin, and Rossetti persuaded Morris that he must paint. Although Morris tried, he said that the frames of pictures always bothered him,³¹ and this, combined with his anxiety at accurately rendering human proportions and facial likenesses, led him away from traditional painting towards art forms that were not set so far apart from everyday life and utility. Rossetti collapsed the line between border and painting by designing and ornamenting his own frames, gilding them and decorating them with text and ornament until the complete artwork was almost an illuminated manuscript page. Rossetti’s *Dantis Amor* (1860), for instance, presages Gustave Klimt’s ornamental surface-spaces, with figures

²⁸ Swinburne once remarked, “Why did not Morris take up & finish Froissart earlier—instead of the less appropriate work (Shelley, for one instance) on which the Kelmscott Press was occasionally wasted.” Quoted in William S. Peterson *The Kelmscott Press*, 266.

²⁹ Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* I, 8.

³⁰ Arthur Clutton-Brock, *William Morris* (New York: Parkstone International Press, 2007), 12.

³¹ “I should say that painting is of little use, and sculpture of less, except where their works form a part of architecture. A person with any architectural sense really always looks at any picture or any piece of sculpture from this point of view; even with the most abstract picture he is sure to think, How shall I frame it, and where shall I put it?” “The Arts and Crafts of To-day,” [1889 lecture] *On Art and Socialism* (London: J. Lehmann, 1947), 230.

emblazoned on a field seemingly derived from heraldry. In later years Edward Burne-Jones would speak of how his own book illustrations “needed” the framing of type and ornamented border that Morris provided, that they could not manage alone.³² The *Æneid* and *Chaucer* illustrations were designed to take their place in specific spaces, and shared a common style and vocabulary with them.

Morris’s wallpaper patterns had an effect on his page design similar to that of Rossetti’s frames on his paintings: engaging with the entire available surface as a single coherent unit. His Acanthus design, contemporary with his *Æneid* work, shows both the close connection between his illuminations’ ornament and his surface designs, and the blending of medieval stylization and natural observation (see fig. 3.4). Pre-Raphaelites had begun working out into their frames before Rossetti: Millais’s *Eve of St. Agnes* (1856) triptych being a fabulous example, with church-window shapes framing the pictorial elements and golden ivy spilling between them. Yet, immediately prior to Morris, only Rossetti was so balanced in skill between visual and poetic forms that he was compelled to combine them, as Blake had before him, into multimedia artworks. Ainsworth notes that his “lifelong vacillation between the sister arts of poetry and painting caused him great anxiety.. [y]et out of his struggles there emerged a very personal and dynamic union of the two arts.”³³ This working symbiosis of words and images had a great influence on the young Morris, who experienced Rossetti’s medieval-influenced work, and immediately began purchasing it.

Indeed, Rossetti’s paintings inspired Morris’s words. “The Blue Closet” and “The Tune of Seven Towers” are poems written in response to Rossetti watercolours. Morris’s

³² Quoted by Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 164.

³³ Maryan Wynn Ainsworth, “Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Double Work of Art,” *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Double Work of Art* (London: Yale University Art Gallery, 1976).



Figure 3.4 Original design for Morris's *Acanthus* Pattern (1879-81). Pencil and watercolor on paper, 81.2 x 68.8 cm. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery Birmingham, England.

lifelong manner of finding inspiration in both Victorian and medieval art supported his search to establish a dialogue between art forms and periods. This desire to create art that complemented and responded to the art of others working in other media may itself owe much to Rossetti's influence. "Rossetti shows every artist's understanding, that the only adequate interpretation of a work of art is a responsive work of art... in this kind of model, images call out to images and their dialogue is the action of an artistic process of thinking."³⁴ The visual dream-symbolism which typifies Pre-Raphaelite work was designed to encourage such a dialogue, and the list of subjects and themes rendered both in word and in image by the circle is endless.

A crucial example of the importance of medieval book culture for Morris's circle is Rossetti's 1849 painting *Girlhood of Mary Virgin*,³⁵ which features a stack of books beside a young angel who is watching over the Virgin and her family (see fig. 3.5). The books are anachronistic for the Biblical period portrayed, but they reflect the medieval sensibility that guides the picture's symbolism, and are colour-coded to the virtues they represent. This is one of the first of Rossetti's "double works of art," which would begin the revived tradition of combining words and images to form a composite meaning, and this practice would be a great influence on Morris. The composite formation of meaning allows design, iconography, color and symbolism to interact with description and verse in a fashion similar to a medieval illumination. Yet, the elements are not physically combined in the fashion of a page, or even his later textual additions to frame ornaments. McGann describes the presentation:

³⁴ Jerome McGann, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game that Must be Lost* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 21.

³⁵ *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (Tate Gallery). This was the first "Pre-Raphaelite" artwork to bear the initials of the movement, an act that upset other members as a breach of their order's secrecy. See Alastair Grieve, "The Applied Art of D. G. Rossetti-I: His Picture-Frames," *The Burlington Magazine* 115: 838 (Jan 1973): 16-24.

We should recall that the painting was itself a manifesto about art, as one sees in the heated controversy that followed its exhibition in 1849. When it was shown at the Free Exhibition, the painting's implicit argument was underscored by the presence of a slip of goldfaced paper he attached to the frame [...]. Two sonnets were written on the golden slip. Formally these texts come as a two-handed engine for interpreting the meaning of the painting. The first sonnet identifies the subject, her primitive historical position, her moral and mythological character within the medieval context of Maryolatry. But even as the second sonnet brings forward its elaborate symbolic interpretation of the pictured details, it no more operates as a Christian interpretation than the first sonnet. Rather, the second sonnet locates the historicity of all these materials, identifying them as "medieval." This identification comes through the act of stylistic analysis performatively displayed in the poetry's consciously antiqued style. So the sonnets are not so much an interpretation as the representation of an interpretive field. Attached to the painting's frame, the sonnets label the work as 'medieval.'³⁶

This labeling as medieval is a strange act and points out the problematic relationship between Pre-Raphaelite and medieval works (and Rossetti is not Morris, who came to use 'medieval' as an adjective virtually synonymous with 'living' or 'honest' when discussing art).

The first generation of Pre-Raphaelite painters could not reasonably be said to be imitating medieval art: the brushwork and rendering may at its best be precise and jewel-like, but the subject matter and methods of rendering look nothing like medieval work in perspective, scale, materials, and often subject matter. But with Rossetti's newer work in this period, occurring as he becomes friends with younger artists like Morris and Burne-Jones who were better educated in medieval subjects than Rossetti or the first Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood group, the focus begins to shift. Pre-Raphaelite art and writing self-consciously take on a pseudo-archaic style which references the medieval and begins to replace it. This approach reflects Morris's first volume of poetry *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858), composed while working alongside Rossetti on the Oxford Union Hall murals, and consisting in part of scenes from Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. The combination of modern

³⁶ Jerome McGann, "Medieval versus Victorian versus Modern: Rossetti's Art of Images," *Modernism/Modernity* 2:1 (1995): 99.



Figure 3.5 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1848-9) Oil on canvas. 32 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ " Tate Gallery, London

description and medieval speech is unstable, as it was in Rossetti's paintings. The titular poem begins plainly enough, and *in media res*, a most untraditional approach:³⁷

BUT, knowing now that they would have her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek,

Yet when Guenevere speaks, the vocabulary and structure are archaic:

And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps, —
Gauwaine be friends now, speak me lovingly.

The complete poem is part Victorian dramatic monologue, in the style of Morris's beloved Robert Browning, and part Malory, arising from the author's efforts to fuse what he sees as the best of both worlds. The few critics who reviewed Morris's first book derided the dramatic narrative, claiming it contained "real coarseness and immorality" (a common charge also leveled against Rossetti, and rarely explained) and had "faults of affectation and bad taste."³⁸ The charge of 'affectation' alone holds validity, and, at least in his prose, Morris never laid the archaic stylization to rest, making his final fantasy novels a rare taste among contemporary readers. In his visual art, however, he was to move from imitation to originality more quickly. In content the relationship between Morris's writings and those of the past is interesting: Morris's comparisons and perspective are not that of the medieval mind, which made all eras its own when retelling legends or fables (something universal from

³⁷ As David Latham points out, it is disappointing to learn that "the dramatic opening of Guenevere was pure luck due to a mistake by the printer, who started with the second page of the manuscript," David Latham, "A Matter of Craftsmanship: William Morris's Manuscripts," *Journal of the William Morris Society* 6.3 (Summer 1985): 2.

³⁸ Reviewed in *The Spectator*, February 27, 1858. Quoted by David Staines in "Morris' Treatment of His Medieval Sources in 'The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems,'" *Studies in Philology* 70: 4 (1973): 439-464. The anonymous *Spectator* critic does place Morris in fine company, claiming that he shares some faults with Browning and Tennyson. Nonetheless, after the mixed reviews of *The Defence of Guenevere* Morris did not publish poetry for another eight years. His first book was the first published book of Pre-Raphaelite poetry (printed at Chiswick Press). Though *Guenevere* was not widely regarded, his next book, *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867) was a popular success.

Chaucer's *Troilus and Cresidye* to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—anachronism is the rule). Guided by Ruskin, who first judged an era's art as the barometer of its social health, Morris does not focus on particular nuances of individual character as emblematic of universal traits of humanity, as in Browning's 'historical' dramatic monologues. Instead, Morris's characters delineate the spirit of the age by representation and comparison, by examples that lead to general conclusions. It is no accident that Morris's art in all forms shies away from the specific individual, even to the extent of his startling lack of self-confidence in figure drawing. His literary creations are types rather than unique exceptions, presented to tell the story of the people as a whole—at times, they are almost archetypal. This movement towards universal representation is important because it shows Morris, in writing as well as in art, approaching the symbolic rather than the particular, and this movement mirrors the tension between art and design.

Rossetti also began working with visual and literary combinations in *The Germ* (January-April 1850, 4 issues), a short-lived but important periodical project of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which committed itself to including a fine reproduction to illustrate each issue.³⁹ He contributed a series of "Sonnets for Pictures," which record the responses of a viewer to the visual artworks, focusing on the emotions and moods evoked. The poems elaborate on the information present in the images, giving narrative content which expands the subject, as in the sonnets surrounding his painting *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. As McGann says, "Rossetti constructs an argument in images for the procedure of

³⁹ This journal began as *The Germ: Thoughts towards Nature In Poetry, Literature, and Art*. But for the last two issues was titled *Art and Poetry: Being Thoughts towards Nature*. It contained "original Poems, Stories to develop thought and principle, Essays concerning Art and other subjects, and analytic Reviews of current Literature--particularly Poetry. Each number.. also contain[ed] an Etching; the subject...taken from the opening article of the month." (from the back cover of issue #1, reprinted in *The Germ: The Literary Magazine of the Pre-Raphaelites* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 1992)).

arguing by images.”⁴⁰ It is worth noting that Rossetti also obsessively worked and reworked both his poems and his paintings over years, as if trying to suit them perfectly to their age and audience. The formal structure of Rossetti’s use of symbolism (as detailed in the *Mary* sonnets, for instance) articulates this need for interpretation, and Rossetti sets forth his guide, saying authoritatively; “these are the symbols.”⁴¹ Speaking in an antiquated language (medieval Christian iconography) to an uncertain Victorian public was a frustrating affair, and the goal of educating the society would be undertaken by Morris and his circle throughout their careers through artifact creation and craft resurrection, writings and lectures to change perception and style, and through efforts to change the fundamental structure of society so it might be better able to foster and appreciate such art. McGann concludes that Rossetti’s poems and art invent “a whole new vocabulary and method of images,”⁴² but it is the fact that it is *not* “whole new” that is salient. It is a translation of the medieval materialist tradition (an approach that might be called a precursor of both Symbolist and Imagist poetry and art). Rossetti is at once deeply formal and deeply idiosyncratic in his use of a traditional discourse of symbols, and that is the heart of his influence on Morris.

This is not to say that Morris took his materialist aesthetic solely or even primarily from Rossetti, but the latter did provide artifacts of paintings and poems to serve as partial

⁴⁰ McGann, “‘A Thing to Mind’: the Materialist Aesthetic of William Morris,” 100.

⁴¹ Rossetti’s frame-poem:

I This is that blessed Mary, pre-elect/ God's Virgin. Gone is a great while, and she/ Was young in Nazareth of Galilee./ Her kin she cherished with devout respect;/ Her gifts were simpleness of intellect/ And supreme patience. From her mother's knee/ Faithful and hopeful; wise in charity;/ Strong in grave peace; in duty circumspect./ So held she through her girlhood; as it were/ An angel-watered lily, that near God 10/ Grows, and is quiet. Till one dawn, at home,/ She woke in her white bed, and had no fear/ At all,—yet wept till sunshine, and felt awed;/ Because the fullness of the time was come.

II These are the symbols. On that cloth of red/ I' the centre, is the Tripoint,—perfect each/ Except the second of its points, to teach/ That Christ is not yet born. The books (whose head/ Is golden Charity, as Paul hath said)/ Those virtues are wherein the soul is rich:/ Therefore on them the lily standeth, which/ Is Innocence, being interpreted./ The seven-thorned briar and the palm seven-leaved/ Are her great sorrows and her great reward. 10/ Until the time be full, the Holy One/ Abides without. She soon shall have achieved/ Her perfect purity: yea, God the Lord/ Shall soon vouchsafe His Son to be her Son.

⁴² McGann, “‘A Thing to Mind’: the Materialist Aesthetic of William Morris,” 100.

models for Morris's own undertakings. Socially too, Morris hoped to emulate Rossetti by forming a band of kindred souls who might inspire each other in different media. Morris's circle of university friends, many of them drawn from Oxford's Plain-Song Society, had begun referring to themselves as "the Brotherhood" as early as the summer of 1855 (though they should not be confused with either incarnation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood). Their core membership was Morris, Burne-Jones, Cormell (Crom) Price, Charles Faulkner, Richard Watson Dixon, Harry MacDonald, and William Fulford.⁴³ When Morris came into his inheritance in 1855, (receiving an annual disposition of £900⁴⁴), for a brief period he considered using to found a monastery to be peopled by members of his Brotherhood. His familiarities with writers like Carlyle and Ruskin, however, and the urgings of other members of the Brotherhood, especially Price and Faulkner, convinced him that there was a more pressing need for aesthetic and social reform in the secular world.⁴⁵ He and Burne-Jones came across a copy of *The Germ* in the spring of 1855,⁴⁶ and soon decided that the best way to use Morris's inheritance was to found a similar magazine combining social reform with aesthetic investigation. All this ferment of literary and artistic beginnings centered, for Morris, on questions of conveying aesthetic messages to the public.

The first illuminations from Morris come in the middle of this busy period: in 1856, he apprenticed himself to architect G. E. Street (an undertaking that was doomed to failure), started the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, and began to wrestle with the concept of the

⁴³ Mackail, *Life of William Morris* I, 65-82.

⁴⁴ Mackail, *Life of William Morris* I, 49.

⁴⁵ As discussed in Chapter 2. Mackail, *Life of William Morris* I, 64.

⁴⁶ Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* I, 122.

page.⁴⁷ Yet the development of a personal language of design was a slow process, and it was not until Morris had developed a more coherent and urgent social agenda that he was able to perfect a grammar of paratextuality that could support his message. Morris felt that historically illumination had begun to decline as early as the fourteenth century, and his evidence was a perceived estrangement between ornament and picture, as the harmony of the page became corrupted by the mechanical influence of printing. For Morris, this was the loss of a vital semiotic model. The paratextual, material, and decorative elements integral to forming the meaning of an illuminated page had been largely abandoned or degraded, and the effort to recapture this archetype would lead Morris on a restless quest for much of his life.

The First Illuminations (1856-57)⁴⁸

The specific impetus that caused Morris to take up illumination can only be speculated on, though the move was natural enough to his character and skills. Certainly he had made a study of medieval examples with Burne-Jones since their meeting in 1853, and the British Museum's guest-books are full of his signatures. Together these men had gained inspiration from medieval art and the Oxford Movement, and were determined to become artists. Ruskin claimed the work of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had begun a new era in art, and as Morris had just come into his annual disposition, he and Burne-Jones went to London, the latter to become Rossetti's student in 1855. The two friends moved into Rossetti's former

⁴⁷ It is hardly surprising, therefore, that two-dimensional and three-dimensional design are mingled in Morris's discussions throughout his writings. His practical experience with architectural drawings, illuminations, and printed page layouts all began simultaneously, yet he rejected any use of visual perspective to decorate surfaces.

⁴⁸ This chapter is by no means meant as a comprehensive examination of Morris's calligraphy. For further reading, see Joseph Dunlap's *The Road to Kelmscott: William Morris and the book arts before the founding of the Kelmscott Press*, especially "Chapter VI: Calligraphy and Illumination Realization," and William Whitla's "'Sympathetic Translation' and the 'Scribe's Capacity': Morris's Calligraphy and the Icelandic Sagas," 27-108.

lodgings in Red Lion Square and began making art.⁴⁹ When they met Ruskin early in 1856, he had already lectured on principles of design, using illuminated manuscripts to illustrate his points. Though these lectures were not recorded or published, the first one (“The Distinction between Illumination and Painting”) differentiated between the miniatures and ornaments and ornamental letters in manuscripts.⁵⁰ Ruskin asserts his conception of the proper principles of illumination: because illumination belongs to the lesser art of decoration, it must not seek to be too accurately pictorial or realistic. Nature must not be directly imitated, and realistic rendering of light and shade was inappropriate to design (this latter was to be one of Morris’s rules of wallpaper design). Grotesques were appropriate to the illuminator’s art because they were not true to nature, and hence did not intrude on the higher art of the painter who rendered the miniature.⁵¹ Ultimately, the point of studying or rendering such elements was to develop a proper medieval awareness and reverence both towards nature and to the book: “a noble and sacred thing, to be respected and revered.”⁵² As an avid disciple of Ruskin, Morris may have been inspired to try his hand on vellum from Ruskin’s lectures, which, if he did not attend them personally, were reported on in a paper he read regularly, the *Builder*.⁵³

⁴⁹ Rossetti introduced Burne-Jones to his contractor Powell’s Glass Works in 1857, and Burne-Jones designed windows there until the founding of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co in 1861, an apprenticeship that made him an expert at working with limited detail, expressing form through colour rather than shading, and movement through posture and composition. His figure work was much better suited to both illumination and woodcut adaptations after he had drawn hundreds of cartoons for glass commissions.

⁵⁰ Phimister, “John Ruskin, William Morris, and the Illuminated Manuscript,” 30.

⁵¹ On medieval page design, see M.B. Parkes, “The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinato* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book,” *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, J.J. G. Alexander, M.T. Gibson, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 115-41, plates IX-XVI.

⁵² Ruskin, *The Complete Works of John Ruskin* XII, 476.

⁵³ The issues for November 25, December 2, & December 16 of 1854, cited by Phimister, “John Ruskin, William Morris, and the Illuminated Manuscript,” 30.

One of Morris's first subjects was relatively modern: a song from Robert Browning's *Paracelsus* (1849 edition, IV lines 190-205). Morris illuminated it in the summer of 1856 and presented it to Robert and Elizabeth Browning.⁵⁴ This single vellum sheet, the earliest surviving example of Morris's calligraphy, is, despite Rossetti and Ruskin's high praise, not a particularly auspicious start (see fig. 3.6). The text is in two stanzas of eight lines each, written in rough *textura quadrata* script and framed by two floriated hybrid dragons in red and blue. The stanzas are surrounded by filigree flourishes and tendrils, also in red & blue, and each stanza features a large Lombardic initial capital on a gold field. The letters are uneven in width of stroke, and the border ornamentation crowds in on the text, a problem common to all three of Morris's earliest pieces. As an illumination it would seem unremarkable, if not viewed in context of Morris's later achievements, but there are some significant observations to be gleaned. First, Morris is consciously working in a very early style of ornament, a fact easily overlooked if the viewer concentrates on the penmanship. In his detailed analysis of Morris's early calligraphy William Whittle notes that hybrid dragons similar to Morris's were common in French and English manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (their popularity lasted from the early thirteenth to the end of the fifteenth century in most of Europe), but that they usually emerge from the initial capital in medieval work.⁵⁵ The hybrid creatures are called drolleries or *grotesques* (Ruskin's favored term), and they appear in all three surviving Morris manuscripts from the 1850s. Traditionally, grotesques come in a wide variety of hybrid forms, combining human, animal, organic and even inorganic elements into one fantastic shape. This is a form of playful interaction with words, a creation of a living

⁵⁴ For the manuscript's text and further information, see Appendix A.

⁵⁵ Whittle, "'Sympathetic Translation' and the 'Scribe's Capacity': Morris's Calligraphy and the Icelandic Sagas," 40.

environment to enhance and augment meaning, which did not last long into the era of printing. The reasons for this are open for debate, however.

[By the second decade of the sixteenth century] the printer's provision of all the aids that had previously been added [by hand] ... effected the final step in the transformation of reading. In antiquity reading had implied an active role in the reception of the text.... Throughout the Middle Ages readers, even long after a book had been confected, felt free to clarify its meaning through the addition of ... marginalia. Under the influence of printing, reading became increasingly an activity of the passive reception of a text that was inherently clear and unambiguous.⁵⁶

Perhaps the relationship between reader and writer shifted in power with the change to mass production, and marginal ornament, so easily done with a quill and so difficult to accomplish in a printed work, soon faded from use, leaving the page monochromatic and greatly impoverished. This point can be overstated, however: incunabula often follow the layout traditions of manuscripts so closely that it is not always possible to immediately perceive them as printed works (especially when hand-rubricated). As Andrew Taylor notes, "printed texts could do this in part because the textual layers *had already stabilized in manuscript* (as the very concept of a *glossa ordinaria*, or standard gloss, suggests)."⁵⁷ Furthermore, a scribe's visual marginalia is not equitable to a book-owner's written glosses. Such commentary is generally visually distinct from the original printed page it occupies, and though it may serve as response to or enhancement of the document's meaning, it employs no graphesis, nor is textual marginalia manifold of symbolic meaning in the fashion of grotesques.

One point of contact that might be considered here, however, is that of space.

Morris's adoption of the medieval proportions of wide borders, both in his illuminations and

⁵⁶ Paul Saenger and Michael Heinlen, "Incunable Description and its Implication for the Analysis of Fifteenth-Century Reading Habits," *Printing the Written Word: The Social History of the Book circa 1450-1520* (London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 256. This article suggests increased control over production increased the power of printers, gradually turning them into editors while undermining the interpretive ability of both authors and readers.

⁵⁷ Andrew Taylor, in correspondence, February 2011.

Kelmscott books, gives space where the page might be adorned with either textual or visual replies—a feature few Victorian books offered. That few would dare to decorate Morris’s books in such a fashion is beside the point (and some have, at least the Chiswick printings).⁵⁸ It is more accurate to say that though readers did not necessarily become passive as they switched from manuscripts to incunabula (and certainly did not refrain from writing marginalia in their volumes), the use of visual elements in books underwent a fundamental change once mechanical reproduction became the standard. Morris not only considered their inclusion to be vitally important, he struggled with their role on the page.

Paul Saenger’s tracing of the historical conversion of the manuscript page from a solid block of text to a more “aerated” space that gradually separated sections and words is interesting, both because Morris tends towards tight kerning and solid masses of text yet leaves ample breathing room around the text block and elsewhere, and because Saenger argues the transition from oral to silent reading did not occur because of the rise of printed texts, but rather through the introduction of canonical word separation.⁵⁹ Saenger connects this increased textual clarity to the rise of individual reading, silent contemplation, and ultimately a more individualized sense of self. Morris usually spaces his words rather than utilizing interpuncts, so his words are still visually distinct figures. Since both his words and letters stand closer together than those of his contemporaries, however, given Saenger’s assertion (which, compelling though it may be, is far from convincing), it is tempting to see Morris returning the page to a design better suited to oral recitation, discussion, and marginalia. Given that this was probably an inadvertent effect of adapting medieval design,

⁵⁸ As described in footnote 23 of Chapter 5 (pg. 191).

⁵⁹ Paul Saenger. *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Series: *Figurae: Reading Medieval Culture*). (California, Stanford University Press, 1997).

and that Morris's books have for the most part been treated with excessive reverence rather than heavily annotated or embellished by their owners, it would be ill-advised to assert this as a specific agenda. The interplay between textual meaning and layout, material, typographic and graphic elements is the salient point, and it is most easily noted in the tension on Morris's pages between what he called the two universal qualities of organic art: the *epical* and *ornamental*, or "the telling of a story and the adornment of a space or tangible object."⁶⁰

The function of grotesques is manifold: they act as emphasis for certain lines and words, as historiated initials do, and they obscure the gap between non-representational ornament and figurative illustration in a unique fashion, though they have conceptual ties to Islamic art and Scandinavian decorative motifs. Decoration makes a hypertext of any manuscript, though the relationship between grotesques and the text they decorate often seems random or obscure.

Although the intended meaning of zoomorphic and interlaced elements in medieval work is a complex and long-debated question,⁶¹ the levels of importance given by varying styles and sizes of initials are easily understood. Opening words (*incipits*) were given the largest and most elaborately decorated initials, which became mingled with pictorial and symbolic elements by the time of the *Book of Kells* (c. 800). Morris's early efforts are much more modest than such full-page historiated initials. Smaller initials and display or continuation panels set off lesser textual subdivisions and hierarchies. Morris gives each of

⁶⁰ William Morris, "The Woodcuts of Gothic Books," *The Ideal Book*, 26.

⁶¹ Michael Camille's *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992) discusses medieval margins as a space where the authoritative main text could be questioned, subverted, even mocked through ornament and marginalia. This can be compared to the role of gargoyles and other small sculptural elements in a Gothic church: to provide a less daunting, often humorous or subversive level of playful interaction with the viewer as counterpoint to the more sombre, daunting, and complex experience of the greater work. In the case of Morris's embellishments, the subversive or mocking role is rarely present, as he controlled all elements of the page.

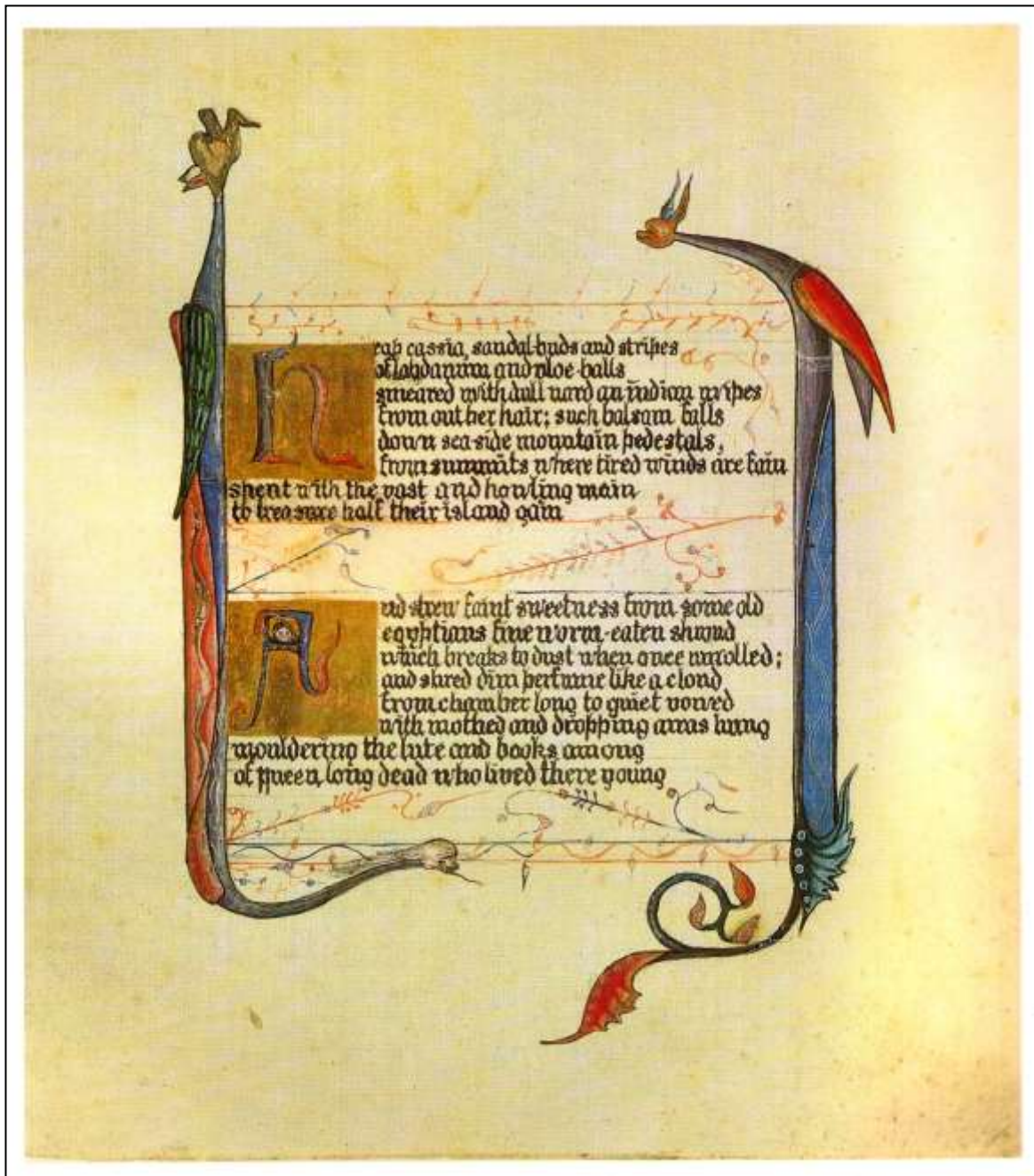


Figure 3.6 Song from Robert Browning's *Paracelsus* (1856).

his two Lombardic initials equal size here, further embellishing the second stanza's initial capital with a human face, thereby creating only two levels of text: stanza capitals and body script. He would complicate this almost immediately, with his next experiment, while moving towards greater use of gold, framing patterns, and miniatures.

Morris's grotesques are remarkably static and simple here, considering his love of flowing curvilinear forms and detail, but they are restrained by his determination to keep a formal rectangular border. His note in a late thirteenth-century Paris Psalter, intended for the catalogue of his ever-growing library, reveals his continued taste for such design elements:

This book has a complete and satisfactory scheme of ornament, which is nowhere departed from and the colour of which is perfectly harmonious. Many of the dragon-scrolls end in daintily painted little heads, drawn with much expression and sense of fun; and the hair of them beautifully designed, and drawn very firmly. The figure-work in the eight historiated letters is everywhere quite up to the average of its date, but on the first page in the *Beatus* and the symbols of the Evangelists goes a good deal beyond that.⁶²

The next two manuscripts show Morris moving quickly towards more organic forms, an increase of skill and complexity which in some measure reflects the medieval evolution of the art itself, until at last the borders vanish and become fields and margins within which plants writhe in semi-geometric profusion. Even at this early stage, the bold, rustic forms and hand-made forms are an emphatic protest against the “undue thinness of line, diaphanous vignetting by photographic process,” subtle tonality and anemic filigreed ornament that was considered the proper setting for text at the time.⁶³ His use of materials also becomes more confident, and his application of gold moves from the chrysography of the *Paracelsus* stanza initials to the true gilding of the *Rubáiyát*.

⁶² May Morris, ed., *The Collected Works of William Morris* XXIV, xxiii.

⁶³ Walter Crane, *The Decorative Illustration of Books* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1896), 157.

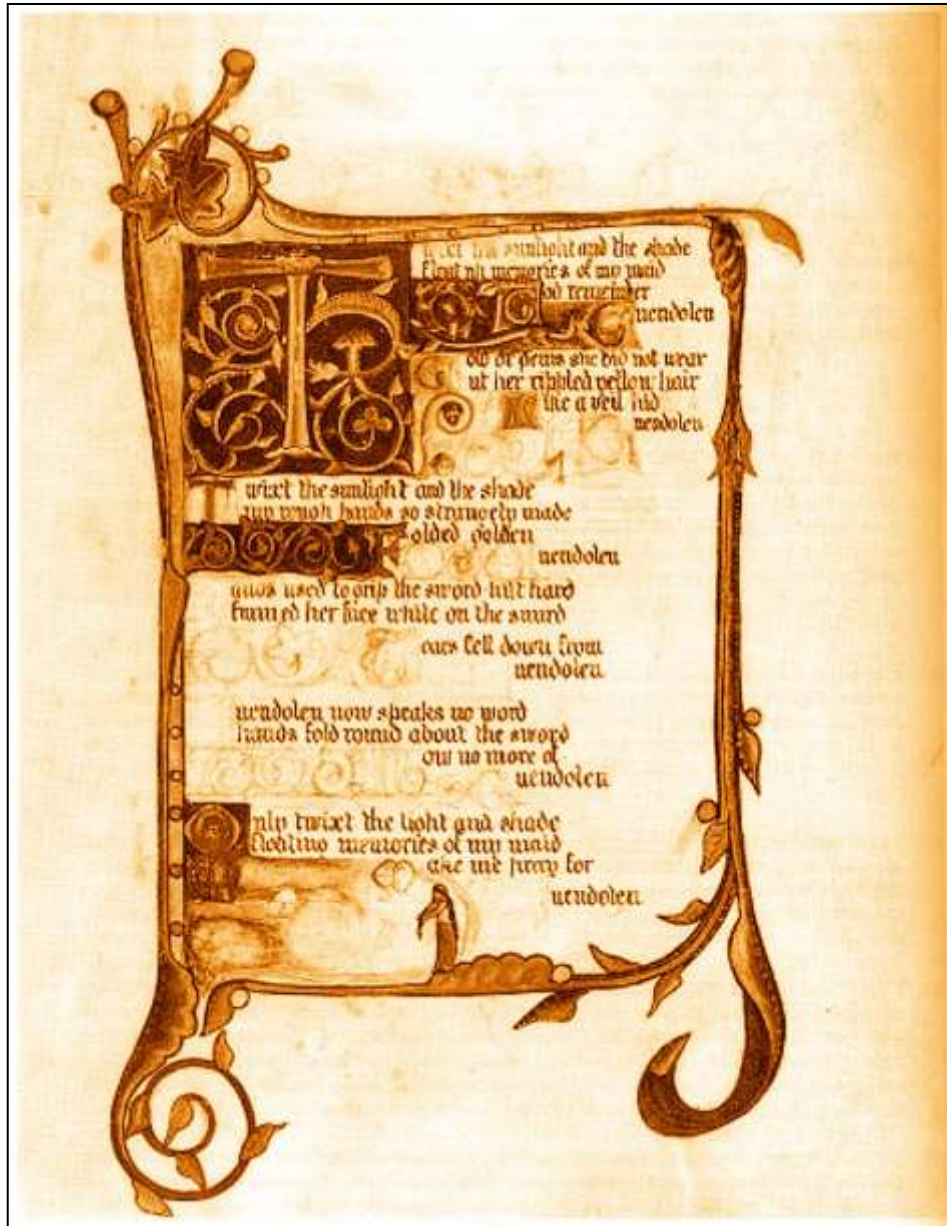


Figure 3.7 *Guendolen* (1856).

In the tenth century initials became more organic and plant-like, stylized renderings based on Carolingian innovations. Morris's next experiment approximates that form of organic ornamentation. *Guendolen*, a short poem by Morris, was illuminated in August 1856 as a gift for Georgiana MacDonald (later Georgiana Burne-Jones, the intended recipient of several of Morris's best manuscripts).⁶⁴ The text is in six three-line stanzas, again written in rough *textura quadrata* script. The curved fish-tail serifs on the H and P ascenders resemble the *Paracelsus* border hybrids. The initial capital is a T, fronting floral vine decoration of a style which resembles Morris's later initials at Kelmscott. A small figure stands on the lower border, holding her hair out, watched by a knight's face in the historiated initial O of the last stanza (see fig. 3.7). This charming element is more directly illustrative than any decoration Morris had used before in this medium: the figure of Guendolen (later Rapunzel) is carefully placed to stand beside the final unfinished capital of her name, which ends the poem, as it ends each stanza. Since the implied speaker of the poem is the knight, the final stanza exists in the space between the separated lovers, and his longing words physically occupy the place of his gaze: "Only 'twixt the light and shade/ Floating memories of my maid/ Make me pray for Guendolen."⁶⁵ If the large foliate initials that begin the poem seem abstract and merely decorative, the same cannot be said of this final tableau. The ivy-leaf arabesque implies the tower Guendolen has been locked in, and the unfinished minor *litterae florissae* (letters

⁶⁴ This poem was published as "Hands" in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* of July 1856, and republished in 1858's *The Defence of Guenevere* as the Prince's song in "Rapunzel," though the seventh and eighth lines are reversed. For the text of the poem and further information, see Appendix A.

⁶⁵ A similar use of figures with dramatic space between is the archer and bird portrayed along a bottom border in a diminutive book of hours made c. 1260 (British Library Egerton MS 1151, f. 95v). See J. Home Cameron, *British Museum Guide to the Exhibited Manuscripts Part III: Illuminated Manuscripts Exhibited in the Grenville Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), Case 2: "Hours of the Virgin, etc., in Latin, with calendar of a marked English character; latter half of the 13th century. Executed for a lady, who is depicted kneeling before the Virgin in the first initial. Miniature-initials, with small grotesques, birds, animals, etc., in the margin, of most delicate work."

ornamented with floral motifs or delicate pen-flourishes,) tied to the arabesque-like vine border implies both Guendolen's imprisonment and the means by which the Prince may reach her (the rope of her hair that bridges the space between them). Evidence of such strategies can be seen in the lower right-hand side of the border, where Morris has rendered beech leaves and nuts, a reference to the "beechen wood" in which the maiden's tower stands. In keeping with Ruskin's guidelines the coloration is ornamental rather than realistic. The border uses gold, red, and Prussian blue, and the "beech nuts" are also gold balls, a notably Italian element found in some English fourteenth-century manuscripts.⁶⁶ Though Morris still has little control of the pen, and has not yet developed his later draughtsman's discipline in geometric layouts, this page is remarkable in its adaptive use of his sources. The irregular line justification, however, is unlike medieval models, and results in Morris's prime sin: crowding of the body text into cramped short lines which are difficult to read smoothly. On the right-hand margin, too, the line is ragged, and the negative space between the text and the foliate border draws the eye into nothing. These are all mistakes Morris would learn from, though not immediately.

The final extant page of illumination from this period is an incomplete translation by Morris of the folk tale "The Iron Man" or *Der Eisenhans* by the Brothers Grimm (see fig. 3.8). This page was likely composed in 1857 and presented to Georgiana's sister Louisa MacDonald the same year. It is written in a *textualis rotunda* script which is more readable than the *textura quadrata*, but this is more due to the much thinner vertical strokes than to any vast improvement in Morris's writing. Indeed, the letters are not distinct in their shapes, being too even in stroke width to have much shape or personality (as both Whitla and John Nash

⁶⁶ Joseph Dunlap, "William Morris: Calligrapher," in Paul Needham, ed., *William Morris and the Art of the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 50.

observe).⁶⁷ The initial N is elaborately historiated on a gold field, with vine tendrils and flourishes in blue, red and green. Smaller historiated initials on a connected gold vertical are joined by a vine/dragon motif which runs through the right-hand column, declining to a curled ivy terminal. There is possible Irish influence in the dragons interlaced with spirals on the left-hand margin: Morris owned several books with facsimile plates from *The Book of Kells*. The most notable thing about Morris's first efforts, however, is not his use of sources but his refusal to rely on them. Just as his choice of which texts to illuminate is idiosyncratic, so too is his obvious decision not to depend on the copy-books so popular at the time. There is no evidence of Morris owning any Victorian pattern-books, though he would later discover a volume of sixteenth-century Italian writing books which would dramatically change his illuminations and influence his printing at Kelmscott. As Burne-Jones said, "all his life he hated the copying of ancient works as unfair to the old and stupid for the present, only good for inspiration and hope."⁶⁸ Morris's mistakes are his own, and though one can easily imagine the frequent fits of frustration that probably led to the destruction of most of his early efforts at illumination (as they doomed many of his early poems and architectural drawings), he is striving for a living, original voice: one which would be relevant to his time and his goals. The key is the balance and combined effect of the text and ornament, an abiding concern which Morris would bring to the forefront of book culture before he died. Of *The Iron Man*, Mackail wrote:

⁶⁷ Whitla, "'Sympathetic Translation' and the 'Scribe's Capacity': Morris's Calligraphy and the Icelandic Sagas," 42. John Nash calls Morris's calligraphy here "so formless as to look brush-written, though it's most likely that a soft, badly-cut quill was to blame. Morris himself was undoubtedly conscious of the failings of this piece, which can be witnessed in the unfinished decorative elements, the badly smudged erasures down the right-hand margin and the perverse breaking off of the story at a particularly dramatic point. However, it remains valuable for two principal reasons: it demonstrates the heavy Gothic influence from which Morris's later manuscript work was to free itself, and it shows what a very long way he had to go." Linda Parry, ed. *William Morris*, 301.

⁶⁸ Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* I, 161.

The writing, which is in the Gothic character, is rather cramped and uncertain. But the design and colouring of the border, and the treatment of a picture in a large initial letter, show a complete grasp of the principles and methods of the art. It is probable that no illumination had been done since the fifteenth century which was so full of the medieval spirit.⁶⁹

One must take such praise, as Rossetti and Ruskin's, with a large grain of salt, yet the claim is not entirely groundless. *The Iron Man* page is uneven, but it reveals quickly-growing ambition, especially in the tantalizing framing in the lower half of the sheet for a large miniature which was never sketched in. Morris's tools are still those of an amateur, watercolour paints and gold paint for the illuminating, yet he is using a quill rather than a steel-nib, and working on vellum rather than paper. The large historiated initial depicts the "cage of iron and strong wood" mentioned in the text, and uses medieval aspective angles rather than accurate foreshortening perspective, again obeying Ruskin's injunction against realistic depiction outside of miniatures. Morris's choice of Gothic script, decoration, materials and story are all reminiscent of examples from 1250-1350, the period of manuscript art Ruskin believed had been the most authentic.⁷⁰

In 1858 Morris painted his only known easel painting, *La Belle Iseult*, which led him to decide his talent lay elsewhere. *La Belle Iseult* (also called *Queen Guenevere*, though that is an error), which is more respected for its depiction of pattern and ornament than its main figure, included an open book of hours for which no specific source has been authoritatively identified. Morris had definitively chosen the "lesser arts" of decoration as his field, but being recruited for the Oxford Union murals by Ruskin in 1857 distracted his energies from the page--though the riot of birds, animals, and plants he painted on the upper dome was

⁶⁹ Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* I, 116.

⁷⁰ See Michaela Braesel, "The Influence of Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts on the Pre-Raphaelites and the Early Poetry of William Morris," *Journal of the William Morris Society* 15.4 (2004): 49-50.



Figure 3.8 The Iron Man (1857).

inspired by medieval decoration, and Morris's first wallpaper designs, "Trellis," "Daisy," and "Fruit," or "Pomegranate," from 1862–64, are also reminiscent of his beloved manuscripts.

His engagement the following year and subsequent marriage to Jane Burden (on April 26, 1859), complementing Burne-Jones's marriage to Georgiana (in June of 1860, after a four-year engagement) changed Morris's life dramatically. For several years after his marriage he was occupied with the building and decoration of Red House for his family (see fig. 2.1),⁷¹ and the growth of his new firm, which aimed to reinstate decoration as a worthy and respected art. In this period Morris also stopped painting, despite Rossetti's influence, and his latest painting is dated 1862. He would not return to illumination for more than a decade, until something suddenly inspired him to take both script and design in a greatly different direction. This change was the direct and almost immediate result of his acquisition in 1868 of an essential volume that would inspire the golden period of his calligraphy, the rebirth of penmanship as an art in Victorian England, and contribute in many crucial ways to the later phenomenon of Kelmscott Press.

The Italian Influence

By 1868, inspired by the discovery of a rare collection of Italian writing-books, Morris became determined to learn the traditional art of Italic scribal hands as part of his renewed interest in creating a contemporary style of illumination. This undertaking was simultaneous with the ongoing translations of more than forty Icelandic sagas with Eiríkr Magnússon, whom he had met in 1868 (Morris published translations of *The Saga of Gunnlagg Worm-Tongue* and *Grettis Saga* in 1869, the *Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs* in 1870, and *Three Northern Love*

⁷¹ Morris and Jane had two children, both daughters: Jane Alice ("Jenny," 1861-1935), who suffered from epilepsy, and Mary ("May," 1862-1938), who edited the definitive collection of father's works after his death, and was a respected artist, designer, and craftswoman in her own right. For further reading, see Jan Marsh, *Jane and May Morris: A Biographical Story 1839-1938* (London: Pandora Press, 1986).

Stories in 1873). Morris completed his first illuminated manuscript in 1869, the *Dwellers at Eyr*⁷² followed by the *Volsung Saga* in 1870, and the exquisite *Book of Verse* for Georgiana Burne-Jones that same year. In 1873 he scribed *King Hatbur & King Simard*, and Horace's *Odes* in 1874. The latter volume features borders by Charles Fairfax Murray, and was more lavish than anything Morris had previously attempted in the medium.⁷³

Between 1869 and 1875 Morris took up calligraphy in earnest, and devoted much of his precious time to illuminating manuscripts, many of which were intended as gifts for Georgiana Burne-Jones, starting with *A Book of Verse* in 1870. He went on to decorate *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* for her, with illustrations by Fairfax Murray. By this time Morris was assembling his own collection of medieval manuscripts, and Burne-Jones spent many hours studying major manuscripts at the British Museum. Both men spent increasing amounts of time together, now experienced at sharing aspects of their joint artistic projects.

The rebirth of Roman and Italic handwriting in 1868—1875 is one of Morris's lesser-known achievements. In October 1868, while translating the "Erybryggia Saga" for *Dwellers at Eyr*, Morris wrote five pages in Italic handwriting beginning at page 99 of the manuscript. A little later, in 1869, while writing "Bellerophon" for *The Earthly Paradise*, Morris again began writing words in the margin in an Italic hand. This was the first time this script had been used in Britain for centuries. What prompted this? A margin note and references in letters of that year refer to "Studying with Mr. Jones" or "Visiting Mr. Jones," which is almost certainly Owen Jones, whose *Grammar of Ornament* had been published just the year before in 1868.⁷⁴

⁷² Bodleian MS. Lat. Class. c. 38.

⁷³ 183pp vellum, Bodleian MS. Lat. Class. c. 38. Edward Burne-Jones assisted with the four faces in square frames at the corners of the opening page.

⁷⁴ It has been suggested that these references should be taken literally, as an indication that Morris studied personally with Owen Jones. Calligraphy classes with Jones might have occurred, though there are only two

Jones provided colour prints for Noel Humphrey's *Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages* and *The Art of Illumination and Missal-Painting: A Guide to Modern Illuminators* (both 1849). This latter was one of the most influential English calligraphic guides until Edward F. Strange's *Alphabets: a Manual of Lettering for the Use of Students with Historical and Practical Descriptions* was published some months before Morris's death (1895).⁷⁵ Strange's work was studied and continued by the highly influential figures of Edward Johnston and Graily Hewitt in the early twentieth century. Yet a visit or even extended lessons with Owen Jones would not readily explain the profound transformation of Morris's hand and approach to illumination, let alone the sudden return to it after so long an absence.

One book can be given a great deal of credit for this sea-change: the Kelmscott Manor volume of Italian writing-books. After two attempts (failed and abortive) to produce beautiful printed editions of their work before the founding of the Kelmscott Press, Morris and Burne-Jones had lost faith in commercial Victorian printers. Between Morris putting down his quill and taking it up again, he and Burne-Jones tried to follow the examples of the Rossetti siblings by working closely with Chiswick Press. Their first project was an attempt to emulate the beautiful Quattrocento incunable folios with a lavishly illustrated version of *The Earthly Paradise* (beginning with "The Story of Cupid and Psyche"), and their second, a rendering of Morris's long verse masque *Love is Enough*, failed, largely due to the anemic and limited typefaces available. Morris doubtless realised he could achieve true control over letterforms, layout, and other paratextual considerations only by returning to hand-

passing references to support the idea. See Whitla, "'Sympathetic Translation' and the 'Scribe's Capacity': Morris's Calligraphy and the Icelandic Sagas," 48.

⁷⁵ The only calligraphy manuals to rival the influence of Jones, Edward Johnston and Strange would come from Graily Hewitt, who completed his work on the *Aeneid* manuscript after buying it from Morris.

illumination.⁷⁶ His manuscripts from 1967-68 betray the preoccupation with Italic letterforms: the sudden change of hand in “Bellerophon” and “Erybryggia Saga” either immediately predates his finding of the Italian writing-book (in which case his sudden interest in developing such a hand prompted him to seek out such original models) or is a response to his first delving into the book after buying it. The latter theory answers the question of inspiration more convincingly.

The date of purchase of the Italian writing-book is not noted, but some information is available: Morris certainly owned it prior to 1876, as Alfred Fairbank proves,⁷⁷ and a letter of March 26, 1874 from Morris to Charles Fairfax Murray notes that, while working on the *Odes of Horace* manuscript, Morris has “taken rather to the Italian work (for) of about 1450 for a type—this kind of thing don’t you know [*followed by an ornamented italic capital A written in the margin*].”⁷⁸ John Nash suggests the volume may have been bought as early as 1864, when Morris was introduced to F.S. Ellis, the publisher and rare book dealer who would sell him the writing-books, “as a natural result of the turning of Morris’s interest from Gothic towards Renaissance,”⁷⁹ but this fact would imply that Morris did nothing with the book for two or three years and then suddenly was swept back into calligraphic experiments, which seems less likely. Given the existence of Italic experiments as early as 1868, that date remains the most compelling. The red volume dubbed the ‘Kelmescott Manor Volume of Italian Writing-Books’

⁷⁶ See figure 7.2 for Morris’s hand-rendered floriated initial designs for *Love is Enough*, drawn shortly before his death in preparation for the posthumous Kelmescott edition of 1898.

⁷⁷ Alfred Fairbank notes that the Italian writing-book is mentioned in a “list of books and manuscripts bought by Morris, compiled about 1876.” *The story of Kormak the son of Ogmund; [translated] by William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon, with an introduction by Grace J. Calder and a note on the manuscript work of William Morris by Alfred Fairbank*, William Morris Society (London: 1970), 54.

⁷⁸ Kelvin, ed., *The Collected Letters of William Morris I*, 219-20.

⁷⁹ Nash, “Calligraphy,” Linda Parry, ed., *William Morris*, 297.

was a remarkable find for two guineas.⁸⁰ Bound in red morocco, it contains four of the first writing-books ever printed: Italian Renaissance writing-manuals by the unquestioned masters of the sixteenth century, which gave Morris perfect examples of chancery cursive, italic and humanistic hands. The contents are

- 1. *La Operina* (“The Little Work” second edition copied by Ugo da Carpi in 1525) by Ludovico Vincentino degli Arrighi, “for learning to write the chancery script.” This book consists of engraved blocks in Vincentino’s own hand, to be used as a guide by students of clerical penmanship.
- 2. *Ill modo de temperare le Penne* (“How to cut your Quill” c. 1525-26) also by Vincentino degli Arrighi. This continues from *La Operina*, and can be seen as its companion volume. Unlike the first volume, this one uses moveable type alongside the engraved plates: a beautiful calligraphic type-face designed by Vincentino to fit smoothly with the reproductions of cursive chancery hand.
- 3. *Lo presente libro...*⁸¹ (“The present book...”second expanded edition of 1525) by Giovanni Antonio Tagliente, who also designed a calligraphic type face for his book. The elegant cursive chancery models are again exhibited through engraved wood blocks.
- 4. *Thesauro de Scrittori* by Ugo da Carpi (“Anthology of Scribes” c. 1526). The final book contains instructions on handwriting and lettering in several styles, some geometrically constructed alphabets, and sections lifted from both *La Operina* and *Lo presente libro*.

There is no question that these books greatly inspired Morris and were a profound influence on his return to calligraphy, and the stylistic shift from Gothic to Renaissance humanist hands: practice sheets in Morris’s hand show him experimenting not only with letterforms that are recognizable as taken from the manuals, but in some cases the book is quoted directly.⁸²

⁸⁰ For a detailed discussion of the history and provenance of the books bound within this volume, the history of their production, and some biography of their creators, see Osley’s “The Kelmscott Manor Volume of Italian Writing-Books.”

⁸¹ This book has no proper title, and is usually referred to by its incipit. The title page states: “*Lo presente libro Insegna La Vera arte delo Excellente scrivere de diverse varie sorti de lettere Lequali se fano per geometrica Ragione, & Con La Presente opera ognuno Le Potra Imparare . . . Opera del tagliente novamente composta cum gratia nel anno de nostra Salute. MDXXV.*” See A.S. Osley, *Scribes and Sources*, (Boston: David R. Goodine, 1980), 57-59; with a translation of Tagliente’s text on 60-69.

⁸² John Nash, “Calligraphy” *William Morris*. Linda Parry, ed., 297, fig. 100 “A page of writing-trials by Morris,” date uncertain.

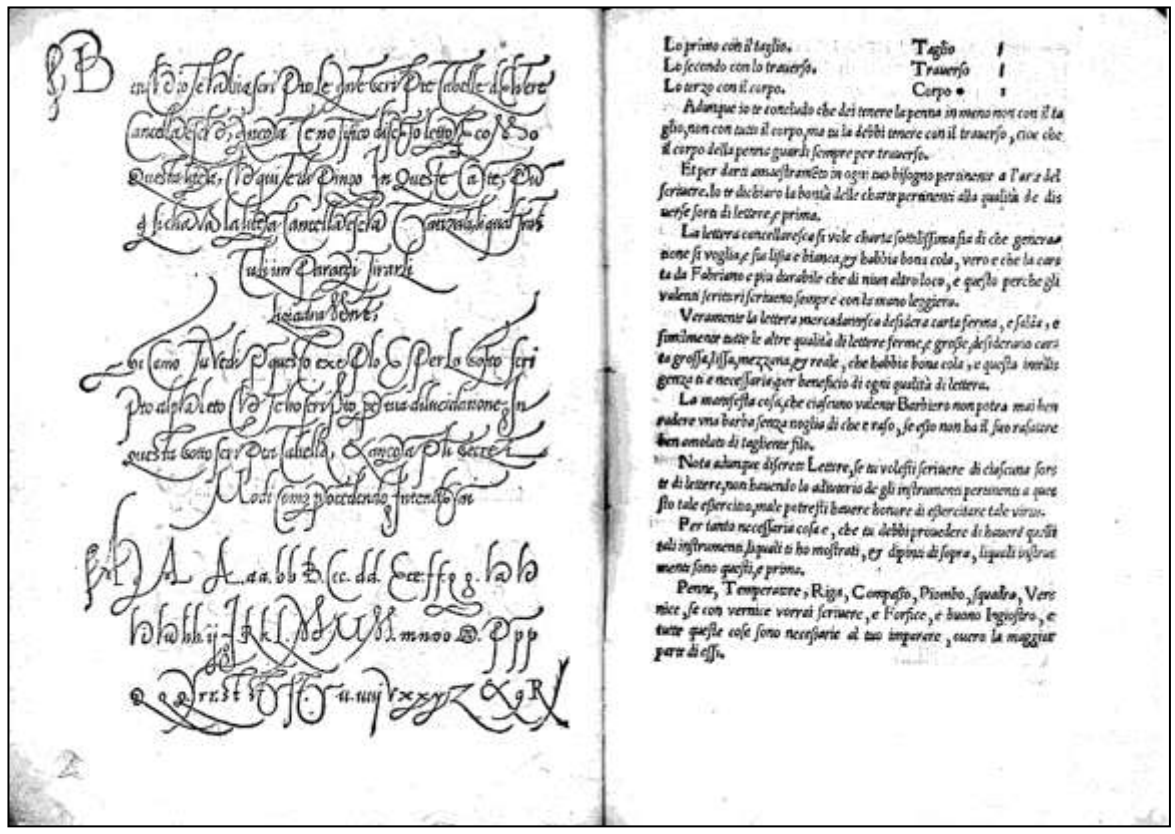


Figure 3.9 Tagliente, *Lo presente libro* (second expanded edition of 1525).

Another trial page by Morris with different scripts cannot be firmly dated (1869-73), but when it is compared to the colophon page of Vincentino Arrighi's 1525 handwriting manual, or the title page of Tagliente's, it becomes apparent which "ancient masters" Morris was taking his inspiration from (see fig. 3.9).⁸³ He had recently acquired his writing manuals, and, following the instructions of Arrighi, begun cutting quill pens, the instrument that would remain his preferred tool over steel-nib pens for the rest of his life. The results of his studies would soon be seen in more polished form, as he began to illuminate his own works again. Alfred Fairbank, an outstanding calligrapher and a type-designer, and therefore well-placed to judge, thought that the set cursive Italic script evolved by Morris for writing *The Story of Hen Thoir, King Halbur and King Seward* and the *Odes of Horace* was probably a fruit of his researches into Vincentino's hand. Fairbank also saw resemblances between the roman script of the Kormak manuscript and Tagliente's *antica tonda*⁸⁴ style, and (looking ahead) between the lower-case letters of Morris's Troy typeface and the *letterata formata* of *La Operina*.⁸⁵ Morris later suggested his daughter May should study the volume.⁸⁶

1868 saw the beginning of Morris's fruitful translations and collaborations with the Icelandic scholar Eiríkr Magnússon. It was only natural that Morris would use these texts for his simultaneous efforts to master a repertoire of Italic scripts, though the juxtaposition of such Northern tales with Mediterranean design and calligraphy seems at first to be a poor fit.

⁸³ For many of these examples, I am indebted to the unpublished lecture, "William Morris and the Black Arts," by William Whitla, given on March 21, 2009 for the William Morris Society of Canada's symposium, *The Art of the Book*.

⁸⁴ The second edition of *La Operina* includes a page of *antica tondo* (roman) script by Spanish scribe Genesis de la Barrera of Carmona, a Spaniard working in Rome, which is not in the first edition.

⁸⁵ Alfred Fairbank, "Note on the manuscript works of William Morris," Magnússon, Eiríkr and William Morris, trs. *The Story of Kormak the Son of Ogmund*, (London: William Morris Society, 1970), 55.

⁸⁶ Osley, "The Kelmscott Manor Volume of Italian Writing-Books," 358.

Nonetheless, he found a way to reach what had eluded him before: a beautiful clear approach to illuminating a page which spoke both to Victorian sensibilities and his own. The single most dramatic practical change between the manuscripts of this period and those of the late 1850s is the notable clarity and readability that mark these texts. They may be perused as readily as any printed book (indeed, with less effort than many poorly-printed books of the day) and are more sparsely ornamented than his earlier manuscripts. Aside from the three finest manuscripts (the *Horace*, *Rubáiyát*, and *Æneid*), Morris's pages from this period are marked by restraint, being lightly decorated and rarely gilded. The emphasis shifts to careful and controlled layouts and elegance of script. Morris had developed at least five distinct and competent scripts: "two based on Renaissance humanist (now called 'roman' minuscule), three on humanist cursive, or 'italic.'"⁸⁷ The decoration had also changed, becoming less stylized or obviously drawn from medieval sources and more naturalistic, with the vast majority of the ornament consisting of plants, particularly leafy backgrounds of willow leaves. Morris's intervening decade of designing wallpaper and chintz patterns stood him in good stead: unlike the scribe of the late 1850s, he was now highly expert at utilizing two-dimensional space and finding a compromise between realistic depiction and stylized ornamentation when covering a surface. Having trained himself as a designer, he could now focus on how best to combine the visual and textual elements of his page, relying on his own taste more than any medieval examples.

⁸⁷ John Nash, "Calligraphy," 298. Whitla elaborates on this, identifying six scripts (four italic, two roman), in the appendices of his article "'Sympathetic Translation' and the 'Scribe's Capacity': Morris's Calligraphy and the Icelandic Sagas," as well as organizing Morris's output in the field into several stages.

The Story of the Dwellers at Eyr (1869)⁸⁸ is the first substantial decorated manuscript of the period. Since Morris was not yet using a flat-edged pen, there are no contrasts of thick and thin line in the letterforms, though the script has cursive features which indicate Morris's studying of the Italian chancery hands. The floral decoration is subtle: small sprigs of leaves and an ornamented initial K which, surprisingly, resembles nothing so much as the Art Nouveau letters that would follow Morris's influence in later decades. Although the script is still far too close to a plain cursive, large and unevenly spaced, the new model is clearly being established, and the page is much more open. This is no pseudo-psalter, but rather a lightly embellished model of design which looks forward to the lovely *Book of Verse* that would soon follow it.

The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs,⁸⁹ of the following year, has a much more regular script, while the switch to a flat-nibbed quill pen has given the text much more character, and brought it closer to a flattened italic hand, with idiosyncratic diagonal ascenders on certain letters (h,k,m,n), little flourished hairlines which reveal the growing confidence of the scribe in his abilities. Conversely, this manuscript also shows Morris beginning to delegate aspects of the work, making the illuminations into collaborative efforts. A historiated miniature of Sigurd astride the dragon Fafnir on the first page was obviously painted by Charles Fairfax Murray, and Joseph Dunlap's assertion that Morris himself drew the surrounding eight musicians in the ornate border on the same page seems hard to credit. Only one is coloured, and the others display a confident sketching of perfectly proportioned figures in classical drapery which is unlike Morris's work. Despite their integration with the floral elements,

⁸⁸ *The Dwellers at Eyr* (referred to above as "The Story of the Dwellers at Eyr" to differentiate it from the much longer manuscript version of the same tale which Morris made for Georgiana Burne-Jones in 1871). c. 1869, 50 pages (37-46 lacking). 14x9 1/2 in. [Bodleian Library MS. Eng. misc. c.265].

⁸⁹ *The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs*, c. 1870. 146 pages. 11 x 8 1/2 in. [Bodleian Library MS. Eng. misc. d. 268].

Murray probably drew these, as he did virtually all the figures appearing in *A Book of Verse* the same year.⁹⁰ The Icelandic manuscripts also see Morris working out several layout concepts which he would return to in his printed books. In *The Story of Frithiof the Bold* (1871), Morris makes his most successful use of a two-columned page format and decoration, presaging the Kelmscott *Chaucer*.⁹¹

A Book of Verse (1870)

Morris now felt confident enough to create a birthday gift book for Georgiana Burne-Jones, the first of four illuminated manuscripts made for her in this period.⁹² He chose a selection of his own poems, perhaps including favorites of the intended recipient, and set to work on *A Book of Verse*.⁹³

In this book he broke completely away from the medieval method... here there is a modernness which owes nothing to any tradition: and a freshness, a direct appeal to first principles and instincts, which (as in the case of his earliest wall-papers) charms by its simplicity and fitness even more than the later and technically finer work. If, as has been sometimes thought possible, ornamented handwriting should again take its place among the popular arts, it is in the direction indicated by this beautiful volume that its most hopeful way would seem to lie.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ For further thoughts on the origins of these figures and similar ones used in *The Earthly Paradise* frontispiece, see Michaela Braesel, "William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and 'The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám,'" *Apollo* 504 (2004): 49-50.

⁹¹ The story was published in *Three Northern Love Stories, and Other Tales* (and as *Three Northern Love Tales*), translated by William Morris and Eirikr Magnusson (London: Ellis and White, 1875), and contains "The Story of Gunnlaug the Worm-Tongue and Raven the Skald," "The Story of Frithiof the Bold," "The Story of Víglund the Fair," "The Tale of Hogni and Hedinn," "The Tale of Roi the Fool," and "The Tale of Thorstein Staff-Smitten." For a description of the calligraphic manuscript, see Appendix A.

⁹² The title is certainly a reference to the famous lines in the *Rubáiyát*: Quatrain XI in Edward FitzGerald's translation, first edition: "Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,/ A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse - and Thou/ Beside me singing in the Wilderness - / And Wilderness is Paradise enow." The other manuscripts presented to Georgiana Burne-Jones were also planned as birthday gifts, though the lack of precise dating makes that intent uncertain: *The Dwellers at Eyr* (1871), *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1872), and *Three Icelandic Sagas* (1873).

⁹³ *A Book of Verse*, August 26, 1870. 55 pages, 8 ½ x 6 in. [Victoria & Albert Museum, L. 131-1953].

⁹⁴ Mackail, *Life of William Morris* I, 277.

This was a labour of love for Morris, as with any project for his dear “Georgie.” Her importance to Morris’s life is often overlooked, but she was indeed the friend of a lifetime for him,⁹⁵ and they were much more comfortably intimate with each other in many ways than with their respective spouses. Indeed, their marital problems were a common ground which allowed them to share understanding, sympathy and support against feelings of desertion. By the time Morris took up his quill again in the late 1860s, his wife Jane Morris was deeply involved with Dante Gabriel Rossetti as friend, muse, helper in times of emotional crisis, and lover.⁹⁶ Georgie meanwhile was painfully aware of her husband’s tempestuous affair with Maria Zambaco,⁹⁷ and so they found solace in one another’s company. In many ways the circle of friends seemed to have miscast their romantic roles, and if Jane Burden had married Rossetti, and Morris married Georgiana MacDonald, it might have been an easier life for them all.⁹⁸ Morris’s choice of poems returns again and again to unrequited love and a gentle melancholy for the past, “barren longing,” “love born but to die,” and “wed to grief and

⁹⁵ Isabelle Williams, “Georgiana Burne-Jones and William Morris: A Subtle Influence,” *Journal of the William Morris Society* 12.1 (Autumn 1996): 17-24, and “Re-thinking the Legend: Georgiana Burne-Jones and William Morris,” *The Review of the Pre-Raphaelite-Society* 4:1 (Spring 1996): 5-25.

⁹⁶ On November 26, 1868 William Bell Scott held a dinner party which was attended by the Morrises and Rossetti: “Gabriel sat by Jeanie, and I must say acts like a perfect fool if he wants to conceal his attachment, doing nothing but attend to her, sitting side-ways towards her, that sort of thing.” Scott also recorded that Morris witnessed this behaviour. Nicholas Salmon, *The William Morris Chronology*, 42.

⁹⁷ “In January 1869 this culminated in a dreadful scene by the side of the Regent’s Canal near Browning’s house at 19 Warwick Crescent. According to Rossetti, in a letter he wrote to Madox Brown, Mary Zambaco ‘provided herself with laudanum for two at least, and insisted on their winding up matters in Lord Holland’s Lane. Ned didn’t see it, when she tried to drown herself in the water in front of Browning’s house &c. - bobbies collared Ned who was rolling with her on the stones to prevent it, and God knows what else.’ Needless to say Burne-Jones turned immediately to Morris for help. In the same letter Rossetti wrote: ‘Ned ... and Topsy, after the most dreadful to-do started for Rome suddenly, leaving the Greek damsel beating up the quarters of all his friends for him and howling like Cassandra. Georgie has stayed behind. I hear to-day, however, that Top and Ned got no further than Dover.’” Nicholas Salmon. “A Friendship from Heaven: Burne-Jones and William Morris,” 7-8.

⁹⁸ For a detailed account of Morris’s relationship with Georgie and her family before his marriage to Jane Burden, see Ina Taylor’s *Victorian Sisters: the Remarkable MacDonald Women and the Great Men They Inspired*, especially Chapter Four: Pre-Raphaelite Experience (1856-60).

wrong.” The book must be first understood as a labour of love, if the full significance of its form is to be appreciated. It is a hand-wrought expression and interpretation of Morris’s thoughts towards Georgie, and the recipient, as surely as the maker, is embodied in its pages.

The manuscript uses gold in its headings and titles, but has no gilded fields. Leaves and flowers, as in Morris’s Icelandic manuscripts, twine and frame the text, flowing inward from a hairline border. The overall impression is

a tangle of swift delicate pen-work in brown with leafage and flowers lightly painted in thin colour, while among the greenery are highly finished figure-subjects. The book, prepared in a few weeks for a special occasion (Mrs. Burne-Jones’s birthday) is a happy piece of work with a certain simplicity of sentiment about its gay fresh pages which makes a piquant contrast to the magnificence of the *Æneid*.⁹⁹

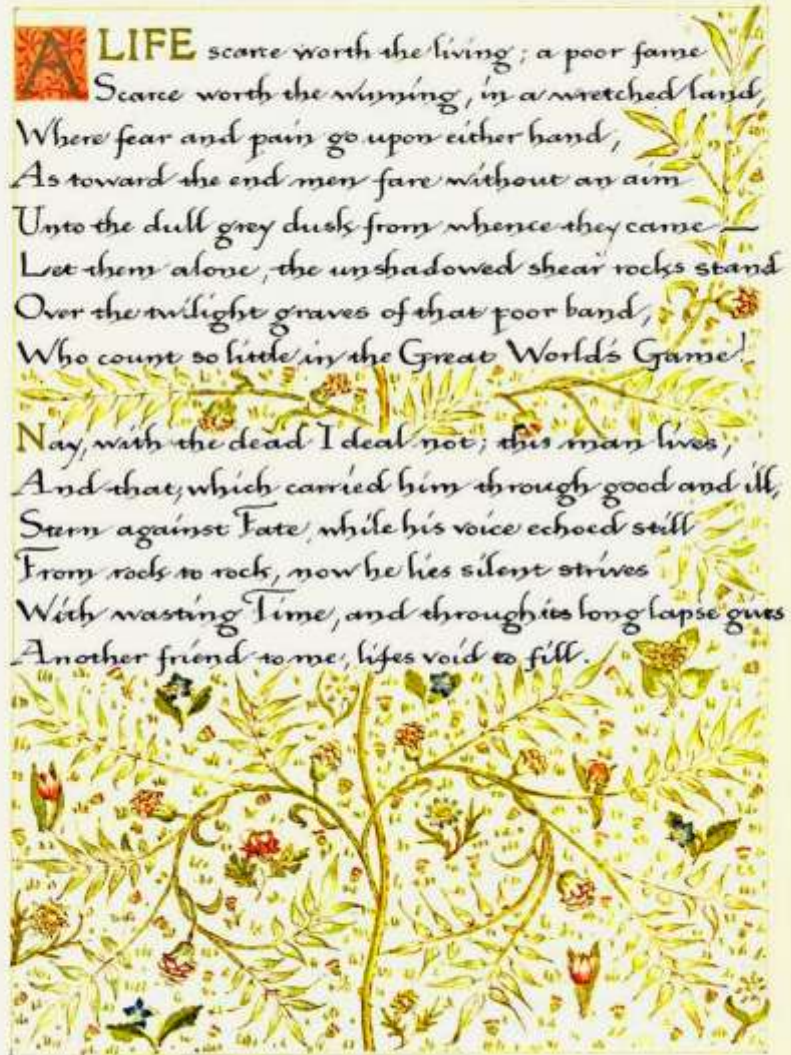
May Morris says of the book that it “marks the beginning of the book-decoration,” and indeed, it varies greatly from the medieval illuminations that inspired its crafting. The watercolour design is delicate and supple, using an understated formality which goes unnoticed among the profusion of blooming ornaments. There are no abstract shapes, no features removed from their natural models (see fig. 3.10). Each flower and leaf is precise and identifiable, coloured realistically rather than symbolically or with a priority given to design hierarchies: Morris has left Ruskin’s credos behind along with the Gothic script. Indeed, if the miniatures and gilded letters were not present, it would be a misnomer to call this an illumination at all, but its beauty and unity of design are unmistakable, and for the first time in Morris’s calligraphy work, genuinely inspired by the content of the text in all respects.

For a personal gift, the manuscript was a surprisingly public and communal project. Morris’s colophon (a separate letter sent with the manuscript) is scrupulous in its efforts to render credit where credit is due:

⁹⁹ May Morris, *The Introductions to the Collected Works of William Morris* I, 255-6.

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TO GRETTIR ASMUNDSON.

Figure 3.10 Sonnet "To Grettir Asmundson" in *A Book of Verse* (1870).

As to those who have had a hand in making this book, Edward Burne-Jones painted the picture on p. 1: the other pictures were all painted by Charles F Murray, but the minstrel figures on the title page, and the figures of Spring, Summer and Autumn on page 40, he did from my drawings. As to the pattern-work, George Wardle drew in all the ornament on the first ten pages, and I coloured it; he also did all the coloured letters both big and little; the rest of the ornament I did, together with all the writing. Also I made all the verses; but two poems, the Ballad of Christine, and the Son's Sorrow I translated out of Icelandic.

William Morris
26 Queen Sq: Bloomsbury, London
August 26th 1870.¹⁰⁰

In a life where Morris's work was being constantly reproduced and sold to wealthy people, a process he was increasingly conflicted about, this book stands out as irreproducible (certainly no technology of Morris's day could have made reproducing such a manuscript readily feasible) and unique.¹⁰¹ It is a gift of labour, not merely by Morris but by their mutual friends, and by Georgiana's husband, whose sole contribution is the first illustration, a head-piece for "The Two Sides of the River" depicting a sorrowful man with arms outstretched towards a maiden just out of reach on the far bank. The book contains many such private textual and graphic messages, and it is worth noting that many of the poems Morris included remained unpublished during his lifetime. "Much as Rossetti buried his volume of poems dedicated to Elizabeth Siddal in 1862 and resurrected it in October 1869, Morris 'buried' his poems from the public's gaze in the special volume for Georgie."¹⁰²

Michaela Braesel's detailed analysis of the ornament¹⁰³ is qualified in a later article by the observation that "[t]he choice of script led Morris to abandon decoration of a mediaeval

¹⁰⁰ This note is reproduced as a plate in the facsimile edition of *A Book of Verse* by Scolar Press (London: 1981), 52. The original has since been lost.

¹⁰¹ Also noted by Rosie Miles, "'The Beautiful Book That Was': William Morris and the Gift of *A Book of Verse*." *William Morris Centenary Essays*, eds. Peter Faulkner and Peter Preston, 133-43.

¹⁰² Richard Pearson, "'Silence and Pity'; an Unpublished Fair Copy," *The Journal of the William Morris Society* 9:2 (Spring 1991): 13.

¹⁰³ Michaela Braesel, "Text and Image in William Morris's *A Book of Verse*," 41-51.

type because this style seemed unsuitable and would have produced an aesthetic dissonance in his work.”¹⁰⁴ Even at this stage, Morris had some way to go in combining his text, script, ornamentation and miniatures into a unified statement, but the manuscript is stylistically balanced and elegant, despite the several contributors. If the meaning of the paratextual apparatus is still more abstract than concrete at this stage, it is nonetheless of great importance to Morris’s coming press-work. As Oscar Wilde said in his unsigned review of that seminal 1888 Emery Walker printing lecture which inspired Morris to found Kelmscott,

He pointed out the intimate connection between printing and handwriting—as long as the latter was good the printers had a living model to go by, but when it decayed, printing decayed also... he exhibited a page of the copy-book of Vincentino the great writing master which was greeted by a spontaneous round of applause.¹⁰⁵

The Vincentino page was photographed directly from Morris’s red volume of Italian copy-books, and Morris’s studies into it had enabled him to create a new “living model” which would serve him well at Kelmscott: not merely of letterforms, but of the page as a living environment for its text.

¹⁰⁴ Michaela Braesel, “William Morris and ‘Authenticity,’” 1.

¹⁰⁵ On November 15, 1888 Morris attended a lecture on ‘Letter Press Printing’ given by Emery Walker at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society’s show at the New Gallery. According to May Morris it was this lecture that determined Morris to set up the Kelmscott Press. Oscar Wilde described it in the *Pall Mall Gazette* as the most important lecture in the series. Morris himself said that Walker ‘was very nervous and should have written down his words; but of course he knew his subject thoroughly well.’ After the lecture an American in the audience came up to Walker and criticized him for some remarks he had made on American printing. Morris immediately came to Walker’s defence and gave the American ‘some candid speech’ on the standard of American printing. The lecture was never published, but notes, review, and surrounding information are collected in Appendix A (324–331) of William Peterson’s *The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris’s Typographic Adventure*. The glass lantern-slides were reused by Walker many times as he gave variations on the same lecture in the following years, but when Cobden-Sanderson borrowed them for his own 1906 lecture tour of America and merely wrapped them in newspaper, they did not survive the journey back to England. Colin Franklin, *Emery Walker: Some Light on his Theories of Printing and on his Relationships with William Morris and Cobden-Sanderson* (Cambridge: privately printed, 1973), 34.

The Rubáiyáts (1871-4)

Morris's love of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* can be demonstrated by his multiple hand-renderings of it: four, three of them illuminated or ornamented. He interpreted no other text so many times. The fame of the *Rubáiyát* is almost entirely due to the Pre-Raphaelite circle's efforts, as the first edition printed by Bernard Quaritch of 250 books at a shilling each initially sold no copies. Finally in 1861 the remaining copies were piled in a "penny box" outside Quaritch's Castle Street shop, where they were discovered by Whitley Stokes and John Ormsby. Stokes bought a copy for his acquaintance Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who showed it to Algernon Charles Swinburne. By the time Swinburne returned for his own copy the next day Quaritch had raised the price to twopence in response to the interest, and as the poem was distributed among the literary circle that included Browning, Burne-Jones, George Meredith, Morris, Ruskin and Tennyson, Quaritch hastily returned the books to the more dignified inside shelves and began to have thoughts of a second edition. As the translation had been unaccredited, it was some time before anyone was aware of FitzGerald's role in the work. The attention and affection given to the work, first by Rossetti and Swinburne, then Burne-Jones and Morris, began its inexorable rise to fame.¹⁰⁶ The work was controversial and sensual in its sensibilities, and the cheerful lack of respect for religious instincts doubtless appealed to Morris as evidence that his beloved medieval citizens had enjoyed life in an earthly, aesthetic fashion.

In "The Failure of Omar Khayyam" in the June 9, 1912 *New York Times*, James J. Daly criticizes several "grossly materialistic" verses, linking them to almost anything one could find to complain about in society, from waning morals and faith to lasciviousness. He

¹⁰⁶ The publication history of the translation is detailed in the introduction to the 2009 edition by Daniel Karlin ed., *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, xlix-lvi.

acknowledges, however, that these reprehensible qualities may not be easily discernible:

There is nothing in it to shock elementary sensibilities; its blasphemies are veiled; its chirping staccato of agnosticism sounds harmless enough; the sensualist and materialist in his singing wears an engaging air of sad mysticism; the “minstrel of smiling nihilism,” as Lionel Johnson called him, is too pleasant and entertaining to be obviously dangerous. And yet we doubt whether any poem of our times has wrought greater spiritual havoc.¹⁰⁷

Of those influenced by the work, Daly says that “their spiritual defects constitute a flaw in the artistic instinct... [w]ithout wishing to judge art by high moral standards alone, but accepting acquiescence with them as an ingredient to every true artist... in art the unspiritual and un-Christian spirit is necessarily of a lesser beauty. In life it is degrading.” Morris’s efforts to illuminate the poem in gold are a challenge to this kind of rhetoric. The sensibilities of the *Rubáiyát* are in sympathy with Morris’s reformatory efforts, and he champions it as a fine example of what the Middle Ages has to teach his society about life. That FitzGerald’s translation is largely creative would make it all the more to Morris’s liking, because its relationship to the source material is as much inspiration as translation, as was so much of Morris’s own work.

The choice was significant because this is also the period when Morris began to take control of his firm, a venture into capitalism which cost him some goodwill from his former partners and friends when the company was dissolved and reorganized under Morris’s sole ownership as Morris & Co. on March 31, 1875, and to develop a more practical awareness of the needs of his society, especially the working classes. Despite Morris’s own belief that he became a Socialist almost overnight, there is evidence that his concerns were growing throughout the 1870s,¹⁰⁸ especially his efforts to head off impending war with Russia in 1876-

¹⁰⁷ James J. Daly, “The Failure of Omar Khayyam,” *New York Times*, June 9, 1912.

¹⁰⁸ “Now this view of Socialism which I hold to-day, and hope to die holding, is what I began with; I had no transitional period, unless you may call such a brief period of political radicalism during which I saw my ideal

8.¹⁰⁹ In 1877 Morris co-founded the S.P.A.B. (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) and started the “Anti-Scrape” movement, after gaining insight into social and political action through this involvement with the Eastern Question Association. The quiet monastic solitude of scribal work was Morris’s solace during this time of turmoil: he called it “his chief joy” in a letter of 1874,¹¹⁰ as he also gave up his share in Kelmscott Manor, which he could find no pleasure in since Rossetti and his wife had taken it as their retreat (Rossetti subsequently quit Kelmscott Manor when faced with paying the rent alone, leaving it for the last time in July 1874), though the place it continued to hold in his heart is unmistakable, from *News from Nowhere* to his choice of Kelmscott’s churchyard for his final resting-place (see fig. 7.3). In a letter to Aglaia Coronio of May 12, 1899, Mackail speaks of “those stormy years of *The Earthly Paradise*¹¹¹ time and the time following it,” when Morris was often absent from his own home, turning to the Burne-Joneses and his other friends for company, and to his work for distraction.¹¹²

In many ways, Morris was forced to restructure his life as he took up calligraphy again. His friends, business, marriage, and art had all strayed beyond his control, and his battle to restore order turned his vision outward: having abandoned the passive role in such

clear enough, but had no hope of any realisation of it. That came to an end some months before I joined the (then) Democratic Federation [in 1883], and the meaning of my joining that body was that I had conceived a hope of the realisation of my ideal. If you ask me how much of a hope, or what I thought we Socialists then living and working would accomplish towards it, or when there would be effected any change in the face of society, I must say, I do not know. I can only say that I did not measure my hope, nor the joy that it brought me at the time.” William Morris, “How I Became a Socialist,” [Justice, June 16, 1894] *William Morris: Selected Writings and Designs*, 36-7.

¹⁰⁹ See Salmon, “A Friendship from Heaven: Burne-Jones and William Morris,” 8-9.

¹¹⁰ Letter to Louisa MacDonald Baldwin of March 26th, 1874. *Collected Letters* I, 218.

¹¹¹ Between April 19 and May 1, 1868, Volume I of *The Earthly Paradise* was published by F S Ellis. Despite the marital difficulties, the book’s title-page nonetheless stated “To my Wife I dedicate this Book.”

¹¹² Pearson, “Silence and Pity; an Unpublished Fair Copy,” 13.

crucial aspects of his own life, he also began to move towards an increased awareness and indignation of the ugliness lurking outside of his carefully circumscribed world. A letter of August 20, 1874 reveals the growing conflict:

I hope you will let me come again and that then you will think me less arrogant on the—what shall I say—Wesleyan—tradesman—unsympathetic—with art subjects than you seemed to think me the other day: though indeed I don't accuse myself of it either: but I think to shut one's eyes to ugliness & vulgarity is wrong, even when they show themselves in people not unhuman: do you know when I see a poor devil drunk & brutal I always feel, quite apart from my aesthetical perceptions, a sort of shame as if I myself had some hand in it. Neither do I grudge the triumph that the modern mind finds in having made the world (or a small corner of it) quieter & less violent but I think that their blindness to beauty will draw down a kind of revenge one day.¹¹³

Morris was translating fourteenth-century Icelandic sagas and the *Aeneid*, designing wallpaper and chintz for wealthy families, employing craftsmen and running a business, but some part of his mind was grappling with the contradictions of his society and his own actions within it. The seeds of *News from Nowhere* are in this letter, nine years before Morris would join the Democratic Federation and sixteen years before he would write that tale.

Of the four *Rubáiyát* manuscripts, the most important is the birthday present to Georgiana Burne-Jones (see fig. 3.1).¹¹⁴ Usually called the 'Burne-Jones *Rubáiyát*' or 'The London *Rubáiyát*' among scholars, her version is written on parchment on 23 small numbered pages (15.2 x 11.7 cm). The gift, as with his earlier present, involved some collaboration: Georgiana Burne-Jones writes in a note that accompanied the manuscript when she presented it to the British Library:

Morris did the whole of the writing and all of the ornament except the figures, of which some were designed by himself and some by Edward Burne-Jones. They were painted in the book by Mr. Charles Fairfax Murray, and owing to their all

¹¹³ Letter to Rosalind Francis Howard of August 20, 1874. Kelvin, ed., *Collected Letters* I, 230.

¹¹⁴ For descriptions of all four manuscripts, see Appendix A.



Figure 3.11 *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1872).

thus having passed under the same hand became more alike than the originals actually were.¹¹⁵

Braesel points out the visible evolution of Morris's use of floral ornamentation,¹¹⁶ and one may also note the greater integration created by stylizing the branches and plants into curvilinear frames, natural roundels which provided space for the framing figures. Morris also first begins to think in *facings* here, seeing the expanse formed by two facing pages as one design surface: an approach almost absent from *A Book of Verse*, but that would become a cornerstone of his book design philosophy when he turned to Kelmscott.

The small scale, as with the *Horace* that would follow, enhances the effect of the elaborately detailed ornamentation. On most of the pages the illumination is confined to a rectangular miniature framed space between the gold title and the text. A running ornament of flowers and fruits couches the verses. On five of the pages, however, the framing ornament is lush and gilded, with three figures on each side of the text frames, one larger figure centred beneath, and perfectly controlled burnished fronds curving into the text frame to soften the barrier between the two regions (see fig. 3.11). Mackail notes:

The treatment of the fruit and flower work is an admirable adaptation of an almost Pre-Raphaelite naturalism to the methods and limits of ornamental design: the raspberries on page 14 and the honeysuckles on page 21 may be specially instanced as unsurpassable in their truth to nature and their decorative effect.¹¹⁷

In addition, in these pages is the first model of the ornamented framed leaves of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*: a complex environment surrounding and displaying the letters, no longer consisting of ornamental elements floating on the paper but rather a continuous design

¹¹⁵ The original note has since been lost. See the introduction to *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: a facsimile of the illuminated manuscript book presented to Georgiana Burne-Jones*.

¹¹⁶ Michaela Braesel, "William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and 'The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam,'" 8-9.

¹¹⁷ Mackail, *Life of William Morris* I, 279.



Figure 3.12 *The Odes of Horace* [Q. Horatii Flacci Carminum] (1874-7).

integrating everything in the facings in a manner that had rarely been seen in the past five centuries. Morris had successfully created an original Victorian counterpart to the medieval paratextual grammar of the scribe's illuminated page. It had been a painstaking process, and he never mastered the perfectly even hand or expert gilding of the calligraphers who dedicated themselves solely to the art, but the skill and originality displayed in his later illuminations is unquestionable.

Last Illuminations: Horace and Virgil (1874-6)

Morris's calligraphic manuscripts assert, above all else, that a document is not a passive entity, a "clear vessel" to convey the information of its words. The first printed incunabula, he asserted, were not far different from scribal ones, and the considerations of production were initially similar, with each medium seeking a thoughtful artistic interpretation of its contents. However, as he said in an 1895 interview, print's "history, as a whole, has practically coincided with the growth of the commercial system, the requirements of which have been fatal, so far as beauty is concerned, to anything which has come within its scope."¹¹⁸ Just as printing killed medieval scribal tradition, it would in one sense end Morris's illuminating days.

The next work of importance after the *Rubáiyáts* was the tiny *Horace*. In March 1874, a few days after celebrating his 40th birthday by quietly illuminating all day, Morris wrote to Charles Fairfax Murray in Rome, concerning the latter's vellum purchases on his behalf, and saying that in his "Scribe's capacity" he was

at work at an Odes of Horace which will make about 100 pp of vellum ocatavo of the big sheets: the odes are short so there is nearly an ornamental letter to every page, which makes it a heavyish piece of work: however I have written about half and done 20 letters. To say the truth I have a mind to try and sell a book if it could

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, "William Morris, Print Culture, and the Politics of Aestheticism," *Modernism/modernity* 15: 3 (September 2008): 477-502.

find a customer: I work much neater now, & have got I think more style in the ornament.¹¹⁹

The small volume is notable in several respects. It was planned and rendered by Morris, Burne-Jones and Charles Fairfax Murray. The scribal hand and decoration are in Renaissance Italic style, designed and handwritten by Morris—all 183 pages of it—although the border design remained unfinished. The text, however, is in the original Latin, and that, coupled with the more painstakingly authentic ornamentation, marks this as the first manuscript of Morris's which an educated viewer might mistake for a Renaissance work. The *Horace* was one of Morris's smallest illuminated manuscripts, with a condensed italic script, but the decoration is rich and elaborate (see fig. 3.12). May Morris calls it "a delightful volume (I use the word carefully), instinct with joy, vivid and jewel-like."¹²⁰ The large illuminated initials are not allowed to encroach on the text, and the crowds of rayed gold discs show a blending of medieval with classical detail, yet the work is notably less original than *A Book of Verse* or the *Rubáiyáts*.

Paul Thompson notes that "with Horace, most of the motifs have clear antecedents. Less naturalistic blooms, more conventional motif like a flower gone to seed, a gold dot surrounded by thin rays, which was commonly used by fifteenth-century French and Italian illuminators. Like Morris, they also mixed this type of foliage and seed ornament with scrolled acanthus leaves." The history of the motifs Morris is adopting is significant:

Morris's fine initial letters, which are interlaced by knobbly stalks, depend very closely on the white vine stem ornament which is found in fifteenth-century Italian manuscripts and also in Romanesque illumination. The Italian humanists revived this motif which had first been applied to the initial in northern barbarian illumination, perhaps because they believed that the Romanesque manuscripts in which they found it represented classical tradition. Morris studied examples from

¹¹⁹ Kelvin, *Collected Letters* I, 219.

¹²⁰ May Morris, *The Introductions to the Collected Works of William Morris* I, 255.

both Romanesque and Renaissance manuscripts. Thus as an illuminator Morris's technical scholarship gradually diminished his originality.¹²¹

Morris's affection for Horace went back at least to his Oxford days. Inside the cover of his textbook copy of *Quinti Horatti Flacci Opera* (The Odes of Horace), he wrote the date (March 21, 1851) and drew a pen and ink drawing of a one-legged man holding a placard on which is written: "W. Morris. His Horace."¹²² The manuscript—like most of Morris's illuminations—was never completed, despite the encouragement of his friends.¹²³ Perhaps because it was intended neither as a present nor specifically for sale, and Morris felt he had begun to master his craft, it was laid aside for another, grander project, within two years: the *Aeneid*, Morris's last and most important illuminated manuscript.

¹²¹ Thompson, *The Work of William Morris*, 151.

¹²² When Morris and Burne-Jones sat their matriculation examination for Exeter College in June of 1852, Burne-Jones noted how Morris finished his Horace paper early, and with great confidence. *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* I, 72.

¹²³ On December 22, 1885, the festive entertainment in the Morris household was included May and Jenny playing duets on the guitar and mandolin. Fellow artist, bookbinder (and later founder of Doves Press with Emery Walker), T.J. Cobden-Sanderson recorded in his *Diary* that Morris had approached him for a subscription to turn the *Commonweal* into a weekly paper: "I gave him £5, on consideration that he completed his Horace and Virgil, and allowed me to bind them, and give them to the Bodleian." *The Journals of Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson* I (London: Macmillan, 1926), 290. Though Morris never fulfilled that bargain, the *Horace* does reside at the Bodleian today.

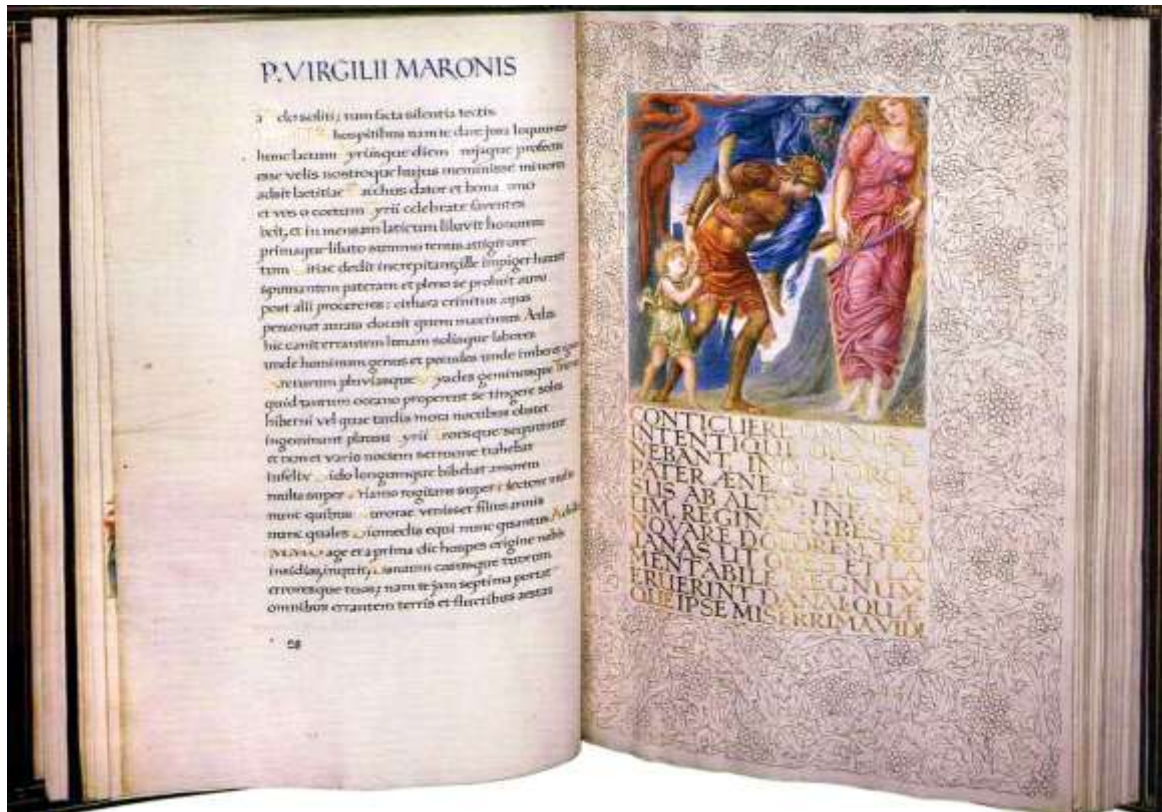


Figure 4.1 The *Aeneid* Manuscript, pgs. 28-29. “Venus leads Aeneas, with his father and son, from the ruins of Troy,” with a full-page acanthus and floral border in pen-and-ink

Chapter 4

Paratextual Renaissance: The Pre-Raphaelite *Aeneid*

In 1873, Morris began work on a large folio copy of Virgil's *Aeneid*, to be illustrated with twelve large designs by Burne-Jones. This was a daunting undertaking for men who were already very busy, and as Georgiana Burne-Jones says, "there were many things to prevent the completion of the scheme, amongst others the temptation Morris felt whilst following the Latin to turn the great poem into English verse—which he did."¹²⁴

The translation superseded the illumination, and the *Aeneids of Virgil* was published in November 1875 (the plural in the title is surely a reference to George Chapman's popular Homer translations of 1843 and 1857, which were titled *The Illiads of Homer & The Odysseys of Homer*). Where the multiple *Rubáiyáts* show Morris's first fully developed Roman hand, the *Aeneid* revealed his second. From his other manuscripts, four adept Italic hands can be differentiated, and it is worth noting that many of the letterforms, derived as they are from the chancery hands in the Italian writing-manuals that so influenced the first printers, are similar to the Golden type that Morris would design and adapt from Jenson's Pliny fount of 1476. Morris's scripts and design choices throughout his calligraphic undertakings come increasingly close to the later Kelmscott model.

¹²⁴ "[Burne-Jones] was not sent abroad for the winter, and the only change he took was to enter on a fresh scheme of work which he describes to Mr. Norton: 'Every Sunday morning you may think of Morris and me together — he reads a book to me and I make drawings for a big Virgil he is writing — it is to be wonderful and put an end to printing.' This went on for more than a year. It was to have been a glorious vellum manuscript, with pictures painted from Edward's designs — twelve large ones and many initial letters — and filled with ornament by Morris. All the pictures were designed, but scarce half of the *Aeneid* was written out, and less was coloured. There were many things to prevent the completion of the scheme, amongst others the temptation Morris felt whilst following the Latin to turn the great poem into English verse — which he did. He was also busier than ever before with the management of the work at Queen Square, and, as he himself said, 'up to his neck in designing papers, chintzes, and carpets.'" *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* II, 156.

For each of the twelve books of the *Aeneid* manuscript, an opening display page was planned featuring a half-page miniature above enclosed golden text, all framed by a border of organic stylized foliage (see fig. 4.1). Burne-Jones created twenty-nine detailed pencil studies for the book, including studies for both the half-page panels and for historiated initials (see fig. 4.8). Bruce Rogers echoed the high praise of Mackail and others for these drawings: “Sydney Cockerell showed me the original drawings long ago and I have always thought them amongst the finest things that Burne-Jones did for Morris.”¹²⁵ The project was too ambitious, ultimately, and only half the text was transcribed to vellum by Morris, and he soon became convinced he was unequal to the task of copying Burne-Jones’s designs onto the final pages. In a letter of May 27, 1875 to Charles Fairfax Murray, Morris asked for his help:

I have begun one of the Master [Burne-Jones]’s pictures for the Virgil. I make but a sorry hand of it at first, but shall go on at it till (at the worst) I am wholly discomfited. Meantime, whether I succeed or not in the end ’twill be a long job: so I am asking if you would do some of them, & what it would be worth your while to do them for: I think I should have to see you before you could get to work on them; but if you don’t come over here this summer, as I suppose you won’t by your letter, I shall like enough be coming to Italy *next* year & we can talk about it then.¹²⁶

Murray thus became the first collaborator on the project, and this collaboration was part of how it lost momentum. By deciding that Murray must take part in the manuscript, and so its copying must await their reunion, Morris stalled the process, and two months later was deeply engrossed in a new passion, the study and practice of dyeing, which preoccupied much of his time for the next few years. By the time Morris raised his head from Thomas Wardle’s dye-house in Staffordshire, the Anti-Scrape and Eastern Question Association had

¹²⁵ Bruce Rogers to Estelle Doheny, *Autograph Letters, New York, 17 April 1934, 1 page, 8vo* This letter is one of 47 letters and cards received by Mrs. Doheny and bound in a folding case with her personal copy of the 1934 Brinton Cox essay *A Pre-Raphaelite Aeneid*. See Appendix A for details.

¹²⁶ Kelvin, ed., *The Collected Letters of William Morris I*, 254.

begun to pull him into political activism, and he would never return to calligraphy. In a letter of April 4, 1878, Morris bemoans his conflicting commitments:

My dear Wardle

I am really very vexed, but I cannot get down to Leek this side of my Italian journey: this week a spurt of politics in which I was bound to share, has destroyed all my work and left me only next week & a day or two in the week after for doing what I positively must do before I go: I am the more vexed as judging from your note I might have been of some use to you about the silk printing: however I send you some notes of combinations of colour which I think would succeed, & shall be happy to see the patterns and advise accordingly. [...] I fancy you will like to sign the enclosed [*a petition demanding to know the Liberal Party's position in the Eastern Question*].¹²⁷

Some years later, as the Kelmscott Press was being set up, Morris sold the unfinished *Æneid* to Murray, who was determined to finish the manuscript.¹²⁸ He accessed Burne-Jones's drawings (at the Fitzwilliam museum at Cambridge) and copied them onto the vellum, then hired Louise Powell to do the painting, and Graily Hewitt to transcribe the second half of the text and provide gilding. Seymour de Ricci, a close friend of Murray's, recalled:

[The] Pre-Raphaelite *Æneid*... is an old friend. Many times did I intrude on Fairfax Murray and find him minutely completing some detail of the illumination. That Virgil is one of two or three modern manuscripts with anything like a soul.¹²⁹

The unfinished volume today is 370 pages. The "Pre-Raphaelite *Æneid*" (*The Æneid of Virgil* illuminated manuscript), is significant for the scope of its ambition, the design and quality of what was realized, and its place as the last illumination project before Morris turned to printing and Kelmscott. The connection between Morris's abandoning of illumination and founding his own press seems initially hard to credit, given the intervening years, but Morris's continued attempts to satisfy his desire for a perfect printed book with the help of other

¹²⁷ Ibid., 471.

¹²⁸ J.W. Mackail remembers the manuscript as being in Morris's possession until 1890, and being sold to Murray shortly thereafter. *Life of William Morris* I, 320.

¹²⁹ Seymour de Ricci to Estelle Doheny, *Autograph Letters*, Paris, 5 July 1934, 2 pages, 8vo. See Appendix A for details.

publishers and printers produced nothing that he considered beautiful or meaningful, until he took the inevitable step after Emery Walker's lecture of starting his own press, and doing all the design work himself. The *Aeneid* marked the limit of what could be done with a pen, and it took some time after that for Morris to determine that it was not possible for existing presses to replicate the rich paratextual environment he had fashioned in his manuscripts. The flood of complex and increasingly expert patterns Morris designed for wallpaper, chintz, embroidery and tile gives ample evidence of his continued preoccupation with two-dimensional surface design, and shows his increasing familiarity with woodblock print transfers (used for wallpaper and cloth prints, then for the ornament and illustrations of Kelmscott books).

Coming at the end of the two thousand leaves of paper and vellum Morris had scribed, ornamented and illuminated, most of those in the sustained Sundays and evening work of 1869-75, the *Aeneid* is an enigma. Its place as the crowning achievement of Morris's quill, the handwritten counterpart to the Kelmscott Chaucer, has never been seriously questioned. Yet unlike the *Chaucer*, only a handful of scholars have opened the book, it has almost never been displayed, and no substantial part of it has ever been reproduced. There have been no critical articles devoted to the manuscript, which is astonishing considering that Morris has received over a century of scholarly attention. There are several reasons for this: first and foremost, the inaccessibility of the manuscript through most of its history.¹³⁰ The text's being written in the original Latin has also encouraged the work to be seen as outside of the purview of English literature, whereas Morris's published translation of Virgil, though often criticized, has at least been studied. Interdisciplinary scholars and calligraphers have tended to concentrate on lesser works held in libraries and museums, and the skilled efforts

¹³⁰ See Appendix A for the full *Aeneid* provenance.

of Murray, Powell, and Hewitt to continue and finish the work amount to contamination of the Morris and Burne-Jones collaboration from a historicist perspective. In fact, the pages most often reproduced of the *Æneid* were finished long after Morris died, and so, in an ironic twist, some patterns taken as evidence of Morris having reused his *Æneid* borders in his *Chaucer* in fact demonstrate the opposite. Louise Lessore, later Mrs. Alfred Powell,¹³¹ who drew (and in some cases painted) the full-page borders around Burne-Jones's opening miniatures for each of the twelve books, in an effort to keep the book artistically coherent and faithful to Morris's vision, derived the necessary ornament from available Kelmscott borders. The magnificent gold grape vines pattern that surrounds the first miniature of the book (see fig. 4.1) is adapted from the *Chaucer*.

When he undertook Murray's daunting commission to complete Morris's calligraphy, Graily Hewitt wrote to Sydney Cockerell, "I quoted as low as I possibly could because I value the honour of the job so." Although Morris had studied various methods of gilding from ancient manuals of gilding and chrysography,¹³² Hewitt had recovered medieval practices specific to vellum, a harder and less porous surface than paper; and he put this to good use in 1909 as he began rendering the golden capitals and headings, and gilding the borders of the twelve title pages following the ornamental drawings of Louise Lessore/Powell. Only four of her borders were gilded by Hewitt, though he completed all the running headings. Among

¹³¹ Louise Lessore's grandfather was Emile Lessore, an accomplished Wedgwood decorator. See Jacqueline Sarsby, "Alfred Powell: Idealism and Realism in the Cotswolds," *Journal of Design History* 10:4 (1997): 375-397.

¹³² May Morris remembers of her father, "He took great pains to learn how to lay the gold, though he did not do it all with his own hand. The raised gold, of course, presented special technical difficulties. I can recall certain sheets of paper that lay about the study for years afterwards, covered with small squares of groundings and gold—his experiments according to various recipes from Theophilus and other old books or from present-day workers in gold. He chose his own method, and with much success, for in most of the books I have examined the gold remains fresh and brilliant and uncracked. The vellum was the other great difficulty; it was found that the only vellum that could be heard of that was not prepared with white lead and injurious to the colours and the gold was produced in Rome," *The Introductions to the Collected Works of William Morris* I, 258.

the letters sent to Estelle Doheny¹³³ in response to the presentation copies given out of Anna Cox Brinton's privately printed essay, *A Pre-Raphaelite Æneid of Virgil in the Collection of Mrs. Edward Laurence Doheny of Los Angeles, Being an Essay in Honour of the William Morris Centenary 1934*, were reminiscences from those who had worked on the manuscript. Hewitt writes:

I am particularly pleased to think that the gilding of that front page has apparently stood well. And you will easily imagine what anxiety was mine in working round that unique miniature of Morris' own hand. The completion of the book was perhaps the most important commission I have ever had.¹³⁴

The position of the *Æneid* manuscript is all the more interesting in that it was conceived as a landmark achievement from the beginning: like the *Chaucer*, there was nothing accidental about its fame: the project is described as a coming triumph and an influential work from its first mentions in letters by Morris and Burne-Jones. Certainly it was influential to a handful of important calligraphers such as Hewitt and Murray, and its place in legend secured by the accounts of those who had seen it, yet its direct practical impact on the field of calligraphy, or ornament, or art in general, would seem to be almost nil, *because it was never reproduced*. Indeed, the first time a single page of the manuscript was printed as a plate to accompany the *Collected Works* of 1911, May Morris tried fervently to compensate in highly detailed words for the failure of the printed reproduction to do justice to the original page:

The page we reproduce in colour is a typical example of the ornamental letters, though this plate— done with the utmost skill and care— cannot render the sparkle and life of the painted vellum. Gold is used in this book with a special ingenuity and enjoyment: one page has pale and red gold and silver fruit with brownish-black (Chinese ink) stems and flourishes, while the capitals of the page are silver and blue. (The silver throughout is untarnished.) Then there is an

¹³³ Estelle Doheny (1875-1958), during and after her marriage, was a rich Los Angeles philanthropist. The Morris *Æneid* was part of the Doheny private library from 1932 until she gifted her rare book collection to the St John's Seminary of Camarillo, California. The founding of the Edward L. Doheny Memorial Library was on October 14th, 1940, and the *Æneid* resided there until the Christie's auction of May 19, 1989, when it was purchased by Andrew Lloyd-Webber for 1.2 million dollars. See Appendix A.

¹³⁴ Graily Hewitt, *Autograph Letters, Liss, Hants, 30 June 1934, 2 pages, small 4to*. See Appendix A for details.

enchancing page where the quite severe ornament consists of plain flat silvery-gold indented with a slight dotted scroll, and all over it hang fruit which are in raised gold of a darker tone, as is also the letter I, which has a little running leafage in brown. The margin of the ornament has just a fluttering of gold penwork, like a streak of gauze. You have to imagine the distinguished simplicity of the arrangement and the subtle handling— veil over veil of transparent gold. The sight of such ornament gives me the same feeling as that experienced on looking at a piece of early Syrian weaving of silk and gold— I forget who calls it “woven air” — a sort of emotion before something not grandiose in aim, but quiet and lovely, made by a hand that does not measure its happy work in hours. There are several pages of this serene golden decoration of the Haroun El-Rasheed order, one of ears of wheat in gold, another of gold and silver and brown with bronze nourishes. I remember his showing me the bronze shell-gold and expressing some pleasure in it, but also a doubt as to its lasting quality. He thought it rather too beguiling to use largely. In the one place where it is employed here, it has not changed colour at all.¹³⁵

The laying of metallic gold by hand is the crucial act that separates a hand-illuminated page from its printed counterpart, and demands compromise in replication. May Morris takes pains to describe it as a separate process.

He also played with the gold in another way — quite his own as far as I have seen. He laid a coloured ground which was then covered closely with spots of flat gold paint; fine effects were got in this way — dots on a red ground, dots on a pale green giving a surface like a lemon; and then he developed this and laid a parti-coloured ground, red and black, say, between the twinings of branches, and over it the gold spots were set thick — such a surface! all ‘bonded’ by a big plain letter of raised gold a-top. All the lettering in this book, gold and coloured, is by his own hand.¹³⁶

This evident truth, that such an illuminated manuscript is a singular artifact that cannot be adequately reproduced or disseminated but remains private and fragile, was not lost on Morris, and it was at odds with both his growing Socialist beliefs and his Ruskin-inherited wish to sow examples of good artistry across Victorian society. Just as Morris had to turn to printing to make his authorial intentions public and to propagate his tales and poems, just as block-printing was necessary to copy his wallpaper and chintz patterns, the means of production necessary to make his message audible were lacking until he turned to print. That

¹³⁵ May Morris, ed., *The Collected Works XI*, xxviii-xxix.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, xxix.

the message was paratextual and could not be expressed wholly or satisfactorily except by example, required Morris to resurrect a type of printing which had not been done for centuries, with a high level of original artistic involvement and concern for material aspects of production.

This tension between Morris's aesthetic and political sensibilities might also be help to explain why Morris chose the *Aeneid* specifically for his grandest effort, rather than the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, or any of the great Northern epics he had worked on previously. In one sense, the choice was a logical and chronological progression: having moved from early Germanic medieval influences in the form and content of his earlier illuminations, the lessons of the Italian writing-book that guided him to develop Humanist letterforms doubtless influenced the choice of subject. The evolution of Morris's calligraphy experiments is strong evidence of the primacy he gave to the visual coherence of documents. Yet the *Aeneid* continued to occupy Morris after he had set aside his pen and planned only a mass-printed translation, so the meaningful nature of the classic to his sensibilities at the time are worth considering. Historically, Virgil is one of the earliest authors to be illuminated, and Italy likely the first country to do so. Ancient manuscripts held in the Vatican (such as the fragments named *Vergilius Vaticanus*, *Vergilius Romanus*,¹³⁷ and *Vergilius Augusteus*) date back to the 4th to 6th centuries A.D. The Victorian adoption of classical texts, by scholars and artists, is too large a

¹³⁷ Paul Ashbee has argued that the *Vergilius Romanus* was produced in England, basing his conjecture in part on illustration analysis by Roman art specialist Martin Henig. If true, this would make it the earliest known British codex, and imply sustained Roman settlement in Britain later than is generally considered likely. Aside from possible implications for Morris's beloved Arthurian tradition, this would give Virgil a particular resonance in terms of the early English identity. "Centuries of Roman survival in the West," *British Archaeology* 32 (March 1998): <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba32/Ba32feat.html>

The manuscript locations are: *Romanus*: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica, Cod. Vat. lat. 3867); *Vaticanus*: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica, Cod. Vat. lat. 3225); *Augusteus*: 4 leaves held in the Vatican Library (MS 3256), and 3 leaves in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Lat. fol. 416).

topic to approach here.¹³⁸ The centrality of classical Latin and Greek texts for educated Victorians is difficult to imagine now, when familiarity with Latin and Ancient Greek is such a rare accomplishment. For example, even Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubáiyát* makes use of Horace.¹³⁹

As already mentioned, Morris's early overt political activism was concerned with Britain's involvement in the "Eastern Question" (essentially a prolonged feeding frenzy as the Ottoman Empire collapsed) and often spoke out against England's aggression and dominance over other countries. Given this anti-expansionist viewpoint, perhaps his attitude towards the founding of Rome should not be assumed to be unqualified nostalgia-tinted praise. Indeed, Geoffrey Riddehough notes that Morris's translation is distorted by his love of Icelandic sagas, imposing a heavy long metre (iambic heptameter couplets) and accentuating the primitive, the darkness, mist and blood—in short, making a retelling that in showing the barbaric roots of the Roman Empire looks forward to its decline, and the ferment and turmoil from which the medieval world eventually arose.¹⁴⁰ Morris, seeing parallels between the British Empire of his day and ancient Rome as many of his contemporaries did, including Matthew Arnold (one thinks of "New Rome"), rejects the assertion of his day that Britain was comparatively philanthropic, or practicing a form of

¹³⁸ For explorations of this topic, see Norman Vance, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), especially 133-53; and Frank M. Turner, "Virgil in Victorian classical contexts," *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 284-322.

¹³⁹ See Stephen Harrison, "Horace and the Construction of the English Victorian Gentleman," *Helios* 34:2 (Fall 2007): 7-222.

¹⁴⁰ Geoffrey B. Riddehough, "William Morris's Translation of the Aeneid," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 36:3 (July 1937): 338-346.

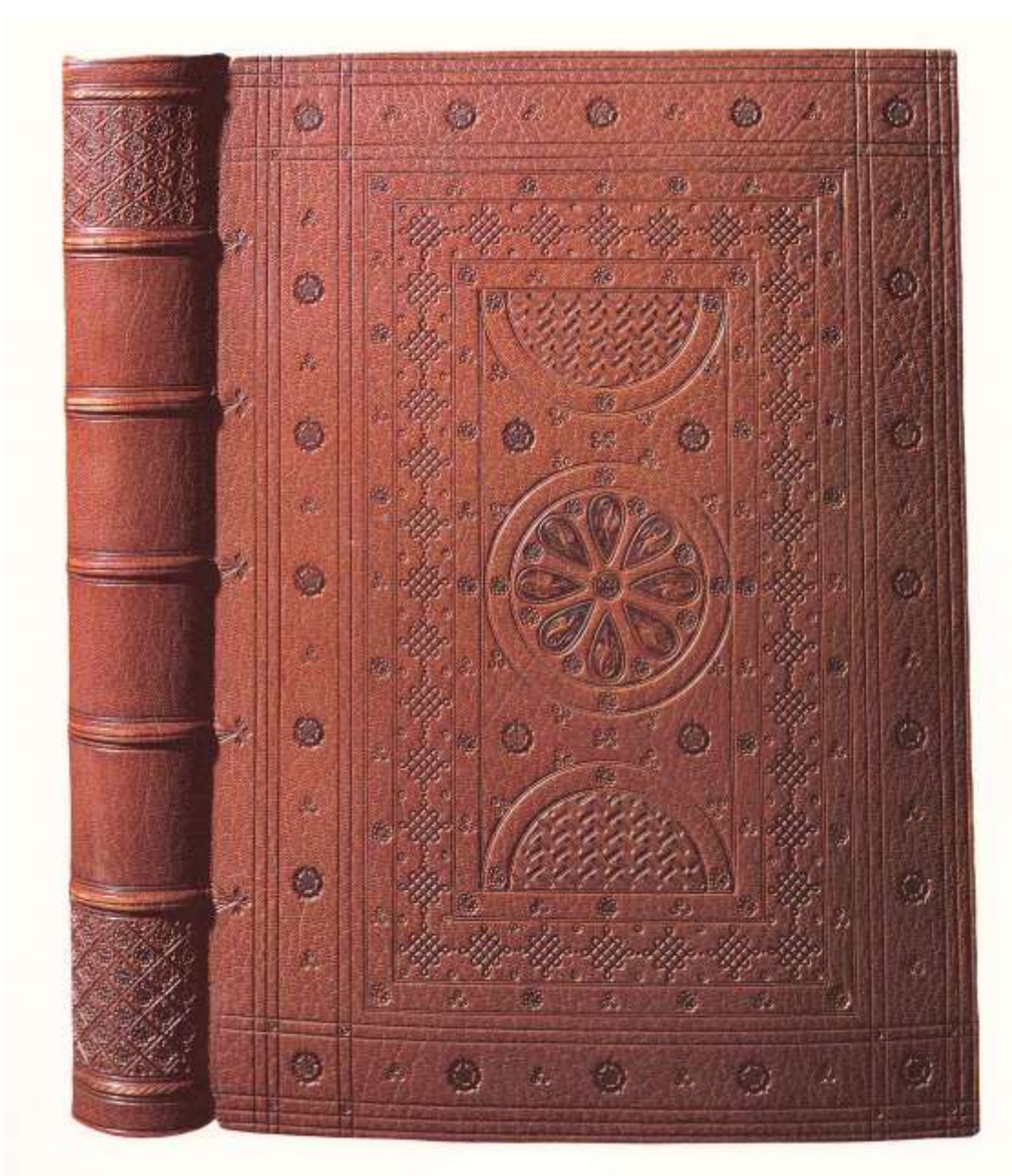


Figure 4.2 The *Aeneid* binding in brown morocco by Leighton.

defensive imperialism.¹⁴¹ The selection of a text which could be read as equating the lost age of heroes with imperial dynasty or a celebration of the inevitable downfall all empires experience.¹⁴²

Reading the *Æneid* Manuscript¹⁴³

Morris's *Æneid* was, as already noted, begun by him and Burne-Jones, abandoned, and given over to other hands. Graily Hewitt completed the writing, presumably before 1919, Louise Powell continued the decorations Morris had begun, though she did not complete the task, and the historiated miniatures were continued by Charles Fairfax-Murray after the preliminary drawings by Burne-Jones. These collaborators were experienced at following Morris's hand, and other manuscripts such as *The Story of Frithiof the Bold* were also continued by Murray, Hewitt, and Powell. The book should therefore be considered as a realized work, if not quite finished. In all elements it is faithful to Morris's vision.

The binding, undated and unsigned, done by J & J Leighton,¹⁴⁴ is Renaissance-inspired and blindtooled in brown morocco leather, with outer borders of rosettes alternating

¹⁴¹ Eric Adler, for example, quotes R.F. Betts: "When comparisons were made between the ideologies of Roman and British imperialism, it was frequently asserted that Rome had been tyrannical and exploitative, whereas Britain was frequently humanitarian and commercial. Therefore, the two empires were forced to part company in the minds of most imperialists over policy." Adler, "Late Victorian and Edwardian Views of Rome and the Nature of 'Defensive Imperialism,'" *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 15.2 (2008): 197n58.

¹⁴² It is tempting to consider Morris's epical translations in light of the famous Marx quote from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852): "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language."

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm>

¹⁴³ Circumstances have prevented my personally handling or viewing the original manuscript thus far, so these observations are based on reproductions and descriptions, drawn largely from the two Christie's catalogues that feature it. I have accessed every published reproduction I know of that has been made from the manuscript to date. See Appendix A.

with small groupings of three annular dots between ruled triple-fillets, mirroring the pattern of stamped rosettes on the top and bottom compartments of the six-compartment binding (the others being blank within). Inner frames, of 36 knot-work stamps (reminiscent of *entrelac* work) and tiny floral stamps, surround a central panel with a full roundel with half-roundels above and below (see fig. 4.2). The supporting semicircles contain a simpler knot-work pattern reminiscent of waves, and the central rosette contains eight teardrops, radiating around a small flower stamp. Each teardrop contains a coiled dragon, facing towards the centre.¹⁴⁵ The book is almost fourteen inches high (three inches shorter than the *Chaucer*), and has 185 leaves (370 pages).

The vellum surface holds the brilliance of gold and pigments without absorption, and so the deeply-incised surface of a Kelmscott page (with the ink biting deep into the paper) is inverted here, with fine layers rising from the page, and never sinking into it. After a purple-stained flyleaf, the shining first page presents the first half-page miniature above burnished gold text, depicting Venus and Aeneas. Murray is said to have reworked this entire miniature with the exception of Aeneas's head, which is almost certainly a portrait of Morris himself (an observation underlined by the fact that Murray was asked by May Morris specifically to rework all but that face)(see fig. 4.3). Examining Murray's transcribed images against Burne-Jones's original sketches reveals the limitations of the former to reproduce adequately the skill of the latter, though the medium of illumination is exceptionally difficult to work with,

¹⁴⁴ J & J Leighton was a family business of binders (in the trade since at least 1764) who ran a London firm in Brewer Street, Golden Square, from 1820 to 1902. The father, uncle, and son were skilled and prolific binders, and the firm was used by Morris for repair work on his manuscripts and most of his binding needs, including the Kelmscott volumes. For the endless troubles which Morris's careless attitude towards practical issues of rebinding caused for binders (especially in such matters as the thin inner margins and title-leaves glued down to the Holland boards) see Colin Franklin, "On the Binding of Kelmscott Press Books," *Journal of the William Morris Society*, 2:4 (Summer 1970): 28-30.

¹⁴⁵ If the choice of dragons has specific meaning, it is obscure: perhaps a reference to the great sacred serpent of Anchises's tomb, the attendant spirit of Aeneas's father.



Figure 4.3 *Aeneid* pg. 1: “Venus meets Aeneas on the shores of Libya” detail.

and Murray was a careful copyist. This is interesting in that it shows the difficulty of precise transmission even in the making of what is ostensibly an original unique work. When considering the collaborative history of the *Aeneid*, it is striking how it reflects the making of such manuscripts in medieval times, even to the shifting of semiotic meaning and unreliability of transcription from the inception. This creative process, and the practices by which manuscripts were received, changed dramatically with the rise of Christian Humanism and literacy in medieval Europe.

The transition of manuscript in the twelfth century from a document to be read aloud and absorbed slowly, in a manner combining movement, speech, hearing, sight, and touch, to a more clearly-organized text which allowed for sophisticated extraction of elements and silent study, has been recently studied as an epochal movement in the history of books.¹⁴⁶ Word division and scholasticism were part of the clericalization of books that transformed European culture. The monopoly of the scriptoria gave way to an increasing popular demand for both lay and clerical manuscript codices, and the developed patterns of design and iconography had to be adapted to this new usage. This is the most crucial reason why the period between the rise of clerical manuscripts and the rise of printing holds the fullest development of paratextual strategies. The page as a conceptual space defined by letters shifts as the meaning of the act of reading does: from the monastic view of reading as “a search for the wisdom of God, for *remedium*,”¹⁴⁷ where the illuminations light the reader’s path to moral understanding and the language is always Latin (indeed, for over six centuries in Europe Latin is almost the only language written in Roman letters and preserved on vellum), the

¹⁴⁶ See Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Paul Saenger, "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society," *Viator* 13 (1982): 367-414.

¹⁴⁷ Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, 11. I am indebted to Illich’s study for many of the observations in this section, and to William Whittle for bringing it to my attention.

codex and its holy language are abruptly desacralized. The line between clergy and clerisy becomes blurred as reading, and therefore the acquisition of wisdom, becomes a mundane act, solitary and silent, that separates sound from word and alphabet from scripture. By the end of the twelfth century Roman letters are being used for Germanic and Romance languages, as well as Italian. Spacing between words allowed copyists to consider them as distinct ideograms, and authorship conflated with the work of the amanuensis (word division, while going back to seventh-century Ireland, became more common with the rise of clerical culture).

Morris and Burne-Jones reproduce some of the process. Making notes on paper (rather than scratching drafts on to wax tablets), they corrected and transcribed onto the valuable vellum, then began to illuminate them with costly inks and precious gold. Their language is the original Latin, but their book is formally subdivided and organized in the manner of later manuscripts. With blue and gold capitals, historiated initials, and marginal miniatures indicating important divisions, the *Aeneid* manuscript uses a sophisticated Renaissance-influenced paratext. This complexity of layout is inherited from the revolution that began in the twelfth century: books gradually became repositories of information that could be easily navigated as the textual patterning expanded to include rubrication of key words, *glossia* moving from interlinear to a subordinate marginalia, arguments offset and even numbered in sequences. As books became individual experiences rather than the impetus for oral recitation, the visual architecture of them became dominant: “The visible page is no longer the record of speech but the visual representation of a thought-through argument.”¹⁴⁸

With this movement comes a corresponding change in the role of visual elements. Illuminations become, from a medieval religious/moral perspective, mere illustrations, and

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 99.

the function attributed to the ornamentation of Christian manuscripts must also be thus engaging an alternating sense and accompanying the words in an abstract illuminative fashion similar to music; the practical mnemonic purpose of assisting the reader in finding and keeping their place—a less sophisticated version of the later visual cues and paratextual conventions; and finally, as a parallel narrative instructing the illiterate or slower listeners and viewers of the text; “exegetical and heuristic cues [...] *Hoc visibile imaginatum figurat illud invisible verum* [...] ‘this visible image represents that invisible truth.’”¹⁴⁹ Although the strategies of adornment and practical organization are relevant to Morris’s work with paratextual environments, it is this last function that most closely concerns the *Aeneid*.

The ornament and illustration have little to do with Ancient Rome, whether the time of Aeneas or of Virgil. Like medieval texts which make all times their own, the ornaments and miniatures ignore the setting of the text as described in the words, and furnish it stylistically rather in a manner befitting the halcyon days of its medium.¹⁵⁰ The handwriting is strongly spaced and comfortable in its dominance of the page, asserting a rejuvenation of the classical content in humanist minuscule and the long, clear lines without abbreviations or multiple columns. In this the influence of the Italian writing-book can be clearly seen, written as they were for the reformation of late-medieval hand-writing. Historically, humanistic script was used for classical and antique texts, seldom for contemporary or vernacular texts. “A

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 109. The Latin is quoted as a caption beneath a twelfth-century miniature.

¹⁵⁰ “IN the edition of Virgil published by Grüninger at Strassburg in 1502, Sebastian Brant boasted that the illustrations to it, whose preparation he had superintended, made the story of the book as plain to the unlearned as to the learned: ‘Hic legere historias commentaque plurima doctus, Ne minus indoctus perlegere illa potest.’ The boast was no ill-founded one, though it must be granted that Virgil would have been puzzled by the cannon here shown as employed in the siege of Nova Troja, and similar mediaevalisms abound throughout the volume. Coming almost at the end of the first series of early illustrated books, the Virgil of 1502 thus exemplifies two of the chief features to which they owe their charm: the power of telling a story and the readiness to import into the most uncongenial themes some touches of the life of their own day.” Alfred W. Pollard, *Old Picture-Books: With Other Essays on Bookish Subjects* (London: Methuen and Co., 1902), 3.



Figure 4.5 *Aeneid* pg. 238: "Turnus visited by the Goddess Iris" detail.

humanistic manuscript was intended to suggest its contents by its look: old wine in new bottles, or the very latest vintage in stylish new dress.”¹⁵¹

The historiated initials resemble the elaborate medallions of later Renaissance book decoration, as does the lack of framing employed through all but the half-page miniature pages. The manuscript resembles Renaissance calligraphy, but also several incunabula volumes from Morris’s own library, including the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder, printed by Nicholas Jensen in Venice in 1472 (see fig. 4.4). The Pliny was printed with small capitals and space for wealthy owners to have initials hand-illuminated if they wished, and also served as model for Morris during his typeface designing (and as the *Aeneid* still has many spaces left amongst the black text for its own rubriced initials, the resemblance is even more striking).¹⁵² Yet Morris is, as always, his own designer: the poetic text is entirely reformatted as if it were prose, enjambed with internal punctuation, while the capitals that would customarily have begun each verse-line are replaced by the gold and blue capitals that set off proper names and certain brief phrases. Paragraph divisions have also been affected, with initial fully-gilded or blue-rubriced words in majuscule setting them apart. The emphasis and rhythm of the language are reshaped by Morris and Hewitt’s calligraphy.

Burne-Jones’s particular compositions emphasize the fitness of each image to its frame and surrounding space, as discussed in relation to the *Chaucer* illustrations in the next chapter. Figures are aware of their limited space, and bending their heads from the borders, contort their bodies in repeating visual rhythms. Aeneas leans in from the corner in the first miniature, his golden armour a more dully-burnished echo of the gold vines writhing around

¹⁵¹ Martin Davies, “Humanism in script and print,” Jill Kraye, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 51.

¹⁵² William Morris’s copy of Pliny’s is held by McGill University’s rare book library (Blacker Wood Rare Books: Pliny, the Elder. *Naturalis historiae libri tricesimiseptimi*.--Venetiis : N. Jenson, 1472. folio PA6611 A2 1472). It is embellished with red and blue initials with white line, and contains an initial representing Pliny offering the book to the Emperor.

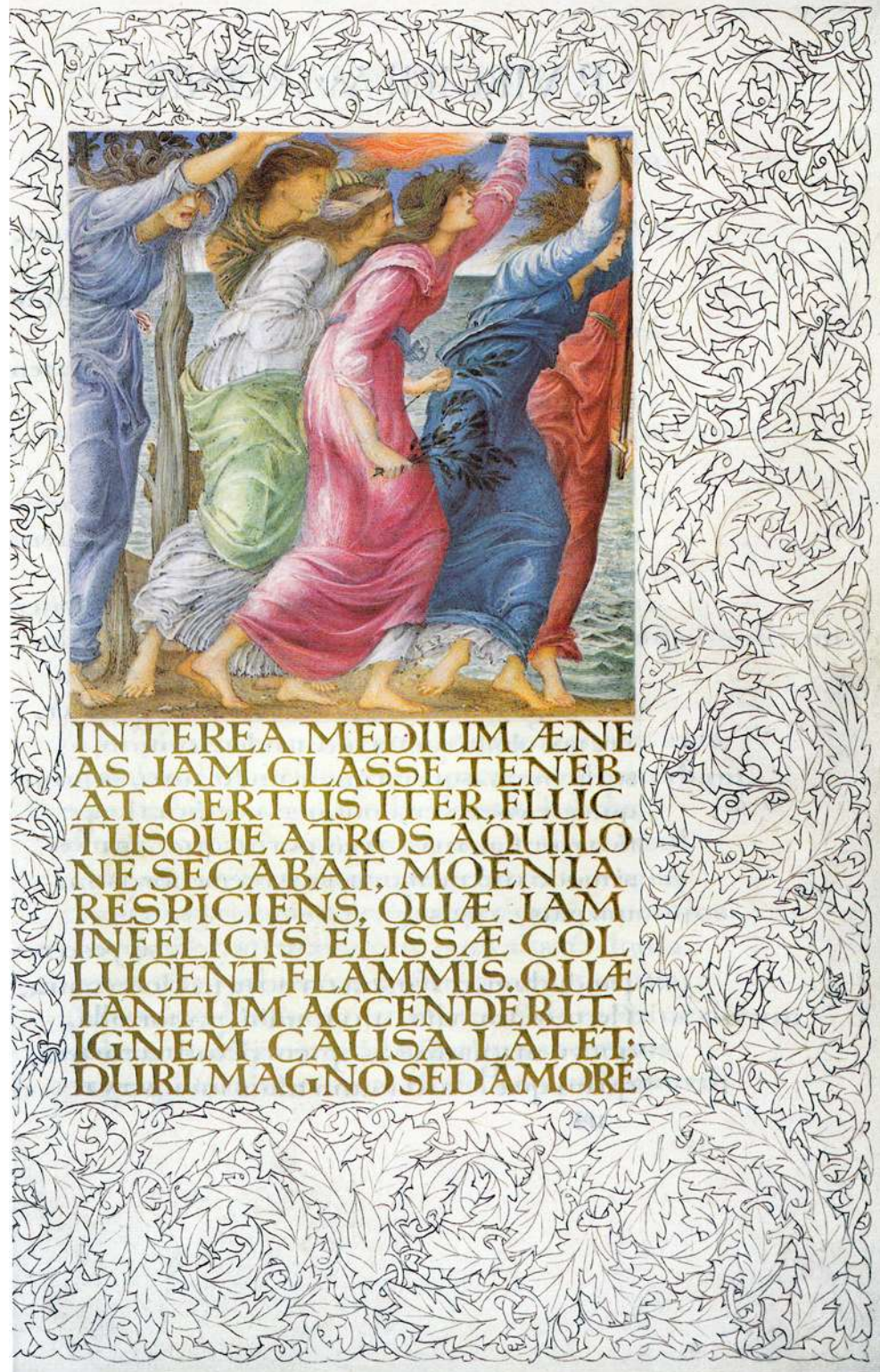


Figure 4.6 *Æneid* pg. 113: “Iris in disguise incites the women of Troy to burn the ships”

the scene, while Venus's left hand is a hairsbreadth from pressing against the other border. Similarly, on page 238 the goddess Iris's finger barely grazes the left border as her foot lightly hovers above the lower frame (see fig. 4.5).

On page 113, as the women of Troy storm forward in a crowd to burn the ships, their hands and the torches they hold are above the frame so the reader's eye must focus on their enraged faces, but the shore they stand on is the lower border of the miniature (see fig. 4.6). The figures are constrained and held to their proper place on each page, but their bodies push against that environment. On page 86, grief-maddened Dido falls on Aeneas's sword, but she is poised above the abandoned bed they once shared, against which the sword's hilt is set, and her back bows beneath the straight upper border, which even causes the flames of her pyre to bend and flicker along it. In the next moment as Dido falls down the blade, if she was to pull it into her breast with enough force, perhaps Aeneas's sword-point might break through the frame and border (see fig. 4.7).

There is a silent message throughout, commenting on the narrative: the deities hover suspended within their paratextual spaces, but untroubled by them. The warriors bow before them gracefully, as they do before the gods and fates—though in the extraordinary battle scene on page 268 depicting Aeneas as he strikes Mezentius in the throat as he is thrown from his fallen horse, that defiant Etruscan king, famed as a *contemptor divum*, a “despiser of the gods,” is held against the lower corner as he is stabbed through the throat (see fig. 4.8). The mortal women, however, are continually trapped by the text: witness Cassandra's sorrowing face as she peers, half-naked and bound, from a historiated initial on page 44 (see fig. 4.9). On page 26, Dido sits enclosed within the fronds of a leafy historiated Q, grasping the side of the letter itself with one hand, while the serene and reckless figure of



Figure 4.7 *Æneid* pg. 86: “Dido, maddened with grief at the departure of Aeneas, falls on his sword in the bed they shared.”



Figure 4.8 *Aeneid* pg. 268: “Aeneas slays Mezentius” & Burne-Jones’s design for the miniature (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

P. VIRGILII MARONIS



conserimus multos anatum demittimus reo
 diffugunt alii ad naves et litora cuncti
 fida petunt; pars ingentem formidine turpi
 scandunt rursus equum et nota conduntur in alvo
EU mihi irvitis fas quatenquam fidere divis
 ecce trahebatur passis riamicia virgo
 crinibus a templo assandra adytisque inervac
 ad caelum tendens ardensia lumina frustra
 lumina, nam teneras arcebant vincula palmas
 non tulit hanc speciem furiosa mente orcebus
 et sese mediam iniecit periturus in agmen
 consequimur cuncti et densis incurrimus armis
 hic primum ex alto delubri culmine telis
 nostrorum obruimur oriturque miserrima cardes
 armorum facie et raiantum errore jubantum
 tum anai gemitur atque crepta virginis ira
 undique collecti invadunt, acerrimus jax
 et gemini trida oloptumque exercitus omnis
 adversi rupto cur quondam turbine venti
 confligunt ephyrusque otusque et latus ois
 rus equis; stridunt silva s.rvitque tridenti
 spumatus atque imo cretus ciet xquora fundo
 illi etiam si quos obscura nocte per umbram
 fudimus insidiis totaque agitavimus tnrbe
 apparent; primi clipeos mentitaque tela
 agnoscent atque ora sono discordia signant
LICET obruimur numero primusque orcebus
 enlei dextra diva armipotens ad aram

Figure 4.9 *Aeneid* pg. 44: "Cassandra chained" (historiated initial).

P. VIRGILII MARONIS

reginam meditor ne quo se numine mutet
 sed magno **A**eneae mecum teneatur amore
 qua facere id possis nostram nunc accipe mentem
 regius accitui cari genitoris ad urbem

Sidoniam puer ire parat mea maxima cura
 dona ferens pelago et flammis restantia Trojae
 hunc ego sopitum somno super alta **C**ythera
 aut super **I**dalitum sacrata sede recondam.

ne qua scire dolos mediūve occurrere possit
 tu faciem illius noctem non amplius unam
 falle dolo et notos pueri puer indue virtus
 ut quum te gremio accipiet latissima **D**ido
 regales inter mensas laticemque **L**yacum
 quum dabit amplexus atque oscula dulcia figet

Pareat **A**mor dictis cara genetricis et alas
 exiit et gressu gaudens incedit **I**uli
 at **V**enus **A**scanio placidam per membra quietem
 irrigat et fotum gremio dea tollit in altos
 Idaliac lucos ubi mollis amaracus illum

floribus et dulci aspirans complectitur umbra
 jamque ibat dicta parens et dona **C**upido
 regia portabat **T**yrus ducit lactus **A**chate.

Uum venit aulacis jam se regina superbis
 aurea composuit sponda medianque locavit
 jam pater **A**eneas et jam **T**rojana Juventus
 conveniunt stratoque super discumbitur ostro
 dant famuli manibus lymphas **C**erereque canistris



Figure 4.10 *Aeneid* pg. 26: “Cupid embraces Dido” (historiated initial).

Amor/Cupid kisses her, his rosy wings breaking through the bounds of the letter and spreading out into the margin of the page as he hovers beside the queen (see fig. 4.10).

Lavinia, last wife of Aeneas, however, stands tall and alone on page 181, only her head tilted down beneath the weight of her burning tresses. The torches from the sacrificial altar have ignited her long hair, but she is unharmed, and the event is called an omen of glorious war and reconciliation for her people (see fig. 4.11). The curves and arabesques of her flaming hair echo and almost merge with the arcs of the surrounding border's foliage.

This is paired in the story with the dream-oracle message her father Latinus receives from his father Faunus, warning that Lavinia must marry a stranger who will come from another land and bloodline (Aeneas). The fires wrap the maid from her feet to her head, but they seem compressed by the top border in a way reminiscent of Dido's pyre-flames. The fires that burn throughout the text and the images are a constant reminder of the gods' great purposes, and the high cost in pain which mortals must pay to bring those plans to pass.¹⁵³

The backgrounds of these half-page miniatures contrasts with the voluptuous foliage swirling in interlaced circles all around their borders, resembling the world inhabited by the figures in Quattrocento art: buildings and trees become simple repeating verticals, geometric shapes. These backgrounds anticipate the world which Burne-Jones's Chaucer would inhabit, as Duncan Robinson and William Peterson have remarked: simple, claustrophobic spaces, shallow and inhabited by multiple planes rather than any true perspective of depth.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ For a remarkably thorough paratextual analysis of framing devices and narrative, see Stuart Whatling's unpublished thesis "Narrative art in northern Europe, c.1140-1300: A narratological re-appraisal" (PhD: The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, March 2010). I have elected not to use his specific terminology here, but his categorizations (such as *chronotopic* and *conversational* frames), could greatly clarify the discourse of framing as ontological marker if their use was more widespread.
<http://www.medievalart.org.uk/PhD/Contents.html>

¹⁵⁴ William S. Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 250, and Duncan Robinson, *A Facsimile of the Kelmscott Chaucer and A Companion Volume to the Kelmscott Chaucer II* (London, 1975), 28-30.



Figure 4.11 *Aeneid* pg. 181: “Lavinia, her hair ablaze” detail.

The narrow streets and medieval buildings that appear both in the *Aeneid* (as Carthage behind the marginal miniature of Juno in her peacock-pulled chariot on page 2) and in the *Chaucer*, may well have been inspired by Burne-Jones's visit to Siena in 1873, during which he made many sketches of the town itself and the art he found preserved there (see fig. 4.12). As the text speaks of legendary Italy, the text and ornament conjure that country's artistic Renaissance, and the larger illustrations blend the two. In Burne-Jones's women and their drapery, the influence of Botticelli is everywhere. Yet despite all these antecedents and influences, the book is fresh and original in design and beauty. It is still a profound repudiation of Victorian printing and page design, mocking the fragmented design, anemic aesthetics, and material poverty of the printed books of Morris's day. The *Aeneid* represents the "end of print" in the sense of exposing that medium's limitation: it does what no printed book can do, and is in many ways far beyond them. The subtlety and richness of ornament and colour, the sense of personal connection with the hands that created it, and the direct resurrection and expansion of the illuminative tradition assert a powerful sense of what had been lost since the rise of printing. As Anna Cox Brinton asserted in 1934,

Today his Virgil possesses the unique fascination of the older, more individual art. It reaches the heart as no multiplied press work can do. The reader is less near to the versatile genius of William Morris in turning the pages of his Kelmscott *Chaucer* than in poring over the illuminated pages of the Pre-Raphaelite *Aeneid*.¹⁵⁵

Lost Messages

What social message, then, is in the physical project of the *Aeneid* illumination, or indeed in any of Morris's paratextual apparatus? This study noted earlier that such questions must yield to the unavoidable ambiguity involved when dealing with multiple levels of meaning and interlacing semiotic systems. Considering the importance of materiality to Morris, however,

¹⁵⁵ Anna Cox Brinton, *A Pre-Raphaelite Aeneid*, 39.



Figure 4.12 *Æneid* pg. 2 “Juno in her chariot before the city of Carthage” (detail/marginal miniature).

the need to create physical artifacts to embody his aesthetics and politics, the relevance of material and process must be examined as a crucial point. The relationship between the printed word and the scribal tradition is important because it suggests the precious nature of the book's contents as socially or spiritually important wisdom, as a cultural event to be preserved. The anachronistic look of the Kelmscott books points out that the first works printed were carefully chosen, lovingly and painstakingly transferred. Unlike the medieval printers, who, like Victorian ones, were usually striving to make a profit, Morris is to some degree in sympathy with the motives of clerical scribal illuminations and so his work's use of a modified form of that paratextuality implies the rendering done for love of the sacred word. The beauty conveys authority and inspires a slower, more attentive effort to interpret the messages of the book, to match the obvious care of the printer. One exegetical message is that as certain canonical works such as Chaucer were worthy of many scribal and printed reincarnations over the centuries, they are by Morris's day more than ever remarkably sustained artifacts of culture. The usefulness of a printed document stylistically resembling a handwritten one is that it evokes those questions of design, labour, artistry and material which are so much easier to ignore when handling a standard cheaply-printed book than a manuscript. The quasi-medieval nature of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* startles the eye, references past centuries, and serves as a strong reminder of the entire history of the text from early manuscript onward. More subtly, it also indicates why Morris feels printing was created in the first place: to facilitate the preservation and the transmission of thoughts that defined a country, a culture, or a faith. Morris's choices of material and design make the Chaucer convey its importance, its age, and its 'Englishness,' all as defined and interpreted by the printer.

The printed word must have a discernible relationship with the written word to keep printing and calligraphy alive, as Morris and Cobden-Sanderson argue, and also to emphasize the personal nature of each interpretation. Everything about a private press book reminds its owner (who often does not *read* his or her purchase: after a century, many Kelmscott books still have their pages uncut) of the attitude of the creator towards his text. This is something absent when questions of paper, layout, typeface or scribal hand, ornament or illustration are decided entirely by practical considerations largely removed from authorial intent, or the intent of the paratextual transmitter who embodies their own attitudes towards the text in its framing and presentation. So much of Morris and Burne-Jones is in the *Aeneid* manuscript that Morris's printed English translation could hardly tell a reader all that those golden Latin words and unfinished paintings might have, but there was no readership present to evaluate their attitude or relationship to Virgil's text. Kelmscott helped to show that the printing-house is always co-author of any work they publish and their choices matter as much as those of the medieval scribes, be their efforts transparent, predictable, clumsy, amateurish, slavishly fashionable, idiosyncratic or anachronistic. In each case the book as artifact is the unavoidable negotiator of textual meaning, of the relationship between viewer and text, between author and culture, between age and place. Every book is a compromise between text and presentation. With his highly controversial decisions and aesthetics, Morris demonstrates to all who touch or see his calligraphic or printed pages how vitally important the printer or scribe's choices are, and how similar their roles are. Reading or even looking at a text is an act of analysis which yields impressions of meaning. The sumptuous and complex materiality, whether seen as design or art, requires the reader to acknowledge and engage with the codes—textual, rhetorical, paratextual, visual—that shape the page. The potential of the artifact's paratextuality may not be unlocked to a great degree, depending on the analyzer, but

this is the loss of transmitted meaning and gain of inadvertent significance that defines any creative act.

Once an unusual page design or material/paratextual environment has engaged the eye actively, the process of interpretation shifts dramatically. Where the standard practice is to ignore everything but the text proper, or to observe and appreciate (or dismiss) the paratextual setting in a moment, disconnecting it perceptually from the act of reading, Morris's continuity of environment sabotages such strategies. The visual ornament, use of strong, handmade materials suggesting antiquity, and (in most of the Kelmscott books and Morris's calligraphic pages) the romantic aesthetic of the language and content form a closely-woven web. For many readers, the novel experience of including visual and material elements in the assimilation of a text was (and judging from modern critics, remains) a frustrating experience, requiring a more multifaceted engagement and greater willingness to interpret non-textual elements. Morris, an artist, designer, medieval scholar, and illuminator, expands his messages through the entire repertoire available, forcing consideration of all the constituent parts of a book.

The next chapter engages with Morris's blurring of compositional and delivery media and the effect this has on the signification of his Kelmscott books: coded works using visual and textual rhetorical strategies specific to the materiality of hand-printed books, but owing much to investigations into illuminated manuscripts. The symbolic systems are deeply interconnected, and Kelmscott books confront and invite comparison simultaneously with at least four other categories of documents: medieval incunabula, medieval illumination, Victorian printed works, and Victorian illumination. In terms of formal and rhetorical characteristics and specific materiality, all of these other categories were influential to Morris, and he to them: the dialogue of the relationship between visual and textual rhetoric was

foregrounded in Morris's illuminations and designs. Far from erasing the boundaries or synthesizing mechanisms of visual and verbal interpretation, Morris's renderings highlight the interactions and unstable relationship of text, image, and ornament. As Julia Thomas notes, Victorian era printing is marked not by a seamless interplay of these elements, but by the impossibility of conflating them.¹⁵⁶ The "bitextual" approach is of particular importance to Morris, the restless explorer of varied art-forms, because the dialogue between a book's simultaneous modes of representation mirrors the endless moving of his messages (social, aesthetic, political, idealistic) from one medium to another throughout his life. The medieval illuminated page is a cohesive artistic statement, an attempted synthesis of meaning using multiple systems, but such coherence is relational: it is coexistent and interdependent with the reader/viewer. A sophisticated and tactile paratextuality ensures negative capability and richness of interpretation, and that was of greater value to Morris than questions of specific, accurate, or predictable semiotic analyses of his pages. The unreflecting adoptions of his values by some, and the later backlash against his particular aesthetics by others, therefore, does not diminish Morris's investigations into these strategies of representation and the manner in which he brought them into public debate, but rather validate them. Yet if the *Aeneid* manuscript represented the climax of Morris's investigations into paratextuality it might seem a failure, since Morris did not even finish the work, let alone follow with others like it, and the revival of illumination as a creative art barely survived the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁷ If the *Aeneid* leads anywhere, it is to Kelmscott, and it is there that Morris created his enduring and public legacy in the history of the page.

¹⁵⁶ Julia Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians: the Inscription of Values in Word and Image* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), 6-12.

¹⁵⁷ For further reading, see Sandra Hindman, Michael Camille, Nina Rowe and Rowan Watson, *Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age : Recovery and Reconstruction* (Evanston, IL: Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art

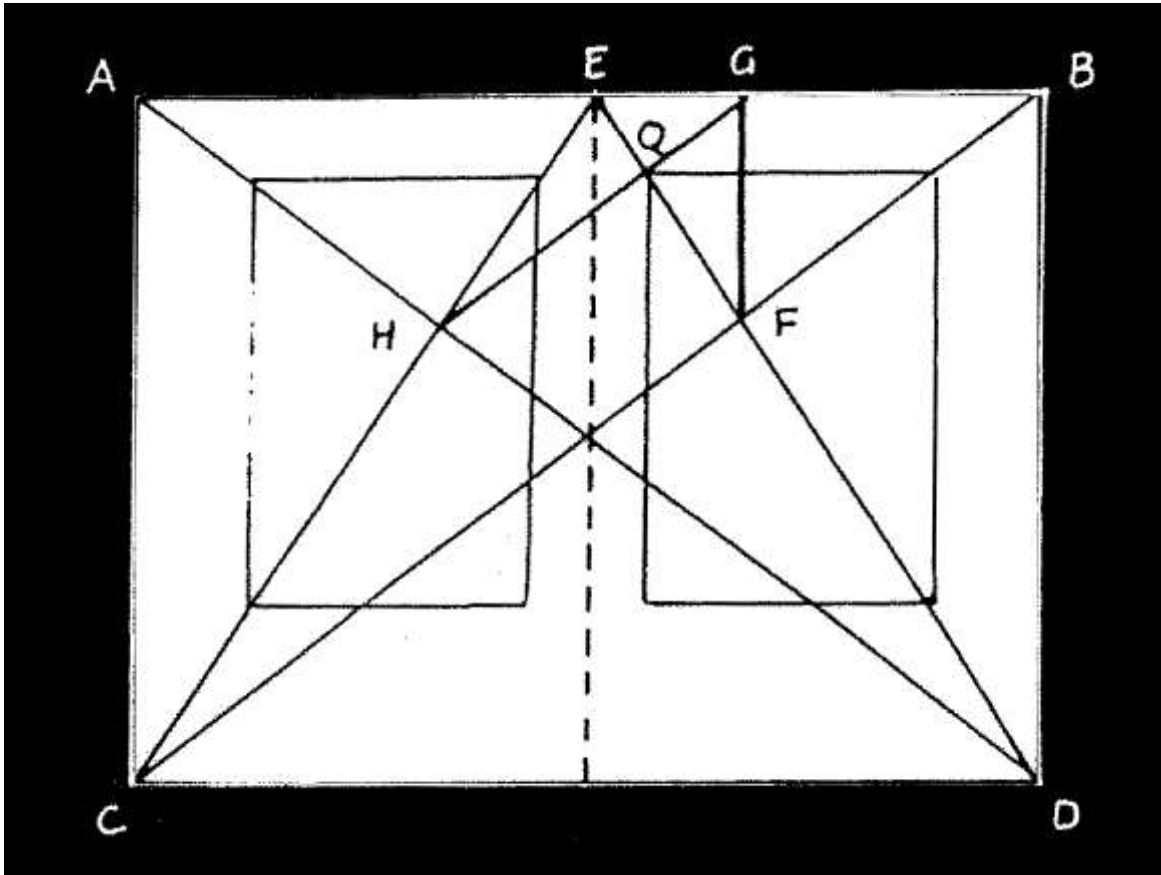


Figure 5.1 Graph demonstrating text and margin layouts derived from the Golden Section.

Chapter 5

Morphemetic Models: The Kelmscott Solution

The picture-book is not, perhaps, absolutely necessary to man's life, but it gives such endless pleasure, and is so intimately connected with the other absolutely necessary art of imaginative literature that it must remain one of the very worthiest things towards the production of which reasonable men should strive.¹

This chapter briefly outlines the state of the printing industry in Victorian England and the rise of Morris and Kelmscott, before engaging with the more abstract methodologies that may be utilized to map the nature of how (and what aspects of) meanings are transmitted through materiality, artifact, and design. Characteristic Kelmscott pages are examined as evidence of Morris's practical application of these rhetorical strategies. Johanna Drucker has done a wonderful job of creating templates to categorize the different variables of paratextuality, which she incorporates into graphesis, or visual representation as a field of knowledge.² Graphesis has been appropriated with different overlapping implications of meaning,³ but Drucker's is closest to the relevant meaning here, especially when discussing electronic texts (as in the following chapter):

Graphesis is concerned with the study of visual epistemology as a dynamic, subjective process. It takes as its objects of study the history of visual forms, graphical expressions, and the concepts they embody within a social, cultural history. It seeks to expose and describe the principles for structuring knowledge through graphical form. It examines imaging technologies as instruments whose inscriptional characteristics register informationally, and also seeks to discover the ways various typologies of form have structured systems of graphical communication, artificial vision, and computational modeling of information in graphical display. Finally, graphesis is concerned with the creation of methods of interpretation that are

¹ William Morris, "The Ideal Book" [1893], William S. Peterson, ed. *The Ideal Book*, 73.

² Among other works, "The Critical 'Languages' of Graphic Design," *Looking Closer 4: Critical Writings on Graphic Design* (New York: Allworth Press, 2002), 168-178.

³ In her introduction to issue #52 of *Yale French Studies* (1975):12, Marie-Rose Logan defines graphesis as "the nodal point of the articulation of a text" that "de-limits the locus where the question of writing is raised" and "de-scribes the action of writing as it actualizes itself in the text independently of the notion of intentionality". This is simultaneously too focused on text itself, and too dismissive of intentionality for my purposes. Drucker's usage is by far the more relevant here.

generative and iterative, capable of producing new knowledge through the aesthetic provocation of graphical expressions.⁴

This focus is combined with the concerns of printing as a craft, adapted to better delineate the aspects of communication here called morphemetic models, and then applied to examples of Morris's work. If what is often labelled "aesthetics" is a crucial part of a work's transmitted meaning, then decisions of design must be considered to be of primary importance. The efforts to create a stable formal system of description—and a corresponding visual inventory—for understanding and using graphic communication cut across many fields. Paratextuality can never be fully standardized or restricted in meaning, of course, but such discussion prepares the field for analysis.

Victorian Printing

In the early years of the nineteenth century British foundries led the way in creating new types, of which there was a virtual explosion. As a result, printers over-indulged and created layouts in what now appears as an overly crowded and cluttered style, and which made Morris positively enraged. There was a lack of guiding theory or concern for the book as a cohesive, coherent statement. By 1850, strong creative artists began to force a more widespread renegotiation of the artistic identity of books in society, and the Pre-Raphaelites were in the vanguard of this movement, especially Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Morris. The changing forms of book production and consumption, a growing literate readership, and the broader social changes accompanying industrialization shifted the emphasis from texts as transparent conveyers of meaning to the material book as an object of beauty.

⁴ Johanna Drucker, "Graphesis: Visual knowledge production and representation" (Unpublished, 2003).

In late Victorian England, the material book played an increasingly important role in the workings of literary culture. The parallels between the changing forms of book production and consumption, in light of the wider changes in social, cultural, and literary history of the period, put the book itself in a central position. The 1890s mark the waning days of exclusively immersive and linear reading practices. Between the years of 1885 and 1900, the vogue for the material book gained prominence in unprecedented ways: books became spectacles.⁵

It is the paratextual apparatus of Morris's books that embody the abstraction and idealism of literary texts in physical form. In the books of late Victorian England, the paratext begins to take an active part in the aesthetic experience of books and reading. This evolution of print culture was intertwined with the Victorian Medieval Revival, which encouraged Pre-Raphaelites to study the manuscripts of the Middle Ages as a model to bring meaning, order, and beauty to nineteenth-century art and society. The British private press movement finally materialized in reaction to what one commentator described as "the vulgar, tawdry and expressionless books of the time."⁶ For the first time, a number of artists of different backgrounds and styles found the designing and printing of books to be a satisfying creative activity. The Arts and Crafts Movement, with the Fin-de-Siècle aestheticism that responded to it, formed a rich and fertile medium for the private press movement globally. Henry St. John Hornby's Ashendene Press, Lucien and Esther Pissarro's Eragny Press, Charles Rickett's Vale Press, Charles Robert Ashbee's Essex House Press, and T.J. Cobden-Sanderson's Doves Press (founded and run, like Kelmscott, with great help from Emery

⁵ Kenneth Clay Smith, Jr., *The Book as Material Instrument: London Literary Publishing, 1885 - 1900* unpublished Ph.D. diss. (University of Indiana, 2006), 1.

⁶ "The tastes of such men as William Morris, Emery Walker and Charles Ricketts were revolted at the vulgar, tawdry and expressionless books of the time and, being masters of practical imagination, their protest was creative. They wanted beautiful books, and instead of grumbling with what existed, they set to work and made what they could not buy. They were moved again by that vital form of atavism which, by throwing back to an earlier period, picks up the dropped thread of tradition, and so continues the process of evolution; their protest therefore became, in the best sense of the word, a revolution; a turning round to the period when craftsmanship, imagination and life were one and indivisible." Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties: a Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Grant Richards Ltd., 1913), 256.

Walker), all have their origins in Morris's "typographical adventure," and shall be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Though Morris's books are specifically based on the fifteenth-century incunabula and early printing techniques that he loved, since they also contain many features which derive from hand-drawn ornamentation they indicate a rewriting of the 'ideal book.' His view of the book as architectural (a theory shared with Ruskin), his understanding of the double-page spread as a single design structure, and his experiments with integration of font and ornament all begin in his hand-illuminations. The turning away from this medium towards print has previously been considered primarily in terms of dissemination and changing interests, but these shifts in process and form raised Morris's position of influence over books to the point where it can be argued that popular awareness of paratextuality (in the sense of the integration of a book's textual message with its physical form) begins from Morris's Socialist rhetoric. His rhetoric itself derives from a host of influences, most of them well-documented, but all centering around his interpretation of the Middle Ages and the central importance of art to humanity. Given Kelmscott's undisputed and profound influence on modern printing, the evolution of this aesthetic largely shaped our modern private press publishing and the field of paratextual studies. The private presses of our own time still share a vision of 'the well-made book', but that vision derives more from Morris's interpretation of medieval calligraphy and incunabula than from a continuity of print.⁷

⁷ Some of the more influential studies of Pre-Raphaelite illustration and its influence are: Sophia Andres, *The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel: Narrative Challenges to Visual Gendered Boundaries* (Columbus, OH.: Ohio State University Press, 2003); Paul Goldman, *Victorian Illustration: The Pre-Raphaelites, the Idyllic School, and the High Victorians* (Burlington, VT.: Lund Humphries, 2003); Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, *Christina Rossetti and Illustration: A Publishing History* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2002); and Gregory R. Suriano, *The Pre-Raphaelite Illustrators: The Published Graphic Art of the English Pre-Raphaelites and Their Associates*. (New Castle, DEL.: Oak Knoll, and London: The British Library, 2000).

Besides decorated initials that closely resembled manuscript work, Morris also created frames and ornamental borders for his print books. The first five Kelmscott books shared the same ornamental frames, but new designs soon appeared to fit several book sizes and layouts. His use of visual elements in Kelmscott volumes, however, was always controlled and restrained. Will Bradley and Eric Gill would follow and augment Morris's theories and practices in typography.

Borders and ornaments must form an inherent part of a design which would otherwise be incomplete. They should not be tacked on or added to a design apparently as an afterthought. Units forming borders and ornaments were considered essential in even the earliest forms of printing, but whenever used successfully were used fearlessly [...] from the use of decorative units in their simplest form, that of borders surrounding type, in which they take a secondary part, up to that of a design where possibly in combination with an ornament they become of first importance, is to go through all the stages of their use.⁸

The full-page borders that frame his frontispiece and title-pages are fine representations of Morris's continued allegiance to scribal traditions. All Kelmscott books position the text block on the page (and thus, determine border dimensions) by following the medieval tradition of textual margins varying in width in a fixed proportion to one another:

I think you will seldom find a book, produced before the eighteenth century, and which has not been cut down by that enemy of books (and of the human race), the binder, in which this rule is not adhered to: that the hinder edge (that which is bound in) must be the smallest member of the margins, the head margin must be larger than this, the fore larger still, and the tail largest of all. I assert that, to the eye of any man who knows what proportion is, this looks satisfactory, and that no other does so look. But the modern printer, as a rule, dumps down his page in what he calls the middle of the paper, which is often not even really the middle, as he measures his page from the headline, if he has one, though it is not really part of the page, but a spray of type only faintly staining the head of the paper.⁹

⁸ Will Bradley, "The use of borders and ornaments," *The American Chap-Book* 1:3 (Jersey City: American Type Founders, Nov 1904).

⁹ William Morris's lecture "The Art of the Book" was first delivered June 19, 1893, at the Bibliographical Society in London, and later published as "The Ideal Book." Peterson, ed. *The Ideal Book*, 70-71.

The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer is the crowning work of the Kelmscott Press, and was not finished until June 26, 1896, three months before Morris's death. The *Chaucer* stands as the culmination of all Morris's training in design. It is the most richly ornamented printed book of his life, as the abandoned *Aeneid* was his most ornamented manuscript, and is the final artifact Morris completed, the most fully perfectly realized manifestation of his desire for a book that could rival those of his beloved Middle Ages. Peterson calls it the "litmus test which measures one's response to Morris's work as a printer."¹⁰ The fame of the *Chaucer* has overshadowed the rest of the press's works to an unfortunate degree, obscuring the pains taken to fit the design of each book to its content and the degree to which each is unique. As Peterson notes, "everyone knows (or thinks he knows) what a Kelmscott Press book looks like: it is a massive folio printed in dense black type with large, overpowering wood-engraved initials, borders and illustrations."¹¹ Even McGann recommends the texts to "anyone who is more interested in the poetical rather than the expository functions of texts"¹² This is unjust, as most of the pages from Kelmscott, including the *Chaucer*, are simple and cleanly laid out, and many of the other Kelmscott volumes have little decoration. A brief adjustment period to the typeface and layout renders the reading of any Kelmscott volume effortless. More importantly, it assigns a false agenda to Morris's paratextual environment, assuming maximum readability to be the highest priority. A glance at any Kelmscott book should convince anyone that transparency of design was not the printer's sole aim. As McGann notes, the material and physical presence of those pages has a different role to play than merely expository.

¹⁰ Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris's Typographical Adventure*, 229.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹² Jerome McGann, *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 75.

Morris forms a strong continuity of environment between his visual ornaments, his use of unusual handmade materials that suggest antiquity, and (in most of the Kelmscott books) the romantic aesthetic of the language and content. The paratextual aspects cannot be easily dismissed or made transparent. For many readers the novel effort of including visual and material elements in the ongoing assimilation of a book was (and judging by modern critics, remains) a frustrating experience, requiring a more multifaceted engagement and greater willingness to interpret non-textual elements. Morris, an artist, designer, medieval scholar, and illuminator, expanded his message through the entire repertoire available to him—considering all the constituent parts of Kelmscott books. His audience, however, was a chaotic and stratified lot, and some appreciated the books solely as objects to possess, some as works of art, some as novel but misguided affectations of obsolete manufacture. Few were willing to spend time actually handling, reading, and delighting in the unique nature of the odd stiff-paged volumes, but the *concept* of them was quickly and globally influential.

The timing of Kelmscott was crucial. The 1890s saw the crystallization of mass media and book culture in England, as Richard Ohmann observes.¹³ The technological advances to printing and illustration greatly expanded the range of what books could be, and how they might look. This led to the debate that Morris stepped into with his customary energy and conviction, championing the earliest printed books as the finest, but the discussion did not begin or end with Morris, influential though he was. Arguments concerning how books should be made, what materials and aesthetics were appropriate for them, and who they should be made for took on a greater scope at the *fin de siècle*. As magazines gained mass circulation, they increased their advertising space and strengthened the universality of that common language. Homogeneity in tastes, quickly shifting fashions and fads, and cooperative

¹³ Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (London: Verso, 1996), 23-29.

establishing of consensus all ascended with the rise of literacy, and as literacy grew downwards into the lower social classes, so too did both content and design find itself scrambling to reach new markets and tastes. For lower-class readers raised with little exposure to canonical literature, appeals to that tradition fell largely on deaf ears. The rise of a less sophisticated readership with greater literacy in the language of periodicals, advertisements, and illustration meant, in short, a more visually oriented generation. The advancements that had made such fine illustration and paratextual flexibility possible were already familiar to a younger generation of readers, and they were now an expected aspect of the reading experience. Books were designed now for a wider variety of reader and social strata.

As a response, the practice of book collecting became increasingly institutionalized and popular, allowing readers and buyers of books to see their purchases and library as a distinct expression of their individual tastes and character. Where a generation before the names of the authors on one's shelf would have sufficed in this regard, now the particular editions involved were the most important aspect of the collection. The discourse of collecting, as Emily Jenkins observes, became widespread, the shared knowledge of bibliophiles was codified, and presses and editions both new and old were ranked and debated.¹⁴ J. Herbert Slater's 1891 *Round and About the Book-Stalls* was followed by his more famed *How to Collect Books* (published by Morris's old friends George Bell and Sons and printed at the Chiswick Press in 1905).¹⁵ The culture of book connoisseurship was evidently well established. Publishers were well aware of this change in readership, and private presses

¹⁴ Emily Jenkins, "Trilby: Fads, Photographers, and 'Over-Perfect Feet,'" *Book History 1* (1998): 22 1-67.

¹⁵ On the title page of the latter work Mr. Slater is also identified as the "Editor of 'Book Prices Current'," Author of "Early Editions," "The Romance of Book-Collecting," "Engravings and Their Value," etc.

like Kelmscott and its followers depended upon this social reading. Meaning became increasingly located in the materiality of books, and in their sources. Since the shift was towards a greater consideration of the appearance of books, it is hardly surprising that this became the golden age of illustration as well. Gift editions, profusely illustrated and finely bound, commanded high prices. Expensive gift-books like Arthur Rackham's deluxe *Undine* were bought not for content, but for the artistry,¹⁶ and this they surely had in common with Morris's Kelmscott volumes.

If Morris's books were meant as a challenge to the craftsmen and collectors of his day, then their elite audience was well-chosen, as the influence and inspiration for those who came into firsthand contact with Kelmscott was extraordinary. Virtually every private press spawned in the decades after Kelmscott was founded by typographers and artists who had been involved with the Hammersmith typographic experiment or who were close enough to be directly inspired by Morris. The collectors who patronized Kelmscott provided appreciative support and a consumer base to give financial confidence to Doves, Ashendene, Vale, Eragny, etc.¹⁷ Morris made books for collectors, and thereby taught them his aesthetic so they might facilitate and encourage other presses to produce similar work. The paper and ink, the words and language, the letterforms and materials of production are all part of his deeply personal interpretation of the past and his considered construction of an unfamiliar

¹⁶ *Undine* by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (London: William Heinemann, 1909) was bound in full vellum with gilt illustrations and lettering, silk ties, featured 15 full colour tipped in plates with captioned tissue guards, text illustrations and decorated titles. The limited edition of 1000 was all signed by Rackham.

¹⁷ In fact, when the five-volume Doves *Bible* was proposed, Walker and Cobden-Sanderson sent their prospectus first to those who had pre-ordered Kelmscott books, with the result that the entire run of 500 copies was sold out in advance "without spending a penny on advertisements or giving away a single review copy." (Emery Walker, quoted by Colin Franklin in *Emery Walker: Some Light on his Theories of Printing and on his Relationships with William Morris and Cobden-Sanderson* (Cambridge: privately printed, 1973), 33.

model. Through his laborious translation, illumination, hand-printing, and binding, Morris obliterates the conceptual spaces between creator, producer, and product.

Practical Agendas

Kelmscott Press has been the subject of hundreds of books and articles, and its historical place as the acknowledged primary impetus for the British private press revival is secure. Morris's famous "typographical experiment," and the rather less successful or influential print projects that preceded it, are now discussed as valid expressions of his politics and social views rather than as misguided contradictions. The relationship between Morris's Kelmscott pages and the commercial print of his day is that of his Utopia to the social realities of his day: an alternative societal model.¹⁸ As with any Utopian construct, Kelmscott must be viewed as a response and critique, not an isolated timeless ideal. Considering Kelmscott as founded on principles worked through in Morris's calligraphy, however, it becomes apparent that the projects are not only refutations of shoddy craftsmanship and economies of scale, but a refusal of the political and economic role books had been forced to play by industrial capitalism. Kelmscott books refused to play by the rules of their industry, because they were created for an educational purpose, and their intended role was social rather than profitable.

Print media had become indispensable to the dissemination of ideas to the public, to propagandizing and revolution, and the *Commonweal* continued that lively tradition. The social space for such journals and pamphlets, however, with their editorializing and discontent, was well established and controlled. By 1888, skepticism accompanied response to such media, whether religious tracts or Socialist flyers, which were locked in the cheap format and

¹⁸ Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, "William Morris, Print Culture, and the Politics of Aestheticism," *Modernism/modernity* 15: 3 (September 2008): 488.

predictable appearance that mirrored the repetitive content. Ephemera advertised its place at the bottom of the field of printing, and its content suffered by association. *Commonweal* engaged with print as it was, accepting that it must enter the debate at the level of the street-corner, as Morris himself did in his many lectures and demonstrations. As Elizabeth Miller observes,

Morris perceived the failure of liberal notions of print as an agent of progress and tried to reinvent print at the level of production as an ideal practice apart from its reception. This inward recoil has been viewed by many as evidence of naiveté or hypocrisy on Morris's part, since it resulted in print products with a very limited audience; certainly, it does align him with a reflexively Aesthetic focus on the work of art as a kind of artificial, manufactured perfection. At the same time, however, Morris's print work was by no means apolitical, but rendered print itself a utopian space in which to imagine post-revolutionary art and politics.¹⁹

Although this analysis is sharp, it misses the roots of the perception. By the time Kelmscott began Morris had been comparing calligraphy and print for two decades, and it was his illuminations that stood "as an ideal practice" untroubled by either commercial reception or public criticism. The illuminated page was a perfect private space precisely because it was bound by few concerns of economy; and virtually all paratextual constraints of print are ultimately rooted in economy. Although in Victorian England a printing press was primarily an industrial machine which mass-produced finished products, for Gutenberg his invention was a machine which created works of art. The incunable printing press had to match the grace and beauty of hand-copied books, and, after a fashion, succeeded. Yet at any commercial press, letterforms were dictated by existing type and the cost and labour involved in creating new founts, and concerns of readability ultimately boil down to fear of customer opinion and lack of salability. Use of colour, cost of materials, quality of paper or availability of vellum are all financial concerns which barely affect a single scribe making a single book, compared to the daunting financial risk involved in even a small print run. Morris explored

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 479.

this private space for two thousand hand-written pages, and brought from it a fully developed aesthetic, a greatly enhanced knowledge of the history of the page and relationship between scribe and early printer, and the understanding that compromise must be made. Kelmscott books are not an artificially manufactured perfection or a private space where artistic expression is unbound by capitalism. Morris's illuminations were indeed that, but they were laid aside with the unfinished *Aeneid*. The ideal page (from the perspective of the individual artistic satisfaction of direct communion with the materials) had been articulated in a format that could not be reproduced, and so could not directly engage the system Morris sought to reform. Only a printed book could disrupt the impasse that industrial capitalism had placed the media in. The expression of political dispute existed first and foremost in warring printed expressions; even verbal debate was secondary to the need for manifestos to be physically embodied. Yet the nature of that embodiment was controlled by the market, from materials and presses to distribution and consumer culture. Because of this, a mistrust of the press as a profit-driven industry which really did not care *what* was printed as long as the job was paid for was common among radical groups. Where an manuscript might seem an individual expression, a work of art which did not support a capitalist economy or structuring of knowledge, print was deeply problematic because it depended on production and circulation for its continued existence. Publishing had been concerned with sustaining itself in a capitalist economy for five centuries and had become a defining aspect of that economy. To try to break free from that mould, Morris had to reconfigure the printed page in a manner which clearly broke with the continuity of commercial print, and instead referenced individual sincerity and the concern with quality seemingly expressed by medieval illuminations—and shared, he believed, by the earliest printers. The use of different paper, ink, binding, ornament, and typeface was not only a matter of aesthetic preference, but vital

to the successful articulation of Morris's physical critique. Although the *Aeneid* manuscript seemed to be an ideal aesthetic book, it was not engaged with Victorian England's presses, and as a singular work of art, could not educate a wide audience. Just as Morris, as a much younger man at Oxford, had abandoned his idea of a monastic brotherhood for a public life that would fiercely engage with his time, so Morris the scribe had to leave his cloistered scriptorium to begin his campaign of paratextual proselytism. The Utopian book was the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, and it represented a challenge to the entire industry's conception of itself.

Kelmscott Press was not begun with a specific political agenda, according to Morris, but rather to create books which would rival those of the past he loved and collected. In Morris's note on his "Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press," he wrote:

I have always been a great admirer of the calligraphy of the Middle Ages and of the earlier printing which took its place. As to the fifteenth century books, I had noticed that they were always beautiful by force of the mere typography, even without the added ornament, with which many of them are so lavishly supplied. And it was the essence of my undertaking to produce books which it would be a pleasure to look upon as pieces of printing and arrangement of type. Looking at my adventure from this point of view then, I found I had to consider chiefly the following things: the paper, the form of the type, the relative spacing of the letters, the words, and the lines; and, lastly, the position of the printed matter on the page. It was only natural that I, a decorator by profession, should attempt to ornament my books suitably. About this matter, I will only say that I have always tried to keep in mind the necessity for making my decoration a part of the page of type.²⁰

This statement was itself a response to criticism which had already been aimed at Morris: charges of extravagance, unreadability, archaism, and self-indulgence. Indeed, many of the first private presses that grew up around Kelmscott were motivated more by a desire to redress what they disagreed with in Morris's aesthetic and convictions than by a desire to emulate them: and they were the more successful for it. The question of what books should *be*—aesthetically, socially, spiritually—was engaged with from all sides in a manner unprecedented in the history of moveable type. Kelmscott created a space which was

²⁰ Peterson, ed. *The Ideal Book*, 75.

paradoxically situated in opposition to contemporary publishing, seeming to defiantly refuse to acknowledge the industry as a valid reality, and yet offering a reformatory model. Morris's denial, however, was only of the supposed *necessity* that governed all aspects of the industry. It has always been the role of the cynic to insist that any minor reform, let alone Utopian vision, is born of obliviousness and ignorance and is not practical. The creation and success of Kelmscott books as sought-after artifacts did not silence such critics, but refuted them on a material level. George Bernard Shaw, writing in the *Commonweal* in June 1886, remarked that "one of the disadvantages of being a Socialist is that your friends . . . continually remind you of certain hard facts before which they expect your utopian ideas to wither like roses in the smoke of London."²¹

The role of *Commonweal* and the other periodicals Morris used to broadcast his Socialist rhetoric in leading Morris from calligraphy to print, as a vehicle of artistic expression that also allowed for reproduction, is only now being given critical examination. The aesthetic experience of these cheap pamphlets and broadsides is hardly striking, and the uneven layout, mingling of ill-matched typefaces, and cheap materials resemble their contemporary penny dreadfuls more than anything from Kelmscott. Still, they must be given due credit for prompting Morris to restructure his activism and reconcile his social and aesthetic agendas. Even Morris, and certainly his contemporaries, questioned the compatibility of decorative art with political reform. Yet the value of the aesthetic experience both in conveying socialist rhetoric and in deepening that discourse—in making it resonate spiritually and artistically with the reader—was a deeply-held conviction of Morris. Where other Victorian political agitators found philosophical or religious justifications for demanding social reform, Morris continued to believe in education through art. From his early days of holding up medieval

²¹ George Bernard Shaw, "Mr. Auberon Herbert and Individual Liberty," *Commonweal* 2:23 (June 19, 1886): 89.

models as simultaneous triumphs of craftsmanship and labour equality, through his vehement scorning of Victorian architecture and art as blatant evidence of a ruined society, Morris always privileges art as the best indicator of social health, and the tool with the greatest potential to cause profound and lasting change. His lifelong search was to find the perfect medium to provoke reform.

As Weinroth notes of the first publication of *A Dream of John Ball* in *Commonweal* (1886-7), “Morris’s narrative voice speaks to a two-tiered Victorian audience”²²—working-class readers, and the more educated Socialist Leaguers who also contributed to the journals. This point, expanded and applied to Morris’s other undertakings, demonstrates why a visual praxis was crucial. Language was highly stratified in Victorian England, and speaking to a mixed audience without alienating half of them was a constant concern for Morris when delivering speeches. Though Morris did not propose, like Professor Higgins (in Fabian socialist George Bernard Shaw’s 1912 play *Pygmalion*) to “fix” the language of his audience, he certainly saw the opportunity afforded by visual and paratextual elements to communicate in a more subtle yet accessible manner. Like Morris & Co.’s church windows, the *Commonweal*’s decorative art by Morris, Burne-Jones, and Crane is illustrative, symbolic, and attempts to display a unity between art, labour, and tradition. When this aesthetic propaganda is joined with Morris’s thoughtful speeches and his dreamlike narratives, the result is often an antidote to broad slogans and poorly-considered agitational cant. Morris runs the constant risk of any revolutionary educator: too simplistic, and his message is reduced to caricature (as happened several times when he was parodied in mainstream newspaper cartoons); too complex, and the opacity and abstraction exclude those people he most wished to inspire. The solution was

²² Michelle Weinroth, “Redesigning the Language of Social Change: Rhetoric, Agency, and the Oneiric in William Morris’s *A Dream of John Ball*,” *Victorian Studies* 53:1 (Autumn 2010): 45.

to combine voices: to mingle simple written rhetoric with more nuanced fictions, to intersperse songs, chants and short news notes with more sustained analysis, and to let illustration and design—though playing a cruder and less consistent role than they had in Morris’s illuminations, or would at Kelmscott Press—frame and support the interdisciplinary enterprise.

The close relationship between *Commonweal* and Kelmscott can be most clearly seen in the careful reprintings of selected speeches and essays that was undertaken by T.J. Cobden-Sanderson and the Hammersmith Publishing Society at Chiswick Press for several years following Morris’s death. For as little as a shilling, any Londoner might buy a small volume of Morris’s thoughts at Longman & Co. on Paternoster Row in 1898. The slim octavo might superficially resemble the older political ephemera, and in some cases the textual content was the same, but the paper was stiff handmade linen, the fount was Morris’s own Golden, and the layout and Holland-board binding closely followed the Kelmscott models, though no ornament was used on the pages. Even today these turn-of-the-century reprints can be purchased for a tiny fraction of the price which their more distinguished Kelmscott cousins garner, and they have surely been more confidently read and used by their many owners. They are the unassuming heirs of all of Morris’s publishing experience.²³

²³ This is not to say that these little Chiswick lectures have not been appreciated, even at times treasured, by their owners. In my small collection there is a 1902 copy of *An Address Delivered the XIth November MDCCCXC at Kelmscott House Hammersmith before the Hammersmith Socialist Society* by J. W. Mackail which, in being given as a Christmas gift, has had its flyleaf carefully hand-decorated by some amateur calligrapher. An ornate crimson W surrounds a chrysographic A and a blue T, with the golden letters *Yule 1918* flourished beneath. This little book is still bound in brown paper boards with a vellum spine, and cost 2s. 6d. (a half-crown). A 1901 copy of *Art and Its Producers, and The Arts & Crafts of Today: Two Addresses Delivered Before the National Association For the Advancement of Art* by William Morris has been rebound in ornate and whimsical fashion. The original paper boards have been covered with a watery-green marbled vellum braced with deep green leather corners featuring gilt floral corner ornaments and lines, and a matching deep green spine featuring seven ribs laid over the original spine (though the compartments are empty) and the same gilt floral emblem repeated on either side in a vertical row of three to either side of the spine. This elaborate binding is, sadly, unsigned and undated. Of a 1901 copy of *Some Hints on Pattern-Designing. A Lecture Delivered at the Workingman’s College, London, on December 10, 1881* by William Morris, the opposite case is equally remarkable—the original and exceedingly fragile blank brown-paper wrap that protected the book during transport is still present, though torn and faded by the intervening century.

Connections between the materiality of Morris's non-Kelmscott publications and his political agendas were made even by early critics. An early review of *Socialism: its Growth and Outcome* (co-authored by Morris with E. Belfort Bax),²⁴ begins with

The announcement a few months ago in the columns of the press devoted to 'forthcoming publications' of what purported to be an *édition de luxe* of a history of Socialism may have called forth a smile of the faces of readers who had not associated the advocacy of such opinions with the issue of handsome volumes. But the smile would have died away when they recognized the name of one of the joint authors. Even in its cheaper form, the typographical excellence of the book, and the width of its margins, attest the regard for nicety with which the productions of Mr. William Morris, whether in literature or in house-decoration, are generally and justly appreciated. But, apart from the care bestowed on the material shape in which the doctrines are set forth and the story narrated, we do not know that there is anything in the book which may not be found in what the authors themselves describe as the 'many treatises on Socialism, large and small, hostile and friendly, that have appeared of late years.'²⁵

Price's review finishes, ironically, by claiming that the book's failings are not, for him, "redeemed by any novelty of treatment or freshness of illustration."²⁶ The terms are used ambiguously, and could apply equally to the speculations and dialectics of the content or to the paratextual and material "excellence" of the book, but the mere fact that a review in the *International Journal of Ethics* begins by praising a Socialist history book's margin widths is likely unprecedented. Morris's mingling of causes and rhetorical forms encouraged a similar multifaceted response, whether positive or negative.

There is a persistent and widespread belief that, if Morris was fighting a battle for his ideals and visions, then it was lost. Certainly modern Western society seems to have retained little of the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic or medieval social structure. It is easy to scorn a movement which seems to have been delivered its final *coup de grâce* by the First World War,

²⁴ William Morris and E. Belfort Bax, *Socialism: its Growth and Outcome* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1893).

²⁵ L.L. Price, untitled review, *International Journal of Ethics* 4:4 (July 1894): 527-8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 529.

and to claim that “William Morris’s romantic late nineteenth-century attempt to infuse the printing trades with higher values now seems like a misguided sentiment buoyed up by a sea of money.”²⁷ The weakness of such statements is increasingly evident as scholarship recovers from the violent disavowal the Victorian era suffered at the hands of Modernism. If the global economy did not discard its entire industrial/economic movement in 1900 and revert to a quasi-medieval socialism organized by village and guild, is Morris therefore to be considered a failure? Similarly, Morris’s legacy in the page does not lie in the sustained use of his particular aesthetics or style, though there are indeed examples of that today. His influence is in revealing the printed page as a potentially complex space full of meaning and information, most of which was being used unconsciously only to perpetuate the status quo: a matrix that could be as rich in paratextuality as the illuminated page had been before industrial capitalism forced its demise. In short, Morris’s examination and experimentation in illumination and calligraphy led to the private press movement, and that is one of the seeds from which modern paratextual, print culture, and semiotic studies and awareness have grown. If the publishing industry has forgotten many of his lessons, academia has not. Morris bound together the political and the aesthetic in a unique manner, and the two agendas continue to twine today whenever theoretical analysis is applied to his work.

The difficulty inherent in establishing a foundation for graphesis, or in asserting visual representation as a field of knowledge, is highly ironic, as it highlights the impossibility of efficiently translating a message between verbal and visual form without substantial transformation. Substituting language for image, or claiming an equivalency between messages articulated in either form, is shaky ground on which to build a theoretical framework. The relationship between image and word is contingent on the situation in which

²⁷ Betsy Davids and Jim Petrillo, “The Artist as Book Printer: Four Short Courses,” *Artists’ Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, Joan Lyons, ed. (New York: Visual Studies Workshop/Gibbs M. Smith, 1985), 52.

they meet, from the placement on the page to the expectations of the society which they exist in, and it is never simple or stable. Grasping for linguistic analogies to explain even the simplest modes of print design leads to terms like harmony and proportion, which resist precise definition. Knowledge can be represented in visual form through a combination of representation, symbolism, reference, and visual flow, but it is difficult to discuss or critique the workings of such transmissions of knowledge. Though it is regularly called a “language” or a “grammar,” such analogies are partly misleading. Simple semiotic signage can be said to form a grammar, perhaps, but even there ambiguity of a type peculiar to visual communication creeps in. For an artist like Morris, efficiency of communication was beside the point: the interplay of interpretation necessitated by using paratextual elements to build his illuminated and Kelmscott books made them a much richer experience than the unobtrusive simplicity or disorganized cacophony of commercial books, where many hands worked at odds with one another and usually yielded rudimentary or nonsensical paratextual environments. Because aesthetics were always subordinated to issues of cost or, at best, communicative efficiency, much book design of Morris’s time was concerned with formalizing appearance. Morris reversed this hierarchy by creating books where his personal aesthetic and desire for fine materials were the primary consideration, and cost, effort, pleasing customers, legibility, and efficient transmission of ideas were ruthlessly forced to comply with his vision.

This is the central message of Morris’s books, as it was of all his art: that even if compromise is necessary, it must be remembered that the expression of the creator through his craft is the *raison d’être* for its existence, and must never pander to a capitalist market to such a degree that it destroys the connection and the pleasure. Design, like art, should be rhetorical, and if it is to operate within fixed parameters, they should be native to the craft

and not imposed from without. The attempt to establish absolute terms for successful design, and to seek those standards in industrial efficiency, has had a devastating effect on the modern world, with a resultant poverty of ornament and beauty Morris could scarcely have imagined. Even the process and results of his small press were a shock to him after the solitude of his hand-lettering. On May 20, 1891, as the first Kelmscott book, Morris's own *Glittering Plain*, was being printed, he wrote of his misgivings, "pleased as I am with my printing, when I saw the two men at work on the press yesterday with their sticky printers' ink, I couldn't help lamenting the simplicity of the scribe and his desk, and his black ink and blue and red ink, and I almost felt ashamed of my press after all."²⁸ The choice was not made without effort.

Morris was possessed of a visual imagination, and there is evidence that he often conceived of his own stories and poems as images first, and then described them in words. May Morris notes that her father "always had a yearning for illustrations to his poems; he saw the stories in brightly defined pictures, and desired that other people should do so, too."²⁹ Considering Morris's unusual skill and facility in both fields, it is not surprising that he was capable of imagining a "bitextual" work simultaneously in text and graphic. "Even while he was writing he saw the episodes as pictures and noted in his margins hints for the wood cuts that Burne-Jones and he were to make for the beautifying of his poems."³⁰ In Morris's rough drafts of prose and poetry there are frequent marginalia and even sketches for proposed illustrations and lists of subjects to be rendered as illustrations.³¹ Creators of graphic

²⁸ Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* II, 256-7.

²⁹ May Morris, *William Morris: Writer, Artist, Socialist* I (Oxford: Blackwell, 1936), 402.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 439.

³¹ Dunlap, *The Book that Never Was*, 10.

narratives such as comic books and film scripts use the same approach today. Even when the final product was only text, the impression is highly visual, as asserted by the *Edinburgh Review's* remembrance of Morris's poetry in 1897:

[H]e wanted to tell a story effectively, to throw a new light on a situation, [...] to present a vivid picture to the eye, by descriptive epithets in regard to colour and detail which are brought in so naturally that they seem not so much inventions as descriptions of what the writer had actually seen. ... This Homeric gift of visualizing a scene, and seizing on all its details, is obvious through all Morris's poetry ... All the details of the scene are gone through with touch after touch, till we seem to be drawn into it, and forget the modern world entirely.³²

There is a performative quality that joins all of Morris's varied interests and that reveals their underlying purpose as models to be followed by other artists, challenges and assertions made in every medium he lived long enough to try. After being developed in many other media, this multifaceted rhetoric was embodied most influentially at Kelmscott Press. The importance to Morris of the visual experience for those holding his books was apparent even before Kelmscott Press. Buxton Forman recounted a chance meeting with Morris at Chiswick Press while they were proofing the title-page for *In the House of the Wolfings*. Morris was insisting on inserting a second "in" into the subtitle "written in prose and (in) verse by William Morris," to tighten one line's white space, and when it was protested as unnecessary, Morris apparently replied, "Ha! Now what would you say if I told you that the verses on the title page were written just to fill up the great white lower half? Well, that was what happened!"³³ Morris abhorred excessive spaces between letters or words and worked hard to make his layouts dense, without "those ugly rivers of lines running about the page which are such a blemish to decent printing."³⁴ Although his acquaintances strove to follow his edicts,

³² H. Halliday Sparling, *The Kelmscott Press and William Morris, Master-Craftsman* (London: MacMillan, 1924), 97.

³³ *Ibid.*, 52. Sixteen lines of verse: "Whiles in the early winter eve [...] the bitter-sweet of days that were."

³⁴ *A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press*, 137.

they found the effort involved in such tight layout to be unreasonable. Shaw's letter of November 17, 1928 remarks on his experience:

Many thanks for the quaint book on hanging. You are right about the printing. The lengthening and shortening of the paragraphs to avoid white streaks across the page so greatly prolonged the labour of proof correction and increased the cost of making the corrections that I am not likely to face it again; but I could not resist my desire to make the book look handsomer. My association with William Morris made me fastidious in this matter. Faithfully, *G. Bernard Shaw*.³⁵

The only expansive white space Morris tolerated willingly was the framing margins of a page without border or ornament: he followed the medieval scribe's rule of thumb, making the inner margin the most narrow, the top some 20% wider, the outer margin some 20% wider than the top, and the bottom widest of all (another 20%, making the widest margin roughly 60% wider than the narrowest). This practice encourages the eye to view two pages of a spread as one unit of text, though it could be argued that there is no great advantage to such a strategy when the pages consist only of type (and are, after all, going to be read separately), and the extremely narrow inside margins resulted in problems for any Kelmscott Press collectors who wished their books rebound from the blue paper Holland boards with grey linen spines or limp white vellum, in which they came. Despite Morris's assertions, most Kelmscott books do not "lie quietly," and the stiff hard Batchelor paper resists attempts to view the innermost part of the facings. In designing letters, Morris tried to keep the 'counter' or negative space within the square of a letter, equal to the inked letterform, and so his Jensen model is modified to thicker, less variable lines forming each letter. The use of a stiff black German ink, and the deep 'bite' or imposition of the type into the pre-moistened paper completed the dramatic contrast that visually and tactilely separates a Kelmscott leaf instantly from any commercially-printed page. Isolde Karen Herbert, like the *Edinburgh Review* author,

³⁵ Unpublished holograph letter, typed and signed, November 17, 1928, London (Private Collection: Charles Agvent, Mertztown, PA).

notes that Morris's epic poem *The Earthly Paradise*, "by its form and content [...] foregrounds visual and verbal designs...

Morris's ability to see letters as patterns temporarily separated from their linguistic function (his ornamental 'bloomers' are tokens of this ability to isolate shape and line from semiotics) enabled him to design pages with the harmonious interaction of type, picture, and ornament described in his lectures on decorative art and printing.³⁶

The content of Morris's prose and poetry echoes the Kelmscott visual format, with repetition and exploration of themes, and varying designs within a predictable framework. Repeated phrases, such as the WELL AT THE WORLD'S END, always printed in full capitals, or the use of white-line vine borders to begin episodic chapters, allow graphic and textual elements to function in a shared symbiotic system. Jerome McGann sees this graphic conception of text as a forerunner of Modernism (and, through Yeats and others, as an influence on the relationship between modernist writing to graphic design). Yet McGann's focus is the interpretation of poetry through its material encoding: to him, the "vessel" of the book may not be clear, but the designs on it are nonetheless meant to illuminate the meaning of the words. This gives the language too much authority over the paratextual elements. Assuming the graphic and paratextual elements are shaped solely to explicate the words misses the fact that the text and image are halves of a hybrid artwork, and that tension is what makes Morris's books so complex and subtle. Morris's pleasure in an illuminated manuscript would hardly have been dampened by it being in a language he could not read: the visual grammar is satisfying for its own merits.³⁷ When McGann discusses the textual condition of "The Tune

³⁶ Isolde Karen Herbert, "The 'Sympathetic Translation' of Patterns: William Morris as Singer, Scribe, and Printer," *Journal of the William Morris Society* 13:4 (Spring 2000): 23.

³⁷ This is meant as a hypothetical proposition: Morris was of course fluent in Latin, Greek, Old French, and Middle English. His education, coupled with his facility for deciphering old scribal hands, ensured he rarely met a medieval manuscript he could not read. When he was not fully conversant with a language, Morris enlisted expert help—as with Icelandic scholar and University of Cambridge librarian Eiríkr Magnússon's work in teaching Morris Old Norse and collaborating on their famous translations.

of Seven Towers,” his detailed analysis fails to mention either that the poem itself was written as a textual response to a painting by Rossetti which Morris bought, or that Rossetti himself wrote a series of sonnets for pictures.³⁸ This ekphrasis was, as discussed earlier, one of the first manifestations in the pre-Raphaelite circle of the interdisciplinary dialogue of art-forms: *Ut pictura poesis*, as Ruskin claimed when he expanded the definition of poetry to include visual arts such as painting and illuminated manuscripts.³⁹

McGann sees the framing of poems in the manuscript of *A Book of Verse* as iconographic, reflecting the images in the stanzas, and implies that questions asked on the textual level are answered on the level of illustration and design. The much more formal use of textual ornamentation in Kelmscott books is hard to credit to intuitive or subconscious process, as such immense effort lies behind the inclusion of every graphical element in a hand-printed book (and unlike his successors, Morris did not use calligraphers to embellish his printed books by hand). Therefore McGann assigns authorial intent to each design decision that alters the reading of the text: “Morris’s [work] affects not inspiration and spontaneity so much as craft and extreme deliberateness.”

The text, that is to say, comprises a sequence of rhyming couplets, but the lines run margin to margin, creating another ‘spatial rhyme’ with the prose layout of the verso text. When Morris signals the couplet endings with small leaf ornaments, we ‘see’ the couplet forms, see language as a poetical medium in which time gets measured out. But we see it through a sign that is dominantly spatial and iconic.⁴⁰

³⁸ According to Morris, “This poem [written 1858] is to be related to D. G. Rossetti’s painting, ‘The Tune of Seven Towers,’ 1857.” The model was Lizzie Siddal.

³⁹ Horace’s maxim *ut pictura poesis* (“as is painting, so is poetry”) has been used for centuries to examine the relationship between visual and verbal arts. “Painting is properly to be opposed to speaking or writing, but not to poetry. Both painting and speaking are means of expression. Poetry is the employment of either for the noblest purposes” (*Modern Painters* III, 5.31). See Aaron Kashtan, “Pre-Raphaelite Approaches to *Ut Pictura Poesis*: Sister Arts or Sibling Rivalry?” <http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/prb/kashtan12.html>

⁴⁰ McGann, *Black Riders: the Visible Language of Modernity*, 74-5.

Given Morris's extremely consistent aesthetic throughout the Kelmscott books, and his feelings that the material encoding of his press work was not to be greatly compromised or altered for the subject of the text, we must be careful not to assume too much. Although he rarely reused major ornamental devices and borders and tried to make each book a coherent unique visual experience, his resources were limited. Unlike the almost limitless possibilities afforded by a calligraphic interpretation, his typefaces restricted him to two founts in three sizes, and excepting two volumes,⁴¹ only black and red inks were utilized at Kelmscott. Despite these restraints—or indeed, because of them—Morris laid a clear foundation for a considered aesthetic of display which enriched the received experience of his books.

In her review of McGann's *Black Riders*, Johanna Drucker notes that this interpretation of material features of production as elements of authorial intention “raises a more thorny problem.”

Do the various decisions made at the level of the page, say, about the breaking of a line, or its length relative to other lines, necessarily reveal linguistic meaning or poetic intentionality? Or is it enough to assert that by the very fact of such features, the reading of a line obtains a distinctive meaning in which these material aspects play a part?⁴²

Because design decisions are made at many stages of production and are often necessitated by practicality and compromise, it is more fitting to reserve judgment on minutiae. Morris had firm control over the letterforms he shaped, the borders he made, the blooming letters he positioned, and the ink and paper he used. The layout of individual pages is always a struggle with the text, especially when the text is poetry with built-in line breaks, a feature Morris found awkward enough that he considered it when planning Kelmscott books:

⁴¹ *Laudes Beatae Mariae Virginis* (July 1896) and *Love is Enough* (December 1897) are the exceptions, which use blue initials alongside red and black ink. The blue ink, made from ultramarine ash, was a custom order from Winsor & Newton. Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 116-7.

⁴² Johanna Drucker, “Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism,” *Design Issues* 10:2 (Summer 1994): 84-5.



Figure 5.2 William Morris's bed at Kelmscott, with valance, bed-hangings, and coverlet (1891).

One of many plans now ended had been to publish an illustrated book of *The Hill of Venus*. It was to have been rewritten and have had ornamental borders made for it by Morris; the pictures, redrawn, were those designed by Edward long ago for *The Earthly Paradise*. The question as to whether the story should be written in verse or prose was settled by Morris saying, ‘Well, you know, old chap, prose looks blacker in the page and fills up better — so it’s to be prose.’⁴³

An interesting related example of the importance of layout and design can be found as close to Morris as his old bed-hangings.⁴⁴ The poem “For the Bed at Kelmscott” which he wrote to adorn his early seventeenth-century four-poster in 1891 is well-known and has been reprinted countless times, but never correctly. The text as transcribed in books is always broken into short rhyming couplets and verses and uses capitalization and punctuation. Yet the poem was written for a specific installation, and the valance took 35 weeks to embroider, so the typographic design represents very careful and painstaking effort. Each of the three sides of the bed bears part of the poem in three lines, and the first and second sides break the text midway through the supposed couplet-lines:

First side:

the wind's on the wold / and the night is a-cold, / and thames runs chill
twixt mead & hill. / But kind & dear /is the old house here
and my heart is warm / midst winter's harm. / rest then & rest: and think

Second side:

of the best / twixt summer and spring /when all birds sing
in the town of the tree / and ye in me / and scarce dare
move: lest earth & its love/ should fade away / ere the full

Third side:

of the day / i am old & have seen / many things that have been / both grief and peace
and wane and increase / no tale I tell / of ill or well / but this I say:
night treadeth on day / & for worst or best / right good is rest ///

⁴³ Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* II, 290.

⁴⁴ These observations follow a discussion with John Plotz regarding his work in progress, “‘This New-Old Industry’: Lectures, William Morris, and the Founding of Kelmscott Press.” Comparisons might also be made between the scaled text on the valance and Emery Walker’s projected slides of pages, or even the room papered with manuscript pages in *News from Nowhere*. The paratextual environment surrounds the viewer, in all cases.

Even before considering the nature of the graphic elements (flowers, oak leaves, grape vines, placed in the locations marked by / above), it is clear that the poem in the books is not the poem of the bed (see fig. 5.2). Given the use of ornaments, there is no reason why the lines could not have been divided only at their rhyming points for each section, or run wrapping around the entire bed before descending to the second and third lines. They do not: as one prepares to climb into the bed on its right side, the last words to be read are “rest then & rest: and think.” Facing the bed from the end, the lowest line is uneasy and anxious: “move: lest earth & its love / should fade away / ere the full,” and only on the bed’s left side does the poem finish with a complete and comforting note: “night treadeth on day / & for worst or best / right good is rest.” The poem is an illuminated work, and its page includes the valance, but also the specific bed it was made for, the complementary embroidered hangings that his daughter May fashioned with Lily Yeats and Ellen Wright (two Morris & Co. embroiderers),⁴⁵ the matching bed-cover, also designed by May but embroidered by his wife (signed by her with Morris’s own motto “Si Je Puis [‘If I Can’], Jane Morris”), and the very room at Kelmscott where the great bed stood. As the Thames runs by both Morris’s beloved Kelmscott Manor and Kelmscott House where he worked, the poem also joins the two homes into one, speaking of the river and the wind they share. Far from Hammersmith, the only bustle is in the “town of the tree,” but the poem speaks to the bed’s owner, in images crafted by his family, and is forever incomplete without the figure of Morris himself lying within the words (“ye in me”).

⁴⁵ See Linda Parry, “May Morris, Embroidery and Kelmscott,” *William Morris, Art and Kelmscott*, Linda Parry, ed. (London: The Society of Antiquaries of London, 1996). Also on the Morris family’s revival of old embroidery, see A.R. Dufty, *Morris Embroideries: The Prototypes* (London: The Society of Antiquaries, 1985).

Kelmscott Paratextuality

Some elements and variables of Morris's print matrix have already been mentioned and some of the inherent problems of interpretation alluded to, yet a more detailed look at the materials of construction is worthwhile. To a typophile, most Kelmscott books would be anachronistic by virtue of their typefaces. Whether one considers Golden, Troy and Chaucer as late Victorian or late Quattrocento founts, they are equally incongruous when used for the Kelmscott *Shelley* (fig. 7.4).⁴⁶ The resulting pages do provide an insight into Morris's view of the Romantic poet, and the aesthetic materialist presentation is almost legible as a commentary by him on Shelley's verse. The enjambment of lines on the title pages defies the smooth flow with which the poems would usually be read, and, as Rollison notes, the use of ornamented capitals breaks the usually sacrosanct left margin, changing the rhetorical divisions of the text.⁴⁷ The poems cannot be read as they would be in any other edition, and Shelley's intent struggles with Morris's priorities. But this complication of the reading process is part of what made Kelmscott so unique: the insistence on an aesthetic so obviously not grounded in the text's origins, yet so intrusive to the reader, forces close attention to every aspect of the material encoding. That the title pages go much further in their disruption of the words is fitting, as it alarms and disorients the eye, announcing the strong design presence

⁴⁶ "In particular, the deluxe Kelmscott editions of Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley can be seen to encapsulate in material form a particularly late-Victorian (even proto-Modernist) misprision of Romantic influence. The most elaborate of these editions was the ornate three-volume octavo edition of the complete works of Shelley, published in 1895, some copies of which were hand-bound in vellum with decorative ribbons. We do not know to what degree Morris's own hand was involved in the production of the *Shelley* volumes, but we can still find instructive the result of applying what McGann calls Morris's 'materialist aesthetic' to the often highly anti-materialistic poetry of Shelley, a contrast which brings the interaction between material and imaginative modes, as well as between late Romantic and late Victorian sensibilities, into high relief." Damian Judge Rollison, "The Kelmscott *Shelley* and Material Poetics," *Journal of the William Morris Society* (15.4 2004): 58.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

immediately, and preventing any passive ignoring of it.⁴⁸ Shelley's unfinished "Medusa" is one of the few cases where Morris allows large white spaces in lines, as he graphically demonstrates the lacunae, visually illustrating the absence of words without brackets, ellipses, or filling in "stand-in" words in a different typeface.⁴⁹ This allowance also brings attention to the handmade paper itself and the traces of the metal type's bite into the fibres—the only information in the blank spaces of the page comes from the material itself.

When Morris says that one cannot have art without resistance in the materials, he also means that the physical rendering of an idea must be foregrounded, that the particular characteristic strengths and weaknesses of any medium or craft should shape the idea from concept to reception. In this sense, the practical limitations of printing are not only obstacles to be surmounted, but fundamental shapers of how society conceives of communication. This relationship involves both resistance and harmony: nature is our "friend in the guise of an enemy."⁵⁰ Morris claims that the artist should accept and welcome the limitations of his materials— the resistance of stone to chisel, absorption of ink by paper under the brush, even the ambiguity of meaning in words, and of course the imperfect loci of meanings transmitted through image and symbol. Absolute precision of meaning is the provenance of science and

⁴⁸ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley. In three volumes. Edited by F S Ellis. With woodcut titles.* Vol. 1 issued 29 November 1894, Vol. 2 issued 25 March 1895, Vol. 3 issued 28 November 1895. Hammersmith: Published by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press. 8vo. Golden type. Borders 1a and 1. 250 paper copies and 6 on vellum. Bound in limp vellum with silk ties.

⁴⁹ Rollison, "The Kelmscott *Shelley* and Material Poetics," 71.

⁵⁰ "But in order that his labour may be organized properly he must have only one enemy to contend with-- Nature to wit, who as it were eggs him on to the conflict against herself, and is grateful to him for overcoming her; a friend in the guise of an enemy. There must be no contention of man with man, but ASSOCIATION instead; so only can labour be really organized, harmoniously organized." William Morris, "Dawn of a New Epoch," *Signs of Change: Seven Lectures Delivered on Various Occasions* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1888), 192.

math, not art and language; and it loses something essential and natural in the making of that precision.⁵¹

Every material ... imposes certain limitations within which the craftsman must work. Here again is the wall of order against vagueness, and the door of order for imagination. For you must understand from the first that these limitations are as far as possible from being hindrances to beauty in the several crafts. On the contrary, they are incitements and helps to its attainment; those who find them irksome are not born craftsmen, and the periods of art that try to get rid of them are declining periods.⁵²

The move from hand-illumination to print necessitated a massive cultural and social sea-change unmatched in history until the present-day electronic revolution. The relationship of humanity to printed words changed as they became increasingly accessible, and increasingly relied upon, in the centuries after Gutenberg. In Morris's lifetime, the same shift was occurring between humanity and images, between visual reproductions and representations. The rise of photography and various printing processes in the nineteenth century greatly increased the number of images encountered by people in their daily life (a trend that has now exploded to unprecedented levels since television, video, and computers became commonplace), and the ability to consider and respond to images as meaningful semiotic experiences grew alongside the technological advancement. As literacy became more widespread, the taste for images accompanying text became universal: Morris's generation learned to decode such visual rhetoric in its youth, but it was his role at Kelmscott to exploit the full visual and sensory potential of the book-reading experience.

From the moment we begin to untie the silk threads that bind the outer covers of these narratives we are engaged in an experience of tactile and visual pleasure that cannot be hurried. The texture and substance of the hand-made paper means we necessarily turn the pages more slowly, whilst the typography and ornamentation

⁵¹ Isolde Karen Herbert, "Nature and Art: Morris's Conception of Progress," *Journal of the William Morris Society* 10:1 (Autumn 1992): 4-9.

⁵² William Morris, *Some Hints on Pattern-Designing* (London: Chiswick Press, 1899), 10.

encourage the reader to linger a little longer than usual on each page in order to trace the twists of a border, to delight in a well-crafted letter or word, to enjoy the detail of a single leaf used as punctuation or a pair of small flowers trailing the end of a chapter heading. To complain that Morris's typography and page layout slow the reading process, is, therefore, to miss the point—the slowing down is part of the delight, part of the wonder of reading these narratives in this form.⁵³

Learning *morphemic* models consists of grasping the relationship between verbal sounds (meaningful linguistic units with conceptual significance), and written or printed words (arrangements of characters which, in English, have no inherent meanings, but in combination relate to verbal sounds). The French word *morphème* is a blend of the Greek *morphe* (form) and French *phonème*. I propose the term *morphemetic* to indicate the parallel function of visual typology as an indicator of the flexible and contingent nature of the relationship between visual units and concept. The morpheme can be a symbol with both visual and linguistic significance, as discussed in the first chapter, and the root of that significance is representational. In most Western languages the visually-symbolic representational aspect of linguistic characters is buried too far back in time to still hold association—simplified letter forms and eroded awareness having broken our understanding of the written symbol as sound *and* pictograph. In languages where morphemes are the smallest units of script, however, as with traditional Chinese characters (to a much greater degree than with the modern simplified and Mandarin character sets), they often retain ancient visual symbolic associations and allow for simultaneous interpretation as both image and text. The more transparent a written or printed language is, the less possibility remains for that simultaneous reception of dual meanings through text alone, and this transparency may in part explain some of the popularity of the image. It acts as an alternative semiotic

⁵³ Phillipa Bennett, "A Legacy of 'Great Wonders': The Last Romances of William Morris and the Kelmscott Press," *Æ: Canadian Aesthetics Journal* 15 (Winter 2008): v.

interaction, mingling recognition of representation and intuitive or socially-constructed aesthetic approval. Stepping back from completely transparent efficiency of language representation opens up a much richer space to enhance and complicate meaning. Good typography is in this fashion related to poetry, in that it calls attention to the deliberate selections and inherent ambiguity of the elements of its construction.

Ornament and layout, Morris's major interventions to the text of Kelmscott books, exist in an ambiguous zone that invites intuitive interpretation and resists assignation of formal meaning. He has a historical model to utilize which is fortunately not entirely foreign to his readers, the Western medieval illuminated manuscript. The tradition Morris worked to reincarnate for his society addresses the blurred lines between visual and verbal and created a symbolic system which utilized semiotic and representational information. He references this tradition in everything from margins and typefaces to historiated initials and miniature woodcuts, challenging the reader to find levels of interpretation from their own experience with which to process the page. The Kelmscott aesthetic implies the illuminated manuscript tradition made accessible: the minuscule script becomes a relatively readable Gothic or Roman typeface. Intricate miniatures and floriated capitals become clear monochromatic woodcuts, and ornamented borders obey a more regular hierarchy and formal placement. Yet even the level of text itself, of letterforms and placement, is indicative of the revolutionary project Morris is undertaking. He moves letters back towards their performative role, moving towards a more concrete conception of language. The relative poverty of visually significant or designed letters in eighteenth-century print culture was the nadir of the move towards *constative* text: letters whose function was only to construct words as signifiers, and not to

have their own entity.⁵⁴ The letters in a Kelmscott volume are not only abstract references to language, but a material morphemetic reality which shapes the messages of the book.

Floriated capitals become referents of the natural world, associating the language and morphemetic aspects of the alphabet with organic life. This is not the formal assigning of meaning of a runic abecediary, but a partial unweaving of the overly abstracted quality the printed word had taken on. As with Morris's earliest illuminations, letter-forms are given aesthetic and even narrative function: a multiplicity of signification.

Conscious appreciation of design does not spring full-grown from instinct, but is of slow growth and comes from association with the artistic in our daily life. As the late-period Arts and Crafts ceramicist Henrietta Barclay Paist asserts in the introduction to her 1916 book *Design and the Decoration of Porcelain*,

Design is a larger subject than we at first realize. It opens the eyes to beauty and order in everything. It is not alone for the artist; it is a study of universal principles which underlie all creation. It furnishes logical reasons for things hitherto considered of the emotions; and art does not lose by this process; on the contrary it gains permanence. If we would raise our craft to the highest standard and avoid the merited criticism it has received in the past, we must realize that we are studying to conform to universal principles, we must bring our work within the same province and under the same laws which govern all art; realizing this, the study of design assumes importance and becomes an absolute necessity.⁵⁵

Morris reached the overall proportions of his pages by studying manuscripts and incunabula, though they have a mathematical basis. Villard de Honnecourt, a thirteenth-century French architect, made popular a method of finding the "golden rule," the supposedly harmonious proportions Morris follows for his calligraphic and printed page layouts. De Honnecourt's method divides any page's height and width by nine to form 81 units, each proportional to

⁵⁴ The terminology here is Shoshana Felman's, borrowed by Karen Coats, "P is for Patriarchy: Re-imaging the Alphabet," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 25:2 (Summer 2000):88-97, and Michael Heyman, "The Performative Letter, from Medieval to Modern," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 30:1 (July 2005):100-107.

⁵⁵ Henrietta Barclay Paist, *Design and the Decoration of Porcelain* (Syracuse, NY: Keramic Studio Pub. Co, 1916), ii.



Figure 5.3 *Of King Florus and the Fair Jehane*. Kelmscott Press, 1893.

the text box. The four margins created in this manner all relate to the proportions of the single or double-page unit, which has divided the height and width into ninths. Resurrecting these canons of page construction made Kelmscott pages unlike any of their contemporaries, at least until they were imitated. The Gutenberg Bible's pages are close but not identical to this proportion, and Morris's pages also show only minor deviation. This architectural approach to building up the elements on a page helps give Kelmscott spreads their characteristic solidity and stable layouts, and the integration of ornament and devices is never haphazard. Neither is there overly clever construction in Morris's pages, as there was in many Renaissance books, such as the *carmina figurata* texts, which use red and black type to delineate the figure of a saint or relic, or draw figures behind or around the words, or arrange the full text into shapes, or the complex multiple layouts of columns and blocks of type that characterize some early folios. Purchasers of Kelmscott books may not often consciously analyze all of the elements in this page to understand their functions, but the obvious care of every aspect asserts that each element did embody thoughtful decisions.

The unusual graphic forms foreground the fact that they are conveying information: spacing, type style and size, hierarchy of titles, shoulder headings, ornamented capitals in different sizes, divisions between elements, the relationship between what is represented in ornament and the textual content—all these elements contribute to meaning. “The relations among elements figure in the argument created on the page, and their origin in a step-by-step process of abstracting the rules of such arguments, codifying them into graphical forms, is visible in what appears to be a fixed and static format.”⁵⁶

The self-evident graphical features of a book tend to go unnoticed unless they interfere with reading by breaking convention (for instance, if page numbers are moved from

⁵⁶ Johanna Drucker, “The Virtual Codex from Page Space to E-space,” *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies*, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 216-232.

the outside to the inside margin of the header, close to the binding-gutter), but they are points of departure for the thoughtful book designer, who in this subtle space begins to access a sophisticated visual vocabulary universally understood in its most common form. When Morris was questioned about the principles of his pattern designs by Sparling, he described a parallel to language, but was unable to codify the process with any precision, describing a mostly intuitive response to the space:

I tried to get him to tell me at another time how a design took shape in his mind, but any sort of introspection was strange and uncomfortable to him, and it was not easy to say. Realizing that the inquiry was not wantonly made, or without an anxiety to understand, however, he was patiently ready to do his best. “When one began,” he said, “of course one had to learn all about the nets — you know what they are? — and that sort of thing, just as one had to learn the rules of grammar, and one had to keep them in mind while doing one’s ‘prentice-work, but that’s a long while ago, and I don’t think about them any more than I do about grammar. To confess the truth, although I haven’t forgotten as much about them as about grammar, I have to dig for them when I want them. I know what’s right and what’s wrong, but I couldn’t always tell why. I look at the space to be covered, and say to myself that it has to be reproduced on such and such a scale, and the repeats will run in such and such a way, and that a rose or honeysuckle or whatnot would be the sort of thing to suit it, and there the matter ends for the time being. It goes somewhere at the back of my mind, and when it comes up again, it may be as the whole thing, or only the general hang of it and a bit of the detail. Sometimes it seems to come out of the paper of its own accord, misty at first and getting clearer each time I look at it. But whether it comes as a whole or gradually, come it does, and that’s all I can say of it.”⁵⁷

In the case of Morris’s book design, the “rules of grammar” had been learned first from study and emulation of manuscripts, then by hand-illumination and planning books, and finally by forming a coherent aesthetic based on his own experience. Because they are grounded so strongly in the incunabula aesthetic, however, they exert an impression of antiquity and medievalism that suffuses the text, and in some cases causes a lack of coherence between textuality and paratextuality. For Morris, this was how he saw the world, and the Kelmscott apparatus suited his own writings perfectly, especially the late romances with the

⁵⁷ Sparling, *The Kelmscott Press and William Morris, Master-Craftsman*, 37.

quasi-medieval fantasy landscape that would be endlessly imitated after Tolkien introduced it to future generations. The fiction of his last years, *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894), *Of Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair* (1894), *The Well At the World's End* (1896), *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* (1897), and *The Sundering Flood* (1897), revive the medieval romances, with their episodic plots of high adventure and deep underlying themes of loss, questing, and longing for lost times. These novels, written after Kelmscott was established, are distinctly prepared for the press that gave them their first printings. They are a response to the paratextual environment, the texts that best suit such volumes: original and modern, yet archaic in sensibility and tone. All are fairy-stories, set in distant lands, forgotten days, holding a dream-like quality which seems strangely remote from the immediate socialist agendas. The “dreamer of dreams“ from *The Earthly Paradise* had finally retired from the Socialist League and begun first to rebuild his antique library, then to write stories fitting for his final project.

Though Morris unconvincingly argued in an interview that the form and apparatus of his press editions were equally well-suited for the work of contemporaries like Dickens as for reprinting Caxton’s classics,⁵⁸ the physical experience of a Kelmscott book is in greater harmony with his own stories than it would be with most of his contemporaries’ work. A Kelmscott Hardy, for instance, is a curious concept: the materiality of the book would be always at odds with the contents. A Kelmscott Scott, on the other hand, would fit well, and Swinburne, Tennyson, Rossetti and Ruskin survived their “Kelmscotting” with enriched meanings. Morris grounded his press in a desire to create a presentation and preservation which matched his own love of books, as stylistically similar to medieval books and manuscripts as possible while retaining some artistic originality. Volumes with such ornamented initials and borders, handmade paper and vellum bindings require a sympathetic

⁵⁸ “Four Interviews with William Morris,” in Peterson, ed., *The Ideal Book*, 107-108.

style for their contents or they become at best incongruous, at worst absurd. Such careful, precious paratextual apparatus and painstaking craftsmanship are best suited to works of venerable age or classic status. Most texts cannot hold their own against such a strong presentation and require a more transparent medium. Incongruity is inevitable as well when the author's care and skill is not equal to the care and skill of printing: Wilfred Blunt's verse was never worthy of a Kelmscott edition, and it is doubtful that Morris ever thought it was.

It is perhaps closest to the truth to say that Morris had a simultaneous awareness of the fragility and ephemeral nature of the England he had known in youth and of his own mortality. His desire was to preserve his vision, bodied forth in books which might easily last as many centuries as his own collected medieval treasures had, the "objective realization of his fantasies," as an interviewer put it to him.⁵⁹ On seeing the first copy of the completed *Chaucer*, Burne-Jones wrote: "When Morris and I were little chaps at Oxford, if such a book had come out then we should have just gone off our heads, but we have made at the end of our days the very thing we would have made then if we could."⁶⁰ As Peterson notes, "each Kelmscott Press book was intended to be not a Victorian railway hotel 'done in the Gothic style,' but a miniature cathedral, or at least a parish church, constructed of sound materials and inspired by the Ruskinian vision of craftsmanship as an act of worship."⁶¹ The real medieval cathedrals Morris and Burne-Jones loved were threatened by restoration and destruction, and this was a sign of how far the world had come from the society that had raised them centuries before. Burne-Jones once observed, "I couldn't do without Medieval Christianity. The central idea of it and all it has gathered to itself made the Europe that I exist

⁵⁹ Ibid., 111.

⁶⁰ Quoted by Duncan Robinson, *A Facsimile of the Kelmscott Chaucer and A Companion Volume to the Kelmscott Chaucer II* (London: Basilisk Press, 1975), 23.

⁶¹ Peterson, *The Ideal Book*, xvi.

in.”⁶² Defiant against the inexorable loss of their heritage and the unraveling of the beliefs that had once sustained it, they were yet unable to devote themselves to the religious significance of art, and so spent endless effort in trying to make it fit a hypothetical social order. Burne-Jones, however, was (unlike Morris) no atheist, and his personal vision imbues the *Chaucer* with a sincerity it might otherwise have lacked. Despite its secular and even ribald nature (as in the tales that Burne-Jones declined to illustrate), Chaucer’s work required the spiritual sensibility of a pilgrim, as well as that of an artist, to be fully embodied.

The Kelmscott *Chaucer*

The last book Morris saw printed at Kelmscott, and the greatest book printed in the English language since Caxton’s day, the great *Chaucer* folio must be given its place in any analysis of Morris’s printing: *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer now newly imprinted at Hammersmith, printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, 1896*. There were 425 paper copies, and 13 vellum.

From Morris’s first border designs in February of 1893 to the binding in June 1896, a few months before his death, it was an extraordinary sustained undertaking. Yeats echoed the thoughts of many when he called it “the most beautiful book in the world,”⁶³ and Morris said during production, “this book I hope to make a specially beautiful one as to typography and decoration, and I naturally wish to make the text as good as possible... It is intended to be essentially a work of art.”⁶⁴

This is not to place it above critique, and even Burne-Jones had some reservations about the fit between the woodcuts and Gothic typography. “I wonder, if Chaucer were alive

⁶² Mary Lago, ed., *Burne-Jones Talking: His Conversations 1895–1898 Preserved by His Studio Assistant Thomas Rooke* (London: John Murray 1982), 27.

⁶³ W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1926), 174.

⁶⁴ Peterson, *A Bibliography of the Kelmscott Press*, 109.

now, or is aware of what is going on, whether he'd be satisfied with my pictures to his book or whether he'd prefer impressionist ones. I don't trust him. And if he and Morris were to meet in heaven, I wonder if they'd quarrel."⁶⁵

The book is a testament to Morris's oft-repeated edict that illustration and ornament must be part of the harmonious whole of the page, and both he and Burne-Jones compared the Chaucer to architecture and illuminated books when discussing the cohesion of its elements. In a letter of December 1894 to Charles Eliot Norton, Burne-Jones said:

And so you don't like the Chaucer—that is very sad—for I am beside myself with delight over it. I am making the designs as much to fit the ornament and the printing as they are made to fit the little pictures—and I love to be snugly cased in the borders and buttressed up by the vast initials—and once or twice when I have no letter under me, I feel tottery and weak; if you drag me out of my encasings it will be like tearing a statue out of its niche and putting it in a museum—indeed when the book is done, if we live to finish it, it will be like a pocket cathedral—so full of design and I think Morris the greatest master of ornament in the world—and to have the highest taste in all things.⁶⁶

Underlying the humour, great affection and respect for his best friend, and his use of characteristically Gothic imagery, Burne-Jones is paraphrasing Ruskin. As Schoenherr notes, the parallel between a beautiful book and a church was made famous by Morris and Burne-Jones, but it came first from their teacher. In Ruskin's *Praeterita* of 1886, he described his joy at the purchase of a small fourteenth-century Hours of the Virgin in 1854, his first complete medieval illumination:

But now that I had a missal of my own, and could touch its leaves and turn, and even here and there understand the Latin of it, no girl of seven years old with a new doll is prouder or happier: but the feeling was something between the girl's with her doll, and Aladdin's in a new Spirit-slave to build palaces for him with jewel windows. For truly a well-illuminated missal is a fairy cathedral full of painted

⁶⁵ Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones II*, 217.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Martin Harrison and Bill Waters, *Burne-Jones* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), 164.

windows, bound together to carry in one's pocket, with the music and blessing of all its prayers besides.⁶⁷

Reaching for the right language to convey the perfect unity of the Kelmscott folio, Burne-Jones invokes the wonder of a Victorian lover of art encountering a medieval codex. Ruskin showed the psalter to all his friends and students, and its effect on the Pre-Raphaelite circle was inspiring. Ruskin bought the manuscript on February 24, 1854 and immediately began to ruin his treasure. He dismembered it and gave individual leaves to his acquaintances; a friend reported seeing it in pieces in Ruskin's rooms at Oxford. Three pages were sent to Charles Eliot Norton, who recognized Burne-Jones's reference to Ruskin's "fairy cathedral."⁶⁸ This practice would become common for Ruskin, who regularly cut medieval books down to fit his shelves and broke them apart to give leaves as gifts.⁶⁹

The architectural model of the *Chaucer*, with its tightly-fitted elements and use of a much greater proportion of black on the page than was typical for the time, was the subject of much later debate and discussion. Will Bradley tried to find a balance between the 'clear vessel' ideal of page design exemplified by Doves and the highly ornamented environments of Kelmscott in a 1904 essay. As with most of the American printers responding to Morris, he weighs questions of practical business practices alongside artistic considerations.

That and as such possessed of many splendid possibilities is in itself quite enough to lead a compositor to a development of ornamental forms when the material in his possession makes such a course possible. But printing, besides being an art is also a business, where, in a broad sense, it is getting type into the galley that counts; yet still,

⁶⁷ Douglas E. Schoenherr, "A Note on Burne-Jones's 'Pocket Cathedral' and Ruskin," *Journal of the William Morris Society* (15.4, 2004): 92.

⁶⁸ Despite this butchery, Ruskin described the book as his 'Louis IX Psalter', valuing it at £1000 for insurance purposes in his diary of December, 1872. For a detailed analysis and reconstruction of the psalter's leaves, see *The Elements of Drawing*, an online version of the teaching collection and catalogues assembled by Ruskin for his Oxford drawing schools: http://ruskin.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/catalogue/cat_page.php?id=CAMFZ.MS300.fol.106.r

⁶⁹ See James S. Dearden, "John Ruskin, the Collector, with a Catalogue of the Illuminated and Other Manuscripts in his Collection," *The Library* 5:21 (1966): 124-53.

being an art, it is important that all forms of type display be governed by such rules as govern good art.⁷⁰

With a slightly ruthless air, Bradley makes his case for using ornament, a practice which, if judged strictly by expense and time, there would be “little excuse for either the use of borders or ornaments in business printing, for no form of type display can exceed in dignity and beauty that of simple and plain work where is used an appropriate face set with due regard to spacing, margins, etc.”⁷¹ His stated motivation is far from Morris’s, however: he claims that ornament, once created and cast, allows an advertisement or page a better chance of “attracting the eye with an expenditure of little time in composition.” His caution regarding unity of design, however, is almost a paraphrase of Morris:

Such use is legitimate, but to be kept so, the borders and ornaments must form an inherent part of a design which would otherwise be incomplete. They should not be tacked on or added to a design apparently as an afterthought. Units forming borders and ornaments were considered essential in even the earliest forms of printing, but whenever used successfully were used fearlessly[...] in every case when a border or ornament is used it must be with a knowledge and appreciation of its decorative quality, and a consideration of the value such a quality has in the building of the design. From the use of decorative units in their simplest form, that of borders surrounding type, in which they take a secondary part, up to that of a design where possibly in combination with an ornament they become of first importance, is to go through all the stages of their use.⁷²

Bradley’s confident application of a hierarchy to “decorative units” is useful in analyzing the *Chaucer*, because it resembles the medieval separation of the page into ranks, from border and text to historiated and floriated initial and actual miniatures and demonstrates the renewed continuity between scribe and printer after Morris. Johanna Drucker goes much further in categorizing graphical features of textual works, and makes some reference to the *Chaucer’s*

⁷⁰ Will H. Bradley, “The Use of Borders and Ornaments,” *The American Chap-Book* 1:3 (Jersey City, NJ: American Type Founders, 1904), 5.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

layouts. Drucker's analysis is at once more practical and detailed than McGann's, and corrects his earlier description of these features as individual entities, describing them as "constitutive elements of a system in which expressivity is acquired relationally."⁷³ Graphic elements exist only in context, from the very ink requiring paper to absorb it: the page is a system or field, not a vehicle for predetermined meaning but the site of its negotiation. She first divides the white spaces of this field into three broad categories (graphic, pictorial, and textual), which, it should be noted can also stand as functional categories for all components of a page. Further divisions lead to nineteen further uses of white space, emphasizing its importance as a supporting medium and the fundamental basis of the page's vocabulary. Textual continuity or division between elements, the movement of text to the eye, the graphic space required to decipher ornament as representational—all of these rely on this simple negative space. The highly ornamented spreads of the *Chaucer* show another architectural aspect to Morris's pages: the ability to establish an implied third dimension which dictates levels of meaning. Morris's sense of successive planes and openings, and the deep space of representation in relation to the scene of the page, is created only through juxtaposition, since he was always at great pains to make his individual ornamental designs flat and two-dimensional.

The "depth" of pages such as *Chaucer* 312-13 is dynamic: like the impressionism and pointillism of the period, it relies on the movement of the viewer's eye to establish coherence and invites complex movement of the gaze between the varied elements. They are contingent on a higher level of engagement and visual sophistication than most pages are, and like those of a modern manga or graphic novel, the layout and semiotics require some familiarity to be easily deciphered. The eye meets the outer border of page 312 first, moving through the whorls of thorny vine and stylized roses to the widest lower section, which abuts against the

⁷³ Drucker, "Graphical Readings and Visual Aesthetics of Textuality," 5.

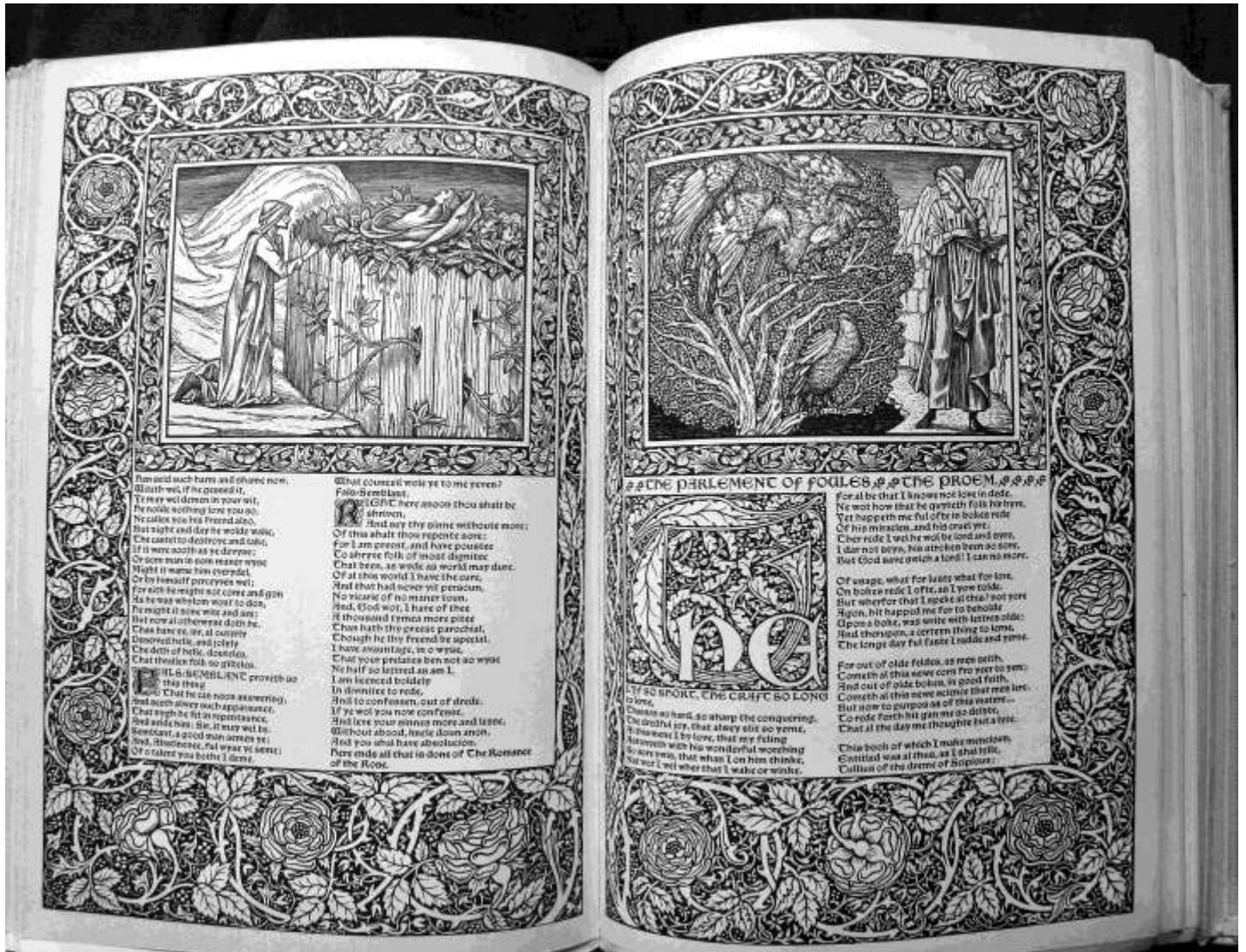


Figure 5.4 The Kelmscott *Chaucer*, pages 312-13.

small text block- the largest white field on the page. This is the final page of “The Romance of the Rose” and the graphic elements are referential and symbolic of the text. The next level is the inner border of field flowers and stylised leaves surrounding the final woodcut of the story, depicting Geoffrey Chaucer separated by a wooden fence from the rose-garden, just as the narrow inner border fences him from the garden of the outer rose-frame.

As with virtually all of Burne-Jones’s book illustrations, the border cuts off curvilinear elements within the image and constricts the figures. This strategy prevents the eye from moving freely around within the illustrative space, and compels it to return to the surrounding frames. The use of intermediate planes in the form of sub-borders and floriated capitals resembles, as Burne-Jones noted, the prepared niches for statues in the walls of Gothic cathedrals which make the statuary part of the building’s formal architecture despite their discrete nature.⁷⁴

The *Æneid* manuscript utilizes a related approach: forcing the figures to bow and bend before the frames of their illustrations, creating an almost claustrophobic space that emphasizes the dependency of the miniatures on their surrounding environment rather than their autonomy. The two columns of text are a compromise, too small to contend with the strong graphic designs around them and using mere three-line floriated capitals to show verse breaks. The full white block allotted to the text seems unbalanced beneath the framed illustration above, but it is not clear why: in fact, though the width of the text block and the illustration frame are equal, the height of the text space is only equivalent to the height of the illustration itself without its narrow floral border. This uneven balance gives the subtle

⁷⁴ Martin Harrison and Bill Waters, *Burne-Jones*, 164. For comparison, see figure 7.1, where an incunable *Dante* features a very Morrissean floriated Q, but neither frames nor balances the text against the woodcut with the convincing and sophisticated relationship which Burne-Jones found so appealing.

impression of the text being compressed by the frame above it, where it would otherwise seem independent.

It is not until the facing page is considered, however, that the full design strategy becomes clear. “The Parlement of Foules” begins on page 313, using the same rose-border and inner frame patterns as its facing page. This repetition forcibly joins the end and the beginning of the two stories together into one graphic device, asserting a continuity which has greater implications for the text as a whole. Morris at times would have text blocks printed on drawing paper so he might design borders on the obverse: the mirrored text was visible, but could not be read, so he might concentrate on the letters as image, and match the weight and rhythm of his ornament to the type.⁷⁵

As Diane Archibald points out, though she is too quick to subscribe most of her impression to Burne-Jones’s illustrations, one overall effect of the Kelmscott treatment is to push Chaucer’s text into a mould which denies both the textual uncertainties of the stories (many of which exist in multiple forms or are unfinished) and “to nullify the rich, lively diversity of *The Canterbury Tales*.”⁷⁶ The individual voices of the pilgrims, and in a larger perspective, the great variety of subject and tone in Chaucer’s work, are buried within the explicit unity of the single great folio. For Jessica DeSpain, however, this heterogeneity is a codified challenge to capitalism, demonstrating Morris’s socialist ideals by providing a creative equalitarian framework which unites all of the pilgrims of Canterbury.

The symmetrical illustrations and borders are hence a visual representation of the guild system that united the subjects: “In the *Tales*, Morris found a mini utopia that is created,

⁷⁵ John Dreyfus, “William Morris: Typographer,” Paul Needham, ed., *William Morris and the Art of the Book* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1976), 86.

⁷⁶ Diane C. Archibald, “Beauty, Unity, and the Ideal: Wholeness and Heterogeneity in the Kelmscott Chaucer,” *Medievalism in England* 2:7 (1995): 169-80.

sustained, and commentated upon by the characters that inhabit it, including its author.”⁷⁷

This acceptance of the ability of Morris and Burne-Jones’s design strategies to assert a heteroglossia on the medieval text demonstrates the power of ornament to control the text, but both critics ignore the fact that the *Canterbury Tales* make up less than half the book: 222 of 554 pages. Surely this paratextual strategy has implications for the rest of Chaucer’s work. Although the empirical reframing of the tales is a form of recovery and codifying, its primary agenda is not to respond to the particulars of the text (though it certainly does that). The order being imposed reframes Chaucer’s age and knowledge through handicraft, asserting that the transmission of knowledge is dependent on those who reproduce it, yet Morris’s visual commentary does not exist merely to call attention to his role in the book. He is illuminating the text: his folio argues simultaneously and eloquently for the worthiness and importance both of Chaucer’s venerable text and of the contemporary reconstruction of it into a living book. While working on it, Morris asserted that his *Chaucer* would be “certainly the most magnificent book ever produced on an English press,”⁷⁸ and if his aim was simply to equal Caxton, or even Jensen, such elaborate ornamentation would be unnecessary: early printed books cannot stand against Kelmscott volumes for fineness of execution or beauty of decoration, despite Morris’s idolizing of incunabula. Only illuminated manuscripts could compete with the *Chaucer* when it was created, but it was taken up as a challenge by other printers immediately, and soon the Ashendene *Dante*, Doves *Bible*, Golden Cockerel *Four Gospels*, and other lavish folios appeared, each modeled after—and willfully deviating from—the example of Morris’s masterwork.

⁷⁷ Jessica DeSpain, “A Book Arts Pilgrimage: Arts and Crafts Socialism and the Kelmscott Chaucer,” *Journal of the William Morris Society* 15:4 (2004): 77.

⁷⁸ Peterson, ed., *The Ideal Book*, 105.

Morris embodies his vision of the ideal printed book as a precious but shareable experience: just as he and Burne-Jones spent their adult lives visiting the British Museum to admire unique medieval manuscripts held in trust for all citizens by a public institution, he envisioned the perfect setting for books such as his to be communal spaces:

You see, if we were all Socialists things would be different. We should have a public library on each street corner, where everybody might see and read all the best books, printed in the best and most beautiful type. I should not then have to buy all these old books, as they would be common property, and could go and look at them whenever I wanted them, as would everybody else.⁷⁹

Morris had created a book which could grace public libraries, which would be cathedral-like, existing in a common space as a destination to provide a shared experience. There can be only one original *Windmill Psalter* (or Morris *Aeneid*), but there could be a Kelmscott *Chaucer* in every library (or as he also agreed, in “a hundred British Museums”), conveying both the history of the text, some of the paratextual beauty that had shaped it through the intervening centuries, and the relationship between Chaucer and his material encodings. The massive floriated word (“The”) that begins “The Parlement of the Foules” is a fine example: a full nineteen lines high, it combines twining spirals of leaves behind the letters with a distinctly Victorian innovation: decorative embellishment inside the letterform of the **T** itself, which threatens to pull the letter into the background. That movement is arrested by weaving the **h** and **e** in and out of the **T**’s curved descender, asserting that initial as a separate form. Ironically, the phrase so illumined is “The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne.” Like the giant birds roosting in the trees (observed by the figure of Chaucer in the framed illustration above), the separation of figure and background in the floriated word-box is incomplete, shifting the gaze from one level to another. Morris’s arrangements reconstitute the medieval episteme of paratextuality. His arrangements are self-consciously and insistently rhetorical:

⁷⁹ Ibid., 92.

The eye is led here not so much from left to right and top to bottom as in every direction at once, and not so much led as slowly pulled: the effect is rather like taffy-- no reader is likely to proceed for long before being compelled into reverie (and beyond reading), absorbed into the more immediate and sensuous consideration of Morris's book art.⁸⁰

Morris is providing models for teaching the materiality of book art, best exemplified in his beloved but inaccessible medieval manuscripts, so that the powerful concept of visual language might be fully explored in everyday objects, as he felt it had been in the Middle Ages. Just as the eye moves from one element to another in the highly structured spreads, the rhythm established by the less ornate pages allows for breathing space, a more subtle and familiar paratextual grammar punctuated by moments of graphic virtuosity. A musical metaphor of repeating themes expressed with restrained variations, occasionally bowing to intricate solo passages, would be fitting—the more so because both share a deep exploration of the possibilities evoked by the configurations of their many elements. Consistency and continuity of impression are vital to such instruction: even Burne-Jones's subtle aging of the figure of Chaucer throughout the book's illustrations establishes a visual authority to the ordering of the writings, which is by no means standardized or logical. Just as Chaucer the author is highly involved and engaged with his stories, appearing as a character, commenting, dissembling, apologizing, clarifying, debating, Morris meets such authorial interference with his own cheerful effrontery and graphical editorializing. McGann says that Morris and Burne-Jones were trying “to invent a new kind of book” throughout the experiments leading up to Kelmscott, the planned decorative editions of *The Earthly Paradise* and *Love is Enough*, and the illuminations of the 1870s.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Jeffrey Skoblow, “Beyond Reading,” *The Victorian Illustrated Book*, ed. Richard Maxwell (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 254.

⁸¹ McGann, *Black Riders*, 48.

It is important to note that before the *Chaucer*, Burne-Jones played a very minimal role in the Press: prior to that great collaboration, he had designed only eleven woodcuts which appear in six Kelmscott books. In fact, Burne-Jones had not worked so closely with Morris since the abandoned *Aeneid* manuscript. It was a long process to realize that dream, and it changed in the seeking, but it was not only the creation of a new style of book that was at stake: it was an argument for the importance of paratextuality, foregrounding the materiality of the pages. Morris was able to point out that ornament had other roles to play besides cursory or referential, and that use of the page as a locus for a unique artistic grammar, composed of the interaction of graphic and textual relationships, had been slowly lost through the centuries of printing's increasing obsession with finance and expediency. The spiritual and artistic implications of illumination as a craft had not long survived the shift in technologies, and as scribal arts were lost, bookmaking became an orphaned practice, subservient to transmission of authorial meaning. Studying medieval examples made it clear to Morris and Burne-Jones that, despite the Victorian obsession with the image, printing had not yet moved towards recovering the language of paratextual meanings that had seemingly once been a part of the reading experience.

The strategy of trying to replicate the importance of design and ornament using extant printshop resources was doomed to failure, because the letterforms themselves could not support a bold aesthetic, nor could a coherent expressive textual presentation be achieved without the same hand guiding all elements of the page. The strategy of creating richly illuminated manuscripts fashioned after medieval models allowed for the flexibility and harmony Morris needed to shape a physical grammar for books, but that strategy did not allow for reproducibility, and was ultimately unfeasible as the basis for an influential new movement. Kelmscott was more influential than anyone could have foreseen, and the

backlash against it, championing textual clarity over decoration, yet sharing a reverence for fine workmanship and historical design models, was simply the other half of its influence.

David Carlson notes the formal differences between the manuscript and printed page, the conceptual space discussed here in terms of Morris's movement through it, as he mastered first one medium and then the other, and led future bookmakers to continue the dialectic more directly on their pages: "generally speaking, printed pages are smaller, plainer, simpler, and more regular, using fewer varieties and sizes of lettering, fewer columns and blocks, less ornament, and less colour: black and white, regularly spaced and justified lines, a rectangular block—a tombstone, basically."⁸² If the incunable's page is a tombstone, most would agree it marks the death of the illuminated manuscript. Yet there was a century of competition between the scribal and printer models of page design, each shaped by the practical considerations and tradition of their craft. That century was the time when many of the most beautiful accomplishments were made in each form, and Morris saw that as the legacy of the relationship between two living arts. The difficult, subtle, and often bizarre experimentations that mark this period are glossed over by Morris, who ignores the most complex strategies of Renaissance printers trying to meaningfully arrange multiple columns, glosses, interlinear and rubricated text, commentary, ornament, and illustration.

Carlson sees in the eventual dominance of the simplified "monolithic" style of the printed page that remains the standard today an abandoning of the manuscript tradition in favour of stone-carved models such as ancient Roman tomb inscriptions (remembering that the Romans used only upper-case letters, and that our lower-case alphabet developed out of Roman cursive, finally standardized as Carolingian miniscule under Charlemagne). This has interesting implications for Morris, who does not seem to have considered a link between the

⁸² David Carlson, "Nicholas Jensen and the Form of the Renaissance Printed Page," *The Future of the Page*, Peter Stoicheff and Andrew Taylor, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 91.

lapidary and the punch-cutter, despite the similarity of materials. Is this the fissure between calligraphy and printing that began what he saw as the long decline of the latter? The alienation of the book-forms may have been largely determined by practical pressures and growing custom, which made the simpler designs triumph over the more elaborate print layouts, but the early examples certainly prove that printers followed manuscript models closely at first as they developed a distinct aesthetic and paratextual apparatus. Morris, then, reaches back, past the influence of the monument, to the time when the printer was still learning from the scribe.

The final chapter examines traditions of printing and illustration after Morris's intervention and the transmission of paratextual awareness through the presses that sprang up in response to Kelmscott. The focus is primarily on growing paratextual awareness, and the manner in which calligraphy was reintroduced as a sister art, embellishing otherwise plain texts and reconstituting the role of the scribe and illuminator as modern book design exploded into eclectic and sophisticated fragments. Past studies of the Private Press movement have paid scant attention to the use of calligraphy, and its implications as a sign of Morris's ideological legacy. The inclusion of pen-work on the printed page resurrected the tension of the incunabula period between organic handwriting and mechanized type, and represented in material form the dynamic of their competing aesthetics. Printing and calligraphy were both resurrected as valid art-forms through this response to Morris's aesthetic and ideology, and they shared in the ascendance of the role of the signifier over the signified, only to see the signifier transformed in our lifetime into electronic ephemera. A century after Kelmscott, there is an evanescence of the material form of books that allows for instant reframing of any aspect of their visual design, and the subsequent implications for shared or paratextual meaning form the conclusion of this study.

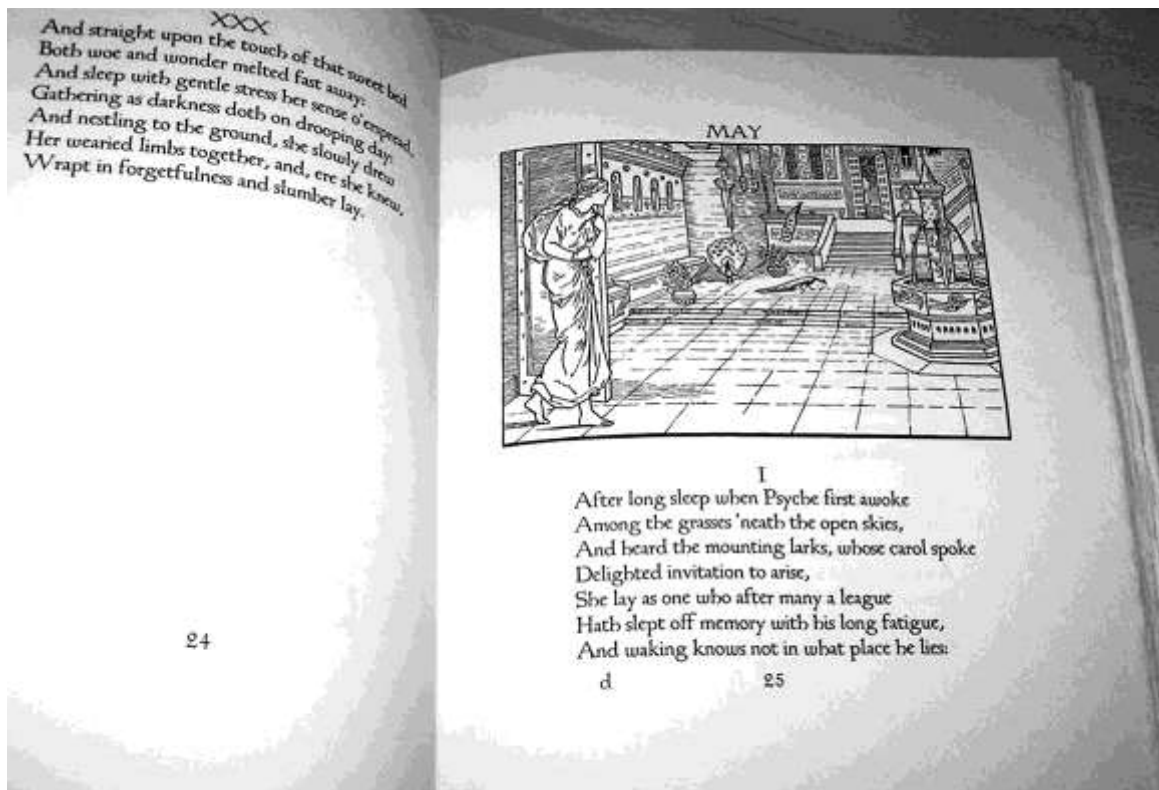


Figure 6.1 Robert Bridges, *Eros and Psyche*, Gregynog Press, 1935.

Chapter 6

The Changing Signal: Morris's Paratextual Legacy

It is now clear that Gutenberg's invention did not alter the essential structures of the book. Until at least the beginning of the sixteenth century, the printed book remained very much dependent on the manuscript. It imitated its predecessor's layout, scripts, and appearance, and, above all, it was completed by hand: the hand of the illuminator who painted ornamented or historiated initials or miniatures, the hand of the corrector or emendator, who added punctuation, rubrics, and titles; the hand of the reader who inscribed notes and marginalia on the page. More fundamentally, after Gutenberg as before, the book continued to be an object composed of folded sheets, gathered between covers and bound together. The Western book achieved the form it would retain in print culture twelve or thirteen centuries before the introduction of the new technology.¹

The resurrection of paratextuality as a discipline was the unacknowledged heart of the private press movement, as it had been fundamental to Morris's illumination projects. Morris's preoccupation with analyzing and expanding the range of viable semiotic systems possible in documents and ornament was seized on by his contemporaries and successors in the movement. Although personal interpretations and private agendas quickly warped and fragmented Morris's vision for the publishing industry's future, his legacy is nevertheless crucial because it fostered new awareness of the tensions between word and image, message and symbol, material and concept. This final chapter brings us from the initial responses and repudiations of Morris's approach to the page through the notable private presses and their effect on the evolution of the book in the twentieth century to the threshold of the digital age, where the static form of paper and ink is being quickly abandoned for a new fluid ethereality which represents the most dramatic change to the page in more than fifteen centuries. This is analogous to the movement from pen to printing-block in fifteenth-century Europe, and represents a reversion from a strictly constrained and laborious method of textual transmission back to a medium which is highly flexible and easily manipulated, yet more easily duplicated than ever before. The age of print is being superseded, and the surface

¹ Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*, 14.

resemblance between digital transmissions and paper books is a temporary state. The first steps to understand a new language must be based in familiar extant ones, but the properties and limitations of radiant textuality are greatly different from those of its predecessors. As Morris revived the considerations and inclusion of calligraphic design into printing, there will come a day when digital communication has forgotten the possibilities of the materiality of print, and the media forms will have to be re-acquainted with one another.

The history of printing and writing is simultaneously the history of paratextuality, and the use of word and image can be viewed as a struggle for ascendancy or as a symbiotic relationship. The first printing was of images, as were the first writings (pictographs), but increasingly standardized and widespread language-use necessitated advancements in communication, and the focus rested on refinement of text for many centuries. Yet much of the population was not literate, and messages could be conveyed to that public only through visual or verbal means. The growth of symbolism and ornament occurred in specific disciplines, particularly religion, where the labour was justified as a necessary theological and cultural service. Illuminated manuscripts combined the sacred word and the sacred image in psalters and breviaries, each one unique and combining function with aesthetic interpretation. Wider dissemination of religious tenets required a more efficient reproduction than hand-lettering, so single-sheet block prints appeared early in the fifteenth century, followed quickly by moveable type, the most profoundly important invention of the past two millennia. The growth of the printing industry as a secular, profit-driven community soon removed it from its scribal legacy, and ever-increasing literacy drove the dominance of the word over the image. The strategic use of ornament as an equal or privileged partner in the conveyance of meaning was lost, and illustration became a luxury, its use tightly circumscribed by limitations of budget and technology. William Morris's lifetime saw the great revolution of both literacy

and the printing industry, and the subsequent return of the image as a primary definer of culture. His obsession with ornament returned repeatedly through his experiments in print and calligraphy, until his Kelmscott Press finally appeared to champion this model of revived medieval paratextual awareness. In this final chapter the effect of both Morris's calligraphic and print paratextual strategies on the future of the page is surveyed.

Morris was by no means alone in his quest to reform Victorian printing and raise (or return) it to an art form. Outside of the intimate circle of private presses that sprang up after Emery Walker's 1888 lecture, there was a group of English publishers of *belles lettres* whose reforms and achievements are often overlooked because they were part of the commercial industry: among them John Lane, Elkin Matthews, Grant Richards, Fisher Unwin, Joseph M. Dent, and Charles Kegan Paul. In their lifetimes the publishing industry in England underwent tumultuous change and growth in every area. The rise of cheap books (under three and a half shillings) and newspapers as the market's largest share in the second half of the nineteenth century was a response to growing literacy among the working classes. Even the seasons shifted: from summer being the peak sale period to the dominance of the Christmas book market by the end of the century. Novels, yellowbacks, penny dreadfuls, and journals had to be produced cheaply to stay affordable, and quality suffered greatly. Literacy and incomes tended to be higher in urban than rural areas, and this rapidly growing population meant a hugely expanding market for books and newspapers. The lower education and reduced religious sentiment of the new readers changed the market's profile towards fiction, children's books, and heavily illustrated volumes of all description.² In all respects, printing and publishing had radically transformed, and by 1888 the industry's relationship with the reading public was in uncharted territory.

² Simon Elliot, "Aspects of the Victorian Book" <http://www.bl.uk/collections/early/victorian/intro.html>.

Morris and Burne-Jones were always planning beautiful illuminated and printed books, some of which never came to pass, but each unfinished project honed their skill and knowledge of the related crafts, as did observing the work of their friends. If Dante Gabriel Rossetti's paintings inspired Morris with their use of text, the endeavours of Rossetti's younger sister to have her poems properly embodied and illustrated were no less influential. As previously noted, *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862), written by Christina Rossetti and designed and illustrated by her brother Dante Gabriel, was the first book project to strongly engage with the problems of contemporary printing faced by the group. The typeface and setting are not always successful, and Rossetti's illustrations transfer poorly to woodcut format, but the result is "virtually unique in the period because of the wholeness of their book design," as Lorraine Janzen Kooistra says, remarking on what Jerome McGann has called the "materialist aesthetic" which seeks for an appropriate compositional environment.³ Kooistra points out that while Christina Rossetti did not go as far as Morris's "need to control all aspects of [his] books' bibliographic codes from typography to paper," her struggle to synchronize form and content anticipates (and partially overcomes) many of the challenges Morris would face at Kelmscott.⁴ The efforts by Morris's inner circle to integrate text and image for mass reproduction established the existence of a unified design as a defining mark of the Pre-Raphaelites, a mark that prior to *Goblin Market* could be seen only in Dante Gabriel's displays of his paintings in hand-designed sumptuous ornamented gold frame with his own accompanying verses.

³ Jerome McGann, "'A Thing to Mind': the Materialist Aesthetic of William Morris," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 55 (1992): 56.

⁴ Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, *Christina Rossetti and Illustration: A Publishing History* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2002), 8-9.

No other Pre-Raphaelite would manage to publish anything like the trade editions of Christina Rossetti's first two volumes of poetry with Macmillan and Company until Morris established Kelmscott in 1891. Her brother's hand in joining binding, text, and illustration into a single articulate paratextual environment is all the more remarkable considering that it was done in cooperation with a commercial publisher rather than a private press, and that Dante Gabriel Rossetti was not nearly as skilled in the decorative arts as Morris. Her later collaborations with illustrator Arthur Hughes on her two books for children, *Sing-Song* and *Speaking Likenesses*, continued the effort to inscribe the visual from the earliest possible stages, as the illustrator worked from the author's own pencil sketches (drawn on the pages of her own manuscript above each poem). Hughes was a fellow Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood associate of Dante Gabriel's, and he worked hard to realize Christina Rossetti's visual imagination.

Sharing the Page: The Effect of Morris's Calligraphy on Printing

The first generation of British private presses that followed Kelmscott have themselves become famous, and though their design choices are individual and clearly distinguished from Morris, his influence is clear. Where Morris never used hand-calligraphy or illumination to enhance a Kelmscott book, however, his successors were more willing to mingle the arts on their pages. Calligraphy was on the rise as an art: Alfred John Fairbank, Eric Gill, Ida Henstock, Graily Hewitt, Helen E. Hinkley, and Edward Johnston all worked with books from this circle. Each of the important private presses that followed Morris made use of his legacy in their own unique manner, and changed it thereby. Just as the second chapter of this study surveyed the roots of Morris's philosophies and strategies by surveying a small number of vital influences, we must touch on several influential branches that spread outward from his example.

The Ashendene Press (1894-1935) was inspired in part by an afternoon Charles Henry St John Hornby spent at Kelmscott, watching the *Chaucer* pages being pulled.⁵ When the Ashendene *Dante*, Hornby's answer to the *Chaucer*, was created, Graily Hewitt's chrysography embellished the vellum with beautiful gold capitals and the paper with red ink, as he completed most of the Ashendene books with hand-rubrication (see fig. 6.2). The fine bindings of Katharine Adams embellished the vellum copies with gold hand-tooled patterns on the spines and boards as well, pointillist designs resembling embroidery that aided the continuity of design between cover and content often lacking in Kelmscott volumes (Morris did not live long enough to become enchanted with elaborate bindings, though his blind-stamped design in white pigskin for the *Chaucer*, and the 250 "Superior Edition" copies of *The Roots of the Mountains* bound in Morris & Co. patterned cloth in 1890 certainly show his ability in that area)⁶. Hornby was Ashendene Press's only worker for some time, and many of his early decisions for material and form were taken from Morris: he used Albion hand-presses and commissioned his handmade paper from Batchelor & Sons and his ink from Janecke & Schneeman of Hanover (until 1914, when the first World War forced him to switch to English sources), just as Kelmscott did. Until he took the step of designing new founts (Subiaco, first used in 1902, and Ptolemy, first used in 1927), Hornby's volumes were printed mostly in Fell, a borrowed typeface, but the Subiaco's debut in his *Dante* encouraged him to make the letterforms as personal and meaningful as possible.

⁵ Colin Franklin, *The Ashendene Press* (Dallas, TX: Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, 1986), 2-3. Correspondence between Hewitt and Hornby elsewhere in this study illustrates the tireless discussions and endless minute modifications the hand-embellishments required.

⁶ The cloth binding was made in two versions---a specially-designed chintz pattern and the popular 'Honeysuckle' pattern---and Morris was, initially at least, very pleased with the effect. Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 71.

AL NOME di DIO. Comincia la Commedia
 di Dante Alighieri, eccelso poeta fioren-
 tino, nella quale tratta delle pene & punizioni
 de' vizii & demeriti, e de' premii delle virtù.
 Cantica prima appellata Inferno. Canto primo
 nel quale si proemia a tutta l'opera.

NEL MEZZO DEL CAM-
 MIN DI NOSTRA VITA
 MI RITROVAI PER
 UNA SELVA OSCURA,
 CHE LA DIRITTA VIA
 ERA SMARRITA.

È quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
 Questa selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte,
 Che nel pensier rinnuova la paura!
 Tanto è amara, che poco è più morte:
 Ma per trattar del ben ch' i' vi trovai,
 Dirò dell'altre cose ch' io v' ho scorte.
 I' non so ben ridir com' io v' entrài;
 Tant'era pien di sonno in su quel punto,
 Che la verace via abbandonai.

b

i

Figure 6.2 *Lo Inferno di Dante Alighieri Fiorentino*. Ashendene Press, 1902.

Thereafter Hewitt “not only filled in by hand the coloured initials in many of the books, but [...] designed [...] several alphabets of large initials, chapter-headings, and the like.”⁷

Eric Gill also designed an alphabet of initials which were reproduced and used in Moore’s *Utopia* (1906), and Louise Powell (*née* Lessore, who continued the ornamentation of Morris’s *Aeneid* manuscript for Charles Fairfax Murray) designed borders and initial letters for the 1927 *Don Quixote* where the Ptolemy fount was first used. Hewitt provided fine initials in red, blue, and burnished gold for the 1902 *Song of Songs*. Hornby, looking back on his press, rued his lack of talent as a designer: “Had I been able, like Morris, to design my own types and ornament, my pleasure in the Press would have been doubled, and my work more worthy of remembrance.”⁸ The dependence of those printers who followed Morris on the skill of calligraphers to embellish their books derives in part from their relative shortcomings in creating their own ornament, and perhaps the more modern, less ornate aesthetic in use was often prompted as much by practicality as personal aesthetics.

The Doves Press (1900-1916), alone among the first generation of private presses, used no illustration and no ornament except flourishes of a pen and hand-drawn initials. The famous red “I” (from “IN the beginning”) that dominates the first page of the Doves five-volume *Bible* (1902),⁹ and the large illuminated golden “O” that begins Milton’s *Paradise Lost*

⁷ C.H. St. John Hornby, “The Ashendene Press: An Account of its Origin and History,” [1933] *Kelmscott, Doves and Ashendene*, Los Angeles, CA: The Typophiles, 1952), 182.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *THE ENGLISH BIBLE, CONTAINING THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW TRANSLATED OUT OF THE ORIGINAL TONGUES BY SPECIAL COMMAND OF HIS MAJESTY KING JAMES THE FIRST & NOW REPRINTED WITH THE TEXT REVISED BY A COLLATION OF ITS EARLY AND OTHER PRINCIPAL EDITIONS & EDITED BY THE LATE REV. F. H. SCRIVENER M.A. LL.D. FOR THE SYNDICS OF THE UNIVERSITY PRESS CAMBRIDGE.* In Five Volumes, Large 4to. Printed in black & red. 500 on paper at 15 guineas, and 2 on vellum. June 1903 - June 1905.

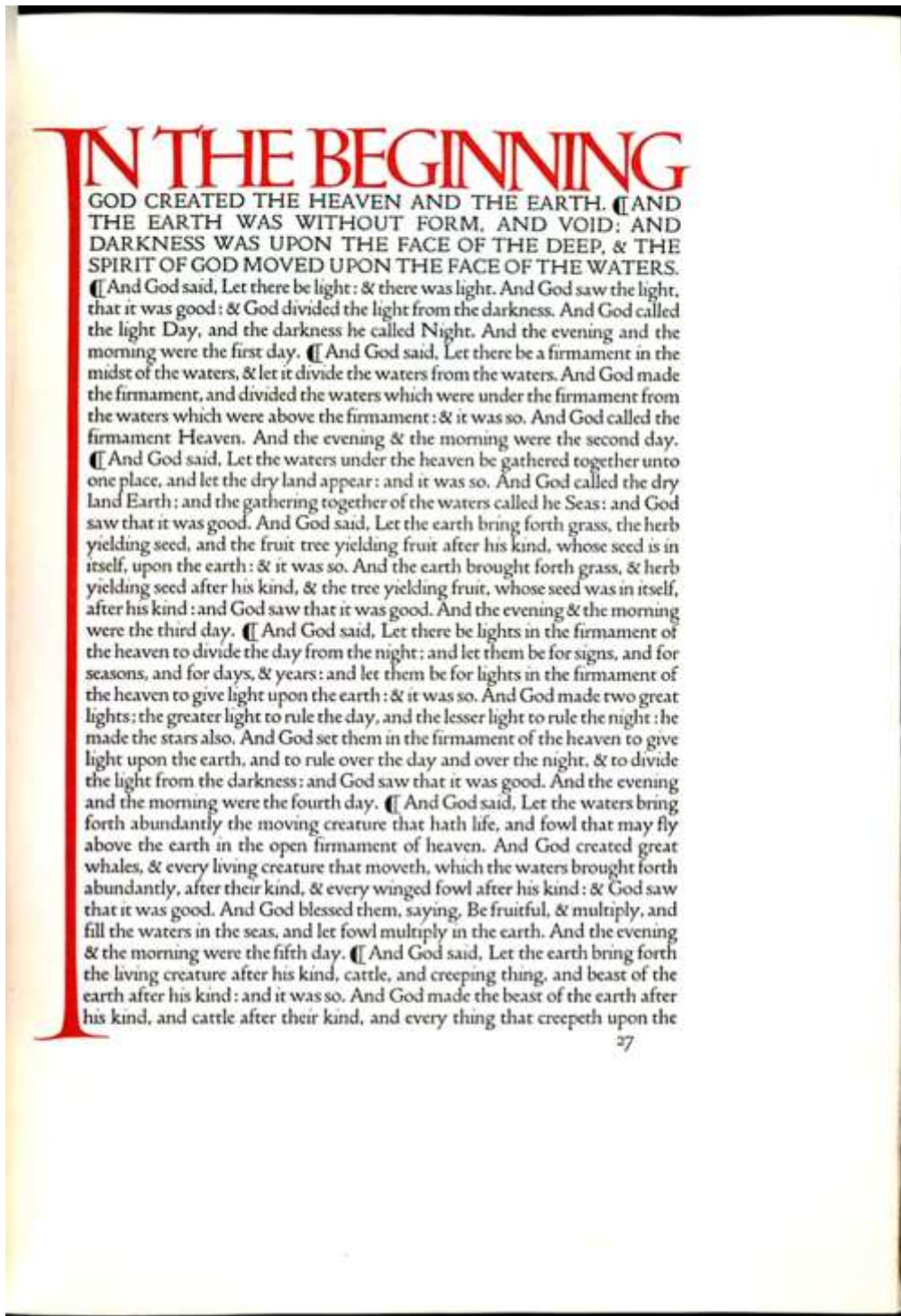


Figure 6.3 *The Bible*, Doves Press, 1903. Flourishes and calligraphic embellishment by Graily Hewitt.

(1902)¹⁰ are the strongest graphic elements of the press's library (see fig. 6.3). T.J. Cobden-Sanderson started Doves with Emery Walker, who inspired and guided Kelmscott Press, but their bitter falling-out led to the dissolution of the Press and the drowning of the Doves type fount in the Thames. Edward Johnston, considered the father of modern calligraphy, was also involved in book design with the private presses of his day. He designed titles for Doves, and an italic type for the Cranach Press (cut from his hand-drawn examples). Johnston's sketches and notes for the title of Milton's *Areopagitica* (1907) show his careful planning, and though his designs were meant to be reproduced by press and not scribed into each copy, as with Hewitt's labours, the influence of his hand-work was direct and meaningful.¹¹

When Cobden-Sanderson wrote his essay, "The Book Beautiful," Kelmscott had been running for only a year, and his presentation of the paper at a meeting of the Art Workers Guild (June 3, 1892) was followed by a response from Morris, which sadly went unrecorded. Cobden-Sanderson's respect for what Morris had achieved did not render him uncritical, and he disagreed with Morris's Gothic sensibility on three main points: he considered Kelmscott margins to be too small, especially the inner margins, which Morris made so thin that the blocks of text merged in the reader's sight, but which necessitated opening them to lie flat, and made rebinding the books difficult; he felt Morris's typefaces (Golden/Troy and Chaucer) too heavy and black, detracting from grace and readability; and he disapproved of the breaking of words and lines to allow the large decorated initials and

¹⁰ *PARADISE LOST. A POEM IN XII BOOKS. THE AUTHOR JOHN MILTON.* Imperial 4to. Printed in black and red from the Text of the First Edition, 1669. 300 on paper at 3 guineas, 22 on vellum at 15 guineas, and 3 with gold lettering. November 1902.

¹¹ *AREOPAGITICA; A SPEECH BY MR. JOHN MILTON FOR THE LIBERTY OF UNLICENSED PRINTING TO THE PARLLAMENT OF ENGLAND.* Small 4to. Printed from the First Edition. 300 on paper at £1. 5s., 22 on vellum at £3. 10s., and 3 with revised title. June 1907.

borders dominance over the layout.¹² All of these points may be summed up as concerns for readability, and the plainer pages of Doves books are certainly more comfortable to a modern reader's eye than those of most Kelmscott volumes. Morris's rebuttal took a more concrete form with his essay "The Ideal Book," presented in June 1893 to the Bibliographical Society. The rivalry was good-natured, but the differences between the two men's viewpoints are important. For Cobden-Sanderson, the Gothic Revival was dead, and its aesthetic was far from a natural choice for contemporary artists to emulate. The Kelmscott tendency towards austerity and a restricted stylistic range in Cobden-Sanderson's hands became minimalism.

THE DOVES PRESS was founded in 1900 to attack the problem of Typography, as presented by ordinary Books in the various forms of Prose, Verse, and Dialogue, and, keeping always in view the principles laid down in the *Book Beautiful*, to attempt its solution by the simple arrangement of the whole Book, as a whole, with due regard to its parts and to the emphasis of its capital divisions rather than by the addition and splendor of applied ornament.¹³

Cobden-Sanderson, his concerns more religious than social, summarizes the philosophy behind the Arts and Crafts movement in forthright and revealing words:

Arts and Crafts [...] may be associated with the revival, by a few artists, of hand-craft as opposed to machine-craft, and be defined as the insistence of the worth of man's hand, a tool in danger of being lost in the substitution of highly organised and intricate machinery, or emotional as distinguished from merely skilled a technical labour: or it may be defined to be both one and the other, and to have a wider scope than either- as, for example, it may be defined to be a movement to bring all the activities of the human spirit under the influence of one idea, the idea that life is creation, and we should be creative in modes of art, and that this indeed should extend to all the objects of man's endeavour in transforming means into ends and ends into means, a still higher accomplishment.

Handwriting and hand-illumination are at the root of the *Book Beautiful*, of Typography and Engraving and every Printer; and indeed every one having to do with the making of the *Book Beautiful*, should, I think, practise his hand in the *Art of Beautiful Writing* and let both hand and soul luxuriate and rejoice for a while in the art of its decoration. Such practice would keep Type alive under the inspiration of an ever-living prototype. It would supply a stock of exemplars and

¹² Marianne Tidcombe, *The Doves Press* (London: British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2002), 5.

¹³ T.J. Cobden-Sanderson, *Cosmic Vision* (Thavies Inn, UK: Richard Cobden-Sanderson, 1922), 118.

suggestions from which the Typographer might cautiously borrow, engrafting upon his own rigid stock the new growth of Calligraphy in which it is so easy to make experiments. In the making of the Book Beautiful, moreover, in which various modes of presentation are combined, symbolical and pictorial, the adjustment of capital to text, and text to picture and of picture to text is easy and natural when the whole page is done by hand, and by one hand altogether, or by several hands working together on one identical page with a view to one effect.¹⁴

The history of lettering, the birth of calligraphy as an art neither merely practical nor decorative but possessed of “a substantive beauty, as if a picture, a world within a world, framed by the adjacent illumination and writing, and overshadowing them,” is seen by Cobden-Sanderson as succumbing to excess in the very period where Morris and Burne-Jones find their greatest love, the medieval era of complex ornament and historiated initials. Here he sees the danger of the illuminator “subordinating the text to himself, of sacrificing the thing signified to the mode of its signification.”

For as I have said in the end the written communication became as it were nothing, or but the framework to support a succession of beautiful pictures, beautiful indeed but at the expense of the text which they had set out to magnify. I submit that a book so constituted is not a Book Beautiful, but a Book Sacrificed.¹⁵

Yet, the paradox here is that Cobden-Sanderson, despite giving the text the position of primary importance, insists that the printer should be either a calligrapher himself or working closely with one, and he invokes Morris as the proof: “to clinch all I have said on this subject, the great revival in typography which is taking place under our own eyes, is the work of a printer who before he was a Printer was and is a Calligrapher and Illuminator, William Morris.”¹⁶

The debate between Morris and Cobden-Sanderson is that of authorial intent versus artistic interpretation. When Cobden-Sanderson argues that the skill of printer, typographer,

¹⁴ Ibid., 54.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

or calligrapher must be subordinate and focused on translating only the intent of the text's author as clearly as possible, he is summarizing the 'clear vessel' ideology that would crush virtually all decorative art in the next half-century. By arguing that the personal expression of the craftsman should be concerned first with the harmony of the page, Morris is subordinating content to form, and allowing a space for interpretation throughout the production process, which he saw as vital for both the work and the worker's health. Cobden-Sanderson saw a very different thing than Morris did when looking at medieval pages, especially of an illuminated breviary or missal, where the word being glorified or obscured by the illuminator is that of God and an exuberantly beautiful rendering may border on idolatry. For him, the artist must be strictly subordinate to the authority of the text, conveying the thought or image set forth by the text's author (see fig. 6.4). Morris, however, was himself author, artist, and designer, and had no such notions of the inviolable supremacy of the message. Like Rossetti's idiosyncratic Moxon Tennyson illustrations, Morris's design makes its own decisions, and the text must conform to the medium he has chosen for it.

This lack of formal consideration for the boundaries between text and picture upset Cobden-Sanderson, and he used slides of Kelmscott pages to make his argument, with Morris observing in the audience. Similarly, when Morris died a few years later, Cobden-Sanderson bought his copy of Jensen's *Pliny* and repeated Morris's process of creating a fount from the 1476 model, but without the thickening and alteration Morris had done to the characters, which had made Kelmscott pages more closely resemble calligraphic pages.

Superficially the typography of Doves books was in marked contrast with those of Kelmscott Press: no gothic type, no ornament, but a reliance on 'pure' typography relieved only by hand-drawn lettering. Yet there could still be seen the same Kelmscott practice of closely set type of Venetian style, carefully proportioned margins, fine presswork, and excellent materials.¹⁷

¹⁷ John Dreyfus, "William Morris: Calligrapher," *William Morris and the Art of the Book* (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1976), 90-91.

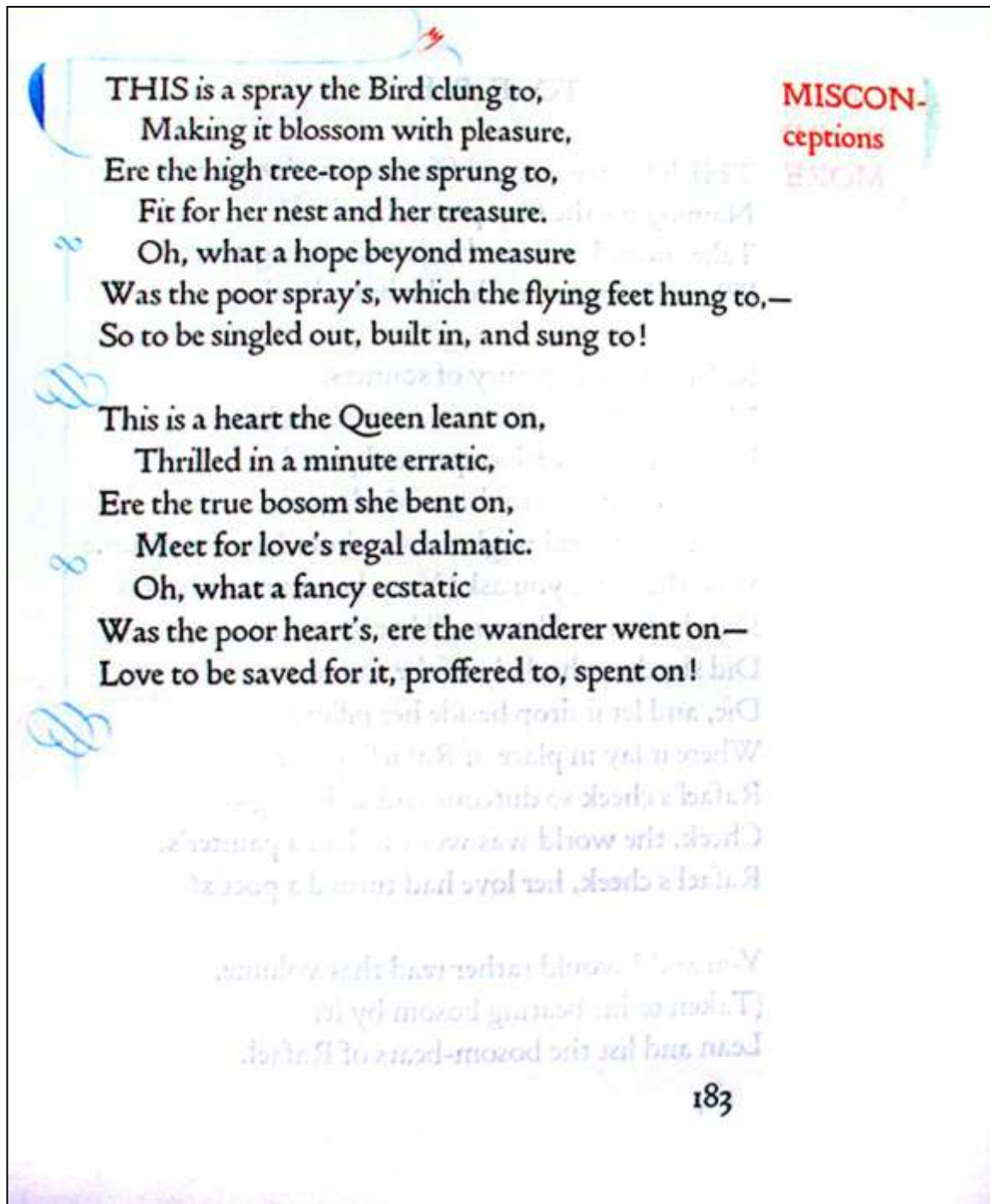


Figure 6.4 Robert Browning, *Men and Women*. Doves Press, 1908. Flourishes and calligraphic embellishment by Edward Johnston.

At every turn, Morris's teachings that the craftsman is legitimately creator of the handicraft is undercut by the anxiety of his successors, who were designers but unwilling to be artists. The paratextual environment is not merely an awareness of taste, a concern for quality, or stylistic continuity: it is the exploitation of the entire matrix of the variables in the book form to generate unique and complex meanings, and few of the printers who followed Morris had the vision or skill necessary to keep that matrix alive. Lucien Pissarro's Eragny Press however, was the exception to that rule.

The Eragny Press (1894-1914) is unique among Kelmscott's first generation of successors in being started by an already-experienced visual artist; Lucien Pissarro, the son of the famous Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro. Inspired by Charles Ricketts and Vale Press, Lucien and his wife came to England to found their press after struggling with illustration and printing in France. Motivated by a need to prove himself in a field his father had not worked in, (the decorative arts as opposed to oil painting), he attempted to find a balance between ideal art for art's sake and the need to earn a living in a trade.¹⁸ Though he struggled financially throughout the twenty years of presswork, Pissarro's books are richly ornate and beautiful, using techniques Morris never attempted, and synthesizing colour and recent impressionist style into his woodcuts. Pissarro's experience as a printmaker led him to intricate processes: colour prints and borders using multiple wood blocks, and rather than relying solely on the founts made available to him, the use of photo-engraved calligraphy for the text. Cutting blocks with his own designs and calligraphic text closed the conceptual distance between artist and printer, making the Eragny books autographic, first generation handicraft. As Urbanelli states, "Lucien's involvement in every step of this intricate

¹⁸ Marcella D. Genz, *A History of the Eragny Press 1894-1914* (London: British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2004), 14-15.

procedure allowed him to indulge in a true joining of letter forms and illustration, a dimension of design that would concern him for his entire career.”¹⁹

Lucien Pissarro was introduced to Charles Ricketts, illustrator for Oscar Wilde, and became part of the salon circle of their Chelsea studio, known as “The Vale,” which included Yeats, Wilde, Shaw, Housman, Rothenstein, and Roger Fry. Ricketts founded the Vale Press in response to Kelmscott, but preferred early Renaissance books to Morris’s Gothic aesthetic. His books used cleaner, simpler lines of design and focused on wood engraving as a showcase element, with blocks cut by the original artists rather than by intermediaries (which was the case at Kelmscott). Ricketts generously allowed the Pissarro family to use his new Vale type and at times the Vale watermarked paper, while Hacon & Ricketts bought half of each Eragny edition outright, allowing them a reliable source of funding. Without this assistance, Eragny Press could not possibly have been sustained in its early years, with its laborious production and high spoilage rates (due to the multiple colours). When the Vale Press was closed by a fire in 1903 (the same year Lucien’s father died, who had been assisting with expenses), it marked a major shift in the press’s practices. Pissarro finally produced his own typeface, called Brook,²⁰ and began printing fewer and smaller books, primarily in English (French had been the common choice for the first seven years) (see fig. 6.5).

The use of gold leaf and characteristic flowered bindings made the outside of Eragny books match the inside well, and the constant use of stippled and mottled colour in the illustrations kept the effect light and airy, a graceful counterpoint to the naturally heavy lines of Post-Impressionist wood engravings. The aesthetic is remarkably original, and was highly

¹⁹ Lora Urbanelli, *The Wood Engravings of Lucien Pissarro & A Bibliographical List of Eragny Books* (Oxford: Silent Books and The Ashmolean Museum, 1994), 26.

²⁰ In 1947, three years after her husband’s death, Esther Pissarro cast the punches and matrices for the Brooks type into the English Channel, letting them drown between the two countries which had shaped the Eragny Press.

influential in early twentieth-century book publishing, particularly through the famed French art dealer and children's book publisher Ambroise Vollard, who was a great fan of Lucien's work.²¹

The French influences of Pissarro and the Decadents on the Aesthetic Movement were crucial to the shaping of modern print paratextuality, because the private press concept became married to the *livres d'artistes*, furthering the modern exploration of visual semiotics into books which self-consciously tested the boundaries and relations among verbal and visual arts.²² This foregrounding of the visual over the textual content harkens back to the medieval illuminated manuscript in many respects, lacking only the religious significance and continuity of style, yet this work spoke clearly to its own time. Eragny books were not commissioned *livre d'artistes*, but even among the private press movement they were without equal for artistic integrity, unity of labour, and use of colour, and the modest thirty-two book output of the press's two decades had far-reaching influence.²³ Slowly gaining recognition in France as a new form of artwork, the visual artist's role in elucidating and interpreting a written text became widely accepted as a valid collaboration. As with the private press books, the level of intervention and collaboration varied wildly from one project to another, though

²¹ "In 1900, we observe Ambroise Vollard casting about for an artist to illustrate Verlaine's *Parallelement*; he hoped to attract Lucien Pissarro, the son of Camille and proprietor of the Eragny Press in Hammersmith, in London. Pissarro, and then others, declined Vollard's overtures, because even early in his career as impresario, Vollard was known as being impossible to work with." Veronique Plesch, "From Image to Word: The Books of Lucie Lambert," in Claus Clüver, Véronique Plesch, and Leo Hoek, *Orientations: Space/Time/Image/Word. Word & Image Interactions* 5th Ed. (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2005), 215.

²² The *livre d'artiste* (artist's book) arose as a phenomenon in early twentieth-century France, and soon in Germany as the *Malerbuch*. These finely-printed books were illustrated with original prints by well-known artists. The artist went beyond illustration into design collaboration, rendering the text in visual terms. A commission for a *livre d'artiste* was usually given by a publisher and produced at great expense in volumes that often followed private press conventions of material and quality.

²³ As an example of this influence: in 1914, the year Eragny Press closed, the Pissarros met a Dutch printer named Jean Francois van Royen, for whom they designed a unique typeface (the Distel type, based on the Carolingian miniscule calligraphic hand), a pressmark, watermark, ordered an Albion press, and taught the basics of printing. Thus the Pissarros were directly responsible for the Netherland's first private press, the Zilverdistel (later Kunera).

most still relegated visual elements to the framing or enabling designer's role that Cobden-Sanderson was most comfortable with at Doves. Examples would arise, however, of text responding to image and taking the submissive role. Even today in Canada, engravers such as Lucie Lambert and Gerard Brender à Brandis create books based in visual iconography.

When the poet Thomas Sturge Moore wrote an account of the Eragny Press in 1903 (on the occasion of the withdrawal of the Vale type from circulation), he stated boldly:

It is no longer necessary to defend the beautiful printed book, because its price is established, and the collector appreciates its rarity...But it may not be altogether vain to say something in explanation of the ends that should be attained by reclaiming the book for beauty, and making it a work of art. Haste and hurry are the mortal foes of delicacy, discrimination, contemplation and refinement. In an age of motors art has untold enemies: the circumstances of our life are hostile to beauty; we are robbed right and left, but we have not the time to realize our losses. Our lives are so impoverished that we have scarcely leisure for a sigh. And those who have time upon their hands often seem best pleased when they are able to emulate the slaves of machinery, in some exercise originally designed to recreate.²⁴

Moore speaks to the need for internal harmony within the book's elements: a beauty of form and rhythm, a "comely consonance one with another [...] when the agreement of the letters has at last resulted in the sweetness of a well-proportioned page, if there are to be any decorations or illustrations these should be of a similar origin to the type itself, cut with like tools, designed with similar strokes."²⁵ He sees Eragny as a proper successor to Kelmscott Press, and he makes comparisons to Morris's work and philosophy. Kelmscott was "the first harvest," but,

in this revival of the beautiful book, there is room for many developments, for new beauties are a result of life, which implies wholesome growth. The shades of distinction and charm obtainable by an artist in the building of books are doubtless as

²⁴ Thomas Sturge Moore, "A Defence of the Revival of Printing," *A Brief Account of the Origin of the Eragny Press* (Chelsea: Eragny Press, 1903), 5-6.

²⁵ Ibid.

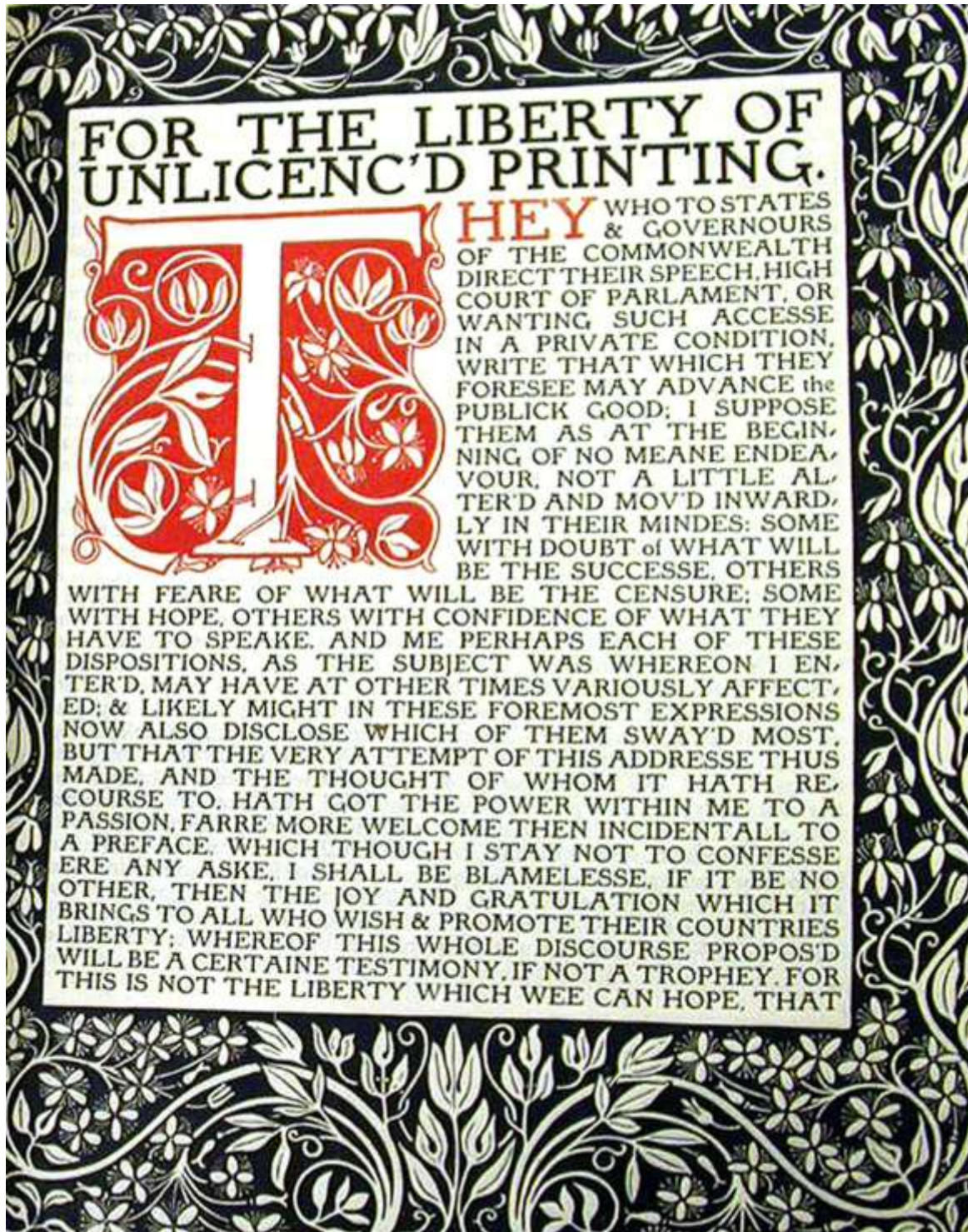


Figure 6.5 John Milton, *Areopagitica*. Eragny Press, 1903.

many as the pearly hues on the neck of a pigeon, passing by as imperceptible degrees from the gay to the solemn.

Moore clearly differentiates between the aesthetics of the letterforms of a scribe and those of a typeface (“the form cut from steel should not simulate that traced by the flowing quill”), but in the process he also clearly separates those whose aesthetics are based on rigid restriction and adherence to established rules, and those whose unique creativity fosters the growth of an art, neither stifling change nor abandoning the lessons of the past. The rhythm of a book’s elements can become Art only by appealing to our natural delight in beauty and proportion, and taking joy in the narrow constraints of material and form that foster a clear aesthetic—what Morris calls the necessary resistance in the material.

The Vale Press (1889-1904)²⁶ was started by Charles Ricketts, inspired in part by Walker’s 1888 lecture. In response to the growing naturalism and photo-realist tendencies in art, Ricketts championed the place of visual design and stylization.²⁷ Trained as a professional wood engraver, he deplored the loss of artistry that often accompanied the translation of a drawing to woodblock by an uninterested hand, and so, despite his respect for Morris, he remarked of the first Kelmscott book he found, “the type very noble indeed, the decorations less so.” Like Pissarro, he was more directly involved than Morris in realizing his vision on the page. As a respected illustrator, freelance engraver, and later typographer of sorts, he collaborated with master printer Charles McCall at the Ballantyne Press, designed bindings for books by Wilde and Hardy, and published the *Dial*, an influential journal of the arts which was successor to Chiswick Press’s journal *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, and to *The Germ* and

²⁶ This date range combines two related endeavours: Ricketts’s early Vale productions, starting with *Dial* magazine, that were published with his lifelong partner Charles Hazelwood Shannon between 1889-1894, and Vale Press publications, 1896-1904, published with his patron William Llewellyn Hacon.

²⁷ Maureen Watry, *The Vale Press: Charles Ricketts, a Publisher in Earnest* (London: British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2004), xxii.

Oxford and Cambridge Magazine (though Morris viewed the complimentary copy he received from Ricketts with distinct misgivings).²⁸ Ricketts himself would later look back with deeper admiration at Morris's books, but the clash of aesthetics was fundamental on one level: Morris worked to make his layouts black and imposing, while Ricketts moved towards ever-lighter line work and a whiter page. In his *Defence of the Revival of Printing*, he warns printers to "use decoration only when it can be urged as an added element of beauty to the book, let it accompany the text and not gobble it up,"²⁹ and poetically remarking, "I was by that time, as I am still, utterly won over and fascinated by the sunny pages of the Venetian printers: I would define the page of a fine Kelmscott book as full of wine, an Italian book as full of light."³⁰ Like Cobden-Sanderson, Ricketts mingles praise and criticism of Morris throughout his lectures on the book arts.

Ricketts's love of intricate, flowing linework in his ornaments and designs did not extend into type, however. Always an enthusiastic apologist for the book arts, he responded fiercely to criticisms of his founts and questioned the link between the letterforms of calligraphy and incunabula type. He acknowledges that "In the history of the finer Italian printers" certain founts may almost be dated by the surviving traces of penmanship the letterforms exhibit³¹ but he disputes the evidence of Morris's Italian writing manuals:

That trained scribes of the fifteenth century were called in to design type, and that the efforts to recast the Carolingian writing of the ninth and tenth centuries benefited by their practice with the pen, is conceivable enough, but conjecture ends here, for penmanship was not of the highest quality at the end of the fifteenth

²⁸ In a letter of April 44, 1892, Morris remarks that he has "looked at the art portion of [the *Dial*] with somewhat mixed feelings as the talent and the aberration of that talent seemed... to be in about equal proportions." Watry, *The Vale Press: Charles Ricketts, a Publisher in Earnest*, 100.

²⁹ Charles Ricketts, *A Defence of the Revival of Printing* (London: The Ballantyne Press, 1899), 35.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

century. A student of form must study elsewhere (as the old type designers did) to note at what period shape reaches its perfection.³²

Ricketts's rejection of the influence of calligraphy on type design presages the modern typefaces, and implies, as Colin Franklin notes, "that there could be no need to follow a style which had been dictated by other tools and conditions."³³ Nonetheless, Ricketts's own Kings fount is closely modeled on Carolingian miniscule, though the result is imperfect. He also had a sharp enough eye to point out that Morris's use of ornate borders had little dependence on medieval printing, but he only passingly connects them with illuminated manuscript work.³⁴

The finest books of Italy were in the main not decorated books, the prejudice of the then purchaser against printed decoration making the existence of ornament one of experiment soon abandoned. Some recasting then of ornamental motives is necessary to a printer anxious to evolve the most beautiful conceivable achievement in book-making, wherein type, decoration and proportion of page shall receive equally the most fastidious and scrupulous attention. I think a great debt is owed by book lovers to the late William Morris for motives in decoration (such as the half-borders) that to my knowledge are not to be found in old printed books, and for which he was indebted (if at all) to the great periods of decoration and illumination. This ornamental tendency of his makes more and more in the history of his press towards books ornamentally conceived and of ornamental use.³⁵

Ricketts saw with clarity the danger of ornament, which was leading to poor imitations and a backlash minimal aesthetic before Kelmscott Press had even closed its doors.

With such pomp of circumstance they become more and more large, necessitating ornamental type such as the Troy type; certain books like the Chaucer should be perused at a lectern. With a designer of Morris' importance this is one thing; deprive ornament of its excellence, relate it to some casual fount, throw in with this a photogravure frontispiece, badly blocked boards, various papers, &c., and the

³² Ibid., 4.

³³ Franklin, *The Private Presses*, 83.

³⁴ Interestingly, it was a newspaper review of Ricketts's *Defence* which emphasized the connection: "[Ricketts] speaks of the debt all book lovers owe William Morris for his motives in decoration. Such, for instance, as his half borders, not to be found in old printed books, and for which, if indebted at all, it was to illuminated manuscripts" (Unsigned review, *The New York Times*, April 20, 1901).

³⁵ Ricketts, *A Defence of the Revival of Printing*, 9-10.

new usual ornamental book becomes unbearable; instead of a revival in the shaping of books we have a new cumbersome trade article.³⁶

Yet many of Ricketts's own ornate page elements are distinctly drawn from medieval models, and he even produced painted pages (as for *Hero and Leander* in 1894) which resemble nothing quite so much as Morris's own illuminated manuscripts. Ricketts's own typefaces, like Morris's, were not without detractors, but his overall influence was considerable.

Designer of all aspects of books, creator of three founts (Vale, Avon, and Kings), a cutter of his own woodblocks who did much to restore the status of wood engraving as an art, even as a designer of the decorative papers that were used to bind many of his books (and remind us of the close connection between Vale and Eragny), Ricketts raised a distinct voice in the discussion that was shaping books at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Watry observes, however, Ricketts had no clear underlying broader agenda of social or moral reform beyond the book industry, but endeavored mainly to produce fine books and find buyers for them.³⁷ Today his reputation as a visual artist is more widely known than any of his fellow printers, with the exception of Morris.³⁸ "In all this just two characteristics are near to Ricketts and Morris: the great care needed for each copy where all the hand-work could not often be repeated—especially in the illuminated books which [Henry] Shaw enjoyed, and the common enthusiasm for medieval art."³⁹ Ricketts looked forward in a more impatient

³⁶ Ibid., 11.

³⁷ Watry, *The Vale Press: Charles Ricketts, a Publisher in Earnest*, 49.

³⁸ See Stephen Calloway, *Charles Ricketts: Subtle and Fantastic Decorator* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 4.

³⁹ Calloway, *Charles Ricketts: Subtle and Fantastic Decorator*, 49.

manner than Morris, however, and so his allegiance to a medieval social model or even a medieval aesthetic could not compare to the older craftsman's.⁴⁰

The Essex House Press (1898-1910) was founded by Charles Robert Ashbee, who took on many ex-Kelmscott printers when their last printing was completed following Morris's death, and indeed bought much of Kelmscott's materials, including two of the Albion presses. Ashbee was a central figure in the Arts and Crafts community, and had been running the Guild of Handicraft since 1886. For Ashbee, the movement's impetus was one of education: like Morris and Crane, he favoured the school as workshop, and the employer as teacher. For over twenty years he oversaw the entire Guild, and so Essex was just another trade in a craft collective which had many aspects. Three precepts summed up the philosophy that sustained the movement:

1. *That under modern conditions of Art, picture painting is forced into an artificial prominence and the constructional and decorative arts, the real backbone, have, as yet, no right recognition among us.*
2. *That the problems of machine production will have by degrees to be solved from within the workshop. That a sharp distinction will have to be drawn between what is produced by machinery and the direct work of man's hands, and that the standard of artistic excellence must depend ultimately on the pleasure given, not to the consumer, but to the producer.*
3. *That at the present day the social problem has prior claim to the artistic.*⁴¹

That a human bond between workers and public be formed by the creation of craft that was first and foremost pleasing and rewarding for the *creator* is a significant evolution of Ruskin and Morris's concerns, and asserts an understanding of the importance of design in life.

Ashbee sought to show that,

⁴⁰ "In 1896, the first book in the Vale Type designed by Mr. Ricketts was printed. Like Morris, Mr. Ricketts took for his model the work of the early Venetian printers, but with the fundamental difference of conception that, whereas Morris, like the early printers themselves, approached printing through the study of the manuscript, Mr. Ricketts 'abandoned the old tradition and conceived his forms as cut in metal.'" Margaret Bingham Stillwell, *The Influence of William Morris and The Kelmscott Press, as shown by an Exhibition of Books from the Later English Presses, at The John Carter Brown Library in December, 1911* (Providence, RI: E.A. Johnson & Co., 1912), 12.

⁴¹ Quoted by Triggs Oscar Lovell, *Chapters in the History of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Bibliolife, 2009), 151.

This Arts and Crafts movement, which began with the earnestness of the Pre-Raphaelite painters, the prophetic enthusiasm of Ruskin and the titanic energy of Morris, is not what the public has thought it to be, or is seeking to make it: a nursery for luxuries, a hothouse for production of mere trivialities and useless things for the rich.⁴²

This summarized the anxiety that plagued Morris throughout his career, when he said of Morris & Co., “am I doing nothing but make-belief then, something like Louis XVI’s lock-making?” When he was when supervising the decoration of the Northern iron-master Sir Lowthian Bell’s house, that patron came across Morris “talking and walking about in an excited way, and went on to enquire if anything was wrong. He turned on me like a mad animal—‘It is only that I spend my life ministering to the swinish luxury of the rich.’”⁴³

Essex House used Caslon type for many books, but Ashbee also designed his own Endeavour and Prayer Book founts for special projects. Their most acclaimed books were the elaborate 1903 *Prayer Book of King Edward VII* and the “Great Poems” monograph series on vellum with hand-coloured woodcuts.

The Golden Cockerel Press (1920-1961) was a later English press inspired by Cobden-Sanderson, and founded by three young women and one man (H.M. Taylor, G. Taylor, B. Blackburn, and H. Pyper). After an uneven beginning during which it was much more successful artistically than commercially, the press was purchased by Robert Gibbings, a founder of the Society of Wood Engravers, who wished to make Golden Cockerel a showpiece for the revival of wood engraving as an art form in the 1920s and 1930s. The press published an offbeat selection of literary classics, which were the mainstay of most fine printing during this period, and supplemented this with contemporary fiction, poetry, and essays. The book designers embraced a modern style, in contrast to the medieval and

⁴² Quoted in Franklin, *The Private Presses*, 69.

⁴³ W.R. Lethaby, *Philip Webb and His Work* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 94.

Renaissance tastes of the Kelmscott Press and its followers. Golden Cockerel's two hundred titles began a revitalization and revival of wood-engraving, due largely to the work of Eric Gill.⁴⁴ Golden Cockerel had three managers during its lifetime, and this changing of hands was the primary reason the Golden Cockerel survived when all other English private presses, including Nonesuch and the heavily subsidized Gregynog Press, closed in the late 1930s at the outbreak of the Second World War. The modern and often erotic engravings of Gill and Lettice Sanford helped sales as well, though they also brought occasional unwanted attention from censors and police.

The Golden Cockerel 1927 Prospectus repeated the standard mission statement: to “produce the finest books only, books where text, type and decorations are most in harmony, and representative of the thought and atmosphere of our time and art,”¹²⁶ but the exact nature of that harmony was far from accepted by all parties. The Golden Cockerel was begun with a remarkable aim unlike that of any other major private press: to be a co-operative press society where authors would “produce their books themselves in their own communal workshops without recourse to paid and irresponsible labour.”⁴⁵ In this sense, it was founded as a response to the commercialization of publishing and its Machiavellian exclusion of any manuscripts not deemed worthy of financial risks. The original prospectus has little artistic pretension, and draws upon Morris's Socialist legacy much more than on his aesthetic arguments: priorities that would remain true throughout the Cockerel's long life.

⁴⁴ Other illustrators/engravers employed by the Golden Cockerel Press included John Buckland-Wright, Blair Hughes-Stanton, Agnes Miller Parker, David Jones and Eric Ravilious. See Roderick Cave & Sarah Manson, *A History of the Golden Cockerel Press 1920-1960* (London: The English Library & Oak Knoll Press, 2002).

⁴⁵ David Chambers and Christopher Sanford, *Cock-A-Hoop, a sequel to Chanticleer, Pertelote, and Cockalorum, being a bibliography of the Golden Cockerel Press September 1949-December 1961* (Kent, England: Golden Cockerel Press, 1961), 57.



Figure 6.6 *The Four Gospels of the Lord Jesus Christ: According to the Authorized Version of the King James I, with Decorations by Eric Gill.* Golden Cockerel Press, 1931.

The books created at the Golden Cockerel are recognized for the progressive and modern nature of their illustrations, and of their typefaces, some of which were designed by Gill. Ironically, a note by Sanford in the Press's final bibliography of 1961 comments that "the gallant attempt at co-operation between author and printer announced in the [1920] prospectus was not to survive many books—authors do not generally make good printers."⁴⁶ Starting with no experience, and two extant type founts (Caslon Old Face and Goudy's Kennerley), the press was soon forced to hire journeymen printers and professional compositors; the "co-operative society" was a lost dream. Nonetheless, the press did rise to notable respect, and their more ambitious folios, such as the four-volume *Canterbury Tales* (1928) and *The Four Gospels*, which featured 65 wood engravings by Gill, are highly regarded today (see fig. 6.6).

Bound in white pigskin, the *Gospels* was the most sumptuous book published by the Cockerel, and was soon regarded as the equivalent of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, Doves *Bible* and Ashendene *Dante*: an extravagant folio which showcased the best articulation of the press's craftsmanship and aesthetic principles.

In early illumination, one finds no frontier between decoration and illustration. The work of the artist surrounded the text, explained and ornamented it - sometimes in historiated initials; and as calligraphy is itself a kind of illustration to explain meaning, text and picture formed one thing ... That is the balance that [Eric Gill] achieved [in *The Four Gospels*], greater than the even weight of engraving and type.⁴⁷

The Gregynog Press (1922-1954) was founded by the wealthy sisters Margaret and Gwendoline Davies. The press, which was named for their country estate in Wales, published forty-two titles in English and Welsh over its seventeen-year life, of which thirty-three were

⁴⁶ Chambers and Sanford, *Cock-A-Hoop*, 55.

⁴⁷ Franklin, *The Private Presses*, 142.

illustrated, and most of the remainder at least embellished with decorative initials.⁴⁸ Having a substantial fortune to use on the Press, the Davies spared no expense, time, or effort to realize their visions.⁴⁹ Of particular importance is the Gregynog *Eros and Psyche* (1935), which undertook to build on a project abandoned by Morris and Burne-Jones long ago, rendering “The Story of Cupid and Psyche” from *The Earthly Paradise* into a fully illustrated volume (see fig. 6.1). Burne-Jones’s seventy drawings (and forty-eight tracings with bold lines to guide woodblock cutting) were available at the Ashmolean. Loyd Haberly (the Press’s appointed controller), matching them to Robert Bridges’s long poem on the same subject, redrew twenty-four of them in a faithful rendering which resulted in woodcuts which were pleasant and crisp, but lacking the power of the originals. Ironically, the final book suffered notably from the opposite problem to the one that had driven Morris to despair of the project until he had designed his own type founts and founded Kelmscott: the woodcuts are almost overpowered by the tall dark type alongside them. The new Gregynog type had been designed by Graily Hewitt (who also embellished the book with green initials), but the type was too large to balance the illustrative linework. This may have been a calculated choice, as Hewitt’s letterforms are open and rounded, in the manner of a humanist hand, and at smaller sizes several of his letters can be mistaken for one another. The type had its supporters, but garnered more critics, including C.H. St. John Hornby, who recommended it not be used again. The eponymous calligraphic fount never graced another Gregynog book.⁵⁰ Decisions

⁴⁸ The Press initially shut down in 1940, but was restarted as Gwasg Gregynog in 1978. The current Gregynog Press has a website at <http://www.gwasg-gregynog.co.uk/>

⁴⁹ The Cranach Press, founded by Count Harry Kessler in Weimar, Germany, is the perhaps the only private press to have been funded more lavishly than Gregynog. Its famous *Hamlet* (1930) made use of a typeface designed by Edward Johnston, based on the gothic type used by the printers Fust and Schoeffer in their 1457 Psalter, and included woodcuts by Edward Gordon Craig and Eric Gill.

⁵⁰ Dorothy A. Harrop, *A History of the Gregynog Press* (London: Private Libraries Assoc, 1980), 145.

of typography and layout at Gregynog included, at one time or another, input from most of the important book-arts figures who were still alive: Hornby, Hewitt, Cockerell, Gill, Edward Johnston, and R.A. Maynard among them. The environment that had fostered the press movement in the first place barely survived the two world wars, however, and, like the other presses discussed here, Gregynog's work went for the most part directly to the shelves of collectors. The primary mission went largely unrealized:

[T]o help cultivate a love of beautiful things in the people of Wales by means of the practice of such Arts and Crafts as printing, binding, illustration, illumination... and not increase the specimens accumulated by collectors, whether they live in Wales, or in England, or the United States.⁵¹

The Nonesuch Press (1922-1956) was an interesting experiment in improving books for the general reading public, and a press that managed to survive the paper shortages of World War II. Francis Meynell founded Nonesuch Press with his wife Vera Mendel and the noted Bloomsbury writer David Garnett. They felt that there was a way to improve books without the exclusivity and high prices of the artisan presses. He set up Nonesuch Press with a hand press, just like the other private presses, but after he had completed designing a book in the hand-press model, he turned the production of the books over to large, commercial printers, such as the Kynoch Press in Birmingham. "Our stock in trade has been the theory that mechanical means could be made to serve fine ends; that the machine in printing was a controllable tool,"⁵² Meynell stated, and in a spirit similar to that of Viollet-le-Duc as an architect, concerned himself with the appearance rather than process. The design and layout resemble Kelmscott books superficially, but are much closer to the standard

⁵¹ From a memorandum to the Misses Davies, dated June 27, 1924, quoted in the Gregynog exhibition catalog by Michael Hutchins, *Printing at Gregynog: Aspects of a Great Private Press* (Gregynog: Welsh Arts Council, 1976), 34.

⁵² Francis Meynell, 'Personal Element', in A.J.A. Symons, Francis Meynell, and Desmond Flower, *The Nonesuch Century: an Appraisal, a Personal Note and a Bibliography of the First Hundred books issued by the Press, 1923-1934* (London: Nonesuch Press, 1936), 43.

industrial press offerings of the day, and the 1934 Nonesuch Morris anthology, despite its use of the Willow wallpaper for endpapers, would have greatly displeased the author.⁵³

Nonetheless, though the originality and exquisite hand-work that had distinguished the earlier private presses was less in evidence, Meyell's work did demonstrate one strategy whereby some elements of Morris's ideal book might survive mechanization and a competitive market. The higher cause implied in Morris's efforts—that of raising the working class to an artisan status that might demand respect, financial stability and personal fulfillment in exchange for their labour—had little to do with specific fonts or endpapers, and so the aesthetic was orphaned from the social mandate that had birthed it.

The trend through the printing world as a whole was towards compromise, stylistically and in methods of manufacture, and so Kelmscott Press became copied and parodied, but the deeper message rarely understood. Even during Morris's lifetime this was true:

Seeking to emulate the books of the Kelmscott Press, John Dent in 1892 offered Aubrey Beardsley £200 for twenty full-page illustrations, about one hundred smaller designs in the text and nearly three hundred fifty initial letters for *Le Morte D'Arthur*.⁵⁴ In accepting this formidable commission, the artist anticipated, correctly as it turned out, a year's hard work. His chief model when he began was his friend and patron Burne-Jones, but as he progressed, his designs became almost a parody of the Gothic style. Hearing that 'William Morris had sworn a terrible oath against me for daring to bring out a book in his manner,' Beardsley maintained that, while Morris's work was 'a mere imitation of the old stuff, mine is fresh and original.'⁵⁵

This was a thoughtless pronouncement on Beardsley's part, who knew little of "the old stuff" firsthand, but the comment is representative of the admiration mingled with animosity that existed between the younger generation of Aesthetes and the last of Ruskin's devotees.

⁵³ William Morris, *Selected Writings: Stories in Prose, Stories in Verse, Shorter Poems, Lectures and Essays* (London: Nonesuch, 1934).

⁵⁴ J.M. Dent would later become famous as the publisher of the Everyman's Library series.

⁵⁵ Gordon N. Ray, *The Illustrator and the Book in England from 1790 to 1914* (London: Dover Publications, 1992), 194.

Beardsley, like Wilde, admired the aesthetic qualities of the Arts and Crafts movement, and the value it placed on fine handwork and art, but he had no agenda of social reform to match the rigor of the older generation. ‘Art for art’s sake’ delighted in style, luxury, a wealth of sensations and experiences, and felt that contemporary society was deliberately and foolishly denying itself life’s pleasures through misguided morality and antiquated social customs. They were quick to understand the possibilities for design and art revealed in Kelmscott books, but, having little interest in the concept of handmade art as a reflection of an ideal society, discarded the quasi-medieval social model quickly. Morris found pleasure and fulfillment in work, and his books reflected that perspective as surely as his lectures did. The manner of the making was more important than the style: it was the necessity of engaging with all material aspects of the art that made the act of creation satisfying, and elevated drudgery to craftsmanship. The illuminator’s model had been important because it represented a profound connection between the hand of the scribe and his book, an experiential bond that was shared by the reader, but was of foremost importance to the maker. Morris’s challenge was taken up seriously by the half-dozen presses that followed Kelmscott in England, but by most others it was misunderstood from the onset. In North America, where there was no direct contact with the printers from Morris’s circle, the understanding and appreciation of paratextuality varied wildly. The desire for new styles of art and ornament drove artists away from Morris and Burne-Jones quickly, though they inspired every one of the newer artists. Although Beardsley eventually became more influenced by James McNeill Whistler and Japanese art, the ornamental designs of Morris’s textiles and wallpapers never completely left his work.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Linda Gertner Zatin, “Aubrey Beardsley’s ‘Japanese’ Grotesques,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 25:1 (Cambridge University Press, 1997): 87-108.

Across the Atlantic: North American Presses

Just as J.M. Dent and the Nonesuch Press were interested in demonstrating that a fine book could be produced using modern machinery, many printers, inspired by Morris but not as heedless of financial practicality as he had been, chose style over substance. Imitators like C.R. Ashbee of Essex House (who was, after all, using the same ink, paper, vellum, presses, and machinery as Morris, though his typefaces were distinctly inferior) found themselves competing with “machine-press books patterned after the Kelmscott Press style.”⁵⁷ The extent of Morris’s influence on the presses of the United States from 1890 on was widespread, and is already the subject of a fine study.⁵⁸ Morris’s efforts to reform typography by updating incunabular models, his view of the book as an architectonic unit, his desire for strong materials, and his medieval sensibility, were all proclaimed in numerous magazine articles and interviews throughout the 1890s. Journals like *Modern Art*, *The Knight Errant* (Boston 1892-3) and *The Century* lauded Kelmscott books, and Walter Crane’s visit to the States in 1891 further increased awareness of Morris in the country. Though only one Kelmscott book was officially released in the States (Rossetti’s *Hand and Soul* in 1895), publishers like Roycroft and Thomas Mosher were soon reprinting Morris works and copying his style as they pleased. In most cases the end result was a strange hybrid of Gothic and Victorian, handicraft and standard commercial press-work.

A small octavo of J.R. Lowell’s poem *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, published by Thomas Y. Crowell & Co. in New York (n.d., 1896-8), is a perfect example (see fig. 6.7). Externally it closely resembles an Eragny press book, with slender grey Holland boards and blue linen spine, a small pasted label on the spine and a larger one on the cover featuring a whimsical

⁵⁷ Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 277.

⁵⁸ Susan Otis Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris* (London: British Library Press and Oak Knoll Press, 1996).

ornamental framing motif in brown and pale green, with the title and author's last name in black hand-lettering. Inside, however, the viewer is immediately confronted with a Victorian photographic engraving of the author as frontispiece, separated only by a tissue guard from a pseudo-Morris title-page which uses a twining vine border in red and green curling in arabesques around and over a striking gold-inked inner border, framing the title, author, and publisher in flourished uneven Gothic lettering. This color lithography is a surprising embellishment given that the rest of the book uses a plain (and rather ugly) typeface with only the running title in hairlines above retaining an overdone Gothic flavour. A pair of dropped capitals in a completely different typeface set off the poem's two parts, and deckled-page edges complete this confusing little volume.

Varied attempts by American printers to negotiate the uncompromising and unwieldy standards of Morris, Cobden-Sanderson and the British circle led to some rather strange theoretical justifications of design decisions.

At a printers' convention in August 1892, [Theodore Low] De Vinne⁵⁹ proposed the ideal of 'masculine printing' in opposition to the 'feminine' variety he claimed was weakening the standards of the craft. 'Feminine printing' was an approach interested in ornamental effects and especially in a cultivation of hair-line delicacy, whereas the object of the 'masculine' style was the instruction of the reader.⁶⁰

Aside from the unfortunate gender comparisons, this proclamation essentially contrasts pre-Kelmscott Victorian commercial printing standards with post-Kelmscott Arts and Crafts. Conflating appearance with strategy, this kind of discussion of Morris's "masculine" (i.e. active and consciously engaged) approach to printing joined it to the particular stylistic

⁵⁹ See Michael Koenig, "De Vinne and the De Vinne Press," *The Library Quarterly* 41: 1 (January 1971): 1-24.

⁶⁰ Robin Kinross, *Modern Typography: an Essay in Critical History* 2nd Ed. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 53.

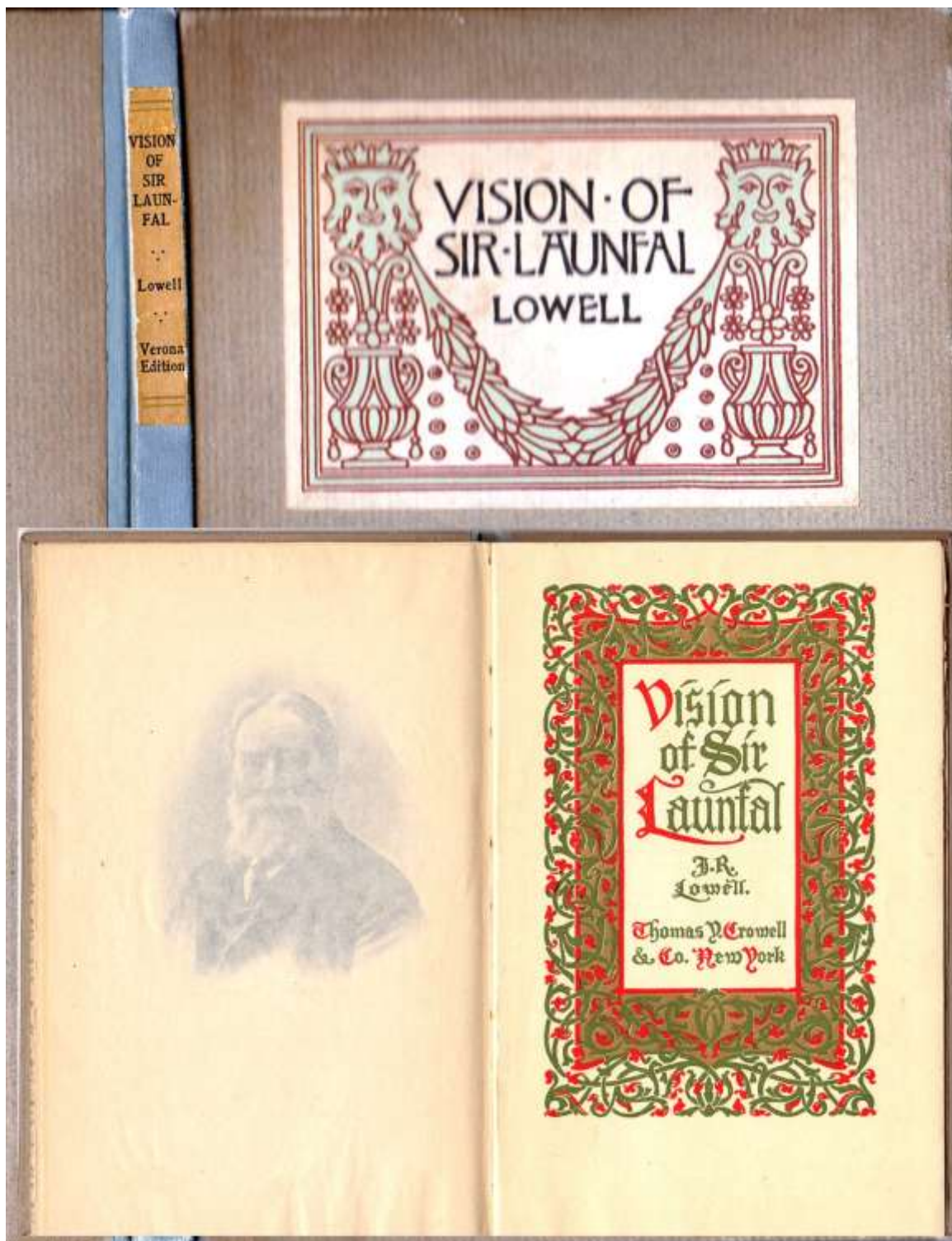


Figure 6.7 J.R. Lowell, *Vision of Sir Launfal*, Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., n.d.

features of Kelmscott publications. North American printers were separated from the vital environmental elements of Victorian England that had informed Kelmscott: in their continent there were no medieval buildings, no continuities of craftsmanship or art that had not been partly displaced by emigration, no Pre-Raphaelite circle, little access to ancient manuscripts, no Gothic Revival: all of these factors made their influence felt, but at a remove, through importation and local interpretation. The American Arts and Crafts Movement was no weaker for this, but it was alienated from Morris and largely left to find its own way, guided by a distinctly flawed understanding and appreciation of his work.

The social roles fulfilled by books were shifting, dislocated by time and space, too quickly to remain unified, and the rise of Modernist agendas and sensibilities provoked a profound schism from the past, and placed Morris inextricably on the far side of that gap. Morris's social concerns were particular to his own society, and did not cross the Atlantic as readily as his art and literature did: within a few years his art and books became seen as historical gestures, the possession of which was a way of appropriating an Old World sensibility, and as little understood as some distant past. For the most part, American printers studied Kelmscott volumes if they could lay hands on them, and reproductions in journals if they could not, and reacted directly but idiosyncratically—as Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue and Fred Day did in Boston when designing the Copeland & Day edition of Rossetti's *House of Life* in 1893.⁶¹ Morris had used his *nouveau*-medievalism as a socially located protest against the industrial modernity of the Victorian Gothic Revival that both revived and effaced the true medieval, but outside of Europe any chance of those forms being clearly distinguishable was lost. The aesthetic role of Morris's books was blurred, and their social role reduced to exemplars that might inspire further hand-press work.

⁶¹ Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris*, 44.

Conclusion: Modern Textuality

It is necessary to summarize a tangled and fascinating century of influence in order to show the threads linking Morris to both modern printing and print culture studies. We have seen the ancient and contemporary influences on Morris that led to his awareness of how meaning had once been conveyed eloquently by ornament and the non-textual aspects of books, and how he found the best exemplars of such practice in his beloved vision of medieval England and Europe: first perfected by scribes and illuminators, then translated into the new grammar of moveable type and the printed page. We have observed how Morris slowly rediscovered both strategies through personal effort and long study, in effect recreating the societal evolution from pen to printing-block in his own life. There is ample evidence of the seriousness and profound insight of this undertaking, with the *Aeneid* manuscript and Kelmscott *Chaucer* ably illustrating his successes and connecting the entire process to his changing social agenda. As the import of mass communication and the engagement of the creator with labour became undeniable in his philosophy, Morris moved from calligraphic work done for private satisfaction to rhetorical and material embodiment of his ideals in printed books which could be accessed and used for instruction worldwide. Yet even at the end of his life, as he set aside his newly-finished *Chaucer* to look at the antique *Golden Psalter*, he valued illuminated codices above all other forms of the book, and was aware of the limitations of ink and press. Morris had entered the print medium to please himself, but had continued Kelmscott in order to raise awareness through his creations—a policy that led not only to improvement in contemporary publishing but to greater critical appreciation of illuminated manuscripts. The common ground of graphic paratextuality as a vehicle for personal expression makes familiarity with one medium (medieval illuminations, Renaissance

incunabula, Victorian calligraphic work or *Fin de siècle* private press books) a useful education for understanding and appreciating the others.

Industry reaction began with a combination of intelligent artistic response and shallow imitation, with the latter increasingly dominant as commercial publishers followed the examples of smaller presses. Although Boston's Society of Printers, formed in 1905, continued the trend of craftsmanship in the centre of North American Arts and Crafts, Kelmscott imitation gave way to Doves imitation, led by the changing sensibilities of Daniel Berkley Updike at Merrymount Press, Albert Bruce Rogers at Riverside Press, and Will Bradley at Wayside Press. A love of 'pure, unornamented typography' soon characterized the modernist sensibilities, joining the global shift towards the plain industrial design that still dominates Western culture today.

The failure of those presses that followed Kelmscott to respond directly from calligraphic models did not go unremarked. A 1911 *Times Literary Supplement* article, "The Influence of the Kelmscott Press," reviews books published by St. John Hornby (Ashendene), Cobden-Sanderson (Doves), Philip Lee Warner (Medici Society), Oxford University, and Chatto & Windus, a London house which in 1946 would take over Virginia and Leonard Woolf's Hogarth Press. The anonymous author discusses each book, comparing them to Morris's work at Kelmscott, and then unleashes a scathing assault on contemporary typefaces:

We must add a word about typefounding. There is no more dismal sight than the pages of a modern typefounder's specimen book which seems to gather together some of the worst examples of the taste of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in a kind of museum of horrors. The first typefounders formed their types from the beautiful which they found in contemporary or early manuscripts ...when the alphabet became cast in lead, its growth presently ceased, and with its growth its life. Though new founts and new fashions in types have been invented from time to time, they have been inspired from no living source. The mummy keeps the form of the living body, but, twist and turn and robe its limbs as we may, it has neither comeliness nor life. The author having finally reflected on the work and

influence of Morris pleads: May we not hope that our typefounders may also come under the influence of the movement, and that the modern calligrapher may design alphabets formed naturally and beautifully, not slavishly copied from any model, however fine, free from affectation and from eccentricity, which may fulfill all the practical requirements of modern book type?¹

This condemnation of modern typefaces as a “museum of horrors” is a clear paraphrase of Morris’s own thoughts on the vital link between calligraphy and typeface and shows the connection fading quickly. Morris’s legacy was rather in the awareness he fostered of the importance of materials, of the nature of early printing and its relationship to scribal illuminations, and his assertion of fine printing’s worthiness to be called art. Although private presses are no longer enjoying the second renaissance they had at the dawn of the twentieth century, they are now permanent fixtures around the world, and traditions of hand-craftsmanship are maintained in spite of the massive commercial presses that dominate the markets. Amongst commercial presses too, there are fine books being made with experimentation in design, blending of graphic and textual elements, and attention to material and coherence, that would probably not exist if Kelmscott had not been so influential. Printing as active *interpretation*, rather than an invisible conduit of meaning, still has strong proponents. More subtly, Morris’s use of ornament created a model for a lavish visual page design, and strengthened the development of rich graphic treatments. If the visual was for a time estranged from adorning text, it nonetheless persists in modern book forms, some wildly experimental and joined only to Kelmscott or medieval work by the foregrounding of design or the confidence in graphic elements.

In Canada, many private presses are still active, though their heritage is not as long as elsewhere. There were no Canadian paper mills until the nineteenth century, nor local type

¹ “The Influence of the Kelmscott Press,” *The Times Literary Supplement* (September 28, 1911), quoted by Roy Millington, *Stephenson Blake: The Last of the Old English Typefounders* (London: Oak Knoll and The British Library Press, 2002), 134-5.

founders until 1830. The printing press came to Canada a century later than it did to America, and it was slow to come to its potential. Robert Bringhurst comments on the lack of tangible letterform heritage, noting that

European typography was born and raised in the Renaissance, nourished on trim and rapid penstrokes made by lively, well-trained human hands—but in conquering the world, becoming all things to all readers, typography had lost not only its local freshness but much of its intellectual and physical vitality. At the end of the nineteenth century, the forms of the Latin alphabet were begging to be reborn. Over the next several decades, they would in fact be reincarnated many times, but these renewals came to Canada second-hand. The revival of humanist scribal practice, forcefully begun when the self-taught calligrapher Edward Johnston began to teach in London in 1899, had immediate transformative effects in England and Germany. But Johnston’s teaching came to Canada only in 1927, in watered-down form. Here its impact was much less.²

This reduced effect was as true of other paratextual elements as it was of letterforms, and stylistically Canada absorbed much less of Kelmscott’s overall aesthetic. Indeed, the conscious Canadian book aesthetic was hardly an artistic reality until the 1960s, long after the battle for preserving ornament and medieval design in books had seemingly been lost. The keen interest with minute differences of typography can be seen as an inheritance from Ashendene and Doves, or a sign of the visual and material poverty that increasingly typified the medium. Yet a number of Canadian presses have independently reached backwards and placed their work in the tradition of Morris, coming to their own understanding of material paratextuality and the importance of the book as artifact.

Nova Scotia’s Gaspereau Press, founded in 1997 by Andrew Steeves and Gary Dunfield, is committed “to making books which reinstate the importance of the book as a

² Robert Bringhurst, *The Surface of Meaning: Books and Book Design in Canada* (Vancouver, BC: CCSP Press, 2008), 47-48.

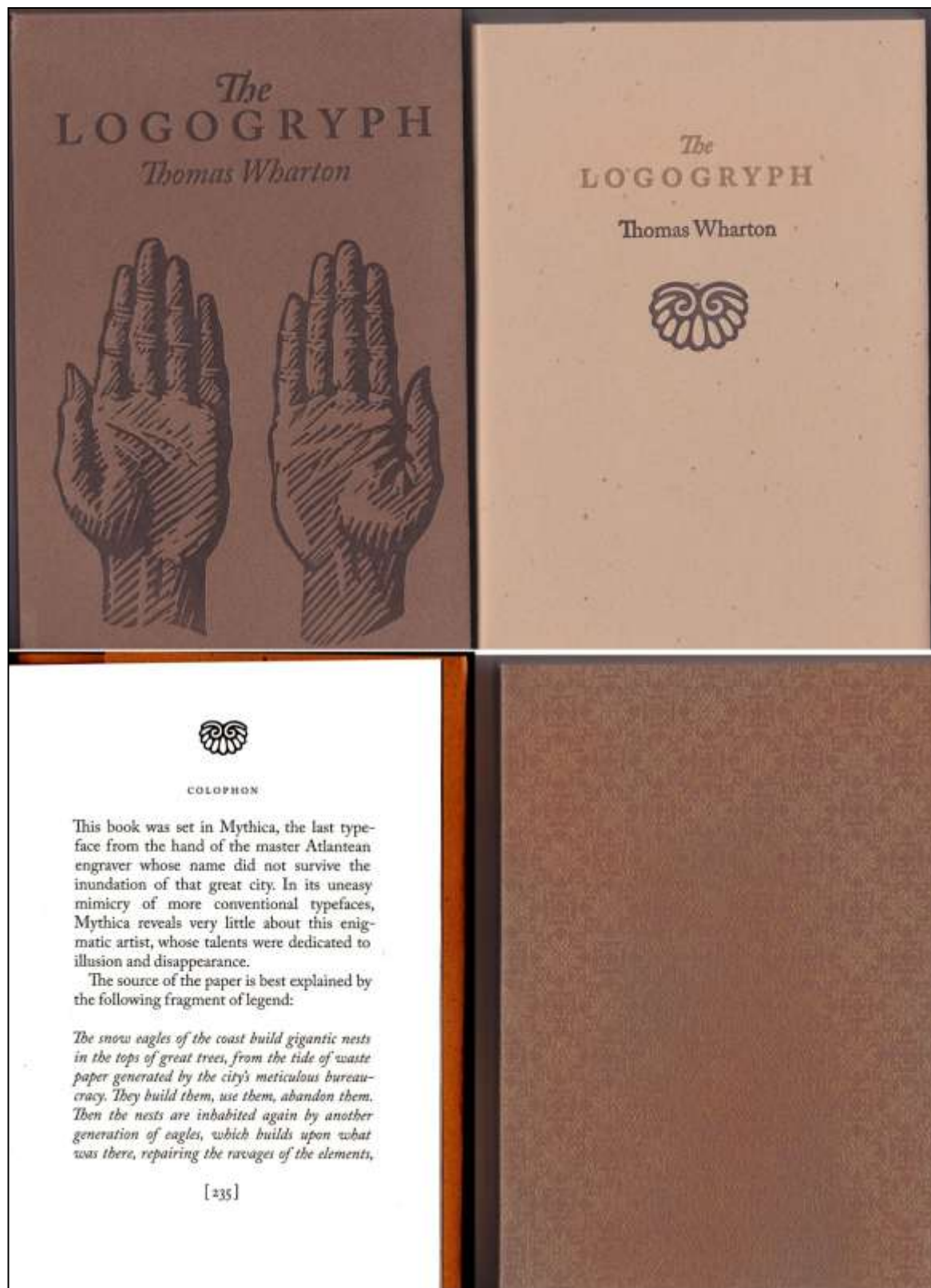


Figure 6.8 Thomas Wharton, *The Logogryph*, Gaspareau Press, 2004.

physical object, reuniting publishing and the book arts.”³ Their 2004 edition of Thomas Wharton’s *The Logogryph*,⁴ a novel centering on the search for a book with no binding or boundaries, uses minimal ornament and small illustrations to punctuate chapters. The book itself uses three levels of binding: an outer sleeve with a deeply embossed image of two hands palm-up, as if holding an invisible book (see fig. 6.8).

This is reminiscent of the rudimentary wrapping given to early printed books, which were often sold unbound so that the owner might choose a custom binding.⁵ The book itself is perfect-bound, with a brown paper dust-jacket bearing the title, but beneath that sleeve, the actual stiff paper binding has no text to identify it: just a repeating floral pattern of gold on textured brown, reminiscent of Morris’s wallpapers. The identity and physical form of the book are destabilized by this use of multiple design features and of visual ornament instead of text on the actual (attached) cover. Gaspereau chap-books are sometimes given first limited runs as hand-composed and hand-pulled editions, often in two colours (using red for rubricated shoulder-notes in the manner of Kelmscott), and then trade editions which repeat the process with digital typesetting and offset printing. George Elliott Clarke’s *Execution Poems* is an example of this: first printed in a handset folio edition of 66 (December 2000), it was

³ The Gaspereau Press website: <http://www.gaspereau.com/background.shtml>

⁴ Wharton’s novel features two colophons. The first claims the book was set in “Mythica, the last typeface from the hand of the master Atalantean engraver whose name did not survive the inundation of that great city,” and printed on paper retrieved from dreams of riding the Logogryph itself (235). The second colophon announces that, “unable to secure the materials specified in the author’s colophon, Andrew Steeves typeset this book in Adobe Caslon, Carol Twombly’s 1989 redrawing of the letterforms attributed to the first great English typecutter, William Caslon (1692-1766). It was printed offset on Zephyr laid paper, Smyth-sewn and bound at Gaspereau Press,” Thomas Wharton, *The Logogryph* (Kentville, N.S.: Gaspereau Press, 2004), 237.

⁵ The basic vellum wrap and plain linen spine/Holland boards of Kelmscott were the more generous forms of this practice.

soon given a trade edition (and several further printings after winning the 2001 Governor General's Literary Award for Poetry).⁶

The Aliquando Press of Ontario, established by William Rueter in 1963, is stylistically more closely aligned with the credo of Doves Press.⁷ Like Morris, however, Reuter wanted “to learn and personally practice most aspects of bookmaking: selecting texts, editing, designing, occasionally writing and illustrating, setting type by hand, printing, and binding.”⁸ and to create books to complement the author's words through the considered use of typefaces, paper, and binding. Like Cobden-Sanderson, Reuter prefers a polite subordination of the printer's vision to that of the author, but that does not preclude the achieving of a harmonious whole book. Aliquando books often display a much more extreme manipulation of the page than anything to be found in the early private press volumes, and they delight in the use of a wide variety of textured papers and coloured inks. Overall, the relationships between visual and language art were profoundly renegotiated at the end of the nineteenth century, and even for Canada, Morris provided the spark that began that process.

The processes of Kelmscott are still painstakingly undertaken by a few modern artisans, who work in very close parallel to the Arts and Crafts tradition. Gerard Brender à Brandis, currently based in a small cottage in Stratford, Ontario, has been making woodcuts and handmade books since 1969. In Canada he felt isolated from any community or continuity of traditional skills, and so he visited England to learn more about wood-engraving

⁶ George Elliott Clarke, *Execution Poems* (Kentville, N.S.: Gaspereau Press, 2001). The trade edition is typeset in Adobe Bembo, based on roman letters cut in Venice by Francesco Griffo in 1495.

⁷ In 2007 Rueter published a special edition of Cobden-Sanderson's writings: *Majesty, Order and Beauty: Selections from the journals of T.J. Cobden-Sanderson*. 2007. William Reuter, *The Aliquando Century: The First 100 Books from the Aliquando Press of William Rueter* (Toronto: Aliquando Press, 2008), 54.

⁸ William Reuter, *The Aliquando Century*, 5.



Figure 6.9 Albion Press in Gerard Brender à Brandis's studio, Stratford, Ontario.

in 1971.⁹ An exhibit at the Victoria and Albert Museum introduced him to Kelmscott books firsthand, and he was able to purchase an antique Albion hand-press (forged in 1882, and identical to those used at Kelmscott), which he has called “the cornerstone of my career”¹⁰ (see fig. 6.9). This combination of firsthand contact with Morris’s books and a Morrissean press inspired a lifelong exploration of paratextuality, and an expansion into all the related arts. Brender à Brandis is one of very few contemporary Canadian private-press printers who does his own printing, typesetting, wood engraving, papermaking, and binding (including fabric book-covers spun, woven and dyed by him). The first editions of his books are limited and done entirely by hand, but mass-market editions have been made of many of these books, most by The Porcupine’s Quill publishing house of Erin, Ontario. There are notable differences between the limited and unlimited print runs, however.

Brender à Brandis moved, like Morris, from attempts to fit existing typefaces to his layouts and illustrations to creating his own “Libra” fount, directly based on his own calligraphic hand. Few of the reprinted editions use this fount, substituting instead commercial typefaces such as Bodoni or Sabon. The proportions of the handmade pages, partially dictated by the Albion’s platen and coffin, are rearranged and standardized. The woodcuts are still printed at original size, but the relationship between those images and the text is lost, as is the materiality of ink and paper.¹¹ Nevertheless, Brender à Brandis is perhaps the most thorough Kelmscott disciple working in Canada today, and the material

⁹ Marianne Brandis, “Artist at Work: Gerard Brender à Brandis, Wood Engraver and Bookwright,” *DA: A Journal of the Printing Arts* 64 (Spring/Summer 2009): 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ I am grateful to Gerard Brender à Brandis for discussing these matters with me, showing me several of his original books and engravings, and allowing me to photograph his press, during my visit to his Stratford workshop in August 2011. By selling individual specimen sheets as well as original prints, he still makes the authentic designs available to those unable to purchase the expensive complete handmade books.

dissemination of his work through both handmade and machine-published editions illustrates the survival and adaptation of Morris's legacy.

Awareness of the importance of this negotiation and interpretation of meaning has been embedded in literary studies for generations, slowly coming to the fore in analyses devoted to the implications of print culture, reception, and paratextuality, and there are highlights of recent scholarly attention which have been of particular importance. Gérard Genette's *Paratexts*, published in English a decade after its 1987 appearance in French, increased sensitivity to paratextual theory, elevating it from descriptive bibliography and print history into an open-ended discipline which questions formal categories and distinctions of meaning in relation to books. Jerome McGann has been highly influential in tracing the rise of materiality in Rossetti and Morris's day and its effect on Modernism and the book arts. Roger Chartier also argues for the necessity of considering paratexts as integral to a work's received meaning, though the position of authorial intent remains hotly debated versus the public forms of a work ("The *Mona Lisa* is in the Louvre in Paris, but where is *Hamlet*?"). To some extent this thesis sidesteps that debate because it is concerned with Morris's agenda as printer/translator, where the "authorial" intent is replaced by a designer's intentionality and his articulation of his own interpretation of the text.

The relationship between modern books and medieval illuminations is far from self-evident, and can only be appreciated by unraveling the skein of threads between them, and recognizing Morris's crucial role as connector. Ruskin, Carlyle, Schiller, et. al., influenced the evolution of Morris's sensibilities and convictions, but it was his own work and experience that led to the theoretical foundations of Kelmscott: the necessity for new artifacts to be crafted after his interpretation of the medieval tradition and made public, the great potential for Kelmscott books to be the artifacts that best embodied his message or propaganda, if

through paratextual and material strategies they could exploit the rhetorical potential revealed by illuminated manuscripts, and the simultaneous benefit to creators and receivers that such a revolution would bring. For Morris the discovery of an authentic artistic voice of his age was vital to the survival and health of society, and that voice, as embodied by pen and printing-block, bore a clear inheritance from the past, and a strong message to the future.

We have endeavored to reconstruct Morris's world, and thereby find a deeper understanding of what he did to the texts he copied and printed, why he did it, and how others read the results. Morris is a fortunate paradigm in that he combines the figures of author, artist, designer, philosopher, critic, scribe, printer, and publisher into one, providing an almost unique model of conflated intentionality and response. Complete authorial control of a book's manufacture, as with assumptions of awareness and prediction of reception, is not possible, any more than complete editorial control or stability of meaning. It is fitting, however, that the fluctuation of material embodiments of writing expanded to match the immense range of content that it struggled to codify. Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and Morris's *The Well at the World's End* were both published in 1895, and the initial printings were as different as the authors' prose styles: Hardy's work first serialized in modern pulp serial form, and Morris's last romance first published at Kelmscott.

Printing, like architecture, is an intimate connection of the principles of the fine arts with the principles of the industrial arts. The earliest printers were artists who had been trained in aesthetic judgment and artistic interpretation before they undertook their new work. The earliest printed books displayed the indisputable legacy of the exquisitely hand-lettered and illuminated books that had preceded them from the hands of artists—perhaps

from the hands of some of the first printers themselves.¹² When the skill and care of such printers were revived by Morris, already an experienced calligrapher, illuminator, and designer of ornament, the mandate of re-establishing the connection between pen and printing-block was vital to him. The arrangement of the margins and of the initials, the columns of letters, the forms of the type founts, the balanced masses of tone, delightful initials and meaningful naturalistic decoration, even the judicious use of colour, are all based on Morris's interpretation of medieval illumination. The inspired conception of such reawakened paratextuality, graphic environment, and fine materiality, revolutionized the meaning of books just as their production became a massive mechanical industry. Without the voice of Morris, speaking to the printing industry on behalf of incunabula history and scribal aesthetic, it is doubtful that our modern awareness of book design would be as engaged with paratextuality. Because that voice was first developed in hand-scribal work, many aspects and vestiges of the medieval scribe were reintroduced to print culture through Kelmscott, Doves, Ashendene and Eragny, the most fundamental being the necessity of considering all aspects of the book's physical presence as embodying the time and place of its creation as well as the printer's intent. Morris's purpose in resurrecting paratextual and material awareness was to instruct and reform society through the medium of finely-crafted printed books.

Much modification of Morris's credos occurred, most of it unavoidable as his influence moved around the world and forward into a new century. The greatest loss through this faulty transmission was the conscious consideration of the illuminated text as printing model. Modern private presses, as in the examples of Gaspereau and Aliquando, base their typefaces and designs on incunabula, but seldom refer directly to scribal models, either by direct insertion of calligraphy or by modeling ornament on hand-drawn examples. Morris was

¹² For instance, the first italic typeface is said to have been cut by Aldo Munuzio in imitation of the handwriting of Petrarch.

a catalyst for the rebirth of printing, and the reconnection of that art with its predecessor, but the full importance of that connection was not understood by many of his followers, and it was soon discounted. Fortunately, the translation of medieval paratextuality into print had already been reconfigured in the Kelmscott model, and that heritage survived even in the face of stylistic rejection. Ornament, as Morris conceived it, was largely excluded from the visual grammar of twentieth-century books, but the importance of the visual experience in shaping reader response was noted, and continues to be explored. The materiality of books has never received so much critical attention, and it is ironic that aspects of modern book design awareness now considered fundamental to print culture had their origin in Morris's calligraphic experiments, long before he made his public typographic venture. His influence is felt in all modern books, whether through adoption or rejection of his specific aesthetic. The relation of a work's material encoding to its received meaning has become more visible since Morris's day, with modern full-bleed illustration and graphic elements, imbedded objects, combining of disparate materials and a breakdown of sequential narrative all evolving from an integration of ornamental features and materiality into an understanding of what constitutes a book. In this conception is the mark of medieval manuscripts, set there by Morris's hand.

Epilogue: Radiant Paratextuality

The arc from Morris and the important British presses that followed him to select American and current Canadian private presses has been greatly distorted in recent years by the new interface of text and image within the increasingly fluid and ephemeral interface of computers. Is the conscious refusal of mechanized compromises in the hand-production of books by modern printers such as Gaspereau and Aliquando simply a Morris-like obsession with handcraftsmanship, or is it an effort to retrieve lost aspects of meaning? If our current mass-printed texts are inferior in cohesiveness of design and paratextual considerations, how are we to judge the flood of information being absorbed through digital screens—information that has no materiality at all, and that renders almost all design considerations malleable?

The change to print from scribal hand, both in medieval times and in the course of Morris's life, is a means of extending the influence of his aesthetic, and in some small measure, his ideology. Morris was never motivated by financial greed, but by altruism, passion, and a desire to control the specifics of production. The highly limited accessibility of Morris's illuminations fragmented and stifled his argument for what made a book beautiful, because his examples were cloistered and hidden from the public. As Nicolas de Condorcet says, "public opinion, so crucial to the progress of the human mind, is a creation of the printing revolution,"¹ and despite the limited circulation of Kelmscott publications (typically 200-300 copies sold by subscription for each of the 52 books), their reach was far greater than the tiny audience who had even been aware of Morris's calligraphy, let alone held and read examples of it.

¹ Quoted by Chartier in *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices*, 6.

The effect of Kelmscott on the printing industry through inspiration and awareness was spread more through newspaper and magazine interviews and articles than through the travels of the original book-artifacts themselves. Many presses, particularly in North America, which were founded on or strongly influenced by Morris's principles and the revolution he spearheaded, never had direct access to Morris's models or had very limited access so that the widespread compromise, mis/interpretation, and altering of his principles was inevitable. The irony is that the mass media of his day served to broadcast his principles and art around the world while simultaneously degrading and altering the rhetoric itself. All the aspects of meaning embodied in the original artifacts that could not survive reproduction (and there were many such) could only be imperfectly described or hinted at in some other fashion, usually by written description of the materials and processes used by Morris. While Morris's rejection of the manufacturing practices of his time was fostered by the attention members of the press gave him, they transmitted that rejection in their own materials, with their own paper, ink, poor reproduction, lack of imposition, rewording, resizing, editorial sampling and so on, and in this manner acted as corruptors of the signal. Since Kelmscott and the illuminations are specific repudiations of the practices of mass book production in his day, both materials and design are crucial to the articulation of Morris's message, and disseminated in such crude forms, that message could only be partially conveyed.

The implications of this loss of meaning when a text is apprehended through different mechanisms of representation are of crucial importance as we begin the process of converting the world's books into digital data. "The revolution has begun, which is transforming the book as we know it—with its quires, its leaves, its pages—into an electronic

text to be read on a screen.”² It is also of profound importance that Morris draws most of his incunabula models from the first stage of printing.

For Morris too, the move from calligraphy to printing is only a partial augmentation of the process, and the codex in either case shares much of the same design language and grammar of ornament. The shift we are now undergoing is replacing the language of the codex with that of the web page, and none of the physical properties of a book applies to, for instance, a Kindle reader, except for general size and shape. A Kindle screen or web page may have the rough appearance of a codex page or newspaper sheet, but it contains none of the materials that have marked the transmission of written language since its origins. There has never been a change so fundamental to the medium’s structure. Along with the rise of other image-based media such as television and movies we have moved quickly into an age where information has no essential materiality. The initial stages of mechanical reproduction changed the concept of an “original” work and its relationship to copies, or, in the case of a published book, the relationship between manuscript, print galley, trays of type, and the printed pages. In the case of computer-created, web-based media, there is no original, and there are no copies. The signals that created the virtual page came from the pushing of buttons and entering of code – they are commands that cause the generation of a certain visual sequence on a viewer’s screen. The construct cannot be viewed outside of a computer without being transferred to paper, which fundamentally changes its nature from a radiant text to a linear one.

Similarly, the translation of a text from its original physical form to a virtual one destroys and changes much or all of the paratextuality. The loss of meaning involved is much more drastic than the worst printing practices of Morris’s day because the shared traditional

² Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*, 14.

properties of all books are no longer present. Recent studies showing our inability to reliably read or understand complex information on a computer screen suggest that this loss may have a greater impact on our learning and even thought processes than we can understand from our current perspective. We do not know the consequences of removing our words from paper; neither do we understand what this loss of paratextual and design elements means for our perceptions. We must not, however, take as inevitable the *death of the book* that is widely prophesized as digital media dominate the world. The original physical form of a printed work, as with medieval buildings, Morris's illuminated manuscripts, or any other artifact, constitutes a vital part of its meaning and socio-historic position. Though form and function are no longer inseparable, the properties of unique materiality and paratextuality offer a richness of meaning that cannot be duplicated by electronic texts, and this is the fundamental reason that physical books will continue to be made and studied.



Figure 7.1 Dante, *La Divina Comedia*, 6th illustrated edition. Printed in Venice by Pietro Quarenghi, 1497.



Figure 7.2 Study for *Love is Enough* initials, William Morris, 1896.

Appendix A:

A Descriptive Bibliography of Select Illuminations by William Morris

1. **Song from Robert Browning's *Paracelsus*** (1849 edition. Book IV, lines 190-205). This early effort was illuminated in the summer of 1856 by Morris on his own and presented to Robert and Elizabeth Browning.

The text is in two stanzas of eight lines each, written in rough *textura quadrata* script. Text framed by two floriated hybrid dragons in red and blue. Stanzas are surrounded by filigree flourishes and tendrils, also in red & blue. Each stanza features a large Lombardic initial capital on a gold field.

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,
Smear'd with dull nard an Indian wipes
From out her hair: such balsam falls
Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled;
Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
From closet long to quiet vowed,
With moth'd and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,
As when a queen, long dead, was young.

Huntington ms. HM 6478 Vellum Leaf. 27.9 x 21.6 cm

Illustration from *William Morris By Himself: Designs and Writings*. Ed. Gillian Naylor. London: MacDonald & Co., 1988. pg. 94 (note: Naylor dates the work as "c. 1870")

2. **Guendolen** (poem by Morris, illuminated August 1856. This poem was published as "Hands" in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* of July 1856, and republished in 1858's *The Defence of Guenevere* as the Prince's song in "Rapunzel")

The text is in six three-line stanzas, written in rough *textura quadrata* script. Curved fish-tail serifs on the H and P ascenders. The initial capital is a T on floral vine decoration, in a style that resembles Morris's later initials at Kelmscott. A small figure stands on the lower border, holding her hair out, watched by a knight's face in the historiated initial O of the last stanza. Presented to Georgiana Macdonald (later Georgiana Burne-Jones).

Twixt the sunlight and the shade
Float up memories of my maid
God remember Guendolen.

Hands used to grip the sword hit hard
Framed her face, while on the sward
Tears fell down from Guendolen.

Gold or gems she did not wear
But her yellow rippled hair
Like a veil, hid Guendolen.

Guendolen now speaks no word
Hands fold round about the sword
Now no more of Guendolen.

Twixt the sunlight and the shade
My rough hands so strangely made
Folded Golden Guendolen.

Only 'twixt the light and shade
Floating memories of my maid
Make me pray for Guendolen.

Sold by Sotheby's in 1993 from the collection of Alan G. Thomas for £16,100 to Matsuvra. Current whereabouts unknown. Vellum leaf, 24.7 x 19.3cm.

Illustration from Sotheby's Catalogue (Alan G. Thomas Sale, 1993; lot 244). This plate was tinted and sharpened in Adobe Photoshop to extract more detail from the monochromatic image.

3. **The Iron Man** (an incomplete translation by Morris of the folk tale *Der Eisenhans* by the Brothers Grimm. Likely illuminated in 1857. One leaf, watercolour and gold paint on vellum, 23.5 x 37.0 cm, J. Paul Getty Collection, Wormsley Library. Written in *textualis rotunda* script. Initial N is elaborately historiated on a gold field, with vine tendrils and flourishes in blue, red and green. Smaller historiated initials on a connected gold vertical are joined by a vine/dragon motif that runs through the right-hand column, declining to a curled ivy terminal. There is possible ancient Irish influence in the dragons interlaced with spirals on the left-hand margin. Morris owned several books with facsimile plates from *The Book of Kells*.

Now there was once a king that lived merrily, and above all things he loved hunting. And herein there befell him great tribulation: for one day, us here divers of his great lords of council held him in the hall of council, divers others went forth to hunt: who came not back again that night or any night, either lords or poor folk. Neither did those who went to seek them come back how many so ever years passed: so no man dared enter that forest till at last a certain knight came into that land who said he would achieve the adventure or die. And it did not move him much that, as he passed through the thronged long streets to go out at gates, the young men wagged their heads to each other and laughed, or that the old men wagged their heads and looked wise and muttered, no not even that many of the women wept. But this was because he had lost his love. So he passed into the forest with his hounds and in a little while one of them seeing a wild beast gave chase to it, but presently chancing to cross some water, a great rusty-brown naked hand and arm rose and dragged the dog down under the water. Then the knight grasped what had happened to those missing huntsmen, and he caused the country people to take all the water out of that pool and when this was done behold there lay a great wild man rusty-brown and naked who moaned when they bound him. This man the knight brought to the King and then departed with many gifts and much honour. But the King caused them to make a cage of iron and strong wood and to lock up therein the wild man, nor did they ever suffer him to come out: and at first the people pelted him with stones and mud and cabbages but at last getting tired of him left him alone. But the king had a young son who one day played at ball in the green quadrangle of the place wherein also the cage of the wild man was; and as he played his gold ball rolled away into the cage whereon the prince prayed him piteously to give him the ball again. "Nay said the wild man nor till you open the door of my cage": "I cannot said the child, and went away sorrowfully. But the next day when both the king was out and the Queen, the boy came and stood pensively by the cage where the wild man was sitting, smiling thoughtfully to himself. When he saw the prince he called out to him; "So you have come for your ball again, well you know the key lies under the Queen's pillow, let me out and then for the ball." Whereupon the boy being overpersuaded fetched the key and opened the cage door. So then the wild man when he felt himself free threw up his arms and shouted, afterwards began to stride off: But the prince cried out after him to stop or he should be beaten for letting him go. Thereupon he laugh and turning took the prince in his arms and went away with him into the forest where they dwelt together for years and years till the prince had almost forgotten who he was. But at last one day the iron man took him to a place where there was a pool of water and said to him: See you now, this pool is as bright as crystal- you must watch lest any thing should fall into it, for then it will be dishonoured." So the prince watched and for some time things went well enough, till at last he felt a sore pain in one finger so that he could not refrain from dipping it in the water.

4. **The Story of Frithiof the Bold** Calligraphic and illuminated manuscript on paper, c. 1873. "Story of Frithiof the Bold" translated by William Morris and Eirkr Magnusson; William Morris, Charles Fairfax Murray, Louise Powell and Graily Hewitt, c. 1873 Watercolour and gilding on paper, 40.1 x 27.0 cm closed, 40.1 x 53.0 cm open J. Paul Getty Collection, Wormsley Library. 11 leaves (22 pages) plus 4 blank leaves at front and 13 blank leaves at end, folio, 39.1 x 25.1 cm, each sheet tipped to a guard, written by Morris in brown-black ink

in an upright Roman script, double column, 40 lines and headline, 9 of the pages ruled in ink, the rest in pencil, the columns numbered at the foot of each from 3 to 44; headlines, chapter headings and opening words supplied in gold, the opening page with a full acanthus border shaded with brown wash on a blue, red, and green background and heightened with chased gold. 2 historiated miniatures at the openings of chapters I and XIV; 43 illuminations variously on chapter headings, endings and songs decorated with 22-line and smaller ornaments composed of swirling green foliage and red, blue and pink blossoms executed in brushwork and watercolour; a further 12 similar illuminations left unfinished; chapter initials in gold on coloured fields heightened by brushwork, the opening initials to the lines of the songs in alternating gold and blue or gold and pink. Most work by Morris, but Charles Fairfax Murray painted the two historiated miniatures and probably the brushwork of the uncoloured floral illuminations on columns 13, 14, 15 and 16. Louise Powell painted the opening page border and supplied the remaining painted illumination, and much of the gilding was added by Graily Hewitt. This information is from a note Murray supplied with a typed transcript of the text, once with the manuscript but now lost, referenced in the *Christie's Auction Catalogue for Estelle Doheny Collection Part VI: Printed Books and Manuscripts Concerning William Morris and his Circle* (New York: Friday, May 19th, 1989), pg. 87.

5. A Book of Verse 1870. Manuscript codex. Description: [4], 51, [1] p.: col. ill. ; 28 cm. Spine title: *Verses / by William Morris*. A 56-page illuminated manuscript, containing a number of poems by William Morris, written in his own hand, each page ornamented with elaborate designs of fleurons and leafy branches. Also contains paintings and decorations by others in Morris' circle. Written and decorated by the author for presentation to Lady Burne-Jones. Drawing in gouache by Edward Burne-Jones and miniatures by C.F. Murray, some after designs by George Wardle. The script is similar to that of *The Volsungs and the Niblungs*. Ornament on the first 10 pages by George Wardle, after which Morris takes over and the arrangements become denser and more organic. Quarto format. Watermark: fleur-de-lis ; "C. Ansell 1864". Calligraphy in ink and gilt. Paginated in gilt. Vellum binding, tooled in gold with floral ornaments. Initials of dedicatee, "G.B.J." (Georgiana Burne-Jones) at centre of covers, within gilt laurel wreath. Spine gilt with ornaments and lettered. Gilt edges. Typescript note describing repairs to binding dated Feb. 1982, tipped-in (inside back cover) National Art Library (Great Britain). Manuscript. MSL/1953/131. August 26th, 1870. 55 pages, 8 ½ x 6 in. [Victoria & Albert Museum, L. 131-1953]

6. The Dwellers at Eyr, April 19, 1871, 249 pages. 14 ½ x 9 ½ in. [Birmingham City Museums and Art Gallery, cat. 92'20]. Red leather bound book; hand illustrated in pen and ink, watercolour and gold leaf on Whatman paper. The second of the three manuscripts presented by Morris to Georgiana Burne-Jones. Over 100 pages of the first manuscript attempt of 1869 were inserted by Morris to complete this manuscript (the Bodleian appears to have at least some of the pages from the first manuscript which were not reused). Colophon inscription: "I translated this book out of Icelandic with/ the help of my master in that tongue,/ Eirikr Magnusson, sometime of Heydabr/ in the East Firths of Iceland: it was the/ first Icelandic book I read with him./ I wrote it all out myself, and did / all the ornament throughout the book/ myself except the laying of the gold/ leaf on pp. 1, 230, and 239. which was/ done by a man called Wilday, a work-/ man of ours./ William Morris/ 26 Queen Square/ Bloomsbury/ London/ April 19th 1871(back page)"
<http://www.preraphaelites.org/the-collection/1920p92/the-story-of-the-dwellers-at-eyr/#detail>

7. The *Rubáiyáts* of Omar Khayyám

A. **The London *Rubáiyát***. British Library. MS. Add. 37832, written on vellum on 23 numbered pages. 15.2 x 11.7 cm. Completed between Spring 1871 and the 10th of October 1872, when it was presented to Georgiana Burne-Jones as a birthday present (the third such, after *A Book of Verse* in 1870 and *The Dwellers At Eyr* in 1871). Written in small roman script, on widely spaced lines. The decoration follows from *A Book of Verse* but is thicker and more colourful. There are 5 heavily ornamented and gilded pages, four of which make up two double-page spreads (facings), in which the foliage and floral ornament entirely fill the margins, creating a wallpaper-like field on which miniatures are painted by Charles Fairfax Murray. Trial pages: Bodleian Library. MS. Eng. misc e. 233/1 fol. 17—17v. & 26-33; British Museum. Ashley. 5755. 3 pp.; William Morris Gallery j 578. 15pp.

B. **The Graham *Rubáiyát***. Privately owned [Earl of Oxford and Asquith]. 20 pages, 10 ¾ x 8 ½ in., completed 1872-73. At Edward Burne-Jones's request, prepared for Frances Graham, daughter of his friend and patron William Graham. Mackail notes that:

This was executed more in the style of the "Book of Verses," but with somewhat more profuse ornament; and in it Burne-Jones himself painted six extraordinarily beautiful pictures, each in a different scheme of colour and showing although each is only slightly over four inches by two in size, his finest qualities of design and invention. The floral decoration which runs down the margins and between the verses is in pale colours, green, blue, yellow, pink, and crimson, with a preponderance of green. The initial letters of the lines are alternated in gold and colours, the page always beginning with a gold letter and one colour being used down each page. The pictures are inclosed in gold frames, unburnished; and on the pages with pictures and those facing them the whole of the illumination is enriched with burnished gold throughout.¹

The colours are darker than those of the London manuscript, and the choice of scenes for illustration is also different, resulting in more night scenes. There is a lighter amount of ornamental foliage than is seen in the London ms.

C. **The Twelve-Page *Rubáiyát***. 23 pages, 6 x 4 ½ in. Vellum. Oxford. Bodleian Library, MS. Don. f. 3. Presented by May Morris in 1933. Ornamented only on the first 2 pages. Twelve written parchment sheets decorated with initials similar to the 'white-vine' ones used in late fifteenth century illuminations, which also appear in the *Horace* manuscript and *Three Icelandic Sagas*. Two scripts are used: that of the first two *Rubáiyáts* and a more rounded roman hand with shorter ascenders. Dated 1874.

D. **The un-illustrated *Rubáiyát***. Oxford. Bodleian Library. MS. Eng. misc.e.233/1. fols 18-25. This version is on vellum, 16 pp., incomplete. circa.1874

8. **The Odes of Horace [*Q. Horatii Flacci Carminum*]**. Vellum. 183 pages, 6 5/8 x 4 5/8 in. [Bodleian Library MS. Lat. Class. E. 38]. Begun March, 1874, abandoned 1876. Trial pages

¹ Mackail, *Life of William Morris* I, 279-80.

with text and decoration are in the William Morris Gallery (J 578) and the Emery Walker Collection.

9. *The Æneid of Virgil*: The Pre-Raphaelite Æneid of William Morris & Edward Burne-Jones. A detailed physical overview of the bound manuscript:

Technical Description²

William Morris (1834-1896) with the assistance of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, A.R.A., R.W.S. (1833-1898) and Charles Fairfax Murray (1849-1919); later work by Graily Hewitt (1864-1953) and Louise Powell (1882-1956)

An Illuminated Manuscript of Virgil's Æneid

Generally regarded as Morris's calligraphic masterpiece, the **Æneid** marks the climax of his attempt to revive the art of the illuminated manuscript in the early 1870s. The writing was begun by Morris and completed by Graily Hewitt. The illustration and decoration were begun by Morris and continued (but not completed) by Fairfax Murray and Louise Powell. The miniatures and historiated initials were designed by Edward Burne-Jones.

Interior: 335-320 x 240mm. vi + 185 + vi vellum leaves including two end-leaves stained purple, the text block mostly in gatherings of four, paginated 1-370, 28 lines written in black ink in roman minuscule between two verticals and 29 or 28 horizontals ruled in pencil, ruled area approx. 230 x 135mm, running headings throughout in capitals of blue on versos and burnished gold on rectos, some text capitals of gold, blue or occasionally silver up to p.72, guide letters for all others in pencil

Twenty-eight illuminated foliate initials: three- to eight-lines-high in body-colour and burnished gold between p.43 and p.72, four unfinished, a further four drawn in pen-and-ink, *four large historiated initials* in watercolour and one in grey wash, occasional pencil sketches, tracings and instructions for others up to p.166, *half-page marginal miniature*, the opening folios of the twelve Books with *half page miniatures c. 140 x 135mm or 135mm x 140mm above eleven lines of burnished gold capitals surrounded by full-page foliate borders*. the miniatures in watercolour, body-colour and liquid gold, one border of gold leaf, three painted in body-colour and eight drawn in pen-and-ink, one miniature not supplied (flaking to gold of foliate initial p.57 and unfinished initials on pp.57, 61 & 63).

Binding: Contemporary renaissance-inspired paneled brown morocco by Leighton, ruled and stamped in blind with outer borders of rosettes and grouped annular dots within triple fillets, inner border with diaper interlace, the central panel with semicircles containing knotwork above and below a roundel with winged-dragon tools radiating from a central rosette, gilt turn-ins and board-edges, spine in six compartments top and bottom ruled and stamped in blind with rosettes in diaper (very slight rubbing at bands top and bottom of spine-joint, three tiny losses of surface at bottom corner of outer edge of upper cover), matching brown morocco box (box slightly scuffed at corners). 35 x 26 cm.

² The text that follows from this point, up to the description of the Doheny Auction on pg. 293, is from Christie's: *The William Morris Æneid: The Property of the Lord Lloyd-Webber* [November 27, 2002] (London: Christie's International UK Ltd., 2002). I reproduce it here because of the scarcity of that text, and the current inaccessibility of the illuminated manuscript itself. The text's author(s) are not credited in the catalogue.

The *miniatures* are as follows:

- **p.1** Venus meets Aeneas on the shores of Libya and clothes him in mist to prevent his being hindered on the way to Carthage (Book I); with a full-page border of burnished gold grape-vines against a ground of unburnished gold leaf.
- **p.2** Juno in her chariot drawn by peacocks, before the city of Carthage (marginal miniature 152 x 60mm)
- **p.29** Aeneas holds his son's hand and carries his father Anchises on his shoulders as they flee the ruins of Troy, Venus leading the way; behind them Aeneas's wife, Creusa, is engulfed by flames in the gateway of the city; to the right, Venus leads Aeneas by the hand (Book II); with a full-page acanthus and floral border in pen-and-ink
- **p.86** Dido, maddened with grief at the departure of Aeneas, falls on his sword on the bed they shared, his breastplate still beside her; ribbons of flame from her pyre in the background (Book IV); with a full-page acanthus border in pen-and-ink
- **p.113** The goddess Iris in disguise incites the women of Troy to burn the ships (Book V); with a full-page acanthus border in pen-and-ink
- **p.146** Aeneas and the Cumaean Sibyl, armed with the golden bough, journey down to the Underworld and the banks of the river Styx (Book VI); with a full-page acanthus border in pen-and-ink
- **p.181** Lavinia, daughter of King Latinus, stands in the courtyard of his palace, her hair ablaze as a portent of her own fame and the terrible war that will befall her people (Book VII); with a full-page painted border with two types of green foliage and berries against a dark red ground.
- **p.211** Venus presents Aeneas with a gift of arms fashioned by Vulcan (Book VIII); with a full-page border of white acanthus around blue foliage and white flowers against a dark red ground, each side with a central quatrefoil of pointill, -patterned burnished gold.
- **p.238** Turnus is visited by the goddess Iris, who instructs him to make a surprise attack on the Trojan camp (Book IX); with a full-page border of green vine leaves on plaited tendrils surrounded by curling tendrils with red berries and white flowers on a dark blue ground.
- **p.268** Aeneas, protected by his shield, strikes Mezentius in the throat as he is thrown from his fallen horse (Book X); with a full-page acanthus border in pen-and-ink.
- **p.302** Aeneas displays the armour of Mezentius as a trophy of war (Book XI); with a full-page acanthus border in pen and ink
- **p.336** Aeneas, having wounded Turnus, plunges his spear into his breast (Book XII); with a full page acanthus border in pen and ink

The *historiated initials* are:

- **p.26** Q, with Cupid in the form of Ascanius embracing Dido (*Quum venit aulaeis...* Bk I, l.697) 100 x 110mm.
- **p.44** H, with Cassandra chained and dragged from the temple of Minerva during the fall of Troy (*Heu mihi invitis...* Bk II, l.402) 90 x 60mm.
- **p.48** E, with Polites, having been pursued by Pyrrhus, dying in the arms of his father Priam (*Ecce autem elapsus Pyrrhi...* Bk II, l.526) 88 x 60mm.

- **p.50** J, with Helen hiding at the doors of the temple of Vesta (*Jamque adeo super unus...* Bk II, l.567) 93 x 52mm.
- **p.154** T, with Venus watching over her two doves, which reveal the tree with the golden bough (*Talis erat species...* BK VI, l.208) 150 x 65mm.

Provenance, Exhibition History and Literature Provenance.

Sold by **William Morris** to Charles Fairfax Murray, c. 1890. By descent to Fairfax Murray's son Arthur; anonymous sale, Sotheby's, 18 July 1928, lot 2, /P 1,750 to Gregory. Mrs George W. Millard, from whom purchased by Mrs Estelle Doheny, 24 June 1932. The Estelle Doheny Collection, The Edward Laurence Doheny Memorial Library, St John's Seminary, Camarillo, California; sold The Estelle Doheny Collection, Part VI: Printed Books and Manuscripts concerning William Morris and his Circle, Christie's, New York, 19 May 1989, lot 2370. Lord Lloyd-Webber

Charles Fairfax Murray (1849-1919) not only owned the manuscript but played a crucial part in its decoration. Born in Bow, the son of a draper, he began his career as a shopboy with the famous firm of contractors Peto and Betts. In 1866, eager to become an artist, he approached John Ruskin for advice, and by the end of the year (aged seventeen) he was acting as Burne-Jones's first studio assistant. Before long he was also working for D.G. Rossetti and William Morris, with whom he struck up a close friendship. In the early 1870s he was Morris's principal painter of stained glass and much involved with the decoration of his illuminated manuscripts. In 1871 Murray paid his first visit to Italy and in 1873 he settled there, copying paintings for Ruskin and acquiring an exhaustive knowledge of the old masters. The rest of his life was spent between London and Italy, in both of which he established families. Although he continued to paint and, like Burne-Jones, exhibited regularly at the Grosvenor and New Galleries, his energies were increasingly devoted to collecting and dealing. By the 1880s he had established a formidable reputation as a connoisseur, and in 1893 Morris and Burne-Jones recommended him (unsuccessfully) for the directorship of the National Gallery. By the turn of the century he was in partnership with Agnew's, and his services as a marchand amateur were being sought internationally by such major collectors as Wilhelm von Bode, J.P. Morgan and H.C. Frick. Yet he remained intensely public-spirited, giving generously to the National Gallery, the Dulwich Art Gallery and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, as well as selling large numbers of Pre-Raphaelite drawings to the Birmingham Art Gallery for less than their market value. Murray died at Chiswick after a series of strokes in January 1919.

Carrie Estelle Betzold Doheny (1875-1958) married the prominent Californian oilman Edward Laurence Doheny in 1900; she was an operator working for the Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Company, and they met as a result of her placing his calls to wealthy investors. When Doheny died in 1935, he left her a large fortune, which she used to support Roman Catholic charities (Pope Pius XII made her a Countess in 1939, the first title of its kind to be granted in Southern California) and to create a magnificent library. With the help of the legendary bookseller A.S.W. Rosenbach, she bought extensively in such varied fields as illuminated manuscripts, incunabla, post-incunabla Bibles and works of theology, material relating to William Morris, American literature and Presidential autographs. The Edward Laurence Doheny Memorial Library, which she established at St John's Seminary, Camarillo,

California, was sold by Christie's in New York in six sales between October 1987 and May 1989, realising a total of \$38 million, still a record for any library sold at auction. A further sale of the smaller library which she donated to the Mission Church of St Mary's of the Barrens, Perryville, Missouri, was sold by Christie's in New York on 14 December 2001.

Lord Lloyd-Webber (born 1948) needs no introduction as a composer of wildly popular musicals such as *Cats* and *Phantom of the Opera*, and as the owner of the greatest private collection of British Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite art in the world.

EXHIBITION

- ❖ New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library, *William Morris and the Art of the Book*, 1976, no. 63.
- ❖ London, Victoria and Albert Museum, *William Morris*, 1996, no. N.14.
- ❖ New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Birmingham, Museums and Art Gallery; and Paris, Musée d'Orsay, *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 1998-9, no. 66 (exhibited in New York only).

Further Provenance-related Information:

The *Aeneid* is currently the property of Lord Andrew Lloyd-Webber, who purchased it at auction (Christie's) on Friday, 19 May 1989, when Christie's sold the sixth and final part of the Doheny collection, devoted to 'William Morris and his Circle.' A papal countess and the wife of a California oil millionaire, Doheny formed her library during the years 1930 to 1950. Christie's did a lot of publicity for the sale, much of it featuring the obvious 'star' item, Morris's spectacularly beautiful illuminated MS of the *Aeneid*. The hardbound catalogue contains an 8-page description (not counting two fold-out color plates) of this item alone, giving an estimate of \$250,000-300,000. [*The Estelle Doheny Collection Catalogs*, Vol. I-VI + Index with prices realized, were published 1987-1989 in New York by Christie, Manson & Woods International Inc]. Weeks before the sale, there was talk of the *Aeneid* bringing perhaps half a million dollars, if the right buyer could be found. An anonymous bidder, acting on Lord Webber's behalf, set records for many of the auction's finer items, culminating in a staggering \$1.2 million U.S. (£850,000) for the *Aeneid*. Lord Lloyd-Webber subsequently offered it for auction at Christie's in November 2002, but it failed to meet its reserve price of £1.5million and remains in his possession at the time of writing.

Also notable is Estelle Doheny's personal copy of *A Pre-Raphaelite Aeneid of Virgil in the Collection of Mrs. Edward Laurence Doheny of Los Angeles, Being an Essay in Honour of the William Morris Centenary 1934*, Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie 1934, 8vo, LIMITED EDITION, no. 1 of 150 copies, signed on limitation page by Estelle Doheny, Anna Cox Brinton and Ward Ritchie; parchment-backed boards, title printed in red on spine and upper cover, uncut, minor soiling to covers, elaborate fitted silk-lined brown morocco gilt folding case with separate partition containing 47 letters and cards thanking Mrs. Doheny for receipt of a copy of the Essay. This copy is in the collection of Lord Andrew Lloyd-Webber at the time of writing, purchased with the *Aeneid* MS at auction (Christie's) on Friday, 19 May 1989 (see above notes).

PROVENANCE: The Estelle Doheny Collection, The Edward Lawrence Doheny Memorial Library, St John's Seminary, Camarillo, California -- Sale Part VI, Christie's, New York, 19 May 1989, lot 2360. A fascinating copy of the essay written for Countess Doheny on the Morris *Æneid* (see lot 10).

This is her own special copy, number one, with 47 letters of appreciation and thanks. The letters include poignant recollections of the process and the participants engaged in the project to bring the most ambitious and opulent of nineteenth-century manuscripts to completion. The letters include:

1. SIR SYDNEY COCKERELL. *Autograph Letters, Cambridge, 31 January 1934, 4 pages, 8vo*, 'Fairfax Murray... intended the MS to come to this Museum [Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge]... the MS was in his house in Italy. After his death I made no claim, as I had nothing in writing to support it... The Vellum Chaucer and the Virgil MS were sold at Sotheby's by one of his sons in Florence... all Burne-Jones's designs for the illustration and initials of the Virgil are in the museum (Fitzwilliam), they are perhaps the finest thing he ever did.'
2. GRAILY HEWITT. *Autograph Letters, Liss, Hants, 30 June 1934, 2 pages, small 4to*, 'I am particularly pleased to think that the gilding of that front page has apparently stood well. And you will easily imagine what anxiety was mine in working round that unique miniature of Morris' own hand. The completion of the book was perhaps the most important commission I have ever had.'
3. MAY MORRIS *Autograph Letters, Kelmscott Manor, 2 May, 1934, 1 page 8vo*, 'I am glad to know that this magnificent piece of work is in sympathetic hands.'
4. BRUCE ROGERS. *Autograph Letters, New York, 17 April 1934, 1 page, 8vo*, 'Sydney Cockerell showed me the original drawings long ago and I have always thought them amongst the finest things that Burne-Jones did for Morris.'
5. SEYMOUR DE RICCI. *A.L.s., Paris, 5 July 1934, 2 pages, 8vo*, 'I find me awaiting your charming book on a Pre-Raphaelite *Æneid*. I appreciate it all the more because the manuscript described is an old friend. Many times did I intrude on Fairfax Murray and find him minutely completing some detail of the illumination. That Virgil is one of two or three modern manuscripts with anything like a soul.'

An account of the Doheny Auction from the *William Morris Society Newsletter* of July 1989:

THE DOHENY MORRIS SALE

We have all heard the reports that the art market is booming. High--should one say heretofore unimaginable--prices are expected and received for paintings by Picasso and Van Gogh, for illuminated MSS, for Walt Disney cartoons. Those of us whose interest in Morris and his friends includes collecting their work have always felt pleased that ours was an out-of-the-way area, undiscovered (or at least neglected) by big-time collectors. A few exceptional Pre-Raphaelite pictures have brought large sums--\$3 million for Rossetti's *Proserpine*, probably the last major Rossetti left outside a museum, but the market has been relatively calm, some lots at auction actually going unsold. In the course of a single morning all this has changed.

On Friday, 19 May 1989, Christie's sold the sixth and final part of the Doheny collection devoted to 'William Morris and his Circle', A papal countess and the wife of a California oil millionaire, Doheny formed her library during the years 1930 to 1950. Morris was but one of her interests, which included also miniature books, Americana, Mark Twain, Kate Greenaway, incunabula, and many 'high-spots' of English and American literature.

Christie's did a lot of publicity for the sale, much of it featuring the obvious 'star' item, Morris's spectacularly beautiful illuminated MS of the *Aeneid*. The catalogue, hard-bound in bright Socialist red!, contained an 8-page description (not counting two fold-out color plates) of this item alone, giving an estimate of \$250,000-300,000. Weeks before the sale there was talk of the *Aeneid* bringing perhaps half a million dollars, if the right buyer could be found. But the fate of the lesser items--a complete (or nearly so) run of Kelmscott Press titles, numerous Morris presentation copies, books in bindings by Cobden-Sanderson or the Doves bindery, a few decorative objects--was a bit uncertain. As it turned out no one needed to worry, especially the auctioneer or the sale's beneficiary, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

The auction was attended by several Society members, among them Carole Silver, Mark Samuels Lasner, and our former American secretary, Joseph R. Dunlap. The well-known dealers were there in force, though as it turned out, most of us, booktrade and Morrisians alike, were there for the show not the bidding. What was apparent, even by the third lot, was that this was an extraordinary affair, soon to be dominated by three buyers.

Lot 2234 (the sale began with 2232) was a copy, nicely bound, of *The Flower Book of Edward Burne-Jones*. This volume, issued posthumously in 1903, reproduces the artist's symbolic watercolors (now in the British Library) inspired by the names and meanings of flowers. It is not a particularly scarce item, and the stated limitation to 300 copies is not necessarily to be believed. The catalogue estimate of \$1,000 to \$1500 was realistic if a little low. After a minute of spirited bidding it was purchased by the London bookseller Simon Finch, for \$8500. Mr. Finch was clearly a man to watch; he seemed particularly interested in material connected to Burne-Jones. Following *The Flower Book* came Morris's copy of Marx's *Le Capital*, in a leather binding by Cobden-Sanderson. Some might find it odd for this title to be gorgeously bound; certainly the \$50,000 paid for it must count as ironic. (Somehow it is not Marx, but Veblen that comes to mind here.) This price was--believe it or not--below the estimate. However, the buyer was another London dealer, Maggs Brothers, who are believed to represent a tenacious yet generous private collector who has filled his (very appropriate) Chelsea house with Pre-Raphaelite treasures. Had there been more competition they would certainly be prepared to go higher. As the sale progressed Maggs purchased virtually everything bound by Cobden-Sanderson or his Doves bindery, paying \$7000 for Ruskin's *Pre-Raphaelitism* and \$16000 for the Kelmscott edition of Shakespeare's *Poems* inscribed by Cobden-Sanderson to his wife.

Various relatively minor books went to various bidders and it was not until lot 2260, the first of a series of non-Kelmscott presentation copies from Morris, that a third strong force made himself known. For this book, *The Earthly Paradise* inscribed (well, only the first volume, volumes two and three un-inscribed) to John Ruskin, went for \$6000 to a man with bidding paddle number 699. As book after book followed no. 699 either snapped them up or bid them up, the momentum and prices of his purchases becoming so remarkable that whispering arose regarding his identity. As a rule booksellers at an auction do not care to have their turf intruded upon, and the unknown bidder was as upsetting as he was mysterious. A number of others, Ximenes (purchasing some of Morris's original drawings), William Salloch (buying Kelmscott versions of medieval literature) and the Lathrop Harper

firm (the MS of *News from Nowhere* for \$75000, destined apparently for the Morgan Library), were able to withstand Mr. 699 but it was difficult. The least expensive book inscribed by Morris went for \$950, everything seemed to sell for at least the high estimate or, often, double it. In the Kelmscott section Maggs was able to pick off the corrected proofs for *The Tale of King Coustans and of Over Sea* (\$12,000) and the MS (mostly in Sydney Cockerell's hand) of Morris's 'Note on his Aims . . . in founding the Kelmscott Press' (\$13,000); but the Chaucer on vellum went elsewhere for \$300,000. Simon Finch, again attending to Burne-Jones, had success with the Kelmscott edition of Rossetti's *Hand and Soul*, inscribed 'To Edward Burne-Jones from William Morris December 15th 1895'; this little 16mo--which I coveted--brought \$7500, ten times Christie's estimate.

Even more staggering was the \$26,000 paid for a copy of Doheny's own privately printed 1934 *A Pre-Raphaelite Æneid of Virgil*. This book about the Morris MS in her library is not, as one might suppose, any sort of facsimile. In fact it is a rather sedate piece of work by the California printer Ward Ritchie and has been known to be a slow seller on bookdealers' shelves. Certainly the book offered was made more interesting by the insertion of 47 letters and cards from people to whom Doheny had sent copies, but still \$26,000 is, even by the standards set by other things in this sale, exceptional. Then there was the little section devoted to 'Arts and Crafts', four items of which Mr. 699 purchased two, a pair of painted wood panels described as not by but after Burne-Jones--\$7000, and an unattributed photograph of Morris which brought £1900. The stage was set for the last two lots, Morris's calligraphic MS of *The Story of Frithiof the Bold* and the much-ballyhoed *Æneid*.

For *Frithiof* Christie's had a pre-sale opinion of £30,000-40,000, not perhaps a modest sum. While not in the same class as the *Æneid* this was a wonderful MS of a translation made by Morris and Eirikr Magnusson. Any Morrissean would be happy to take it home--even a facsimile would be nice. *Frithiof* went to Maggs for \$120,000, at that moment probably the record for a single nineteenth century MS of any kind. Records are made to be broken (so the art world tells us) and shattered this one was by the *Æneid*. There was silence as the bidding went on, quickly reaching \$500,000, then with longer pauses, moving up notch by notch until 'one million two hundred thousand dollars' was called out twice by the auctioneer, 'all done.'

With this last purchase Mr. 699 had spent possibly \$1.5M or more on Morris, building a sizable collection in an hour and a half. Who was he? It is thought that he was an associate of Andrew Lloyd Webber, the composer who has (I am told) four London shows running simultaneously. The same buyer is reputed to have added to his collection two Burne-Jones paintings (at £300,000 each) recently sold at Sotheby's. What's next?

And what would Morris himself make of all this? He would be pleased that his handiwork was so highly thought of. As a collector himself--the Kelmscott House library held some of the finest English illuminated MS available a century ago--he would have a certain empathy for the bidders and purchasers. Would the prices have bothered him? Possibly, but remember that Morris so coveted the *Aldenham Psalter* that he paid £1000 when it had cost its previous owner only £75/36/-.³

³ William Morris Society, *Newsletter of the William Morris Society in the United States*, July 1989, 2.
<http://www.morrisociety.org/publications/newsletters/newsltr-july89.html>

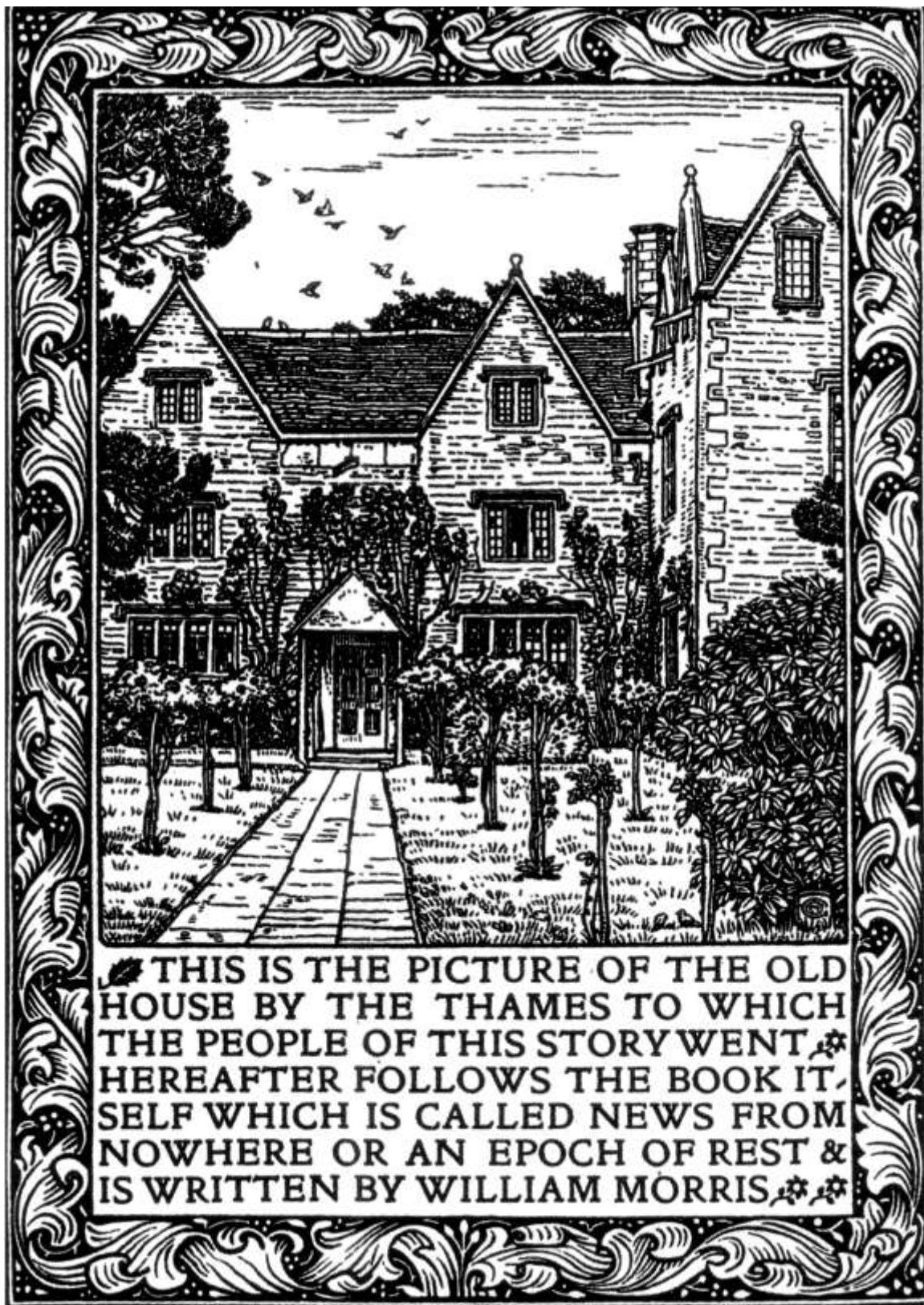


Figure 7.3 *News from Nowhere* frontispiece, Kelmscott Press, 1893.

Descriptive Bibliography of Printed Works¹

I. Kelmscott, Contemporary & Facsimile Editions

- Blunt, Wilfrid Scawen. *The Love-Lyrics and Songs of Proteus. With the Love-Sonnets of Proteus by the same author, now reprinted in their full text with many sonnets omitted from the earlier editions.* London: Kelmscott Press, 1892. Colophon: Here end the Love-Lyrics. Printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith, in the County of Middlesex, and finished on the 26th day of January of the year 1892. Sold by Reeves & Turner, 196 Strand, London. [Printers mark] First pages of text of the Lyrics and the Sonnets within ornamental borders; initials and caption in red. 300 copies on paper. Bound in white vellum, with ties. (A copy is held at the Special Collections Room of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library).
- Cavendish, George. *The Life of Thomas Wolsey, Cardinal, Archbishop of York.* Hammersmith: Kelmscott P, 1893. Sold by Reeves & Turner, 1893. Golden type, with initials; first page of text within ornamental border. 250 copies on paper; 6 on vellum. Original vellum binding. Formerly ascribed to the author's brother, Sir William Cavendish. First ed. pub. in 1641 under the title: *The Negotiations of Thomas Wolsey.* Colophon: Transcribed after the autograph manuscript of the author, now in the British Museum, by F. S. Ellis, and finished the 25th day of December, in the year 1892, in the Parish of Cockington in the County of Devon. And printed by me William Morris, at the Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith in the County of Devon. And printed by me William Morris, at the Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith in the County of Middlesex, and finished on the 30th day of March 1893.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The works of Geoffrey Chaucer now newly imprinted* [*Kelmscott Chaucer*]. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1896. Limited ed. of 425 copies. 554pp. (16-3/4" x 11-1/2") Colophon: Here ends the Book of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by F.S. Ellis; ornamented with pictures designed by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, and engraved on wood by W. H. Hooper. Printed by me William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith, in the county of Middlesex. Finished on the 8th day of May, 1896. (A copy is held in the Rare Books Collection at the National Library of Canada, Ottawa).
- . *Works. A facsimile of the William Morris Kelmscott Chaucer, with the original 87 illustrations by Edward Burne-Jones, together with an introduction by John T. Winterich and a glossary for the modern reader.* Cleveland: World Pub., 1958. Binding is a facsimile of the original tooled white pigskin binding executed by T. J. Cobden Sanderson at the Doves Bindery.

de Voragine, Jacobus. *The Golden Legend.* Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1892.

¹ These descriptions are, to varying degrees, taken from the relevant library catalogues and similar bibliographic sources.

(Copies are held at the Special Collections Room of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library and in the Rare Books Collection at the National Library of Canada, Ottawa).

- Ellis, Frederick Startridge, Edward Coley Burne-Jones. *Syr Percyvelle of Gales*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1895. (A copy is held at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
- Ellis, Frederick Startridge. *Psalmi Penitentiales*. F. S. Ellis, ed. Hammersmith: Kelmscott P, 1894. "Rhymed version. . .found in a manuscript of Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis, written at Gloucester about the year 1440." Latin text and English paraphrase. Original half linen binding. Text in black and red. One of 300 copies printed on paper; 12 on vellum. (A copy is held at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
- Floire et Jeanne. *Of King Florus and the Fair Jehane*. William Morris, tr. Colophon: Printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith, in the county of Middlesex, & finished on the 16th day of December, 1893. Title and first page of text within ornamental border; initials; marginal notes in red. 350 copies on paper, 15 on vellum. Half-title and caption title: The Tale of King Florus and the Fair Jehane. Translated by William Morris from a little volume called "Nouvelles Francoises en Prose du XIIIe Siecle," Paris, 1856.
- Guilelmus. *The History of Godefrey of Boloyne and of the Conquest of Iberusalem*. Corr. by H. Halliday Sparling. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1893. Reprinted from Caxton's ed. of 1481. Tr. by William Caxton from a French version of the *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*. Original limp vellum binding.
- Keats, John. *The Poems of John Keats*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1894. Colophon: Overseen after the text of foregoing editions by F. S. Ellis, and printed by me William Morris, at the Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith in the County of Middlesex, and finished on the 7th day of March, 1894. [Printer's device]. Sold by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press. Golden type with initials; title and first page of text within ornamental border; headings in red. 300 copies on paper, 7 on vellum. Bound in white vellum.
- L'Empereur Constant. *The Tale of the Emperor Coustans and of Over Sea*. William Morris, tr. Hammersmith: Kelmscott P, 1894. Colophon: This book. . .was printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith, in the county of Middlesex & finished on the 30th day of August 1894. Sold by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press. Each tale has ornamental title-page; first page of text within border; initials. "Chaucer" type with marginal notes and headings in red. Bound in half holland. 525 copies on paper, 20 on vellum.
- Laudes Beatae Mariae Virginis*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott P, 1896. "These poems are taken from a Psalter written by an English scribe, most likely in one of the Midland counties, early in the 13th century." Attributed variously to Stephen Langton and to John Peckham. cf. J. P. Morgan. Catalogue of manuscripts and early printed books

from the libraries of William Morris, Richard Bennett . . . now forming portion of the library of J. Pierpont Morgan. Original half linen binding. Printed in black, red, and blue. A note by Rev. E. S. Dewick regarding a previous printing of these poems, printed in Chaucer type Dec. 28, 1896, laid in. (A copy is held at the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University Libraries, Montreal).

- Lefevre, Raoul. *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*. Hammersmith, Kelmscott P, 1892. 2 vol. Paged continuously. Colophon: Here ends this new edition of William Caxton's Recuyell of the Historyes of Troy, done after the first edition; corrected for the press by H. Halliday Sparling, and printed by me William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith, in the country of Middlesex, & finished on the fourteenth day of October, 1892. Sold by Bernard Quaritch, 15, Piccadilly. Page iii: Half-title: "The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye" (p. [xvii]) on floreated background, within ornamental border. Gothic type; the body of the book in "Troy," designed by Morris in 1891; the table of chapters and glossary in the smaller "Chaucer" type cut in 1892. The first book printed in "Troy" and the first in which "Chaucer" type appears. Ornaments and initials. Captions in red. 300 copies printed on paper; 5 on vellum. cf. H. H. Sparling, *The Kelmscott Press and William Morris*. (London, 1924). Caxton's edition, printed in collaboration with Colard Mansion at Bruges c. 1474, was the first book printed in English. Original limp vellum binding.
- Lowell, J.R. *Vision of Sir Launfal*. New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell & Co., n.d. Small octavo, grey holland boards with decorated pastedown title piece on cover and spine.
- Lull, Ramon. *The Order of Chivalry*. William Caxton, tr. F. S. Ellis, ed. Hammersmith: Kelmscott P, 1893. Sold by Reeves & Turner, London, 1893. In 2 pts., each with special title-page and colophon: pt. 2 has title and colophon: L'Ordene de chevalerie, with translation by William Morris. Hammersmith: Kelmscott P, 1893. L'Ordene de chevalerie and its translation are in verse. "Memorana concerning the two pieces here reprinted [by F. S. Ellis.]" Original limp binding.
- Mackail, John William. *Biblia Innocentium: Being the Story of God's Chosen People Before the Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ Upon Earth, Written Anew for Children*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1892. Colophon: Here ends this book called Biblia Innocentium, written by J. W. Mackail, and printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, 14, Upper Mall, Hammersmith, in the County of Middlesex; finished on the 22nd day of October, of the year 1892. [Printer's device]. First page of text within ornamental border; initials. 200 paper copies printed. Limp vellum binding.
- Milton, John. *Areopagitica. A Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicenc'd Printing, to the Parliament of England*. The Brook, Hammersmith. Eragny Press. 1904. 4to. pp. 37, (i). Title printed in red and black, first leaf of text with elaborate woodcut border and elaborate seventeen-line woodcut initial letter in red, three-line woodcut initials throughout, marginalia printed in red, colophon verso with woodcut device of the Eragny Press. All borders and initials designed by Lucien Pissarro and engraved by Esther Pissarro. Blue paper-backed floral-patterned paper-covered boards, title gilt to upper board.

- Magnusson, Eiríkr and William Morris, trs. *Three Northern Love Stories and Other Tales*. London: Ellis & White, 1875. Contents: The Story of Gunnlaug the Worm-Tongue and Raven the Skald; The Story of Frithiof the Bold; The Story of Viglund the Fair; The Tale of Hogni and Hedinn; The Tale of Roi the Fool; The Tale of Thorstein Staff-Smitten.
- . *The Story of Kormak the Son of Ogmund*, With an Introduction by Grace J. Calder and a Note on the manuscript works of William Morris by Alfred Fairbank. London: William Morris Society, 1970.
- . *The Saga Library: Done into English Out of the Icelandic*. William Morris and Eiríkr Magnusson, eds. & trs. 6 vols. London: Quaritch, 1891-1905. Contents: I. The Story of Howard the Halt. The Story of the Banded Men. The Story of Hen Thorir. 1891; II. The Story of the Ere-Dwellers with the Story of the Heath-Slayings, 1892; III-VI. Snorri Sturluson. The Stories of the Kings of Norway called the Round World (Heimskringla), 1893-1905.
- Morris, William. *An Address Delivered by William Morris at the Distribution of Prizes to Students of the Birmingham Municipal School of Art on Feb. 21, 1894*. London: Longmans, 1898. Printed at the Chiswick Press.
- . *Architecture, Industry and Wealth: Collected Papers*. London: Longmans, 1902. "First collected edition printed in the Golden type of the Kelmscott Press, July 1902; new edition, November 1902." Contents: The History of Pattern-Designing; The Lesser Arts of Life; Art, Wealth, and Riches; Art and Socialism; Textile Fabrics; Art Under Plutocracy; The Revival of Architecture; The Revival of Handicraft; Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century; The Influence of Building Materials upon Architecture; On the External Coverings of Roofs. This work contains the texts of lectures and articles by William Morris written or given from 1882—1892.
- . *The Art of the People: An Address Delivered Before the Birmingham Society of Arts, February 19th, 1879*. Chicago: Seymour, 1902. Title vignette. Title and initials in black and red. Running title in red. Colophon: This edition of "The Art of the People" by William Morris, is the first book in which is used the type designed by and cast for Mr. Seymour; two hundred & fifteen copies on paper & ten on Japan vellum have been printed by Geo. F. McKiernan & co. in Chicago for the publisher Ralph Fletcher Seymour, & the type distributed, November, MDCCCII. Morris addresses himself in this lecture "not only to those who are consciously interested in the arts, but to all those also who have considered what the progress of civilization promises and threatens to those who shall come after us: what there is to hope and fear for the future of the arts which were born with the birth of civilization and will only die with its death."
- . *A Book of Verse*. London: Scolar P, 1980. Facsimile of the 1870 manuscript in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Issued in a case with "A book of verse: notes to accompany a facsimile of the manuscript" (8 p., iv p. of plates), containing introductory material by Roy Strong and Joyce Irene Whalley and bibliography; Prospectus (6 p.). "Edition of three hundred and twenty-five copies. Three hundred

numbered copies are for sale of which numbers 1-62 are bound in vellum”
Colophon.

- . “Address at the Twelfth Annual Meeting - SPAB (1889).” First published [Untitled] in *SPAB Report*, 1889, (London 1889), pp. 62-76. Republished as “Address at the Twelfth Annual Meeting, 3 July, 1889”, in *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*, ed. May Morris, I pp. 146-147. This version omits the first paragraph, the first sentence of the second, and the final paragraph.
- . *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, sold by Reeves & Turner, London, 1892.
- . *A Dream of John Ball and A King's Lesson*. Edward Burne-Jones, il. London: Reeves & Turner, 1888. “A Dream of John Ball” first appeared in the “Commonweal,” 1886-87; issued in book-form, 1888. “A King's Lesson,” a story based on the life of Matthias Corvinus, also appeared in the “Commonweal,” Sept. 18, 1886.
- . *The Earthly Paradise*. 8 vols. Hammersmith: Kelmscott P, 1896-97. A series of 24 tales, 2 for each month of the year; 12 from classical sources; The other 12 from medieval Latin, French and Icelandic originals. Contents: v.1. Prologue: The Wanderers; March: Atalanta's Race; The Man Born to be King; v.2: April: The Doom of King Acrisius; The Proud King; v.3: May: The Story of Cupid and Psyche; The Writing on the Image; June: The Love of Alcestis; The Lady of the Land; v.4: July: The Son of Croesus; The Watching of the Falcon; August: Pygmalion and the Image; Ogier the Dane; V. 5: September: The Death of Paris; The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon; October: The Story of Acontius and Cydippe; The Man who Never Laughed Again; v. 6: November: The Story of Rhodope; The Lovers of Gudrun; v. 7: December: The Golden Apples; The Fostering of Aslaug; January: Bellerophon at Argos; The Ring Given to Venus; v.8: February: Bellerophon in Lycia; The Hill of Venus; Epilogue; L'envoi. Original limp vellum binding. (A complete set is held at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
- . *Gothic Architecture: A Lecture for the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society*. Hammersmith, London: Kelmscott Press, 1893. “This paper, first spoken as a lecture at the New Gallery, for the Arts and Crafts Exhibition society, in the year 1889.”
- . *Hopes and Fears for Art: Five Lectures Delivered in Birmingham, London, and Nottingham, 1878-1881*. 2nd ed. London: Ellis & White, 1882. Bookplate of James Watson. Some ms. notations in first three lectures. Contents: The Lesser Arts; The Art of the People; The Beauty of Life; Making the Best of It; The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization. Paper label on spine: Morris's Lectures on Art. Second Edition. These lectures were delivered before the Trades' Guild of Learning and the Birmingham Society of Artists, the Birmingham School of Art and School of Design, and the London Institute.
- . *Kelmscott Press [Catalog]*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1896. (Hand-printed as the books).

- . *Love is Enough, or The Freeing of Pharamond, A Morality*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott P, 1898. Original limp vellum binding. Colophon: Here ends Love is enough . . . with two pictures designed by Sir Edward Burne Jones, & engraved on wood by W. H. Hooper. The picture on the opposite page was not designed for this edition but for an edition projected about twenty-five years ago, which was never carried out. Initials in black or blue; ornamental borders on some pages; stage directions in red. (A copy is held in the Rare Books Collection at the National Library of Canada, Ottawa).
- . "Medieval Lore Preface" in Robert Steele, *Medieval Lore from Bartholomew Angelicus*, (London: Elliot Stock, 1893), v-viii.
- . *A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press, Together with a Short Description of the Press by S. C. Cokerell, and an Annotated List of the Books Printed Thereat*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott P, 1898. Original half linen binding.
- . *Prose and Poetry (1856-1870)* (Oxford University Press: London, 1913).
- ."The Revival of Architecture," [First published in *Fortnightly Review*, May 1888] *Architecture, Industry and Wealth: Collected Papers* (New York: Reitel Press, 2008), 198-213.
- . *Signs of Change: Seven Lectures* (London: Reeves & Turner, 1888).
- . *The Well at the World's End* (Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1896).
- . *Some Thoughts on the Ornamented Mss. of the Middle Ages*. New York: Privately Printed, Press of the Woolly Whale, 1934. Printed on his Albion hand press, with an account of its travels from the closing of the Kelmscott Press to the present day. Issued on the one-hundredth anniversary of William Morris's birth, March 24th, 1934. Head-pieces. "A modest number of copies (besides four on vellum) have been printed damp on Arnold unbleached." "A hitherto unpublished article by William Morris. . . . The manuscript. . . [is in] the Henry E. Huntington library of San Marino, CA." Acknowledgement, signed: M. B. C. [i.e. Melbert Brinkerhoff Cary]. "The first book to be printed on [Morris'] Kelmscott 'Chaucer' Press by the Press of the Woolly Whale."²
- . *The Wood Beyond the World*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1894. (A copy is held at the Special Collections Room of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library)
- . *Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair* (Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1895).

² Morris opens his essay on medieval ornamented manuscripts by noting that the two most important productions of art are first the beautiful house and then the beautiful book. "To enjoy good houses and good books in self-respect and decent comfort, seems to me to be the pleasurable end towards which all societies of human beings ought now to struggle." Morris then continues with his discussion of the production of medieval ornamented manuscripts. Following Morris's essay this work contains a history of the Morris press which was used to print the Kelmscott Chaucer as well as the present volume.

- . *A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press Together with a Short History and Description of the Press* (London: London County Council, Central School of Arts and Crafts, 1898).
- . *Of the Friendship of Amis and Amile* (Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1894).
- . *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs* (Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1898). In verse. Original limp vellum binding. "Two pictures designed by Edward Burne-Jones and engraved by W. H. Hooper."
- . *The Story of the Glittering Plain Which Has Been Also Called the Land of Living Men, of the Acre of the Undying*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1894. Troy type with initials; added t.p. and first page of text within ornamental border; chapter headings in red. Bound in white vellum. 250 copies on paper, 7 on vellum. Colophon: Here ends the tale of the Glittering plain, written by William Morris, & ornamented with 23 pictures by Walter Crane. Printed at the Kelmscott press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith, in the county of Middlesex, & finished on the 13th day of January, 1894. [Printer's device] Sold by William Morris, at the Kelmscott press. Earlier edition in quarto without illustrations published in 1891.
- Morris, William, and William S. Peterson. *The Ideal Book : Essays and Lectures on the Arts of the Book* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1982).
- Morris, William, and Alfred John Wyatt. *The Tale of Beowulf* (Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1895).
- Omar Khayyam. *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. Edward Fitzgerald, ed. Limited ed. Oxford: Phaidon, 1981. Reproduced in facsimile. Written out and illuminated by William Morris, 1872. Some of the figures designed by Edward Burne-Jones, according to the hand written note by G. B. J. (Georgiana Burne-Jones) dated September 1908, which is pasted in the back of the original book. (A copy is held at the Special Collections Room of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library).
- Reynard the Fox. *The History of Reynard the Foxe. Done into English out of Dutch by William Caxton*. Corr. by Henry Halliday Sparling. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1893. Based on a Dutch prose rendering of Reinaerts historie, a 14th century recension and continuation of Reinaert de Vos. Original limp vellum binding. (A copy is held at the Special Collections Room of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library).
- Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Hand and Soul*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott P, 1895. Colophon: Reprinted from The Germ for Messrs. Way and Williams of Chicago by William Morris, at the Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith. Finished the 24th day of October, 1895. Sold by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press. Original white vellum binding. Limited to 300 copies.

- . *The House of Life*. New Rochelle, NY: Elston P, 1901. Added double floriated title within ornamental borders; each sonnet on separate page with floriated initial and ornamental border. Printed on double leaves joined at the top; the “pagination” is the numbers of the sonnets. Colophon: now newly done into type by Clarke Conwell and printed by him at the Elston Press, with decorations by H. M. O’Kaned. Three hundred and ten numbered copies.
- . *So This Then is The House of Life: Being a Collection of Sonnets*. East Aurora, N.Y.: Roycrofters, 1899. Cover title: House of life. “There were printed and specially illumined by hand nine hundred and twenty-five copies.” Illumined by Edith Andrews.
- Ruskin, John. *The Art of England: Lectures Given in Oxford*. Sunnyside, Orpington, Kent: Allen, 1884. Contents: Realistic schools of painting, D. G. Rossetti and W. Holman Hunt; Mythic schools of painting, E. Burne-Jones and G. F. Watts; Classic schools of painting, Sir F. Leighton and Alma Tadema; Fairy land, Mrs. Allingham and Kate Greenaway; The fireside, John Leech and John Tenniel; The hillside, George Robson and Copley Fielding. Ruskin notes in his Appendix that he has given this series of lectures in direct response to a general exhibition of Rossetti’s works.
- . *The Nature of Gothic, A Chapter of the Stones of Venice*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1892. Colophon: Printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, Hammersmith, and published by George Allen. London, Sunnyside, Orpington, 1892. 500 copies printed in “golden” type, with border and initials; printer’s device at end of preface and colophon. Preface by William Morris dated Feb. 15th, 1892. In stiff vellum. (A copy is held at the Special Collections Room of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library).
- . *The Two Paths: Being Lectures on Art, and its Application to Decoration and Manufacture, Delivered in 1858-9*. London: Smith, Elder, 1859. Presentation copy. Contents: The deteriorative power of conventional art over nations; The unity of art; Modern manufacture art and design; The influence of imagination in architecture; The work of iron, in nature, art, and policy; Appendices.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. 3 vols. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1895. Sold by William Morris. Initials and borders. Decorated title preceding text in vol. 1: *The Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. 250 copies on paper and 6 on vellum. Bound in original vellum, without ties. Colophon: Overseen by F. S. Ellis after the text of foregoing editions, & printed by me, William Morris, at the Kelmscott press, Upper mall, Hammersmith, and finished on the 21st day of August, 1895. Vol. 1 published November, 1893; vol. 2 March, 1895.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Poems of William Shakespeare, Printed after the original Copies of Venus and Adonis, 1593, The Rape of Lucrece, 1594, Sonnets, 1609, The Lover’s Complaint*. Facsimile Edition of the Kelmscott Press Edition [Hammersmith, Kelmscott Press: London, 1893] (London: David Paradine Publications Ltd., 1975).

- Sparling, Henry Halliday. *The Kelmscott Press and William Morris Master-Craftsman*. London: Macmillan, 1924. Contents: The idea takes form; Printing in 1888; Morris in 1888; Apprenticeship; Preparation; The master-printer; Books printed; Achievement; Epilogue; Appendix. A note on his aims in founding the Kelmscott press by William Morris. A short description of the Kelmscott Press by S. C. Cockerell. Various lists, leaflets and announcements printed at the Kelmscott press.
- Tennyson, Alfred. *Maud: A Monodrama*. Hammersmith: Kelmscott P, 1893. Colophon Printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith, in the county of Middlesex, and finished on the 11th day of August, 1893. [Printer's device] Published by Macmillan & Co., Bedford Street, Strand. Golden type, with initials; woodcut title and first page of text within ornamental borders. 500 copies on paper, 5 on vellum. Bound in original limp vellum. (A copy is held in the Rare Books Collection at the National Library of Canada, Ottawa).
- Vallance, Aymer. *William Morris, His Art, His Writings, and His Public Life: A Record*. London: Bell, 1909. Appendix I: Chronological list of the printed works of William Morris; Appendix II: Publications of the Kelmscott Press. Title in red and black. Printed at the Chiswick Press. First ed. published in 1897. Cheaper reprint in 1909
- Winterich, John T., ed. *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Facsimile of the William Morris Kelmscott Chaucer*. The World Publishing Company: New York, 1958.

II. Unpublished Primary Sources by Location

- Bodleian Library, Oxford.** Several of Morris's illuminated works, including manuscripts of 'The story of the dwellers at Eyr' (incomplete), fragments of 'Ogier the Dane', 'The Arabian Nights', and 'The story of Harold Hairfair', manuscript of 'The story of Hen Thori', manuscript of 'The story of the Banded Men', manuscript of chapters 1-35 of 'The story of the Volsungs and the Niblungs', fragments of 'The story of Gunnlaug the Worm-tongue and Raven the Skald', manuscript of 'Hafbur and Signy', drafts of chapters 1-2 of 'The story of the Volungs and the Niblungs', and the 'Odes of Horace'. Also Morris's letters to J. and J. Leighton; Bernard Quaritch's letters to his son; miscellaneous correspondence; Kelmscott Press material in the John Johnson collection.
- British Library, London** in the *Department of Printed Books*. Many volumes of Kelmscott Press proofs and trial pages assembled by Sydney Cockerell and Robert Proctor; in the *Department of Manuscripts* diaries and correspondence of Cockerell and Morris; letters of Burne-Jones.
- Dalhousie University Libraries, Halifax, N.S.** In the *William Inglis Morse Collection*, Cockerell Collection, incunabula from Morris's library including Saint Bernard of Clairvaux's *Flores* (pre 1470), Jacobus Phillipus Foresti Bergomensis's *Supplementum Chronicarum* (1485), Hugo de Prato Florido's *Sermones de Sanctis* (1485), Justinus & Lucisu Florus's

Historici viri clarissimi; Gestorum Romanorum (1505) bound with Paulus Orosius's *Historiarum Adversos Raganos Libri VII* (1499).

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. In the *Department of Manuscripts and Books* letters of Burne-Jones and correspondence and diaries of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt; in the *Department of Prints and Drawings* Burne-Jones's designs for the Chaucer illustrations.

Hammersmith Public Libraries, London holds proofs and trial pages from Kelmscott Press.

McGill University Library, Montreal in the *Department of Rare Books and Special Collections*. Designs for decorated letters by Morris, a *Historia Naturalis* by Plinius Secundus, printed by Nicholas Jensen (1472) from Morris's library.

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Design for a full-page border of the Chaucer, a page from Morris's collection of illuminated manuscripts (French c. 1450), drypoint portrait of William Strang by Emery Walker.

Oxford University Archives, Oxford. Morris's correspondence with the Oxford University Press.

Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. The largest collection of Kelmscott Press material in the US, including proofs, trial pages, designs by Burne-Jones, correspondence, and the Kelmscott Press ledger. Also the Huntingfield Psalter, the Tiptoft Missal, the Nottingham Psalter (source of the *Laudes Beatae Mariae Virginis*) and many other manuscripts and incunabula once owned by Morris (provenance Richard Bennett, who bought Morris's library following his death).

Robertson Davies Library, Massey College, University of Toronto. Designs for decorated letters, design for the title-page of *Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair*,

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Norman J. Endicott Collection, University of Toronto. Some of Morris's wood-engravings for *The Earthly Paradise* and "The Story of Cupid and Psyche." Morris's pre-Kelmscott *Love is Enough or the Freeing of Pharamond* (1873), Some incunabula used as models by Morris, including Euclid's *Geometria* (1482), Ulrich von Richental's *Concilium zu Constencz* (1483), Hartmann Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum* (1493- the famous 'Nuremberg Chronicle'), Sebastian Brant's *Stultifera Navis* (1497), Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* (1527).

Victoria and Albert Museum Library, London. Some of Morris's illuminated manuscripts, miscellaneous trial pages, correspondence, design books and sketches. Apart from his famous *Book of Verse* designed and written for Lady Burne-Jones in 1870, the Library also has a draft of part of *The Rubiyat of Omar Khayyam* written in Morris's calligraphic hand in 1874. These came to the Library with papers of Sir Sydney Cockerell.

The Washington University Libraries' Department of Special Collections, Saint Louis, Missouri holds "The Triple Crown Collection", an unsurpassed collection of books,

ephemera, and manuscripts from the Kelmscott, Doves and Ashendene Presses (provenance Charles Gould of Pasadena, California).

The Wellcome Library, London. Morris's entire library (excepting those volumes kept by his daughters) was purchased in 1896 by Richard Bennett, who then held a Sotheby's sale, (December 5-10, 1898) to sell off 1215 lots (Bennett having only kept 31 manuscripts and 239 printed books for his own collection). Bernard Quaritch bought 85 of the most coveted lots, and other dealers (Leighton, Pickering & Chatto, etc.) much of the rest. However, 464 lots quietly went to Sir Henry Wellcome, a prodigious private collector with an interest in medical books. Over half of these were sold by the Wellcome Trustees in the 1930s, but 198 printed books, including 67 incunabula (Morris's copy of the *Nuremberg Chronicle* among them), and one 15th century manuscript, are still in the library, making it one of the largest intact collections of Morris's books.³ All 199 items have been recently identified and catalogued by the library: <http://catalogue.wellcome.ac.uk>

³ Julianne Simpson, "William Morris at the Wellcome Library"
http://wellcomelibrary.blogspot.com/2009_04_01_archive.html



Figure 7.4 *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Kelmscott Press, 1895.
Three volumes in limp vellum binding.

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⁴ The full *Correspondence* consists of 9 volumes, but the editorial work was continued after Fredeman's death by an editorial committee chaired by Fredeman's widow, Betty Fredeman, and including Roger Peattie, Roger C. Lewis, and Jane Cowan. Further advisors and contributors include Jan Marsh, Jerome McGann, Allan Life, etc. The division of labour is unusually opaque, and it seems impossible to attribute most of the scholarly notes to any specific author.

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