

## The Commodification of William Morris: Emotive Links in a Mass-Produced World

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### Résumé de l'article

Cet article cherche à comprendre les inconsistences entre les idées socialistes de William Morris et ses pratiques commerciales, en explorant leurs impacts constants sur les consommateurs de produits inspirés par Morris. Quoique d'agréables motifs décoratifs, les reproductions commerciales des designs de Morris sont souvent perçues comme étant dépourvues de sens, puisqu'elles ne soutiennent aucune idéologie particulière. Tout en offrant au lecteur quelques détails de la vie et l'oeuvre de Morris, en particulier sur la fondation de Morris & Co. et sa conversion au socialisme, la croissance du conflit entre ces deux intérêts peut être souligné. Le développement réussi, par Morris, de produits de design d'intérieur qu'on pourrait qualifier « d'éthique » a eu pour résultat un changement d'idéaux de la part du designer face aux artisans, qui avaient été jusqu'alors responsables de la création d'un objet en entier, mais qui devenaient avec la création du nouveau rôle de designer, des exécutants dans la fabrication de produits de design. Cet article puise aux sources premières afin de donner sens au traitement réservé par Morris à ses travailleurs, dans le contexte de ses principes socialistes. Utilisant les nouvelles théories culturelles, particulièrement celles formulées par Raymond Williams, Antonio Gramsci et Stuart Hall, l'auteur termine son article en établissant un lien entre les philosophies originales de Morris et les usages contemporains de ses designs, et le pouvoir d'identité de consommation et d'identité politique cernant le travail de William Morris.

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# The Commodification of William Morris: Emotive Links in a Mass-Produced World

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## Résumé

Cet article cherche à comprendre les inconsistences entre les idées socialistes de William Morris et ses pratiques commerciales, en explorant leurs impacts constants sur les consommateurs de produits inspirés par Morris. Quoique d'agréables motifs décoratifs, les reproductions commerciales des designs de Morris sont souvent perçues comme étant dépourvues de sens, puisqu'elles ne soutiennent aucune idéologie particulière. Tout en offrant au lecteur quelques détails de la vie et l'œuvre de Morris, en particulier sur la fondation de Morris & Co. et sa conversion au socialisme, la croissance du conflit entre ces deux intérêts peut être souligné. Le développement réussi, par Morris, de produits de design d'intérieur qu'on pourrait qualifier « d'éthique » a eu pour résultat un change-

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Morris and Co. designs commercially reproduced on coffee mugs, notepaper and hand towels permeate many Western homes. For some consumers these are not trivial objects but affordable symbols representing an affinity with ideals related to William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement. For other purchasers Morris's designs are meaningless but pleasing patterns that bear no relation to a particular ideology. The reduction of the Morris aesthetic with its political links to mere consumer items speaks not only of the debates surrounding the impact of mass-production on artistic ideals, a subject on which Morris held many strong views, but of the political implications involved in the separation of Morris's ideologies from his designs. These mass-produced objects represent Morris, yet they are inherently opposed to the politics of production embraced by Morris. The complexities and disparities in the relationship between William Morris's socialist politics and his business practices have been analysed in several scholarly studies, but these inconsistencies have not been explored by analysing their continued impact on the consumers of Morris-inspired products.<sup>1</sup> By investigating the contemporary interest in seemingly apolitical objects linked to the Morris style, it is possible to initiate discussion of the conditions and contradictions surrounding the original production of Morris and Co. products. Central to such an examination are theories related to cultural studies with its long-standing interest in William Morris and its focus on the power of identity in both consumption and politics.

The William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, England, highlights the handcrafted design work of Morris and Company; however, the visiting experience is often framed through the factory-made items available in the giftshop. The income from the William Morris Gallery Shop during the financial year 1998–1999 was approximately £40,000.<sup>2</sup> The majority of the

purchases made at the shop included small and ephemeral things, such as postcards, giftwrap, handbag mirrors, mugs, tiles and the William Morris chocolate bar, objects commonly available for purchase in the shops of many major galleries and museums throughout the world. The popularity of these items is a reflection of the consumer's construction through the existing social order. Analyses of the political and social contexts surrounding notions of culture, as undertaken by the field of cultural studies, indicate the necessity of deconstructing disjunctions evident in Morris discourse. Such disjunctions are manifested through these popular consumer items, obvious sign systems reflecting the position of Morris "culture" originating in the class-based society of England. Whereas Morris romanticized and successfully marketed items glorifying Medieval times, the contemporary idolization and consumption of Victorian times can be described as modernizing the past while antiquating the present; class links and ideology are invisible forces in these constant references to the past, and commercial and political interests are at play in the construction of heritage and its attendant industry. The bourgeois history of the "great man" Morris is often accepted as a given, and not as part of a culture that is complexly determined on political, economic, ideological and cultural levels.

Born in Walthamstow in 1834 to the family of a successful discount broker, William Morris (fig. 1) was accustomed to the privileges of the wealthy. His childhood fascination with all things Medieval led him to view his contemporary urban society with a critical eye. Morris was streamlined for Oxford, which he entered in 1853 with the intention of taking Holy Orders. Through his fellow undergraduate Edward Burne-Jones, Morris met Dante Gabriel Rossetti. While Burne-Jones acquainted Morris with criticisms of nineteenth-century capitalism through the writings of John Ruskin, Rossetti was from a

Figure 1. William Morris. From an original photograph taken by Abel Lewis, Isle of Man, 1880. (Photo: William Morris Gallery, London).



family of revolutionary refugees from Italy and introduced Morris to a number of continental radicals.<sup>3</sup> These new friendships led Morris to abandon his theological career for one in architecture.

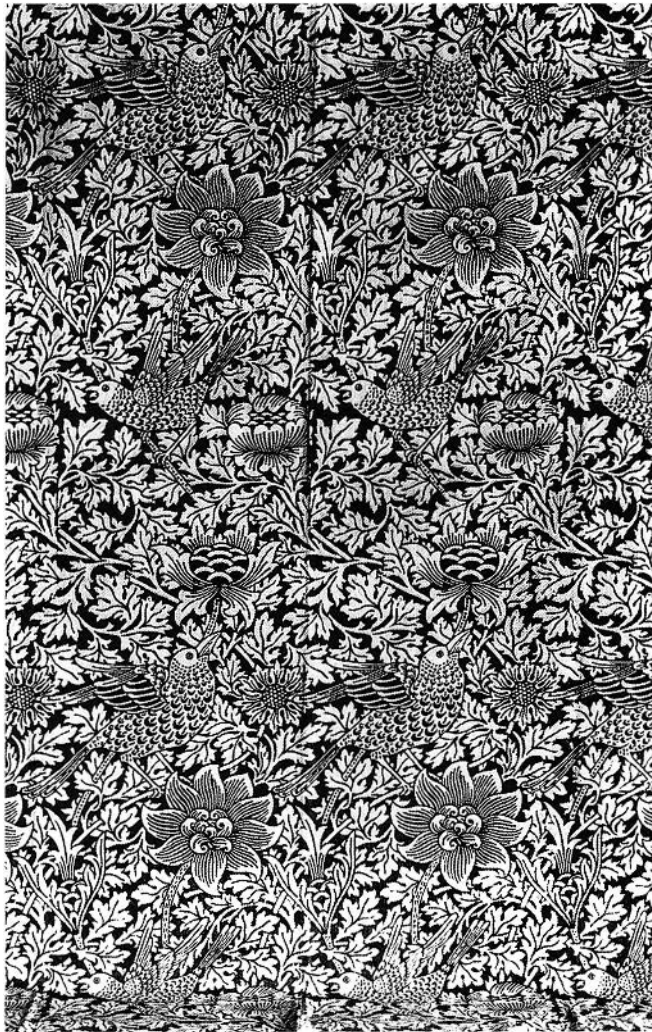
In 1856 Morris began articling in the firm of George Edmund Street, who advocated the necessity for architects to possess a thorough knowledge of the crafts. Morris turned from easel painting, with which he had been experimenting through his association with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and focused on the decorative arts, convinced of their legitimacy by Street and John Ruskin. The writings of Ruskin were central to Morris's developing vision of art. As part of his contribution to the development of the field of cultural studies, Raymond Williams analysed the impact of Ruskin on Morris in his seminal piece "Art and Society" in his 1958 book *Culture and*

*Society*.<sup>4</sup> Whereas Morris's struggle for egalitarian aesthetics led him toward socialism, Ruskin, like other nineteenth-century philosophers and critics, maintained the view that artistic and social improvement would be instituted through a "top down" hierarchy. The assignment of aesthetic and political value undertaken by both Ruskin and Morris was not innocent. As a result of his entrenchment in the upper echelons of the Victorian social system, Morris – despite his socialist leanings – could not entirely abandon his hierarchical position. This is evident from his first implementation of Ruskin's theories. Ruskin's 1854 book *The Nature of Gothic* guided Morris toward a "design utopia,"<sup>5</sup> the purposeful unification of beauty and use based on idealized Medieval examples, which Morris and his new wife Jane Burden put to a practical test during the decorating of their Red House, designed for them by their friend Philip Webb. Morris's friends from Oxford were frequent guests and artistic contributors to the decoration of the Red House. Their collaborations resulted in the formation of the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company in 1861. There were seven partners in the firm, including Burne-Jones and Rossetti. The intention of the firm was to create decorative projects that united artists, designers and architects.

William Morris was the business manager of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company. He had had previous business experience through his family, having joined

his Uncle Francis on the board of a Cornish mining company in which the Morrises had a stake and from which he earned £1000 – 1500 annually.<sup>6</sup> Morris was an excellent choice to lead the firm: "He knew exactly what the bourgeois motivation was ... [h]e understood the workings of commerce; he belonged to it."<sup>7</sup> The firm followed Ruskin's view that designers should "learn craft skills and acquire a working knowledge of the techniques and processes needed to produce an article."<sup>8</sup> The partners had good connections within the world of architecture, and through the Gothic revival in church-building and restoration, the company was successful in gaining commissions for stained glass, carved wood, murals and furniture. Over the next two years the firm developed a large stock of samples and designs. Morris, with the help of a group of women under the

Figure 2. William Morris, Bird and Anemone Chintz, designed 1881, blockprinted by Morris and Co. (Photo: William Morris Gallery, London).



supervision of his wife Jane, was responsible for the fabrics and wallpapers (fig. 2).

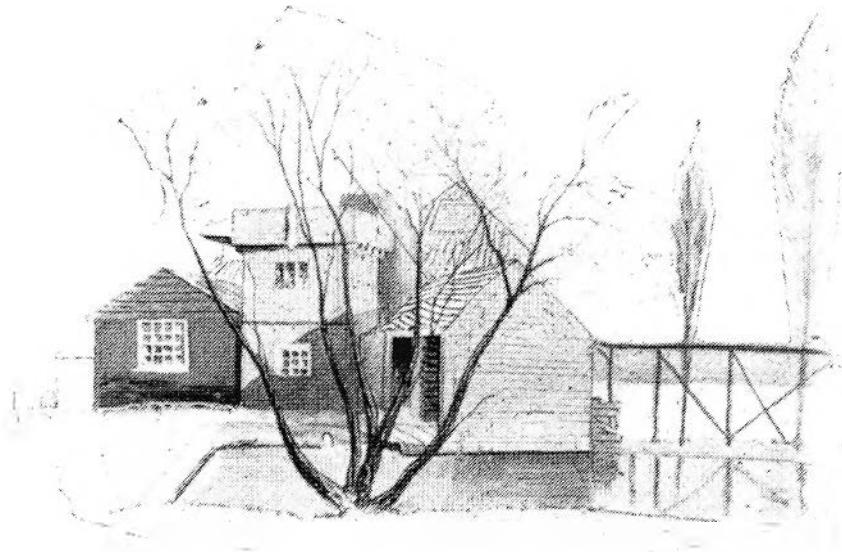
By 1870, as the Gothic revival was waning, Morris was eager to explore new markets. He wanted to move beyond the relatively small circle of architects and artists that the firm catered to, and into a new customer base amongst the increasingly prosperous middle class. Rapid population growth and urbanization had led to the construction of a large number of homes, all of which required products for their decoration and beautification.<sup>9</sup> The expanding middle class needed household furnishings, wall coverings, carpets, rugs and other symbols of prosperity. While department stores were developing on the continent and in North America to fill this demand, in Britain William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement were reconciling “Victorian historicism with Victorian materialism.”<sup>10</sup> Morris decided to focus on the upper-middle-class market, a

natural extension of his own cultural and economic position, in order to take advantage of this new purchasing power. This somewhat compromised the original ideals of beautiful objects for all contained in the early production aims of the firm and caused a bitter separation of the partners, which resulted in Morris gaining sole ownership of the firm – renamed Morris and Co. in 1875.<sup>11</sup>

Morris developed products that suited his own interior design tastes, advocating less clutter in homes and designing objects that contrasted simplicity with intense decoration. He was involved in design aesthetics, warning people of the dangers of “the absence of beauty from the ordinary life of civilized man.”<sup>12</sup> The Morris “look” became a style, which was easily identified by a large percentage of the western middle class. The popularity of this style led to its imitation by numerous manufacturers. Morris warned patrons against his imitators, urging them to pay attention to the ideals behind the quality of production found at Morris and Co., thereby legitimizing the higher prices of the products. Anticipating Walter Benjamin’s argument that “the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity,” the existence of William Morris originals was necessary in order to create a market for the plentiful reproductions.<sup>13</sup> As a result of the increasing popularity of his designs Morris found himself moving from his ideal of the craftsman, responsible for the creation of an object in its entirety, to a new role as the designer, who required workers to carry out the physical production of his goods. As the popularity of Morris and Co. increased, so did the need for production, reinforcing the relationship between supply and demand: “to an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced [became] the work of art designed for reproducibility.”<sup>14</sup> The modern myth of Morris handcrafting every object available at Morris and Co. does not take into account his need to fill the demands of the middle-class market or his choice to enter into that market. In a 1910 article, C.R. Ashbee identified the popularity of Morris and Co. as the significant factor in the introduction of the ethics of machine production into what had previously been a search for the spiritual forces of the arts:

Now the economic results of this business are much the same as those of other businesses whose objective has been good work in the arts. Briefly they are these: that art cannot, except detrimentally to itself be exploited for profit. ... These truths the Morris business discovered. The Morris business, however, marks an epoch in English industry, because it is the first point at which two fundamental conflicting forces meet, the spiritual force of Pre-Raphaelitism, and the material force of industrial machinery directed by commercialism. It is either commercial or cultural, and the two are not compatible.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 3. The Works at Merton. *The Queen, The Lady's Newspaper*, XCVI (17 November 1894), 857 (Photo: Toronto Reference Library).



Many outside suppliers and firms were involved in the projects of Morris and Co. Between 1866 and 1884, Dunn and Co., a firm of builders and decorators, carried out painting, paperhanging and wallpapering. The production of wallpapers was subcontracted to the firm of Jeffrey and Company, “specialists in the highest class of hand printed wallpapers.”<sup>16</sup> Commercially-made Kidderminster carpets and an 1875 line of printed linoleum were produced based on Morris’s designs. Morris also willingly used Jacquard looms, found in the large mills of the industrial north.<sup>17</sup> That Morris viewed himself as a craftsman, and frequently advocated the removal of machines from the process of work in his writings, remained separate from the reality of his own commercial enterprise, while still influencing the contemporary perception of Morris as calling for an end to the use of machines in handicraft production. While he argued that delight in work had been destroyed by the machine system of production, he saw this as being the fault of the system within which the machine existed rather than of the machine itself. Morris wrote in *The Aims of Art* that “The application of machinery to the production of things in which artistic form of some sort is possible. ... There are some things which a machine can do as well as a man’s hand.”<sup>18</sup> Morris was careful to experiment and understand each of the production practices and machines used by Morris and Co.; however, he was still suffering from the anxiety created by his inability to ignore the frameworks of production necessitated by the marketplace.

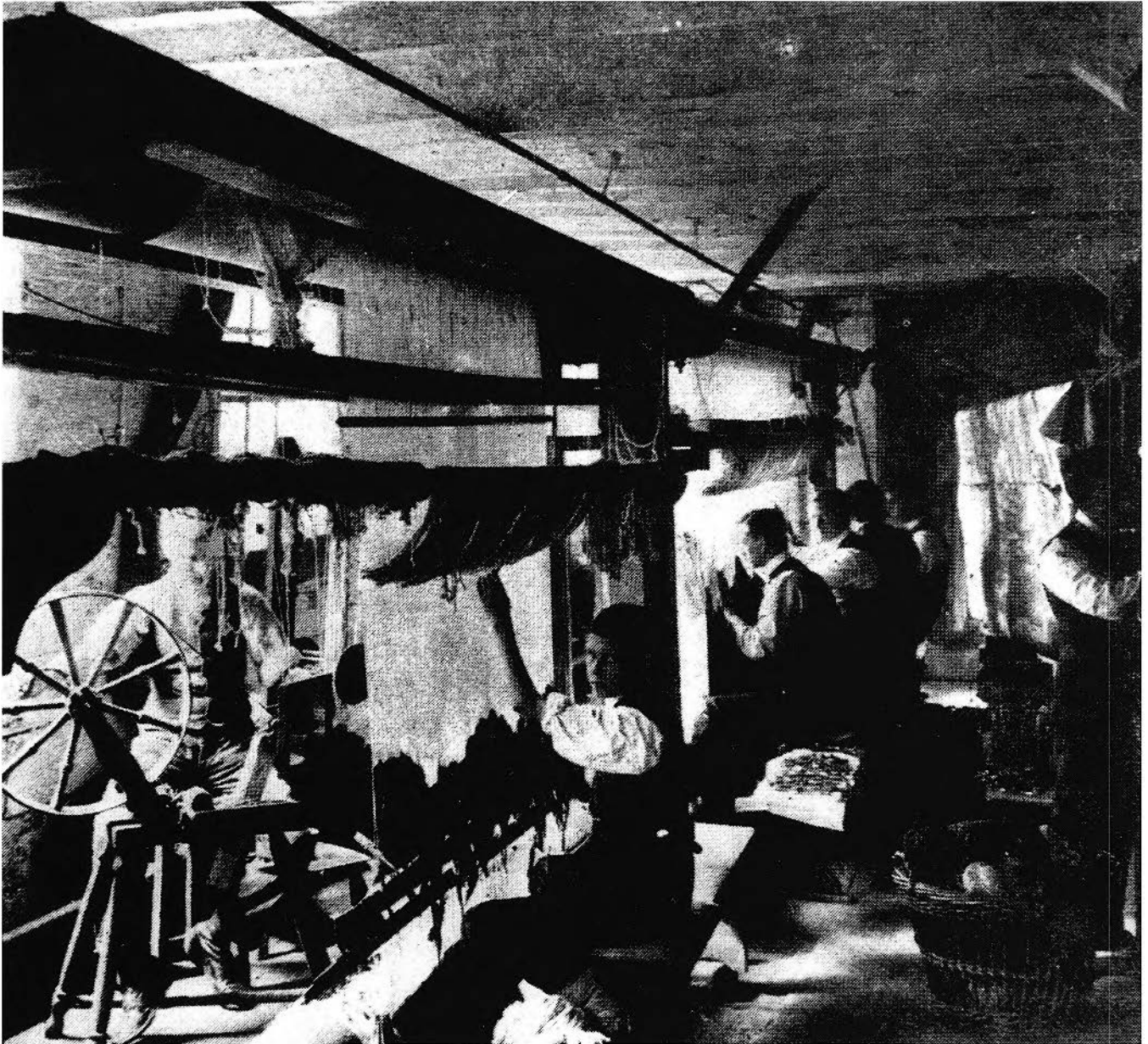
In his writings cultural-studies pioneer E. P. Thompson maintained the distinction between culture made *by* and made *for* the working class. This argument was central to his book

*William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. Describing how Morris’s interest in the decorative arts began as an effort to “reform a philistine age by means of the decorative arts and, as a first step, to reform the arts themselves,” Thompson indicated that by the late 1870s Morris realized that despite his decorative arts reforms he was no closer to rectifying the situation of the producers of his objects.<sup>19</sup> Morris’s growing sense of conflict was a result of his success in the marketplace and the limited audience who could afford his objects.

In what might be considered a foreshadowing of Antonio Gramsci’s concept of the “organic intellectual” capable of identifying with and working on behalf of the oppressed classes, or Stuart Hall’s urging of cultural-studies scholars to combine their theoretical work with activism, Morris made an effort to reconcile the increased production demands of the firm with the condition of the spirit of the producers by setting up production seven miles outside London at Merton Abbey in 1881 (fig. 3). Merton Abbey was a collection of craft workshops surrounded by orchards and the river Wandle, described by *The Queen* in 1894 as “[q]uiet, peaceful, and picturesque, as different as possible from the smoke-laden atmosphere, the whirring and rattling machinery, the heat and noise and hurry commonly associated with manufactories.”<sup>20</sup> Based on Morris’s developing socialist ideals, Merton Abbey emphasized the use of craftsmanship in the processes of production, “the workmen being craftsmen and artists not mere minders of machines.”<sup>21</sup> His workers were still obliged to produce his designs, but “they have the fair wages which socialistic ideas at headquarters should, but do not always ensure.”<sup>22</sup> *The Queen* reported glass painters as earning £5 to £6 a week (approximately £290/year) with the “young lasses, of some fourteen and fifteen summers” earning 16 to 18 shillings a week (approximately £47/year) in the rug room (fig. 4).<sup>23</sup>

In 1884 Morris’s annual income was £1800, a considerable sum, allowing his family to employ six household servants. While he paid his workers at Merton Abbey above-average wages, Morris did not agree to participate in the new concept of profit-sharing. In a letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones, the wife of his friend, Morris justifies not paying each of his 100 workers an additional £16 a year, stating, “Now that would I admit be a very nice thing for them; but it would not alter the position of any one of them, but would leave them still members of the working class.”<sup>24</sup> Just as Morris demonstrated his entrenchment within a class-based society when he decided to cater to the

Figure 4. Tapestry looms at Morris and Co.'s workshops, Merton Abbey (Photo: William Morris Gallery, London).



upper-middle-class market, his inability to reconcile the individual impact of an additional £16 a year on a working-class family with the lack of shift in class position betrayed his romanticized view of the working classes:

I know by my own feelings and desires what these men want, what would have saved them from this lowest depth of savagery: employment which would foster their self-respect and win the praise and sympathy of their fellows. ... There is only one thing that can give them this, and that is art.<sup>25</sup>

The contradictions inherent in Morris's desire for egalitarian aesthetics and production and the reality of his dependence on his privileged position have been described as "an irony not uncommon in the British left."<sup>26</sup> Morris's own social position and his dependence on the markets of capitalism led him to question his ideals. In the late 1870s and early 1880s, as Morris and Co. reached new pinnacles of success, he turned more and more to public lecturing, offering his analysis of the role of work and of art in nineteenth-century industrial society. Marx and Engels were living in London and had contact with working-

class and radical groups. Morris, who read the French version of *Capital* in 1883, knew their work.<sup>27</sup> His version of socialism was more moral than that of Marx, but he dedicated himself to the cause with his characteristic fervour. In eschewing the economic side of Marx's theories due to his concern with the larger social aspects, Morris might be perceived as anticipating the insistence of cultural studies that economics and culture are equally important. In 1883 he joined the Democratic Federation, the only socialist organization in England. The ultimate goal of the organization was social revolution, and its members desired free education, public health improvements and land nationalization. Morris was elected as treasurer in May 1883, contributing many of the organization's funds himself. In 1884 he and his supporters resigned and formed the Socialist League.<sup>28</sup> Morris contributed over 400 articles to the League's paper, *Commonweal*, and was known to walk the streets of London wearing a sandwich board to advertise and sell the paper. In 1886 he was arrested and fined a shilling for addressing a crowd in Bell Street, providing valuable publicity for the Socialist League.<sup>29</sup>

Morris's public politics made no dent in the profits of his business. By the time of his involvement in socialism Morris had hired several managers for his business, and these men successfully kept his politics outside the shop. Morris and Co. managers felt antipathy toward Morris's politics, because socialism simply did not make economic sense. This was particularly the case after Morris's death and into the twentieth century, when "Morris and Co. products, as well as reproductions and derivations from them, have been continuously popular in the absence of any real political or ethical agenda."<sup>30</sup> After his death, William Morris's politics, art and literature became compartmentalized into very separate areas. His art, the Morris "style," was quickly appropriated into markets larger than the commercial, becoming hailed as a British national style. In 1900, just four years after his death, Morris and Co. was the official choice of the British government to decorate parts of the British Pavilion at the Paris Exposition, described by the *Magazine of Art* as "[a] bit of Old England on the banks of the Seine."<sup>31</sup> Morris and Co. went on to win commissions to design a number of royal thrones, including George V's coronation throne in 1910, placing the firm in the centre of the British establishment: an ironic position for a company started by a man who had been arrested by that same establishment.

A 1903 article from *The New York Times* demonstrates how Morris as a concept was by then divorced from Morris the man. Possibly indicating the largely apolitical American interpretations of the Arts and Crafts movement, "Mr. Homebody's Morris Chair" shows how a chair was not seen as a utilitarian object, but rather as a sacred symbol for a middle-class family:

"By George, it is great!" Sighed Mr. Homebody ... as he sank luxuriously into the chair's most hospitable arms. "John, John, what are you doing?" screamed Mrs. Homebody excitedly ... "You mustn't sit in it ... if you ever burn those arms with your nasty cigars I'll never forgive you ... you needn't think you are going to spoil that putting your dirty shoes on it, John Homebody."<sup>32</sup>

While the Morris style was inspiring continued mass consumption and national pride, Morris's intentions toward a design utopia were being diffused.

As a socialist, Morris had believed in a material utopia. Like Morris, Marx and Engels were also interested in the social life of the Middle Ages, emphasizing the importance of the cooperative nature of guild production, but they never romanticized the past.<sup>33</sup> Through socialism, Morris saw it as his role to reawaken the desire for this communal utopia in his own society. When critics assessed Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. as imitating medieval style, Morris responded angrily that they were artists drawing from the Middle Ages. For Morris, the past was a window through which to view the connection between art and work pleasure, with pleasure in production being central. And just as Morris achieved artistic and literary popularity from his romantic medieval themes, similar trends are being experienced today.

Margaret Thatcher and her successors have made profitable use of nostalgia to deflect criticism of everyday life in Britain. The late-twentieth-century large-scale retailing of Morris reproductions through shops, including those run by the National Trust, is no accident.<sup>34</sup> Thatcherism contributed to the view of the individual as centre, with the free market operating as a key for liberty; the purchasing of Morris objects, reinscribed with the narrative of national pride, functions in this capacity.<sup>35</sup> This desire for objects of nationalist association operates through affective items, prescribing a sense of belonging for the subjects who make the purchase. The Morris calendar and chocolate bar *do matter*.

The subject is positioned by different discourses and practices. Marx's conception of consumption in the revolution of modern industry and production is a necessary precondition for the romantic concept of the social individual. By consumption, Marx was not referring to the commodities of the bourgeois but rather to the processes of the power of consumption. Marx saw that only socialism could complete the revolution of modernity that capitalism had initiated. It can be argued that in terms of the process of the powers of consumption, Morris shared this view with Marx. Culture is as material as the world itself, with aesthetics having entered the world of modern production, a leap that was partly initiated by designers such as Morris. The expansion of civil society is a result of the pluralizing of social

life, which expands positionalities and identities available to ordinary people in the industrialized world. Just as the working class Morris visualized as a homogenous unit has proven to be multifaceted, Morris himself has been separated into literary, political and artistic icons, open to multiple representations, rather than existing as a single subject. Thatcherism, playing off these separations, was able to market Morris successfully as a national symbol, devoid of his radical socialism.

Cultural-studies has strongly implicated Thatcherism in the powers of identity in politics. The absence of socialist policies in tourist culture and leisure leads to social class being depicted ideologically. Working classes are absent or romanticized. Walking to the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, now a working-class, slightly dingy suburb, the tourist subject is able to disassociate the present realities from the constructed past once he or she enters the gallery park. "The past is appropriated by capital as a floating signifier, and is used to soften the public image to sell ... an emotional sedative."<sup>36</sup> Nostalgia, the selling tool, is able to combine ironic elements successfully and market this false realism to the positioned subject of the tourist. Mass-produced Morris items, many in direct contradiction to his notions of taste, made in countries where workers are indeed slaves to the machine, are purchased without question as representations of British or Commonwealth pride. The heritagized Morris is a victim of the colonization of his own history via global tourist markets and the very petit-bourgeois cultural capital he himself succeeded in capturing.

The tourist gaze has been analysed employing a Foucauldian approach, with tour companies disciplining the gaze of the tourist by means of a discourse about the historic and geographic places to be visited in order to guarantee essentialist pleasures.<sup>37</sup> There is a social class structure with available gazes; different social groups have access to different classificatory systems, based on different cultural capitals, circulating in different cultural economies.<sup>38</sup> That only a certain segment of the Western population knows of William Morris is a reflection of their ties to economics, politics and nationalism. The aesthetics of high culture have always defined themselves against the popular, and this is true in the case of William Morris, whose ideals and finished products were affordable only to those operating within the framework of high culture, while the products he despised, ill-made and mass-produced, were successful within popular culture. Morris's disappointment with his inability to reconcile his vision of quality art objects and universal accessibility may be examined through Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony.

Morris operated before Gramsci, unaware of the ultimate incapacity of socialism to succeed in its ideals. Morris believed in "The narrative of an evolutionary, natural, predestined trajec-

tory of history within which one form of society (capitalism) would necessarily, without significant superstructural and ideological intervention, change into another form of society (socialism)."<sup>39</sup> Gramsci, aware that this concept had run its course, focused on the production of a new narrative. He realized that power and authority were still retained by the state and capitalism, and conceptualized hegemony and civil society. Hegemony helps in understanding the preservation of the status quo through civil society, with its institutions that contribute to the everyday production of meaning and values. These models are invaluable in rationalizing the contradictions provided by Morris in his multiple roles of businessman and socialist.

Morris's insistence that art in culture is related to a way of life is now generally accepted. However, it must be remembered that this concept was a product of the intellectual history of the nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup> Morris concluded that the commercial habits of the middle class were able to destroy even those things that many individuals within the class valued. Asking himself if the middle class could regenerate itself, Morris had to admit that the answer was "no." He stated that the middle class would not change industrialism's consequences but would only try to avoid them in one of two ways, either energetically entering into commercialism to try to escape the consequences or viewing themselves as a minority culture, unable to prevent further damage.<sup>41</sup> Morris's vision of middle-class escapism is closely aligned with Gramsci's notion of hegemony.

With our contemporary eye, it is hard not to view Morris's position as contradictory, knowing that while he was making these sweeping declarations he was still earning his £1800 per year. Historical reminiscences such as those of one of Morris's servants at Kelmscott House, who recalls as a girl of twelve having to stay up until two in the morning to tend the fire while Morris and his friends discussed socialism, are problematic.<sup>42</sup> It is possible to overcome these obstacles by understanding how Gramsci's concepts operate at different levels of abstraction, with Gramsci ultimately showing the "self" as not unified, but as a contradictory subject and social construction. Morris's conceptual limitation was that he was not theorizing at this abstract level, using Marxism instead for moral ends, with himself being constructed as a multiple subject.

The ultimate contradiction in terms of the production of William Morris was and remains the fact that all the final products of his artistic ideals, for example wallpaper and printed fabrics, were made for sale, being consumed by a middle-class market that was and is one of the spaces in which civil society operates. With our modern view of material objects embodying possible subjecthoods, these objects contribute to shifting hegemonic discourses. Despite our understanding of the contradictory nature of much of William Morris's production, the



objects based on William Morris designs continue to draw us to them through their nostalgic, emotive links.

#### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Peter Cormack and Joan Acland for their support in the preparation of this article.

#### Notes

- 1 See, for example, Charles Harvey and Jon Press, *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian Britain* (Manchester, 1991); Nicholas Salmon, "The Political Activist," in *William Morris*, ed. Linda Parry (New York, 1996), 58–71; and E. P. Thompson, *William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary* (London, 1955).
- 2 Peter Cormack, Deputy Keeper, William Morris Gallery. Interview via e-mail, 24 January 2000.
- 3 Salmon, "The Political Activist," 58.
- 4 Raymond Williams, "Art and Society," *Culture and Society* (London, 1958, 1982, 1993), 130–60.
- 5 Bernard Denvir, *The Late Victorians: Art, Design and Society 1852–1910* (London, 1986), 16.
- 6 Charles Harvey and Jon Press, *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian Britain* (Manchester, 1991), 40.
- 7 Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London 1994), xv.
- 8 John Ruskin, "The Two Paths" (1859), *The Works of John Ruskin*, vol. XVI, eds. I. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1978), 319.
- 9 Harvey and Press, *William Morris*, indicate that by the third quarter of the nineteenth century wages and salaries were rising and prices were falling due to mass production, and as a result living standards were raised. Between 1874 and 1896 prices in Britain fell by approximately 40%.
- 10 Stephen Bayley, *Commerce and Culture: From Pre-Industrial Art to Post-Industrial Value* (London, 1989), 47.
- 11 Harvey and Press, *William Morris*, 95.
- 12 William Morris, "Art and the People: A Socialist's Protest Against Capitalist Brutality; Addressed to the Working Classes," (1883) *Art and Society: Lectures and Essays by William Morris*, ed. Gary Zabel (Boston, 1993), 43–62, esp. 58.
- 13 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," (1934) *Commerce and Culture*, ed. Stephen Bayley (London, 1989), 35.
- 14 Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 36.
- 15 C.R. Ashbee, "Man and the Machine: The Pre-Raphaelites and their Influence Upon Life," *The House Beautiful*, XXVII, 4 (March 1910), 102.
- 16 Ashbee, "Man and the Machine," 46.
- 17 Harvey and Press, *William Morris*, 104.
- 18 William Morris, "The Aims of Art," (1886) *Art and Society: Lectures and Essays by William Morris*, ed. Gary Zabel (Boston, 1993), 113–126, esp. 118. Raymond Williams argued that "Morris wanted the end of the capitalist system, and the institution of socialism so that men could decide for themselves how their work should be arranged, and where machinery was appropriate." Williams, "Art and Society," 155.
- 19 E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London, 1955), 126.
- 20 "Art-Craftsmen at Merton," *The Queen, The Lady's Newspaper*, XCVI (17 November 1894), 857.
- 21 "Art-Craftsmen," *The Queen*, 857. The 1894 prices of goods created at Merton Abbey reflected the expense of handcraftsmanship, with small tapestry panels of four feet by five feet priced at £70 to £80.
- 22 "Art-Craftsmen," *The Queen*, 857.
- 23 "Art-Craftsmen," *The Queen*, 857. The salary of a Daily governess averaged £100/year, and a Cottage Nurse averaged £50–60/year according to the Saturday, 1 March 1890 *Queen*. The 19 December 1891 *Queen* reported that twelve hours of childcare cost 2 pennies. One shilling was equivalent to 12 pennies, and 20 shillings or 240 pennies made up 1 pound. C. R. Chapman, *How Heavy, How Much and How Long? Weights, Money and Other Measures Used by our Ancestors* (Dunsley, 1995), 73.
- 24 Harvey and Press, *William Morris*, 172.
- 25 G. W. James, "William Morris the Man," *The Craftsman*, VII, 4 (January 1905), 418.
- 26 Christine Sypnowich, "How to Live the Good Life: William Morris's Aesthetic Conception of Equality," *Queen's Quarterly*, 107, 3 (Fall 2000), 394.
- 27 Harvey and Press, *William Morris*, 154.
- 28 Salmon, "The Political Activist," 60.
- 29 Salmon, "The Political Activist," 64.
- 30 Paul Greenhalgh, "Morris after Morris," *William Morris*, ed. Linda Parry (New York, 1996), 364.
- 31 Clive Wainwright, "Morris in Context," *William Morris*, ed. Linda Parry (New York, 1996), 362.
- 32 Alan Ricketts, "Mr. Homebody's Morris Chair," *The New York Times*, 17 May 1903, 10.
- 33 Chris Waters, "Marxism, Medievalism and Popular Culture," *History and Community: Essays in Victorian Medievalism*, ed. F.S. Boos (New York, 1992), 142.
- 34 The retailing of mass-produced Morris objects popularized during Thatcher's time is doubly ironic, as Fiona MacCarthy summarizes, "We can also feel confident that he [Morris] would have looked on the Thatcher years in the Britain of the last two decades as amongst the worst he could imagine in terms of human destructiveness and capitalist greed." Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London, 1994), xix.
- 35 Stuart Hall and David Held, "Citizens and Citizenship," *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*, eds Stuart Hall and M. Jacques (London, 1989), 173–88.
- 36 David Harris, *From Class Struggle to the Politics of Pleasure: The Effects of Gramscianism on Cultural Studies* (London and New York, 1992) 158.

- 37 Harris, *From Class Struggle*, 159.
- 38 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, 1984), 12.
- 39 Renate Holub, *Antonio Gramsci: Beyond Marxism and Post-Modernism* (London and New York, 1992), 5.
- 40 Williams, "Art and Society," 130.
- 41 Williams, "Art and Society," 152.
- 42 Lionel Lambourne, *Utopian Craftsmen: The Arts and Crafts Movement from the Cotswolds to Chicago* (New York, 1980), 22.