May Morris and the Making of Art, *c.* 1880 – 1938

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the History of Art Degree Committee.

Abstract

This thesis presents a new, critical study of the career and work of May Morris (1862-1938), an artist, writer, lecturer and leading figure of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Interest in Morris has grown in recent years, principally through the major exhibition *May Morris: Art & Life* (2017) and the accompanying publication *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer* (2017), which positioned the artist as an expert embroiderer and accomplished designer. Expanding on this scholarship, this study seeks to understand what the making of art meant for Morris and provides new information on and critical interpretation of her textiles, designs, making practices and writings. Textiles, above all embroidery, were the artist's primary media, and this project focuses on her complex and persistent engagement with textile production. Concerned with questions of making and materiality, it adopts an innovative thematic structure that mirrors the layers of an embroidery – stitch, design and ground – through which the breadth and complexities of the artist's practices and priorities as a designer, maker, lecturer and writer are explored.

The first chapter provides an overview of Morris's career, which is examined through her principal contexts, spheres of activity and areas of enterprise. The following chapter addresses stitching as a form of artmaking that is expressive of the maker's creative agency and reveals how Morris and her peers understood needlework within narratives of art's prehistoric origins and its contemporary forms at the end of the nineteenth century. Chapter three focuses on the artist's ambition and stylistic eclecticism in her design practice, and demonstrates the ways in which imagination and enlivenment were central to her designs as well as her interpretation of historical sources of ornament. Comparison is undertaken between the artist and her contemporary makers, scholars, curators and archaeologists, situating her thought within larger art historical debates. The final chapter, on ground, assesses the ways in which Morris kept pace with the revival of handweaving in the twentieth century, and her role within a culture of ethnographic research concerned with forms of spinning, dyeing and weaving by hand in the Outer Hebrides. Collectively, these chapters demonstrate that, for Morris, the making of art was multivalent and entangled in a syncretic mesh in which meanings were activated by and mobilised different conceptions of the ancient, modern, global and local, and which were variously changeable, competing and co-existent.

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This thesis is dedicated to Jacqueline Spiller

Introduction

This thesis presents a critical study of the career and work of May Morris (1862-1938, fig. 0.1). An artist, writer and lecturer, Morris is best known today as a celebrated embroiderer and influential arbiter of the legacy of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Born into a prominent family among British avant-garde artistic circles, her career began in the early 1880s as she lectured and wrote on historical textiles, taught embroidery and worked for her family's prosperous interior decorating firm, Morris & Co. In the decades that followed, Morris was at the heart of the Arts and Crafts Movement as it reached its height in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century. She exhibited regularly at international exhibitions of arts and crafts, participated in influential artistic forums and organisations, worked with leading art schools, and, throughout her varied artistic and intellectual pursuits, articulated the multiple values that she ascribed to artmaking.

Throughout the twentieth century, Morris was broadly neglected within histories of nineteenth- and twentieth-century British art. Two studies of the artist arose in the late-1980s, with the publication of Jan Marsh's *Jane and May Morris: A Biographical Story* (1986) and the exhibition *May Morris, 1862–1938*, held at the William Morris Gallery (hereafter WMG) in 1989.[1] This limelight was short-lived. However, in more recent years, interest in Morris has grown considerably. In 2016, the WMG convened a conference on new perspectives on the artist's life and art; its proceedings were published in 2017.[2] That same year, the WMG staged the landmark exhibition *May Morris: Art & Life*, which later toured to the Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh, in 2019. To accompany this exhibition, a catalogue, *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer* (2017), was published by Thames & Hudson in conjunction with the Victoria and Albert Museum (hereafter V&A); a revised second edition was issued in 2022.[3] The published conference proceedings and exhibition catalogue provided a wealth of new research on Morris to which this thesis is indebted. But, while these publications constitute the first flowering of serious scholarship on Morris's life and art, there remains much of her career and work that is yet to be explored and critically assessed.

This thesis opens up that uncharted territory. Expanding beyond pre-existing assessments of Morris as an Arts and Crafts designer and expert needleworker, it explores the breadth and complexities of her practices and priorities as a designer, maker, lecturer and writer. It offers new information on and critical interpretation of Morris's textiles, designs, making practices and writings. These are analysed alongside unpublished, under-explored and newly discovered primary resources

[1] Jan Marsh, *Jane and May Morris: A Biographical Story, 1839-1938* (London and New York: Pandora Press, 1986) and Helen Sloan, *May Morris, 1862–1938* (London: William Morris Gallery, 1989).
[2] Lynn Hulse, ed., *May Morris: Art & Life: New Perspectives* (London: Friends of the William Morris Society, 2017).
[3] Anna Mason, et al., *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum / Thames & Hudson, 2017).

and within a range of contexts that are more varied in disciplinary and geographical scope than those considered in previous accounts. These new analyses of Morris's art and artmaking, as well as her artistic, intellectual and institutional contexts, redefine how the artist has been understood in existing literature. Taking view of this prominent, influential and prodigious artist, lecturer and writer at the centre of a leading cultural movement in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain, this study seeks to uncover what the making of art meant for Morris. In doing so, it foregrounds her work, ideas and endeavours, amplifies the contexts, institutions and settings of her world, and reveals a complex portrait of a multifaceted figure who was variously talented, flawed, ambitious, curious, productive, contradictory and principled.

Making here is understood as the conceptual, material and technical processes involved in an object's realisation.[4] But this thesis is also concerned with the shifting production values and cultural meanings that Morris ascribed to different forms of art making practised past and present. The central argument made in this thesis is that, for Morris, the making of art was multivalent and its most profound meanings were activated by and mobilised different conceptions of the ancient, modern, global and local, which were variously changeable, competing and co-existent.

Morris's career was diverse and her output substantial, but this thesis is necessarily limited in its investigative scope. Textiles, above all embroidery, were the artist's primary media, and this study focuses on her complex and persistent engagement with the meanings of making textiles. It examines in detail her drawings, designs and cartoons for textiles, embroidered and woven textiles, textile-making practices of embroidery, dyeing, spinning and weaving, and writings on historical and contemporary textiles and their methods of production. Not included, however, is an examination of the artist's jewellery and its making nor her writings on the life and work of her father, William Morris (1834-1896). The former is a topic for future research while the latter has been the subject of recent attention.[5] Moreover, an assessment of Morris's socialism vis-à-vis art making is not developed here. While Morris was an active socialist in the 1880s, her political commitments waned as her career progressed. More fundamentally, unlike her father, socialism was not a driving thrust behind her artistic and intellectual practices.

The methodology adopted to pursue Morris's complex and sustained engagement with the making, meaning and interpretation of textiles comprises multiple strands. The first is close visual and material analysis of her work, which considers together the decorative composition, making and materiality of her drawings, designs, cartoons, watercolours and textiles. In tandem with this, careful study is undertaken of Morris's extensive archive and primary sources: unpublished letters, notebooks, diaries, ledgers, lecture transcripts, lecture slides, photographs and personal ephemera;

[4] The use of realisation is informed by Edward S. Cooke, Jr.'s definition of the term, which links together 'conceptualization or composition, fabrication, decoration, and performance.' Edward S. Cooke, Jr., *Global Objects: Toward a Connected Art History* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2022), p. 54.
[5] Judia Dudkiewicz, 'Memorialising her father's legacy: May Morris as curator and gatekeeper of William Morris's estate and the role of Kelmscott' in Hulse, *May Morris: Art & Life,* 2017, pp. 209-235.

published articles, essays, books and catalogues; and the artist's tools and art collection. Thinking through materiality and processes of making is vital to the approach of this research. As the thesis will demonstrate, Morris was profoundly invested in matters of artmaking throughout her life. Moreover, the Arts and Crafts Movement was, fundamentally, about changing how and why art was made. However, within the secondary literature there has been a tendency to overlook the materiality and making of artworks associated with the Movement in preference for teleological interpretations based on Arts and Crafts principles. To break from this, the research is organised in a structure that mirrors conceptually the discrete material layers of an embroidery: stitch, design and ground. Each layer is afforded a chapter, and functions as a thematic site of interaction between associated materials, tools, processes, artistic conventions, production values and cultural contexts. In starting with stitch, this conceit follows intentionally the reverse of an embroidery's material composition. However, in this orientation, the thesis proceeds from a territory most associated with Morris and familiar to historians of embroidery. As the chapters unfold and we look and think beyond an embroidered textile's surface decoration, new insights into Morris's career and work emerge.

These thematic chapters begin with an explication of each fabrication process before broadening out to consider how these processes were imbricated within larger cultural discourses in, for example, archaeology, the origins of art and the histories of ornament and ethnography. In this way, the thesis offers a fresh and nuanced approach to understanding figures of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Rather than appraising the extent to which Morris succeeded or failed as a quintessential Arts and Crafts practitioner, this research considers the rich and complex crosscurrents of Morris's artistic and intellectual worlds in and beyond the Arts and Crafts canon. In doing so, it traverses the conceptual parameters charted in existing accounts of the Arts and Crafts and demonstrates the dialogic relationships between coeval artistic, cultural, geographical and political spheres: Arts and Crafts, Art Needlework, modernism, craft revival, empire, trade and labour.

Additionally, the thematic approach helps to redress an issue particular to Morris within Arts and Crafts scholarship. From museum labels, through lectures to published catalogues and surveys, Morris is routinely introduced as William's daughter in the first instance and defined in relation to his life, work and legacy. A corollary to this is a biographical framing of Morris's career, pinned to the periods prior to and after William's death.[6] Such an approach limits a deeper understanding of the interests, influences, activities and contributions specific to Morris and replicates an outdated mode of historical enquiry that examines women artists against their male family members and partners. While acknowledging Morris's high estimation of her father and the significance of the projects she directed to champion his cultural legacy, this thesis consciously suspends a reliance on reading Morris against or alongside her father. Where comparisons between her and other figures are drawn, these establish

[6] Throughout this thesis, 'Morris' refers May Morris. The remaining members of the Morris family – William, Jane and Jenny – will be mentioned by first name, except in instances when full names are required for the sake of clarity.

new dialogues between the artist and her contemporary, mostly female, makers, writers, historians and collectors. These communions reveal the varied interlocutors of Morris's world and broaden our understanding of her position within the histories of art, craft and design in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. This thesis thus resists labelling Morris as an 'Arts and Crafts' designer or embroiderer and limiting an analysis of her career and work within the conventionally drawn remit of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Nonetheless, the historical context of that Movement and its scholarly reception are indispensable in any assessment of the artist, and these are not ignored in this study. Therefore, it is necessary to set out the definition of the Arts and Crafts Movement as it is used here.

As many scholars have noted, achieving clarification of what this term means is challenging.[7] It was an international movement, which took place between the 1860s and 1930s. During this period, it had different phases.[8] From its early beginnings in the 1860s and 1870s, it emerged in the 1880s in a more self-conscious and recognisable form. It reached its height around 1900, and this lasted until around the First World War. Thereafter, it changed considerably, but many of the methods and ideas advanced by the Movement's adherents in the late-nineteenth century still carried strong currency into the 1930s. Under the banner of the Arts and Crafts Movement, individuals, associated groups and organisations sought to change how and why art was made. The how and why encompass different stresses of emphases on labour, design quality, materials, revival of historical production methods, hand-processes, craft knowledge, object use and ways of integrating art into everyday life. These were variously practised to a range of degrees and successes. Similarly, several artistic, social and moral factors catalysed these concerns with artmaking: design reform; industrialisation; mechanisation; changes to the landscape; shifting politics; decline in rural arts; and cultural anxiety allied to modernity. The use of the term the Arts and Crafts Movement here is not intended to bind people, objects and ideas, but to refer to the period between the 1860s and 1930s and broad and flexible avant-garde artistic temperament that flourished within it.

[7] Annette Carruthers, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Scotland: A History* (London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 16; Annette Carruthers and Mary Greensted, eds, *Simplicity and Splendour: Arts and Crafts Living: Objects from the Cheltenham Collections* (Cheltenham: Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, 1999), pp. 28-33; Imogen Hart, *Arts & Crafts Objects* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 3-11; Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Phaidon, 2005), pp. 8-9.

[8] For a more detailed pictured of these different phases, see Alan Crawford, 'United Kingdom: Origins and First Flowering', in Wendy Kaplan, ed., *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Europe and America: Design for the Modern World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), pp. 20-67 especially pp. 23-66.

Literature Review

May Morris

Morris is frequently mentioned and cited in accounts of the Arts and Crafts Movement, but these instances are brief, repetitive and rarely supported by critical discussion of the artist or her work. Rather, she appears in supporting roles, often as a spokesperson for something or someone else. In part, this derives from the significance of the twenty-four volumes of *The Collected Works of William Morris*, which she edited and wrote the introductions for between 1910–1915, and the two volumes of *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*, which she published in 1936.[9] These provide extensive, first-hand commentary on William's life and work, and have since been used inordinately by scholars of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Morris is a prominent cast member in Zoe Thomas's recent *Women Art Workers and The Arts and Crafts Movement*.[10] However, Thomas's book is a social and cultural history of women's participation in the movement, and sustained art historical analyses of objects and making practices are beyond its scope. While Thomas discusses Morris's role in leading the Women's Guild of Arts, her involvement in the 1916 Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibition and her views on suffrage, the treatment of Morris is nonetheless underdeveloped.

Scholarship which directly focusses on Morris first emerged in the late 1980s, with Marsh's *Jane and May Morris: A Biographical Story, 1839–1938* (1986) and Sloan's catalogue that accompanied the exhibition *May Morris, 1862–1938* (1989).[11] Marsh's biographical account narrates the births, upbringings, marriages, affairs, art practices, careers, politics, retirements and deaths of Morris and her mother, Jane Morris (1839-1914). These narratives bring Marsh to the conclusion that Morris was a leading figure of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which Sloan's catalogue affirms. Sloan orientates the artist's career around 1885, the year in which she was appointed manager of the embroidery department of Morris & Co. at the age of twenty-three. This appointment at such a young age is a moment that subsequent scholars have highlighted time and again to demonstrate Morris's exceptionality. However, this repetition fails to expand assessments of her career beyond her role in Morris & Co. It also insulates from critique the implications inherent in the way we define Morris's career within her family's business and around her father's death in 1896, when she ceased her managerial role within the company. Marsh does note that Morris's career continued into the 1920s and 1930s, but she does not analyse here her activities in those later decades in her nonetheless groundbreaking publication.

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[9] William Morris, *The Collected Works of William Morris, With Introductions by his Daughter May Morris*, Vols. I - XXIV (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910-1915) and May Morris, *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*, 2 Vols., (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936).

[10] Zoë Thomas, *Women Art Workers of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

[11] Marsh, *Jane and May Morris,* 1986 and Sloan, *May Morris, 1862–1938*, 1989.

Marsh's 1989 book remains the only biography of Morris and, while it brings narrative detail to the writing of her life, it views her engagement with making textiles from a set of troubling premises. Marsh argues that Morris's decision to pursue a career in embroidery derived from a combination of possible factors: conventions around the suitability of the art form for women; being discouraged by female family acquaintances who had failed to sustain artistic careers as painters; a need to tackle an inferiority complex and prove herself over her elder sister; and a fear of exceeding her father's artistic abilities.[12] Further, there is an underlying bias towards the fine arts, painting in particular, in Marsh's book, which extends to her study *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement* (1989), co-authored with Pamela Gerrish Nunn. Marsh and Gerrish Nunn explicitly disqualify Morris from the scope of this study, which is limited to artists whose work is two-dimensional and pictorial.[13] This ignores the role of drawn and painted designs (which are two-dimensional) within textile production and assumes that textiles such as embroidery cannot be pictorial.

Marsh is, of course, correct that, during the nineteenth century, embroidery was understood as *the* art form for women, constructed as women's work and conceived as essentially feminine. Rozsika Parker demonstrated this in her seminal text *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, first published in 1984, in which she evidenced embroidery's role in the construction of femininity.[14] However, Marsh's reasons for why Morris chose embroidery discount the potential encouragement for the art form that she likely found in the needlewomen within her family and close acquaintances: Jane, Elizabeth Burden (1841-1924), Georgiana Burne-Jones (1840-1920), Catherine Holiday (1839-1924), Mary de Morgan (1850-1907), and sisters Lucy (1839-1910) and Kate Faulkner (1841-1898).[15] Further, Marsh does not account for the obvious roles of Morris's personal choice and her abundant interest in embroidery. Instead, Marsh sets Morris in a competitive environment in which external factors dictate her career choice but in which she still must prove herself whilst not excelling where her father had failed. According to Marsh, as the second child, she was beset with inferiority and competition.[16] This was exacerbated by her older sister Jenny's more advance academic achievements, which cast a perennial shadow over the younger sister.[17] From this sense of inferiority, Marsh argues, came a need for Morris to prove herself through her artistic abilities. The issue with this argument is that the need for the artist to prove herself renders embroidery a means of

[12] Marsh, *Jane and May Morris*, 1986, p. 165.
[13] Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement* (London: Virago Press, 1989), p. 7.
[14] Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019).
[15] Fiona MacCarthy points out that at Red House, Morris's first home, William 'was surrounded by women with artistic aspirations of their own.' Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 163. Elizabeth Burden and Catherine Holiday were paid for their work.
[16] Marsh, *Jane and May Morris*, 1986, p. 100.
[17] Ibid., p. 104.

fulfilling the expectations of others, rather than being a meaningful art form that she chose as an active agent and on her own terms.

Similarly, claims that Morris needed to prove herself through her art recur throughout the scholarship, and these are often sustained by the ways in which she is positioned in relation to her father. A near cult around William has overshadowed those around him, including Morris, as many have noted. Yet the scholarship itself has also served to keep her in that shadow. Claims that Morris has been eclipsed by her father are frequently declared in the opening remarks of accounts of the artist, often reinforcing this problem rather than dismantling it. This subordinate position is maintained further in three broad ways. First, assessments of Morris's style and design process are often established with reference to William's style and the Morris & Co. house style, with insufficient attention given to her own aesthetic position and methods of working. Additionally, studies of Morris's work do not look beyond William for comparison with her contemporaries or successors. Finally, Morris has come to be assigned the gatekeeper of her father's memory, legacy, estate and even his 'shrines'.[18] This positions her into the default service of her father and prevents us from more fully appreciating aspects of her life and work beyond this role. While the relationship between Morris and her father is undoubtedly important, it is necessary to think about her in new contexts and comparisons and redefine the terms with which we assess her work. We do not need William in order to talk about Morris.

Such efforts have been initiated by more recent scholarship. In 2002 Marsh revisited Morris and explored her activities in the 1910s.[19] Here, Marsh examines her style in more depth and signalled the repeated use of text within her designs and embroideries. She also outlines Morris's publications, interest in historical needlework and teaching, topics which Catherine White, Lynn Hulse and Helen Bratt-Wyton developed in their essays in *May Morris: Art & Life* (2017), edited by Hulse.[20] Other essays in this collection consider Morris's socialist politics, her collaboration with Ernest Gimson, personal relationship with Kelmscott Manor, and roles in Morris & Co., the Women's Guild of Arts and in memorialising her father's legacy.[21] Two essays in the collection pushed the study of Morris in

[18] Dudkiewicz, 'Memorialising her father's legacy', in Hulse, *May Morris: Art &* Life, *2017*, pp. 209-235 and Fiona MacCarthy, *Anarchy and Beauty: William Morris and His Legacy, 1860 - 1960* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2014), p. 73.
[19] Jan Marsh, 'May Morris: ubiquitous, invisible Arts and Crafts-woman' in Bridget Elliott and Janice Helland, eds, *Women Artists and the Decorative Arts, 1880 – 1935: The Gender of Ornament* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 35-49.
[20] Catherine White, 'Decorative Needlework: May Morris and her embroiderers', pp. 56-72, Lynn Hulse, 'When needlework was at its very finest: *Opus Anglicanum* and its influence on the work of May Morris', pp. 87-110, and Helen Bratt-Wyton, 'May Morris: Special Teacher of Needlework at Birmingham School of Art, 1899 – 1902', pp. 130-140 in Hulse, *May Morris: Art & Life*, 2017.
[21] Anna Mason, 'May Morris: socialist agitator', pp. 25-41, Hanne Faubry, Hanne and Jenny Lister, '*Apple Tree* to *Vine Leaf*: the Morris & Co. embroidery day book 1892-1896', pp. 73-86, Helen Elletson, 'May Morris, Hammersmith and the Women's Guild of Arts', pp. 141-154, Mary Greensted, 'May Morris and Ernest Gimson: a wartime relationship', pp. 174-190, Kathy Haslam, 'Our beloved Oxfordshire home': May Morris and Kelmscott', pp. 191-208, and Dudkiewicz, 'Memorialising her father's legacy', pp. 209-235 in Hulse, *May Morris: Art & Life*, 2017.

new geographical directions: Annette Carruthers looked at Morris in Orkney, Scotland, and Margaretta S. Frederick explored Morris in the United States of America.[22] Morris also travelled to Italy, Switzerland, France, Egypt, Madeira, Morocco, Mallorca and Iceland, and spent time in remote parts of the British Isles: the Scilly Isles, Dartmoor, West Wales and the Outer Hebrides. While many of these locations remain underexplored, new scholarship on Morris's relationships with Egypt and Iceland has begun to illuminate the significance of these visits.[23] This thesis will trace other locations which sparked new directions in her textile work and changes in how she understood art making.

The WMG's 2017 exhibition *May Morris: Art and Life* was the largest showcase of Morris's work to date. The accompanying catalogue, *May Morris: Arts and Crafts Designer* (2017; 2022), overturned some of the assumptions of Marsh's 1986 biography as the authors foregrounded Morris's natural ability, personal interest and the positive influence of female role models in her choice to pursue a career in needlework.[24] A chapter on embroidery discusses Morris's upbringing to her time as manager of the Morris & Co. embroidery department, as well as her relationships with the department's employees and her roles in its commercial operations. Yet the coverage stops in 1896 when Morris left the department, leaving a clear need to contextualise and complicate accounts her career beyond this date.[25]

Both the exhibition and catalogue placed Morris's work centre stage. They presented, many for the first time, her sketches, watercolours, wallpaper designs, book covers, dress and jewellery. Yet, it was the artist's embroideries that were the main attraction. These vary in scale, from a tiny pair of baby's mittens to towering curtains; in material, featuring silk, linen, wool and cotton; and in function, including hangings, panels, portières, curtains, bed hangings, bedcovers, fire screens, table covers, tablemats, book covers and bags, as well as a three-fold screen, sideboard runner, embroidered frieze and super-frontal for an altar. This exhibition display was a marked change from the character of written scholarship on Morris, in which a focus on objects is lacking. A select few examples of her embroideries are routinely mentioned, but mostly for tokenistic purposes or as evidence of her service to memorialise her father's legacy. Rigorous visual and material analyses of her drawings, designs and textiles are almost entirely absent. Published one year after the exhibition, Caroline Palmer's article on Morris's drawings and ephemera in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, was object-focused in its content, but it did not interrogate the materiality of these works.[26] In light of these priorities and lacunae, it is imperative that new scholarship attend to the materiality and making of the artist's work.

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[22] Annette Carruthers, 'Darning, dyeing and embroidery: May Morris at Melsetter', pp. 111-129 and Margaretta S. Frederick, 'May Morris in America: spreading the Arts and Crafts gospel', pp. 155-173 in Hulse, *May Morris: Art & Life*, 2017.
[23] Emily Lethbridge, 'May Morris: Íslandsvinur ("Friend of Iceland")', William Morris Society online lecture, 14 June 2022, and Thomas Cooper, 'May Morris, Egypt and Coptic Textiles', *Art History* (forthcoming 2024-2025).
[24] Mason, *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer*, 2017, p. 58.
[25] Ibid., p. 61.
[26] Caroline Palmer, 'Picking up the Thread: exploring the Designs of May Morris in the Ashmolean Museum', *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society*, Vol. 42 (2018), pp. 123-141.

The Arts and Crafts Movement

The literature on Morris is a subcategory of a larger field of scholarship on the Arts and Crafts Movement. This was established between the early 1970s and late 1990s through the work of Annette Carruthers, Margot Coatts, Alan Crawford, Peter Davey, Mary Greensted, Tanya Harrod, Gillian Naylor, Linda Parry and Peter Stansky.[27] Their work examined the Arts and Crafts in Britain and its key ideas, figures, workshops and societies. In the early twenty-first century, a second flowering of scholarship emerged. Rosalind P. Blakesley, Wendy Kaplan, Karen Livingstone and Linda Parry demonstrated the transnational spread of the Arts and Crafts across Northern and Eastern Europe, the United States of America and Japan, as well as how discrete iterations of the Arts and Crafts became manifest in these international locations.[28] More recent scholarship has sharpened the field's critical focus. Glenn Adamson, Tom Crook, Julia Griffin, Imogen Hart, Andrzej Szczcerski and Zoë Thomas have examined questions around craft, modernity, nationalism, canonicity and gender within the Arts and Crafts.[29]

There are four aspects to this historiography that are particularly relevant to the scope and aims of this thesis. First, the routine articulation of Arts and Crafts principles and their use by scholars as a framework for interpretation. Introductions to the Movement commonly assert the complexities in alighting on its definition. How to explain coherently a movement that lasted for more than sixty years, had an international spread, encompassed an eclectic range of artistic practices, organisations, political commitments and religious underpinnings, and produced works in many different media that ranged widely in styles, from austere simplicity to dazzlingly splendour? In response to this, a common line is to claim that the Movement's developments and adherents were united through shared commitments to Arts and Crafts principles. Summarily, these are: bringing together the designer and

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[27] Carruthers and Greensted, *Simplicity or Splendour*, 1999; Margot Coatts, ed., *Pioneers of Modern Craft: Twelve Essays Profiling Key Figures in The History of Twentieth Century Craft* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Alan Crawford, ed., *By Hammer and Hand: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham* (Birmingham: Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, 1984); Alan Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer & Romantic Socialist* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985); Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture* (London: Phaidon: 1995); Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1999); Gillian Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of its Sources, Ideals and Influences on Design Theory* (London: Trefoil Press, 1990); Linda Parry, ed., *William Morris: Art & Kelmscott* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1996); Linda Parry, ed., *William Morris* (London: Philip Wilson in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996) and Peter Stansky, *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s and the Arts and Crafts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[28] Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 2005; Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and America*, 2004; Karen Livingstone and Linda Parry, eds, *International Arts and Crafts* (London: V&A Publications, 2005) and Monica Penick and Christopher Long, eds, *The Rise of Everyday Design: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain and America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019).

[29] Glenn Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft* (Oxford: Berg, 2007); Glenn Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Tom Crook, 'Craft and the Dialogics of Modernity: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Late-Victorian and Edwardian England', *Journal of Modern Craft*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (March 2009), pp. 17-32; Julia Griffin and Andrzej Szczerski, eds, *Young Poland: The Arts and Crafts Movement, 1880-1918* (London: Lund Humphries, 2020); Hart, *Arts and Crafts Objects*, 2010; Imogen Hart and Jason Edwards, eds, *Rethinking the Interior, c. 1867-1896: Aestheticism and Arts and Crafts* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) and Thomas, *Women Art Workers of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, 2020.

the maker in artistic production; advancing honesty of workmanship and truth to materials; promoting vernacular artistic styles and products; fostering equality between different forms of art; uniting those forms to create a total work of art, or *Gestamtkunstwerk*; reviving historical models of communal production, such as medieval craft guilds; and embedding artmaking into everyday life. As some scholars have pointed out, these ideas were, in many ways, idealistic, nostalgic and practically incompatible.[30] Moreover, Arts and Crafts practitioners were variable, and at times contradictory, in their convictions and commitments to ways of working and living that espoused them. Nonetheless, these principles remain an energising force within both scholarly discourse and the popular reception of the Arts and Crafts. One reason for this is because they are attractive: the Movement appeals as an episode in the history of art in which art making was seen to be honest, ennobled, meaningful and beneficial to both the individual and the collective. Relatedly, these qualities are anathema to the conditions of neoliberal, capitalist systems of making in the late-twentieth and early-twenty first centuries, and thus offer models of inspiration to contemporary calls to reform how and why we make things today.

However, setting out these assembled Arts and Crafts principles within secondary accounts should be recognised a construct, which must be treated with caution. As Imogen Hart has shown, interpretation of Arts and Crafts objects based on these principles leads away from visual, material and cultural analyses grounded in the specific making, materiality, use and display of those objects and towards a reading that supports teleological conclusions that place, and confine, their production as tangible expressions of those principles.[31] What results is a repetitive cycle of interpretation that limits the scope and development of the scholarly field. For instance, deterministic readings of Arts and Crafts objects as representations of Arts and Crafts principles ignores potential enquiries into their many inter-connections with contemporary themes and contexts, such as the histories of music, ethnography, race and empire, to name but a few. This framework also maintains a criterion for who is or is not included in historical studies of the Arts and Crafts, based on whether they subscribed to the outlined principles.[32] In this thesis, the analyses undertaken of Morris's work and practices resist using these principles as a lodestar, instead attending to their specific material qualities, intellectual dimensions and cultural contexts. In doing so, it not only articulates new understandings of the particulars of Morris's career and output, but also broadens the scope of Arts and Crafts studies.

A second important historiographical matter concerns the state of criticality within Arts and Crafts scholarship. While broad perceptions of the Arts and Crafts remain overwhelmingly celebratory

[30] Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture*, 1995, pp. 7-13; Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 2005, pp. 8-9; Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 2013, pp. 184-213 and Penick and Long, *The Rise of Everyday Design*, 2018, p. 4.
[31] Hart, *Arts and Crafts Objects*, 2010, pp. 4-11.
[32] An example of this appears in the introduction to Carruthers's *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Scotland*, 2013. In this book, Carruthers considers at length only 'those architects and designers who appear to have been truly interested in craft practice, the expression of the nature of materials and the design of work with a sense of place – the spirit of the Movement rather than merely the style of the day.' (p. xviii)

and uncontested, there has been a limited yet important strain that provides critical interrogations of the Movement. In his erudite and measured studies, Alan Crawford reminds us that the Arts and Crafts was a movement that was fundamentally tied to gentry values (despite its frequent socialist ambitions), tentative and anxious as it negotiated modernity, and had many endings.[33] In the preface to the 1990 reprint of her 1970 foundational text, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of its Sources, Ideals and Influences on Design Theory*, Gillian Naylor reflected that Arts and Crafts commentators had tended, like herself, 'to accept Arts and Crafts evaluations, and to ignore wider analysis.'[34] Following this, Naylor raised the reality of a co-dependency between craft and industry in the nineteenth century, which Arts and Crafts protagonists and their subsequent critics did not fully embrace. It was not until 2013 that this relationship between craft and industry in the context of the Arts and Crafts was critically interrogated by Glenn Adamson in *The Invention of Craft*. In this text, Adamson enlists David Pye's *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (1978) to unpick the flawed legacies of handwork and the status of the artisan as established by John Ruskin (1819-1900) and William Morris.[35] *The Invention of Craft* is among the boldest critiques of the Arts and Crafts, and argues that craft, as it was theorised within the Movement's discourse, was a means of deflection, disguise and coming to terms with fracturing, loss and trauma.[36]

Alongside Adamson, Imogen Hart's work recalibrates conceptual paradigms that have been entrenched within the field. In *Arts and Crafts Objects* (2010), she questions the meaning, use and efficacy of the term 'Arts and Crafts' and unravels the ways in which Arts and Crafts objects have routinely been understood in light of Arts and Crafts principles.[37] In *Rethinking the Interior, c. 1867-1896: Aestheticism and Arts and Crafts* (2010), Hart has also, along with Jason Edwards, broadened the geographical scope of Arts and Crafts studies as well as the range of historical references and protagonists conventionally included within secondary accounts.[38] Additionally, Tom Crook probes the kind of modernity that the Arts and Crafts Movement embodied, suggesting one that was entangled in multiple unresolved dialogues between past, present and future, Europe and the rest of the world, and the assertion of modern and anti-modern processes.[39] However, more recent scholarship has demonstrated that Naylor's observation of the tendency of commentators to ignore wider analysis still rings true. Critical voices are almost entirely absent in major surveys published since the late 2010s: *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer* (2017), *Ernest Gimson: Arts and Crafts Designer & Architect* (2019), *Young Poland: The Polish Arts and Crafts Movement, 1890-1918* (2020), *Arts & Crafts Churches* (2020) and *William Morris* (2021).

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[33] Crawford, 'United Kingdom: Origins and First Flowering' in Kaplan, *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Europe & America*, 2004, pp. 65-66.
[34] Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 1991, p. 6.
[35] Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 2013, pp. 192-96.
[36] Ibid., pp. 181-98.
[37] Hart, *Arts and Crafts Objects*, 2010, pp. 3-11.
[38] Hart and Edwards, *Rethinking the Interior,* 2010.
[39] Crook, 'Craft and the Dialogics of Modernity', 2009, pp. 17-32

This thesis builds on the tradition of the earlier analytical positions and redresses the dearth of criticality in more recent scholarship. For example, it explores some of the global entanglements of the Arts and Crafts; takes aim at the ideal of the designer/maker; and considers Morris's successes and failings as she both championed and othered her contemporary makers. This research also draws from the close attention that critical perspectives have afforded to key concepts. Take, for instance, the term craft. Informed by both Pye and Adamson, the position adopted in this research is that craft is a form of artmaking in which a skilled maker manufactures a product through tacit manipulation of materials, tools and machines by practised degrees of certainty and risk within the limitations of a given medium. Craft is a process in which the head, hand and tool work together. It does not have to do with the division of labour, finish, pictorialism, abstraction, copying or working from a design produced by someone else. However, craft can be understood not only as a method but also as a category under which artistic media are classified. Under this rubric of craft as a noun fall forms of art making that are commonly practised on a small (studio or workshop) scale, executed for the most part by hand, demonstrative of tacitly accumulated practical skill and associated with heritage traditions. Weaving on a handloom is a good example of an art form assigned to the crafts. Following usage within the primary sources, weaving is sometimes called a craft in this thesis, particularly in chapter four. Yet, throughout most of this thesis the term craft is avoided, unless it is used to refer to a method. Scholars' increasingly frequent application of the term to Arts and Crafts embroidery is ahistorical. Morris and her contemporaries understood embroidery as an art; they saw craft as a method of working that was an element of embroidery, but not its sum.

In pushing for definitions of handicraft and handmade, Pye finds that very few things can be made without a tool (baskets and coiled pottery are his exceptions) and thus truly produced by hand.[40] For Pye, handicraft and handmade are not technical terms but historical and social ones.[41] This is true for the Arts and Crafts Movement, in which these terms were profoundly ideologically charged. Few Arts and Crafts protagonists sought to define rigorously what these concepts meant, Morris among them. Rather, they implied in an understanding of handmade a fair degree of craft (process), sensibility to materials, acknowledgement of tradition and exhibition of the maker's intentionality. In this thesis, handmade is used to refer to forms of textile making in which the hands (and sometimes feet) are the principal and necessary guides to the chosen process: plying a threaded needle in embroidery; holding, drafting and twisting fibre at a spinning wheel; threading bobbins, throwing the shuttle and walking the treads in weaving; and lifting, beating, turning and rinsing cloth on a fulling board. Machine-made is used to denote cases where these forms of making are mechanised but not necessarily industrialised. Mechanisation and industrialisation are conceived as processes, which concern, respectively, the nature and scale of production. Mechanisation is the reduction of the

[40] David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 9.
[41] Ibid., p. 10.

maker's manual control (decreasing risk) and increased automation of a tool or machine (raising certainty). Industrialisation is the scaling up of production, which often employs mechanised processes to multiply output, diminish production time, achieve product consistency and raise profits.

Such precise distinctions had little purchase on Morris, who did see craft production as something distinct from industrialised processes of manufacture. But, like many of her Arts and Crafts peers, she was not against mechanised processes in the production of art. As shown in chapter four, machine-made and handmade forms of textile making could be harmoniously cooperative. What mattered to Morris was the quality of a product's finish, be it a stitched embroidered surface, tooled leather binding or stained-glass window. Ideally, these needed to be made through craft because that way they were produced with knowledge and intention, in ways that valued the inherent properties of the materials, expressed individuality and facilitated a dignified model of artmaking.

The third historiographical matter of Arts and Crafts scholarship to attend to concerns the status of the monograph. A popular format within Arts and Crafts literature, monographs have provided the field with in-depth research on the lives, careers and work of the Movement's leading figures and enriched the growth of the wider field. But the monograph is a contested category within this context. Most studies concern widely known individuals, most of whom are men, and many mount the repeated argument that their subjects were radical or pioneering. Some scholars have queried this focus on celebrated individuals and developed alternative narratives around thematic concepts, objects and networks.[42] In her study of collaboration in the Arts and Crafts Movement, Verity Rose Ibbotson reasons that studying the Movement through exceptional figures is untenable in light of its socialist background,[43] while Zoë Thomas observes that to write biographical accounts of individual women of the Movement can unquestioningly replicate older formats centred around remarkable male individuals.[44] Thomas instead takes as the centre of her study an extensive network of female art workers whom she examines collectively through the buildings, sites, relationships and paradigms that were specific to those women and in which they practised.[45]

Recent exhibitions on nineteenth-century British art have adopted new approaches to disrupt the monographic form. The National Portrait Gallery's 2018 show *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters* highlighted the central contributions twelve women made to Pre-Raphaelitism.[46] In 2023, Tate Britain's *The Rossettis* considered together the four Rossetti siblings – Maria, Christina, William and Gabriel. This ground-breaking exhibition posed a relational model of interpretation to examine the artistic

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[42] Verity Rose Ibbotson, *Collaboration and the Arts and Crafts Movement* (PhD Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2010); Hart, *Arts and Crafts Objects*, 2010 ; Sally Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art and Opportunities for Women's Paid Work in the Arts and Crafts Movement* (PhD Dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2013); Claire FitzGerald, *Women, Craft, and the Object: Birmingham 1880 - 1930* (PhD Dissertation, University of Warwick, 2016) and Thomas, *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement*, 2020.
[43] Ibbotson, *Collaboration and the Arts and Crafts Movement*, 2010, p. 17.
[44] Thomas, *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement*, 2020, p. 5.
[45] Ibid., pp. 2-5.
[46] Jan Marsh et al., *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2019).

contributions, collaborations and legacies of this generation of painters and poets. Similarly, in her recent book, *How We Might Live: At Home with Jane and William Morris* (2022), Suzanne Fagence Cooper re-tells the biographies of Jane and William in relation.[47] Such approaches are pertinent to the ways in which the scope of this thesis is drawn. Morris frequently collaborated with family members, friends, colleagues, employees and students in the production of her art, and her familial and sororal networks cannot be excluded from a study of her work. Accordingly, under scrutiny here are objects that Morris designed but which were made by others, as well as those that she made but which others designed. As is revealed in chapter two, this coverage can have productive implications as it destabilises the authorial singularity of the design (commonly made by a man) as the primary site of analysis and affords serious attention to the interactions between a design and the creative female authorship manifest in its reproductions. Nonetheless, this thesis holds the conviction that a monographical study of Morris remains vital as much of her career remains unexplored. However, taking cue from Thomas and circumventing a reliance on interpreting Morris through her father, this thesis stands by a thematic structure as offering a new prism to shed new understanding on her work.

The final aspect of Arts and Crafts scholarship relevant to this thesis is the development of publications on women of the Movement. This was spear-headed by Anthea Callen's *Angel in the Studio: Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement, 1870-1914* (1979).[48] At the time of its publication, this study was pioneering in establishing the first survey of women of the Movement, but, while important in its critique of gender and class, it is now dated. In an 1989 essay, Lynne Walker challenged Callen's conclusions that the Arts and Crafts Movement reinforced traditional patriarchal ideology.[49] Walker argues that the Movement was, in many ways, able to provide alternative opportunities that women used to their social and economic advantage.[50] She acknowledges that while the context in which women were working maintained gendered divisions of labour and stereotypes, and the arts they pursued were perceived as essentially feminine, these activities nonetheless allowed women to earn money.[51]

Scholarship on women of the Arts and Crafts Movement has developed in particularly significant ways since the early 2010s. Sally Hoban looks at Birmingham Municipal School of Art and the commercial prospects that the school's 'Executed Design' training could yield for women as professional designers and makers.[52] Claire FitzGerald revisits the case of Birmingham in her 2016 thesis *Women, Craft, and the Object: Birmingham*, *1880-1930*.[53] FitzGerald centres her analysis on

[47] Suzanne Fagence Cooper, *How We Might Live: At Home with Jane and William Morris* (London: Quercus Books, 2022).
[48] Anthea Callen, *Angel in the Studio: Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Astragal Books, 1979).
[49] Lynne Walker, 'The Arts and Crafts Alternative' in Lynne Walker, ed., *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design* (London: Women's Press, 1989), pp. 165-173.
[50] Ibid., p. 165.
[51] Ibid., 170-171.
[52] Hoban, *The Birmingham Municipal School of Art*, 2013.
[53] FitzGerald, *Women, Craft, and the Object*, 2016.

object case studies, through which she explores the careers and work of female graduates of the Birmingham Municipal School of Art. In her 2020 study *Women Art Workers of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, Thomas concentrates on clubs, guilds, exhibition venues, homes and workshops (predominately in London) to examine the spaces in which women worked. Artwork that women produced in a money-earning capacity is discussed by both FitzGerald and Thomas, but Thomas explores the challenges of professional status for women in this period. Conventional hallmarks of professional status – formal training, institutional membership, regular participation in exhibitions and remuneration – were not always available to women, and Thomas finds that there is no blanket criterion to determine an artist's professional status.[54] Moreover, how women worked muddies a conventional understanding of professional; often there was no fixed division between living and working spaces for women artworkers.[55] Morris is a case in point: it was in her homes that she worked for Morris & Co., designed and made textiles for commercial sale, public display and private use, and collaborated with family members, friends, students and employees.

Maria Quirk further complicates the notion of professionalism and argues that while the Arts and Crafts Movement did provide paid opportunities for women, we must attend to the stigma they faced when working to earn a living.[56] Additionally, Quirk brings into focus a problem for female embroiderers entering commercial markets:

> Embroidery was often a collaborative practice where products were attributed collectively or even anonymously. In an artistic culture increasingly focused on the efforts of individual creators, and where the designer was privileged over the maker, the collaborative model of art-making practised by embroidery societies and guilds could be seen as compromising the individual recognition and professionalism of members.[57]

In conceptualising Morris's practice, neither term amateur nor professional is adequate. She was a regular exhibitor at major exhibitions and steered the Women's Guild of Arts as its co-founder, Chair and Honorary Secretary. And while she worked for the family business, she was not remunerated like her assistants were, although she was paid for her teaching at the Birmingham Municipal School of Art. Morris was very comfortably sustained by her family's wealth and social capital, which granted her a privileged freedom to pursue her interests, projects and travel without the need to support herself financially. Her status was thus not professional, but Morris was equally no amateur in the sense of producing work that was rudimentary in skill or limited to private consumption.

[54] Thomas, *Women Art Workers of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, 2020, p. 12.
[55] Ibid., p. 13.
[56] Maria Quirk, 'Stitching Professionalism: Female-Run Embroidery Agencies and the Provision for Artistic Work for Women, 1870 – 1900', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2016), pp. 184-204.
[57] Ibid., p. 187.

Approaches to Textiles

Several approaches have been used to assess and interpret textiles of the period. In *Victorian Embroidery* (1962), Barbara Morris provides a broad survey of the development of embroidery in Britain and North America from the 1830s to the turn of the twentieth century, introducing notable types of needlework and their materials, techniques and stylistic characteristics, embroiderers, exhibition venues and schools.[58] Owing to her broad overview, Morris does not analyse specific textiles with rigour. This omission of close reading of textiles is a frequent feature across both broad and more focussed scholarship.

Linda Parry's *Textiles of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (2005) is more select in its scope, but also takes the form of a survey. Parry takes us through the evolution of the styles and increased sophistication of Arts and Crafts textiles, highlighting recurring motifs and fabric choices. Her study is largely concerned with illuminating key designers, manufacturers and shops of the period and the commercial contexts and consumer audiences of Arts and Crafts textiles.[59] This continues in Parry's *William Morris Textiles* (2013), a thoroughly-researched study of the textiles designed and made by William and his for-profit company, Morris & Co. The first half of the book is structured around textile type and provides detailed information on the technical aspects of textile production, such as dyeing, surface block printing and weaving. Once again, in-depth analyses of specific textiles are forfeited for larger overviews of stylistic developments, methods of production, and business and commercial history. The book's chapter on embroidery discuses Morris, giving a brief account of her involvement with Morris & Co., production of private commissions and aspects of her publications and teaching. Morris is placed within the rise and fall of Morris & Co.

A popular line of enquiry in studies of textiles of the period has been to trace and match textiles with their design sources. Needleworkers often copied from mass-produced and widely circulated patterns that could be found in books, magazines and household management guides, which provided complete designs or motifs that could be incorporated into a design. Barbara Morris points out that many Berlin wool-work patterns reproduced Old Master paintings and popular pictures of animals and the royal family.[60] Tracing sources can be a productive means of establishing meaning where the textile's designer, maker(s) or both are unknown, helping us understand the translation from design to cloth as well as matters of style, taste and consumption. There are problems with uncontextualised focus on source identification, however. Sources often come from a mixture of ephemera that involve multiple people, exchanges and activities. Moira Thunder provides an example as she examines an album of designs attributed to Sarah Bland in the V&A. The album is heterogenous and highly personal, and includes Bland's own botanical studies, gifts she received and

[58] Barbara Morris, *Victorian Embroidery* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962).
[59] Linda Parry, *Arts and Crafts Textiles* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005).
[60] Morris, *Victorian Embroidery*, 1962, pp. 22-23.

patterns she bought commercially and traced from magazines.[61] As textiles were often made in the home it is challenging to identify conclusively what sources were used, by whom, for how long, and why. Additionally, this emphasis on design source in analyses of textiles can be limiting because it works from the assumption that we can understand better the meaning of a textile if we know the original model on which it was based. Sources can tell us important things about textile production and makers, but they might not speak to the meanings that textiles accumulate and generate post-production through the course of their lives.

One way in which scholars have attempted to look for meaning beyond originating sources is by exploring coeval cultural contexts through which to interpret textile types and styles. In the case of Arts and Crafts textiles, the predominance of flowers, vines, shrubs and trees within their compositions has prompted scholars to draw comparison with the related practices developing in garden design from the 1870s onwards. Scholars have found, for example, crossovers between embroidery and garden design in the use of native British flowers.[62] These correspondences have proved to be a fruitful field of enquiry, and are assessed and expanded in chapter three of this thesis.

Relationships between embroidery and painting are examined in *The Modern Embroidery Movement* (2020) by Cynthia Fowler.[63] This book focuses on the careers, practices and critical reception of five key proponents of the modern embroidery movement in early-twentieth-century North America: Marguerite Zorach, Georgiana Brown Harbeson, Marcia Stebbins, Marian Stoll and Ellen Crisp. These women espoused embroidery as a preferred medium for modernist artistic expression and experimentation. Four of the five women were trained as painters, and all drew from principles of painting techniques and aesthetics to stake claims for embroidery's expressive potential and elevated its status as a fine, modern art.[64]

Taking her cue from the painterly traditions to which these artists responded, Fowler examines the relationships between these embroiderers' work and contemporary developments in painting. In doing so, she expands narratives of the history of modern art to include modern embroidery.[65] However, the emphasis on the interactions between embroidery and painting, particularly as they relate to subject matter and style, comes at the expense of a consideration of materiality, specifically stitching, although Fowler acknowledges that technique was not a concern for the women discussed in her study.[66] In this thesis, relationships between embroidery and painting are not explored; such relationships were actively discouraged by Morris and her Arts and Crafts

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[61] Moira Thunder, 'Capturing Understanding of Women's Embroidery Designs: A Methodology for Research and a Critique of Cataloguing Databases using the Example of Women's Embroidery in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Textile History*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (2014), pp. 68-98.
[62] FitzGerald, *Women, Craft, and the Object*, 2016, p. 201; Parry, *William Morris: Art and Kelmscott* , 1996, pp. 57-58, at p. 60.
[63] Cynthia Fowler, *The Modern Embroidery Movement* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020).
[64] Ibid., pp. 2-3.
[65] Ibid., p. 8.
[66] Ibid., p. 11.

associates and, as chapter two demonstrates, to read her embroideries in terms of painting is to misunderstand the aesthetic and intellectual aims of her embroidery practice.

Other scholars have challenged studies of textiles which privilege the finished object and consider instead on-going processes as alternative ways of establishing meaning. In her work on contemporary textiles, Emma Shercliff explores hand-stitching in terms of embodied knowledge, cognitive and emotional experience and subjectivity.[67] She attends to the involvement of the body and its relationships with tools, materials and people. Meanwhile, in her analysis of what she calls ordinary forms of needlework produced from the 1920s to the 1970s – knitting, crochet, embroidery and sewing – Elizabeth Robinson addresses the processes of making from a social and cultural standpoint, rather than a technical one.[68] These perspectives are important because they move away from prioritising elite textiles or those produced by well-documented makers and commercial businesses; instead, the amateur, independent or anonymous maker comes into view. Moreover, they have broader implications for the study of textiles, which are ephemeral, prone to decay and in many cases survive in fragmented forms. Much can be learned about practitioners and practices by engaging critically with the act of making.

Efforts have been made to bring together the finished object and processes of making in a joint analysis. FitzGerald appraises the visual qualities of textiles in tandem with the materials and techniques used to make them in her study of the embroideries by Morris's colleague and friend, Mary Newill.[69] Caroline Arscott has developed this linked approach with greater success. In her work on William's *Woodpecker* tapestry, Arscott considers the twisted silk threads, the weaving of weft around warp, the visual scene interlacing vegetal forms and alongside the entwined tissue of a human nervous system to propel an argument around consciousness and transformation.[70] Arscott's formulation of this tapestry reflects a larger trend of her research, which probes into the technical and intellectual aspects of Arts and Crafts objects.[71] Arscott is not tempted to link a reading of the object back to Arts and Crafts principles; in an article on William's *Clouds* carpet, she shows that his carpets were about historical debates, cultural exchange and human action.[72] It is an aim of this thesis to apply a similar strategy of linked analysis to Morris's work, but, crucially, to do so via the practices, priorities and contexts specific to her.

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[67] Emma Shercliff, *Articulating Stitch: skilful hand-stitching as personal, social and cultural experience* (PhD Dissertation, Royal College of Art, 2014).
[68] Elizabeth Robinson, *Women and Needlework in Britain, 1920-1970* (PhD Dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2012), p. 4.
[69] FitzGerald, *Women, Craft, and the Object*, 2016, p. 186 and 218-219.
[70] Caroline Arscott, 'William Morris's Tapestry: Metamorphoses and Prophecy in *The Woodpecker*', *Art History*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2013), pp. 612-613.
[71] Caroline Arscott, *William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: Interlacings* (London: Yale University Press, 2008).
[72] Caroline Arscott, 'Morris Carpets', *RIHA Journal*, 0089, Special Issue "When Art History Meets Design History" (27 March 2014) URL: http://www.riha-journal.org/articles/2014/2014-jan-mar/special-issue-art-design-history/arscott-morris-carpets [Accessed: 17/03/2021].

Making and Materiality

The methodological approach concerned with making and materiality taken here is necessarily informed by scholarship on material culture. Over the last two decades, the field of material culture has risen in prominence. This is a field of study that traverses interrelated disciplines of art history, history, anthropology and archaeology. It foregrounds objects and the significance of their making, materiality and lives as ways of exploring culture and cultural histories. Notable contributions to the field that have emerged in recent years are the Bard Graduate Center's series *Cultural Histories of the Material World*, edited by Peter Miller, and Edward S. Cooke, Jr.'s *Inventing Boston: Design, Production, and Consumption* (2019) and *Global Objects: Toward a Connected Art History* (2022). Such studies facilitate new ways of understanding what objects can tell us about social, economic, political, geographic, gender and racial issues. These avenues often actively work against positioning objects within a hierarchy of arts and give serious attention to subaltern media, object types, makers and creative practices. Indeed, material culture is highly generative in exploring women's creative production that has been historically marginalised, as evidenced by the volumes of collected essays edited by Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin. *Women & Things, 1750-1950* (2009) explores how women engaged with material culture at the multiple points of an object's life cycle: designing, making, consuming, using and re-using.[73] The volume's essays engage both product and process in an effort to redress the lack of attention to women's material practices and the interactions between makers and objects. The essays in a related volume, *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles* (2009), focus on the material strategies women deployed not only to produce cultural objects but also to express cultural values.[74] One essay explores the rhetorical function of needlework to form identity, establish community and elicit social cause; another considers textiles as embodied and animated objects that sit within a web of human relationships, and prompts questions of what a textile can record; a third takes the case of an embroidered sampler to examine the life of its maker.[75] This last example fits within a larger body of scholarship on women and material culture in which objects and material practices are used to recoup makers' life-stories and biographies. This is at the core of Serena Dyer's *Material Lives: Women Makers and Consumer Culture in the 18th Century*.[76] Dyer considers four genteel eighteenth-century women as models of material life writing.[77]

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[73] Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, eds, *Women and Things, 1750-1950* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).
[74] Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, eds, *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750 – 1950* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 3.
[75] Heather Pristash, Inez Schaechterle and Sue Carter Wood, 'The Needle as the Pen: Intentionality, Needlework, and the Production of Alternative Discourses of Power', pp. 13-30, Maureen Daly Goggin, 'Stitching a Life in "Pen of Steele and Silken Inke"': Elizabeth Parker's *circa* 1830 Sampler', pp. 31-50 and Beverly Gordon and Laurel Horton, 'Turn-of-the-Century Quilts: Embodied Objects in a Web of Relationships', pp. 93-110, in Daly Goggin and Fowkes Tobin, *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles*, 2009.
[76] Serena Dyer, *Material Lives: Women Makers and Consumer Culture in the 18th Century* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021).
[77] Ibid., p. 2.

Chronicling women's lives through objects and practices is a fruitful strategy. It can supplement archival evidence or, where this is scant or non-existent, provide rich stand-alone biographical records.

Dyer argues that the four women she studies were highly materially literate consumers and producers who professed knowledge of different manufactured cloth types, tools and making accoutrements, grasped how garments and objects were made, and were themselves skilled in making. A high degree of informed material engagement shaped these women's lives, and Dyer argues that today's art historians need to develop this understanding too.[78] This involves recognising that material sources require different modes of reading to those applied to textual sources. It also demands fluency with the 'dialects and vernaculars' of different media, materials and object types.[79]

Edward S. Cooke, Jr. also addresses material literacy in *Global Objects*. In this book, Cooke presents a new methodological model for reading and interpreting objects. Challenging art historical approaches that prescribe a zoned geographical remit, rely on a centre-periphery framework, assert hierarchies of genres and materials or proceed from Western artistic canons and production values, he attends to the materials, realisation and use of objects in terms of nonlinear interchange and global circulation. Analysis of objects, he argues, requires an inside-out approach, beginning with the object and working outward. The volume offers readers a guide to the principles of reading objects in systematic ways, which address and interpret 'the raw materials, commercial exchanges, technological adaption, directional flow, cultural flux, and reception of the material world.'[80]

The research offered here draws implicitly from the ways of thinking about objects and artmaking that have been developed in material culture scholarship. Across the four chapters, close attention is paid to the materiality and fabrication of Morris's work, such as embroidery stitching, the creation and use of cartoons for textiles, and the qualities of weave structure in woven cloth. Alongside these analyses, the chapters interrogate the artist's sensitivity to materials and their affordances and manipulation; how she understood making practices to be personally, socially, culturally and historically meaningful; and the ways in which she communicated those values. Following Dyer's appeal, the informed engagement with making and materiality developed through the thesis is established through a variety of means: sustained first-hand study of objects; wide-reading of primary and secondary sources concerning making processes; knowledge-exchange with present day embroiderers, spinners, weavers and textile historians and curators; and the author's own practical experiments with different textile practices.

[78] Ibid., p. 6.
[79] Ibid., p. 6
[80] Cooke, *Global Objects*, 2023, p. 15.

Chapter Outlines

In addition to the introduction and conclusion, the thesis comprises four main chapters. Chapter one sets the scene with an overview of Morris's career, which is examined through her principal contexts, spheres of activity and areas of enterprise. The discussion begins with museums before proceeding to publications, teaching, lecturing and public engagement, societies and organisations, exhibiting and, lastly, Morris and the global. The chapter revises areas of enquiry previously addressed in existing scholarship and provides substantive new information on Morris's career. In so doing, it offers the field a more nuanced assessment of the artist, which accommodates greater complexity and contradiction than previous interpretations have afforded.

Chapter two commences with the topmost layer of the conceptual embroidery: stitch. It opens with a detailed account of the practical workings of Morris's stitching practice, reconstructed through photographs of the artist at work and written instruction provided in her technical publications. Synthesising comparison of multiple embroideries with critical analyses of her writings and lectures, the chapter argues that stitching was a form of artmaking that was adaptive, inventive and expressive of the maker's creative agency. In making this argument, the Arts and Crafts ideal of the designer/maker as it is applied to Morris is challenged and shown to be a flawed metric of interpretation. Continuing discussion of the ways in which stitching was codified and communicated, the chapter then examines Morris's relationship with the Art Needlework movement. It reveals the ways in which Morris and Art Needlework proponents aligned and diverged in their teaching, written publications and understanding of the place of needlework within narratives of art's prehistoric origins and its contemporary forms at the end of the nineteenth century.

Design is the focus of the third chapter. It begins with an analysis of Morris's design composition processes, which illuminates her selection of subject matter, drawing procedures, adaptions of natural forms and sources of influence, as well as how she transposed the design, via the cartoon, to fabric. The artist's level of ambition and stylistic eclecticism in her designs are brought into focus. Picking up from proposed yet underdeveloped investigations in existing scholarship, the relationships between Morris's textile designs and contemporary approaches to garden design are then examined. The chapter explores the substantive links between gardens and Morris's design practice, revealing imagination and enlivenment to be prominent points of parallel between them. Further to this, imagination and enlivenment are shown to be crucial to Morris's response to historical sources of design. In the final section of this chapter, her interpretation of the historical development of ornament is explored. As in chapter two, fresh comparative discussion between the artist and her contemporary makers, scholars, curators and archaeologists is undertaken, thus situating her within larger art historical debates.

Chapter four turns to the meaning and making of ground, the woven cloth that provides an embroidery's material foundation. It examines the types of fabrics that Morris used in her embroidery production, before broadening out to assess the ways in which she kept pace with the revival of handweaving in the twentieth century. The chapter develops an extended reading of ground as both an articulated woven and earthen surface. This facilitates analyses of the connections between textile making practices of spinning, dyeing and weaving, with which Morris engaged, and the geographical landscapes of rural Wales and Scotland, which she explored in the 1920s and 1930s. The diaries she wrote of these travels are closely examined alongside the documentary work carried out by a network of women ethnographers coactive in time and place with Morris.

Together, these chapters present an original account of the artist's career and work and reveal the complexities and richness in her practices, interpretation and valuing of the making of art. As Morris located artistic creativity materially, metaphorically and physically, she demonstrated art and its production to contain and activate a range of meanings that concern agency and expression, the imagination, playfulness, the past and present, and the local and global.

Chapter One: Morris's Career

Introduction

Since the 1980s, several scholars have examined Morris's career in summary and episodic forms.[1] While valuable, these accounts are nonetheless underdeveloped. This chapter refreshes existing scholarship by expanding the ways in which Morris's career has been understood. It adopts a thematic structure in which contexts and areas of enterprise key to the artist's career are examined. The discussion begins with museums, which were of primary importance to Morris. It then surveys her substantial publication record, providing new information on the content, audience and format of her writings. Following this, the chapter explores Morris's social engagement, including teaching and lecturing, involvement with societies and organisations and participation in exhibitions. Finally, it considers her entanglement with global contexts and imaginaries. The chapter reveals the artist's career to be richer, more complex and contradictory than previously understood.

Museums

Museums were crucial artistic resources and intellectual spaces for Morris. She routinely studied artworks and literature in the galleries, exhibitions and libraries of the British Museum and V&A. When travelling throughout the UK and abroad, she called upon cathedral treasuries as well as national and specialist museums, including the National Museum of Iceland, Musée de Cluny and West Highland Folk Museum. The V&A was particularly significant. Her relationship with this museum spanned the entirety of her adult life, from her education at the National Art Training School in the late-1870s and early-1880s to displays and exhibitions that she mobilised and bequests that she made in the 1930s. She was intimate with the museum's global textile collection, which informed her intellectual endeavours in several ways. Most of the textiles reproduced in her lecture slides, photographic library and publications come from this museum, and its holdings were indispensable resources through which she thought through and articulated her positions on historical and contemporary art.

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[1] Jan Marsh, *Jane and May Morris*: A Biographical Story (New York and London: Pandora 1986); Linda Parry, 'May Morris, embroidery and Kelmscott', in Linda Parry ed., *William Morris: Art and Kelmscott* (London: The Boydell Press, 1996), pp. 57-68; Delia Glazer, ed., *Dictionary of Women Artists*, Vol. 2 (London and Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), pp. 982-984; Jan Marsh, 'May Morris: ubiquitous, invisible Arts and Crafts-woman' in Bridget Elliott and Janice Helland, eds, *Women Artists and the Decorative Arts, 1880-1935: The Gender of Ornament* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); Linda Parry, *Textiles of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), p. 136; Hilary Laucks Walter, 'Another Stitch to the Legacy of William Morris: May Morris's Designs and Writings on Embroidery', in Phillippa Bennett and Rosie Miles, eds, *William Morris in the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 73-89; Linda Parry, *William Morris Textiles* (London: V&A Publishing, 2013), pp. 36-41; Lynn Hulse, ed., *May Morris: Art and Life, New Perspectives* (London: Friends of the William Morris Gallery, 2017) and Jan Marsh, 'A Well Crafted Life', in Anna Mason et al., *May Morris: Arts and Crafts Designer* (London: Thames & Hudson/V&A Publishing, 2017), pp. 8-31.

The iterations of the V&A's textiles across Morris's teaching, research and publication materials underscore the intensity of her engagement with this museum's holdings. These reproductions form a collection of facsimiles that she used at home and whilst teaching, in effect taking the museum's textiles beyond the confines of the institution's physical site to audiences far and wide. The museum was heavily invested in photographing objects in its collection as well as those on temporary loan from outside organisations for the purposes of exhibition. There was an extensive visual economy in which photographs and their reproductions were circulated and used within the museum's departments and library collection, adapted as lantern slides for lectures and published in a variety of print media. It is unclear whether Morris sourced her reproductions directly from the museum. Five-digit numbers appear at the top of her lecture slides in the Art Worker's Guild and on the verso of many of her photographic and printed reproductions of historical textiles now held in the Ashmolean Museum (fig. 1.1). These might correspond to the sequential numbers listed in the museum's bound Photographs Register, described by Erika Lederman.[2] Other reproductions Morris owned were acquired through third-party publishers. For instance, three prints in the Ashmolean, showing fourteenth- to sixteenth-century German whitework embroidery from the museum's collection, were printed by R. Sutton & Co. from glass plates by F. E. Witthaus (fig. 1.2). Further research is needed to understand the particulars of how Morris assembled her image library.

Crucially, museums like the V&A offered Morris a means of getting closer to the arts of the past, as they facilitated direct engagement with historical artworks. Such experiences were key to her understanding of how these artworks were designed, made and used. For instance, the study of medieval manuscripts alongside ancient textiles provided comparative material for charting historical conventions of representation and conceptualising how artists of the past interpreted nature.[3] The display practices of the Musée de Cluny were revelatory in Morris's medieval imaginary. Here, she found that objects were appropriately shown within contextual, use-orientated displays 'as the natural furniture and fittings of this old dwelling-house, whose Gothic character is by no means violated by the later additions and alterations.'[4] As she noted approvingly, such displays demonstrated 'the thoughtful and intellectual qualities as expressed in the domestic art of the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries.'[5]

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[2] Erika Lederman, 'The Official Museum Photographer: Isabel Agnes Cowper', in Elizabeth Edwards and Ella Ravilious, eds, *What Photographs Do: The Making and Remaking of Museum Cultures* (London: UCL Press 2023), pp. 80-107, at p. 90.
[3] May Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – XI, Animals and Symbols', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXVII, No. 2063 (July 20 1894), pp. 66-67, at p. 67.
[4] May Morris, The Cluny Museum – I, *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXVIII, No. 2109, pp. 796-797, at p. 796.
[5] May Morris, 'The Cluny Museum – IV, Chests and Furniture', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXIX, No. 2127, pp. 513-514, at p. 513.

Meaghan Clarke has noted that the V&A was a crucial intellectual space for a generation of women art writers working in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[6] Scholars and critics like Emily Dilke (1840-1904), Gertrude Campbell (1857-1911) and Christiana Herringham (1852-1929) used the museum's collections and library resources as they produced major art historical publications. The ways in which Morris engaged with and occupied this museum as a 'worksite' for her artistic and scholarly practices should be understood in comparable terms.[7] Literate in German, French, Italian, Spanish and Icelandic, Morris read widely. In the V&A's library, and in the Morris family book collection, she read textile publications by Daniel Rock (1799-1871), Friedrich Fischbach (1839-1908) and Louis de Farcy (1841-1921), German and French books on archaeology by Robert Forrer (1866-1947) and Albert Gayet (1856-1916), travel writings by Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890) and Charles Montagu Doughty (1843-1926) and works on a global range of artistic cultures, such as *Painting in the Far East* by Laurence Binyon (1869-1943).

Moreover, as was the case with those writers singled out by Clarke, the V&A was a museum in which Morris made interventions as a cultural authority, and her legacy is felt throughout the institution. In collaboration with the then director, Cecil Harcourt Smith (1859-1944), she devised the temporary 'Morris room' display on the staircase landing outside the National Art Library.[8] She was instrumental in planning and curating the William Morris Centenary Exhibition, held in 1934; she lent the largest number of private loans, advised on the display of exhibits, revised attributions and co-authored the catalogue.[9] Additionally, she exerted control of the photography of select exhibits.[10] Following her death, she bequeathed to the museum artworks designed and made by herself, her family members and Arts and Crafts associates. Many of these are on permanent display in the museum today.

The V&A and British Museum were also prominent nodes within Morris's artistic and social networks, through which different groups and associates intersected. Her contemporary embroiderers, historians and critics, such as Herringham, Grace Christie (1872-1953) and Marian Alford (1817-1888) each drew upon the V&A's collection of textiles in their research; their relationships with these artworks are examined further in chapters two and three. Morris was acquainted with curators at both museums, such as Albert Frank Kendrick (1872-1954) at the V&A and Laurence Binyon at the British Museum. She even worked alongside with Alan. S Cole (1846-1934), an administrator at the V&A and expert on lace, on contributions to Arts and Crafts publications. These museums also blended

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[6] Meaghan Clarke, 'Looking Back: Legacies of Women Art Writers', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 34 (2023), doi: https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.8704, pp. 7-21. [Accessed 05/11/2023]
[7] Ibid., p. 20.
[8] Thomas Cooper, 'A "Morris room" in Cardiff: Mary Lobb and the National Museum of Wales', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 165, No. 1441 (April 2023), pp. 418-421, at p. 419.
[9] Julia Dudkiewicz, 'Memorialising her father's legacy: May Morris as curator and gatekeeper of William Morris's estate and the role of Kelmscott', in Lynn Hulse, ed., *May Morris: Art & Life: New* Perspectives (London: Friends of the William Morris Gallery, 2017), pp. 209-235, at p. 226.
[10] Nominal File, MA/1/M2833 May Morris, National Art Library, V&A.

formal and informal relationships. The ‘Morris room’ display was first proposed during a conversation between Morris and Harcourt Smith at the funeral of William De Morgan (1839-1917) at Chelsea Old Church in 1917. Meanwhile the British Museum was a favourite place for Morris to meet with friends, followed by supper in Soho. These museums were, therefore, sites of enmeshment between objects, literary sources, artistic and intellectual communities, and personal activities – they were living and breathing parts of Morris’s world.

Publications

Morris’s published output was substantial, and an understanding of its range and content is necessary to establish a fuller picture of her intellectual scope and ambitions. She authored over forty articles, chapters and lecture papers, produced three books, and edited twenty-four volumes of her father’s collected works. These appeared in distinct phases of industry: the late-1880s to the mid-1900s; the late-1910s; and the mid-1930s. Morris is well-known for editing and writing the introductions to the collected works of William Morris. However, her writings address a broad range of topics. Prominent among these are technical instruction and commentaries on artmaking, in which she discusses in detail methods of stitching, design composition and colour arrangement. These are grounded in the evidential matter of the materials and making of historical textiles. Other publications adopt more conceptual approaches to broader topics: the history of art, contemporary art criticism and reviews of exhibitions. Across her writings, Morris dovetails discussion of materials, process, ornament, propriety, labour, commerce and history. She adopts different stylistic modes, veering between pedantic, philosophical, acerbic and humorous. Her publications are also highly personal, revealing what she saw, thought, felt and admired; these provide rich insight into her artistic and intellectual priorities. A prominent feature of her writings are the persuasive reflections based on her empirical observations and aesthetic encounters with artworks, buildings and landscapes, which often serve as the fulcrum of her arguments. Publisher Basil Blackwell (1889-1984) praised the quality of Morris’s writing, stating ‘Her aesthetic and mental equipment and her excellent prose style fitting her for creative work in her own right.’[11]

Equally varied were the forums for her writings. Many of the articles and chapters were written for specialist, Arts and Crafts publications: journals, such as *Hobby Horse* and *The Art Workers’ Quarterly*; edited essay collections like *Plain Handicrafts* and Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society compendia; and catalogues of government-sponsored national exhibitions. Comparative reading of these texts reveals that Morris frequently re-used content across her publications as she revisited familiar topics. This took varying forms, from recycling of general arguments to subtle rephrasing of the same point and to word-for-word reproduction.

[11] Basil Blackwell, ‘May Morris’, typed manuscript, p. 7, Merton College, Oxford, BLK/3/53.

Several articles were released in periodicals focussed on building and architecture: *The Architectural Review: For the Artist and Craftsman* and *The Building News and Engineering Journal*. Despite the disciplinary focus indicated by their titles, both journals were diverse in their content, which addressed architectural designs and construction, discussed craft materials and processes, and featured notices on archaeology, articles on historical artworks, and exhibition reviews. All these subjects were congenial to Morris's eclectic interests, and these journals were appropriate homes for her writings on a range of topics: ecclesiastical and medieval embroidery, Chartres Cathedral, the Musée de Cluny, Coptic textiles and handicraft exhibitions. Several of these publications showcased her scholarly research into the reception of historical textiles – an interest also demonstrated in articles published in the *Journal of the Society of Arts* and *The Burlington Magazine for Art Connoisseurs*. Morris's contributions to these two latter journals concentrated on an area of her expertise – *Opus Anglicanum* – whose quality and significance she tirelessly promoted.

Embroidered clothing and decorative furnishings were the foci of short articles Morris wrote for lifestyle and trade magazines: *The Queen: The Lady's Newspaper and Court Chronicle*, *The Decorator and Furnisher* and *The Ironmonger*. In the last of these, Morris reviewed contemporary commercial fixtures for electric lights and their designs. She observed that these frequently lacked qualities of artistry and craftsmanship: they falsely imitated architectural columns, made use of veneers, were overt in their naturalism and their finish was too highly polished. By contrast, she desired simple designs in which ornament was purposeful, responded to form and was appropriate for the quality of light emitted. Additionally, she wanted the materials used to be plainer and bear marks of the makers' hands. Morris's criteria for the designing and making of these objects correlated with her assessments of the historical artworks that she admired and the standards she expected of contemporary craftwork. This demonstrates how her critical engagement with issues of making also responded to functional products commercially produced for modernised ways of living.

The range of Morris's publications evidence her agility in writing for a varied readership. They also make clear her ambition in expanding her intellectual interests and the scale of her writing projects. Her core concerns with historical textiles and processes of making were supplemented by commentaries on nineteenth-century industry and schools of design, Gothic revival, wooden furniture, ceramics, glass, jewellery and metalwork. If her earliest publications were stand-alone pieces or articles that were adapted and re-issued, in the mid-1890s, she started to write in larger formats: serial publications produced in instalments of four, six and thirteen. In 1910, she began the gargantuan project of editing her father's collected works and writing the introductions to the twenty-four volumes they filled; the final volume was published in 1915. This was Morris's first editorial role. She took pains to be thorough and worked insistently at her own pace, despite being hurried by the publisher, Longmans. She wanted to present William's work as accurately as possible, and felt that, if she did not, she would have been criticised on her ability as a woman to undertake the project. As she

told her friend Emery Walker (1851-1933), 'People will pull me up pretty still if I fell into any blunders, and they'll shrug and say "After all, a Woman! Why didn't they give the job to Mackail?"'[12]

Ambitious and undeterred by scale, Morris completed the project to critical acclaim. Reviews in *The Athenaeum* praised Morris's editorial decisions and the value of her commentaries in presenting a fuller, more authentic portrait of William.[13] Writing for *The Bookman*, the writer and poet Edward Thomas (1878-1917) commended her prose style: 'Miss May Morris has made dullness impossible by the companion biographical chapters in each volume, which have a charming combination of respect and familiarity.'[14] Her introductions were also admired by other poets, including Gordon Bottomley (1874-1948) and William Butler Yeats (1865-1939).[15]

Her success with the collected works perhaps prompted Morris to continue to write on a larger scale. Notebooks that Morris filled during long holidays in Britian and Iceland were written up into hard-back, folio-sized volumes and illustrated with drawings, photographs and postcards. It is likely that she intended to publish these; this was certainly the case for the Iceland diaries, which she wrote up 'with a view to making something of them.'[16]

Morris had serious commitments as a writer, which ran parallel with her career as a practising and exhibiting artist. It was a role in which she commanded a range of subjects, and through which she was able to communicate to different audiences across varying formats and scales.

Teaching, Lecturing and Public Engagement

Another means through which Morris reached diverse audiences was through teaching and lecturing. She began teaching and lecturing in her early twenties. One of her earliest lectures, on the topic of historical embroidery, was given to a young ladies' society in East London in 1885.[17] In the same year, she became manager of the embroidery workshop of Morris & Co. In addition to designing and making company wares, she was responsible for overseeing the training of employees and apprentices. By the late 1880s, she had five workers, although this number had shrunk to three by 1890.[18] Employees and apprentices were trained to work in the company's house embroidery style, which meant stitching predominantly in a limited range of stem, satin, darning, and long and short stitches. Morris had exacting standards of workmanship, and the first-rate quality of the stitching produced under her supervision attests to her strong teaching ability and the workers' success in

[12] May Morris to Emery Walker, undated (*c*.1911). William Morris Gallery, S4.4.10, J421.
[13] *The Athenaeum*, 7 January 1911, No. 4341, pp. 5-6 and *The Athenaeum*, 13 March 1915, No. 4559, pp. 233-234.
[14] Edward Thomas, 'The Collected Works of William Morris', *The Bookman*, Vol. 43, No. 255 (December 1912), pp. 172-173.
[15] May Morris to Gordon Bottomley, 3 November 1922, British Library, Add. Ms. 88957/1/70, ff.156-157; May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 11 November 1930, William Morris Gallery, S4.3.21.1.
[16] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 27 June 1932, William Morris Gallery, S4.3.21.1.
[17] May Morris to Cormell Price, 18 April 1885. Collection of Lorraine Bowsher.
[18] Catherine White, 'Decorative Needlework: May Morris and her embroiderers', in Hulse, *May Morris: Art and Life*, 2017, pp. 56-72 at pp. 66-69.

learning to work to this level. Catherine White has demonstrated that the Morris & Co. embroiderers developed sufficient skills in embroidery to enable them to work as professional makers and teachers after leaving the company.[19] This practical training took place in the workshop, and Morris also offered one-to-one private instruction in her home.[20]

Morris was also engaged with several art schools during her career. In 1891, she collaborated with the Royal School of Art Needlework when she oversaw the production of a large embroidery executed by embroiderers at the school to a design created by William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898).[21] The school was founded in 1872 to revive the art of embroidery and to enable destitute gentlewomen to earn a living. Morris took a broadly negative view of such selective philanthropic embroidery organisations to which, as she said, 'none but gentlewomen "by birth and education" need apply – a restriction which rather narrows the scopes of such enterprises.'[22] Despite claims made in secondary scholarship, she was never formally associated with this school.[23] However, her approaches to making aligned in several ways with the artistic practices and intellectual positions of leading embroiderers associated with the school, as we will see in chapter two.

From 1897 to 1908, Morris taught at the Central School of Arts and Crafts. She worked there as an advisor to the school's teaching staff rather than a formal instructor to its students; in the school prospectuses, she is listed as a visitor to the embroidery classes in 1897 and from 1905 to 1908. [24] During this period, Morris supervised the teaching of Ellen Wright (dates unknown), formerly an employee working under Morris's direction in the Morris & Co. embroidery workshop. Following Morris's departure from the business, she and Wright maintained a close working relationship, collaborating on and exhibiting several textiles.

In 1899, Morris was employed as a teacher of needlework at Birmingham Municipal School of Art for three years. Thereafter, until 1904, she was involved with the school as an examiner.[25] The school syllabus included design for embroidery; selecting and arranging colours, materials and their

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[19] Ibid., 71. White notes that after leaving Morris's employment, Lily Yeats founded the Dun Emer Guild, and Ellen and Fanny Wright became teachers in embroidery at London Central School of Arts and Crafts.
[20] *Hobby Horse*, Vol. 3 (1888), p. 83. Morris offered private lessons free of charge to Andreas Scheu's daughter, Daisy. May Morris to Andreas Scheu, 1 May 1888, International Institute for Social History (IISH) Andreas Scheu Papers, 3031/2.
[21] This was the production of *Pomona* (private collection), a large, embroidered hanging worked under Morris's direction by three embroiderers at the Royal School of Art Needlework. This is illustrated in Anna Mason et al. *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum/Thames and Hudson, 2017), p. 59. This was Morris's only collaboration with the school.
[22] *Women in Professions being the Professional Section of The International Congress of Women, London, July, 1899* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1900), p. 191.
[23] Morris's aunt, Elizabeth Burden, taught there on a salaried basis. Lynn Hulse, 'Elizabeth Burden and the Royal School of Needlework', *Journal of the William Morris Society*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Winter 2014), pp. 22-34.
[24] *London Central School of Arts and Crafts, Prospectus and Timetable, 1897-1908* (London: The London County Technical Education Board, 1897-1908). My thanks to Judy Willcocks at Central Saint Martins for supplying scans of these prospectuses.
[25] Helen Bratt-Wyton, 'May Morris: Special Teacher of Needlework at Birmingham School of Art, 1899 – 1902', in Hulse, *May Morris: Art & Life*, 2017, pp. 130-140, at pp. 135-136.
[25] Ibid., pp. 135-136.

uses; the position of the needle; a variety of stitches; and how to work different stitches together.[26] Morris gave her lectures 'viva voce, with rough sketches for the black board drawing', and taught with the aid of lantern slide illustrations and the handling of museum specimens and textiles from her own collection.[27] She held firmly the view that object-based learning was essential to the study of historical artworks.

Morris also lectured at Manchester School of Art, Leicester School of Art and Hammersmith School of Arts and Crafts, where she spoke on such topics as stitches for embroidery, design, medieval embroidery, the history of dress, and her father's writings.[28] While correspondence, newspaper reports and articles document her lecturing activities at Manchester and Leicester schools, Morris is absent from the institutional archives and published prospectuses of these art schools. Gender does not account for this exclusion; female teachers of ornament, design and embroidery, for instance, are listed in Leicester's annual reports.[29] It is more likely that Morris's relationship with Manchester and Leicester schools comprised of ah-hoc work arranged on an informal basis. However, the exact nature of her engagement with these art schools remains unresolved.

This is not the case with Hammersmith School of Arts and Crafts. In the autumn of 1910, Morris joined the school's advisory sub-committee, and for the spring term of that academic year acted as inspector for all classes.[30] It is notable that the year in which Morris joined the school the number of students enrolled for embroidery more than doubled, and an assistant teacher of embroidery was sought and appointed.[31] We might speculate that Morris's reputation as a celebrated embroiderer and previous involvement with the more prestigious art schools of London County Council and Birmingham attracted prospective students to Hammersmith and stimulated this uptake in enrolment.

Morris served as a member to the school's advisory sub-committee until around 1921, making her relationship with Hammersmith School of Arts and Crafts her longest with any teaching

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[26] Ibid., pp.135-136.
[27] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 20 August 1935. WMG, S4.4.23.1.
[28] 'The History of Dress. Lecture by Miss May Morris', *Manchester Guardian*, 12 May 1896 (press cutting; unpaginated); and 'Design in Dress. Lecture by Miss May Morris', *The Leicester Daily [Post ?]*, November 8 1915 (unpaginated). William Morris Society, Box 22. Morris gave two lectures at the Hammersmith School of Arts and Crafts, on medieval embroidery (3 Feb 1915) and on embroidery stitches (10 Feb 1915); both used lantern slides and blackboard illustrations. Women's Guild of Art Archive, William Morris Society, WMS, WGA/1/6. She also gave a lecture on her father's writing at Leicester School of Art in January 1921, Arthur Halcrow Verstage Archive, William Morris Society, VER/1/64. Elsie Eraut notes that Morris delivered a lecture course at Manchester School of Art - Elsie Eraut, 'Embroidery in the Twentieth Century', *Embroidery: The Journal of the Embroiderers' Guild*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (September 1933), p. 4-5.
[29] *Leicester Technical and Art School Reports, 1899-1906*, De Montford University Special Collections, D/008/A/002.
[30] *Hammersmith School of Art, Advisory Sub-Committee Minutes, 1910-1911*, London Metropolitan Archives, LCC/EO/HFE/07/010, entries for 18 July 1910, 7 November 1910 and 5 December 1910.
[31] Ibid., entries for 7 November 1910 and 16 January 1911.

institution.[32] She did provide any teaching at the school during this tenure except for two special lectures on the topic of embroidery, which she delivered during the 1914-15 academic year.[33]

Like museums, these schools were key centres in Morris's networks and places in which she worked alongside and with leading Arts and Crafts practitioners. For example, her relationships with staff and students at Birmingham and Leicester led to noted collaborative textile projects, and, like Morris, Christie, a fellow authority on embroidery, delivered two special lectures at Hammersmith on the subject of 'English Medieval Embroideries'.[34]

Beyond art school settings, Morris lectured widely. She spoke at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, Society of Arts, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Women's Guild of Arts, the Viking Society, Exeter College, Oxford University, Girton College, University of Cambridge, and unspecified locations in Walthamstow, Tunbridge Wells, Burford, Yorkshire and Wales. More well-known is the lecture tour she undertook in the United States of America between 1909 and 1910. A published lecture programme details the subjects on which she spoke: jewellery, medieval embroidery, pageantry and the masque, historic costume, design in dress, symbols and patterns, pattern design, and embroidery stitches.[35] Lectures were illustrated with lantern slides, which were transported in wooden carry boxes (fig. 1.3). Four of these boxes survive today.[36] These comprise 180 glass slides grouped into the categories 'Mediæval Embroidery', 'Costume & Jewellery' and 'Iceland'. However, the slides and their corresponding boxes have been muddled up, and it is likely that slides are missing.

As with her publications, the content of these slides is varied. Among them are images of *Opus Anglicanum* and medieval ecclesiastical embroideries, including copes, chasubles, orphreys, and panels with appliqué and raised gold work; Italian lace and woven fabrics; Iranian embroidered patchwork; German whitework embroidery; British and French medieval tomb effigies; medieval necklaces, rings and brooches; gemstone faceting diagrams; prints; illuminated manuscripts; and paintings produced in Europe from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Also featured are contemporary textiles made by Morris as well as those made by Christie. Many of the artworks reproduced in her lecture slides are illustrated and discussed in her publications; in several cases, the

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[32] In the spring of 1920, Morris was re-appointed to the advisory sub-committee for the 1920-21 academic year, see: *Hammersmith School of Arts and Crafts, Advisory Sub-Committee, 2nd November 1914 to 19th April 1920*, London Metropolitan Archives, LCC/EO/HFE/07/012, entry for 19 April 1920. After this date, Morris does not appear in the school's surviving records; these records, however, are incomplete. It is possible that she continued to serve as a member of the sub-committee for a period after 1921. Morris's role at the school would have certainly terminated by the autumn of 1923, when she moved away from London to settle permanently at Kelmscott Manor.

[33] *Hammersmith School of Art, Advisory Sub-Committee Minutes, 1911-1914*, London Metropolitan Archives, LCC/EO/HFE/07/011, entry for 23 March 1914. Morris was paid £2 2s per lecture.

[34] Ibid., entry for 12 January 1914. Like Morris, Christie was paid £2 2s per lecture.

[35] William Morris Gallery, S4.4.8, J910.

[36] Art Workers' Guild, AWG/5/6/14, AGW/5/6/15, AWG/5/6/29 and AWG/5/6/30. Morris owned additional boxes of slides; in one extant box is a hand-written note listing at least six boxes, covering further subjects such as pageants and patterns, which correspond to the USA tour lecture programme.

very same images are used. These iterations indicate that her publications and lectures were aligned formats of transmission through which she communicated to different audiences her instruction and commentaries on historical and contemporary art production.

Morris's public engagement also included participation in conferences. In 1899, she spoke on the topic of 'Decorative Needlework' at the International Congress of Women. Her address distinguished four different groups of women makers who were producing embroidery in the late-nineteenth century: amateurs who worked at home; those who earned a living through needlework; gentlewomen who worked in philanthropic organisations; and those who had the time and financial means to develop a 'historical knowledge of the art' and to 'pursue it experimentally and on unwonted lines.'[37] Morris's high level of privilege enabled her to belong to the last category. She argued that women who made embroidery to earn a living should be paid fairly but she discouraged them from pricing their handmade wares competitively against machine-produced embroidery. Her intentions were noble: she believed in fair wage for labour and that good embroidery made by hand had greater artistic and economic value than mechanically produced work. But Morris was idealistic and not fully empathetic towards women who had no choice but to price their handwork competitively against machine work; while she had the financial means to purchase expensive, artistically made goods, others did not. In her paper, she also stated her desire for a more widespread appetite for hand-embroidered clothing embellishments and home furnishings, which would generate a healthier market for those seeking to earn a living through stitching by hand. Yet, while there was a market for this kind of embroidery, it was only available to elite monied classes who could supplement the earnings possible from this labour-intensive and time-consuming work with other forms of income or financial support.[38] This episode demonstrates some of the complexities and contradictions in how Morris (mis)understood the practical and idealistic parameters of making embroidery for women outside her privileged milieu.

Later, in 1917, Morris took part in *Problems of Reconstruction*, held at the Hampstead Garden Suburb.[39] This symposium was conceived as a meeting for the foremost thinkers of the time to address urgent issues of national and international post-war reconstruction. Topics concerning foreign policy, education, society, industry and the arts and crafts were discussed. Morris delivered a paper on the subject of 'Co-ordination of Arts and Crafts Societies'.[40] She mounted an argument on the need for greater cooperation in aims and practical effort among interconnected crafts societies in the early

[37] *Women in Professions,* 1900, p. 191.
[38] Morris authored a small article on 'Embroidered Sleeves' in *The Queen, the Lady's Newspaper and Court Chronicle,* Vol. XCIV, No. 2449 (2 December 1893), pp. 94-95. She took as her starting point the contemporary trend in women's dress for elaborately proportioned sleeves and she reflected whether these might accommodate a revival of the types of embroidery decoration used to adorn sleeves seen in historical fashions.
[39] *Problems of Reconstruction: Lectures and Addresses Delivered at the Summer Meting at Hampstead Garden Suburb, August, 1917, with an Introduction by The Marquess of Crewe, K.G* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1918).
[40] May Morris, 'The Co-ordination of Arts and Crafts Societies', in *Problems of Reconstruction,* 1918, pp. 303-315, at p. 304.

twentieth century. The 'scattering of the craft-worker' had, in her eyes, become a weakness of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and now a strong coordinated body of craftspeople was needed to 'reckon with… the modern world.'[41] She proposed the establishment of a cooperative network linking together guilds, workshops and independent makers. This would increase opportunities for rural craftworkers, not just those within metropolitan locales, and allow knowledge, expertise and expenses to be shared.[42] Furthermore, she saw this type of coordination as a means of realising large scale, public arts and crafts projects that would meet the demands of reconstruction. To her audience, she asked:

> Can you not imagine, too, the splendour of life, the splendour of civic art, when, under some practical grouping of building and the crafts, swift, intelligent labour would be available for great public decorations, with the least possible delay, the least possible expenditure on unnecessary preliminaries? Yes, indeed, the one way of producing artistic wares, as we moderns call them, on a grand scale, is the way of co-operation.[43]

In this hopeful address, Morris reiterated her belief in the necessity of the 'arts of life' which she had been advocating to smaller, specialist arts and crafts audiences in 1914 and 1915. She was also developing her thinking on collaboration, which was foundational to her vision for the Women's Guild of Arts and at the heart of the community art projects that she directed in Kelmscott. Yet, her proposal in 1917 for public decorations and the large-scale production of artistic wares seems unconventional for Morris. Typically, with a small team, she made art on a limited production scale for commercial profit, private commission or personal use; frequently, she produced individual, one-off pieces, especially from around 1900.

There were exceptions in this period. Coordinated effort was central to the knitting parties to make clothes for soldiers which Morris led in Kelmscott village. She also commandeered children in the village to stitch multiple reproductions of needlepoint table mats that she had designed, which were made to raise funds for the building of the William Morris Memorial Hall. However, her 1917 symposium address indicates that she became drawn to the idea of participating in large scale, public-orientated coordinated art projects. To her audience, she made known how 'firmly some of us [Arts and Crafts people] are convinced of the economy and efficiency of mutual aid in art production…that we are even now thinking out a scheme for the carrying on of handicrafts in the country with the least possible waste of man and woman power.'[44] This scheme was the 'Association of Architecture, Building & Handicrafts', proposed by Ernest Gimson (1864-1919) in 1916.[45] The physical base of this

[41] Ibid., p. 307.
[42] Ibid., p. 308.
[43] Ibid., p. 308.
[44] Ibid., p. 307.
[45] Gimson proposed this scheme in letters to Henry Wilson written in 1916. A typescript manuscript detailing the proposal was written on July 9th 1917. The 1916 letters and 1917 manuscript are now in the Henry Wilson Archive , HW-7, RCA/HW/1969, in the Royal College of Art. My thanks to Neil Parkinson for supplying me with scans of the letters and manuscript.

proposed art cooperative was to be a new village, built near the existing village of Sapperton in the Cotswolds, where Gimson and other Arts and Crafts figures had established workshops. Along with Mary Newill (1860-1947), Morris was to be one of two directors of needlework.[46] Owing to exorbitant costs and low supply of workers, the scheme never materialised. Yet, Morris's commitment to the project signals her belief in the generative potential of scaling up Arts and Crafts production to revive rural arts nation-wide and envisage artmaking as a grander, community-oriented endeavour. Like with her writing projects, as Morris's career progressed the scale of her ambition and enterprise increased.

Societies and Organisations

Societies and organisations were central to Morris's career. They afforded social networks, sites of exchange and collaboration between makers and ideas, opportunities for exhibiting, publishing and lecturing, and forums through which she channelled her passions and generated change. Among the most important of these was the Arts and Crafts Exhibiting Society (ACES). Established in 1888, this society provided a new home for displaying arts and crafts and became a crucible for the early development of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Morris's relationship with ACES lasted for over forty years. It was an organisation which meant a great deal to her and to which she felt she belonged. Collaboration, so dear to Morris, was a defining feature of the society's activities. Fellow members and participants were family, friends, colleagues and pupils. During her time as a member, the society saw a vast increase in women members and exhibitors, which brought Morris and her work in proximity to a range of notable women textile practitioners, some of whom are examined in this thesis.[47] She was the first woman on the society's committee, eventually rising to vice-president, and was a leading voice in the organisation's exhibition, publication and lecture programmes. Her regular participation in ACES exhibitions boosted her profile and reputation as a designer and maker. Yet, while productive, her relationship with ACES was, at times, strained. For instance, Morris's exacting standards and unforgiving temperament resulted in dispute over exhibition displays that she had arranged.[48]

Less widely known is Morris's involvement with the Society of Women Artists. She participated in their annual exhibitions only three times, in 1896, 1928 and 1932.[49] Her review of the 1896 exhibition is nonetheless important as it contains her earliest critical engagement with gendered display practices. While she found that some of the exhibits too strongly imitated historical styles and

[46] Ernest Gimson, 'The Association of Architecture, Building & Handicrafts', p. 6, Royal College of Art Archive.
[47] This increase has been charted by Linda Parry in *Textiles of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), p. 25.
[48] May Morris to Gordon Bottomley, 7 Jan 1923, British Library, ADD Ms 88957/1/70/ff. 152-153.
[49] Charles Baile de Laperrière, ed., *The Society of Women Artists Exhibitors, 1855-1996: A Dictionary of artist and their works in the Annual Exhibitions of The Society of Women Artists*, Vol. 3, L-R (Calne, Wiltshire: 1996), p. 157.

were thus weak in design quality, she praised the exhibition overall, which inspired her with the hope 'that the amateurishness of women's work may soon become a thing of the past, giving place to a certain individuality – a certain sense of responsibility, I should say – in the production of handwork.'[50] She concluded her review by asking whether the Society of Lady Artists, as it was then known, would become the Society of Women Artists, signalling her desire for the quality of art not to rest on the 'division of the sexes "men" and "ladies."'[51] Work described with the adjective "ladies" carried associations of amateurishness, implied a lack of intellectual rigour and framed artistic assessment within patriarchal notions of femininity. Morris's resistance to the term and desire for women's artworks to be taken seriously in the mid-1890s was a precursor to her radical founding of an arts guild for women in first decade of the twentieth century.

In 1899, as Morris had hoped, the Society of Lady Artists changed its name to the Society of Women Artists. In the same year, she joined the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). This had been established in 1877 by William and others in response to the type of destructive restoration applied to historic buildings. Morris responded to ancient buildings with great feeling. She believed in the necessity of their preservation in order to retain the beauty of the pastoral landscape and sustain the spiritual health of the 'wayfarer' who journeyed through it, as expressed in a paper she delivered to the society in 1900.[52] She regularly donated to its fundraising campaigns for preservation projects. She also took a keen interest in buildings, mostly churches, within the Cotswolds and its surrounding counties, as well as those she visited whilst holidaying in England, Wales and Scotland.[53] Her correspondence with the society shows her concern with the material condition of buildings (rot, staining, cracks etc.) as well as the social roles they played in the settings of rural life. Like many of her Arts and Crafts associates, she romanticised ancient buildings as representative of an ideal and unspoilt rural past; she wanted them to remain unchanged and disliked repair work that looked too modern.[54] Morris's involvement with SPAB should be recognised as one branch of her antiquarian and archaeological interests; another is her membership of the Egyptian Exploration Fund, to which she subscribed for over ten years.[55] These interests were important in how

[50] May Morris, 'Handicrafts in Suffolk-Street', *The Building News and Engineering Journal,* Vol. LXX, No. 2144, Friday 7 February 1896, p. 195.
[51] Ibid., p. 196.
[52] *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, The General Meeting of the Society; Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Committee; and Paper ready by Miss May Morris,* June 1900.
[53] Morris's correspondence appears in the files of following buildings in the SPAB archive: St George's, Kelmscott, Oxfordshire; St Oswald's, Widford, Oxfordshire; Farringdon Town Hall, Farringdon, Oxfordshire; Radcot Bridge, Oxfordshire/Berkshire border; St John the Baptist, Inglesham, Wiltshire; St Mary's, Fairford, Gloucestershire; Bath Abbey Church House, Bath, Somerset; St Mary the Virgin, Chesterblade, Somerset; St Mary's, Honeychurch, Devon; St Nectan's, Hartland, Devon; St Michael's, Chagford, Devon; St David's Cathedral, St David's, Pembrokeshire; Mwnt, Church of the Holy Cross, Cardigan, Ceredigion; and St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall, Orkney.
[54] May Morris to Thackery Turner, 16 June 1932, SPAB Archive, Inglesham Church, Wiltshire, GB 2236 SPAB/CWK/1/303.
[55] Egyptian Exploration Fund, *Annual Reports,* London, 1900-1912. Morris is listed as a subscriber from 1900 to 1912.

they shaped the ways she conceptualised the past and valued materials like stone, fibre, wood, glass and metal. Deep thinking about these categories and their iterations across time and place recur throughout her writings and were crucial tools in her analyses of the making and meaning of art (see chapters two and four).

The establishment of the Women's Guild of Arts (WGA), which Morris co-founded in 1907, is justly recognised as one of her greatest legacies. In accounts of the Guild's history, little is mentioned of her co-originator, the embroiderer Mary Elizabeth Turner (1854-1907), who died in the same year as the Guild's foundation. While Turner was older than Morris, both women had been colleagues in Arts and Crafts circles for nearly two decades prior to 1907. Since 1890, Turner had regularly exhibited at ACES exhibitions and, alongside Morris, contributed to ACES publications in the 1890s. The formation of the WGA under their leadership was, as Zoë Thomas has described, 'a revolutionary moment for women art workers in England'.[56] Women had been excluded from male-only organisations like the Art Workers' Guild from its foundation in 1884. The WGA, in sharp contrast, provided its women members opportunities to lecture, give expert technical demonstrations and organise exhibitions. Above all, it was a space of sociability and collaboration where members gathered to support, debate and inspire as they strove to raise the professional profile of women art and craft workers in the twentieth century. Morris was regarded as the Guild's 'beloved and honored [sic] leader' and driving force.[57] She served as its President and Honorary Secretary, delivered annual addresses, and gave lectures on topics of medieval embroidery, historical jewellery, pageants, patterns and symbols, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, and William Morris.

The purpose of the WGA took on a profound urgency as the First World War broke out in the summer of 1914. As she journeyed through London, Morris was deeply shaken by the sights and sounds of people differently tense, silent, restless and noisy, and especially the 'solitary women…rolling wildly.'[58] She found 'the daily misery of news of death and torture on every side' hard to bear.[59] She did not support the war and described it as a distortion of civilisation. Yet, she understood it to be a reckoning for the aims of the Arts and Crafts Movement. In her 1914 WGA chairman's address, she asserted that the making of art was now more vital than ever as it offered a means to overcome the horrors of war and rebuild a future society based on values of community and collective endeavour, which lay at the heart of the Guild: 'such a moment is no time to deny or ignore the Art that is the flower of man's life upon the earth: it is rather the time to affirm or to show our belief in the Beauty of Life.'[60] Later in 1916, as the war continued, she reiterated this view more

[56] Zoë Thomas, *Women Art Workers of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (Manchester: Manchester University Pres, 2020), p. 33.
[57] Ethel Everett to Mary Annie Sloane, 8 November 1938, Arthur Halcrow Verstage Collection, William Morris Society, VER/4/4.
[58] Ibid.
[59] May Morris to Harold Pierce, 20 August 1915, William Morris Gallery, S4.4.12.
[60] Draft Chairman's address, 1914. Hand-written by May Morris. Women's Guild of Arts Archive, William Morris Society, WGA/1/1.

forcefully: 'in the midst of death and destruction there is something within us that calls for the splendour of life, that claims to do service, to create beauty, to justify the gift of life itself.'[61] These are some of her most powerful assertions of the meaning and value of artmaking.

Exhibiting

Exhibiting work was a consistent practice of Morris's career. Venues varied in focus, scale and location, from intimate shows held in private homes to mass-audience international exhibitions staged in Britain, Europe and Oceania (fig. 1.4). She exhibited most frequently at ACES exhibitions, showing a total of ninety-six exhibits across thirteen shows, between 1888 and 1926. The artworks Morris submitted to these exhibitions demonstrate the variety of her creative output. Her embroidered textiles included portières, curtains, bed hangings and bedcovers, panels, tablecloths, cushion covers, bags, card cases, book covers, figure pieces and item of dress. She also exhibited petitpoint needlework and tapestry, as well as jewellery made with beads, metals and precious stones.

Almost all the exhibitions in which Morris participated across her career were mixed-media and mixed-gender; the exceptions were the three Society of Women Artists shows (1896, 1928 and 1932), the *Embroidery and Needlework* competition exhibition in Glasgow (1900), a joint exhibition (1905) with bookbinder and WGA member, Katherine Adams (1862-1952), and Morris's solo exhibition at the Willow Brook Company in New York City (1910).[62] Her eagerness to display her work alongside a range of media and makers was another reflection of her support for collective endeavour in the making and meaning of art. Furthermore, she was keen to partake in shows in which an artwork was judged on its artistic qualities, not the gender of its maker. Quality was essential, and she did not look favourably on the display of weak design and poor execution.

Select pieces of embroidery, which Morris finely stitched with luxury materials, were repeatedly displayed. One example is a white velvet cushion cover embroidered with silk and gold metal threads (fig. 1.5). This was shown at the Glasgow exhibition in 1900 and the eighth ACES exhibition in 1906. The introduction to the Glasgow exhibition catalogue thanked Morris for the generosity of her loan, which suggests that her submission was not for the competition but as a sample of embroidery whose quality was already well-established, and likely lent on request. Indeed, the introduction highlighted Morris's entire oeuvre as representative of 'the high artistic character' of contemporary embroidery,[63] and proceeded to quote from Ellen T. Masters's account of an embroidered panel Morris had designed and made:

> "The *tout ensemble* is nearly perfect, and shows that Miss Morris has embibed [sic] much of the true spirit following the example of conscientious execution set by the old experts in the art. The whole of

[61] Chairman's Address, 1916, Printed. Written by May Morris. Women's Guild of Arts Archive, William Morris Society, WGA/1/1.
[62] *Embroidery and Needlework. Exhibition and Competition* (Glasgow: Robert Anderson, 1900). Uniquely, this was the only exhibition exclusively dedicated to textiles in which Morris participated.
[63] Ibid., p. 7.

> the work is done with coarsely twisted silk, scarcely any of which appears on the wrong side. The panel should be lived with to be thoroughly appreciated, new beauties being discovered continually."[64]

Here, Morris was praised for successfully achieving the aims of the art which she steadfastly pursued – that of making new work in the spirit of historical precedents.

In addition to regularly submitting artworks for show, Morris was frequently involved in the planning and arrangement of exhibition displays. She was part of the selection and hanging committee for the seventh, eighth and tenth ACES exhibitions (1903, 1906 and 1912). She was also an exhibitor, member of the consultative committee and catalogue essay contributor for the Ghent International Exhibition in 1913.[65] This exhibition was a historic moment for the display of British arts and crafts on an international stage and showcased the flourishing production of women's art and craftwork in this period. Fellow exhibitors included Morris's former pupils, collaborators, and colleagues Maude Deacon (dates unknown), Lily Yeats (1866-1949), Ellen Wright, Christie and Mary Newill, as well as leading textile practitioners to whom she was connected through her networks and mutual organisations. These included painter and textile artist Dorothy Larcher (1884-1952), spinner and weaver Annie Garnett (1864-1942) and multi-media artist Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh (1864-1933). The exhibition demonstrated the broad reach of the Arts and Crafts Movement and its interlacing with municipal and regional art organisations. Among the exhibitors were the London Century Council Camden School of Art, Birmingham Municipal School of Art, The Buckinghamshire Lace Association, The Brighton Guild of Applied Art, The East Devon Lace Industry and The Royal Irish Industrial Association.

Morris saw the Ghent exhibition as a success, and felt this was duly acknowledged when the British Arts and Crafts section in Ghent was shown the following year at the Exhibition of British and Irish Decorative Arts at the Louvre, Paris. She travelled to Paris to oversee the installation of the 'William Morris' room, with which she was pleased. It was:

> Hung round with tapestry – three walls the whole Arthur series (hung backwards, by the bye!) the 'Lion' tapestry below, one end, & 'Love & the Pilgrim' & the 'Rose' on the window side. One end the Wardrobe against the Dragon hanging – It is all superb – so simple and dignified. The Arts Decoratifs [sic] people are delighted – quite excited over it. They had almost doubled the length of our room, so that the tapestrys [sic] are all a magnificent ensemble. How sensible these French are…[66]

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[64] Ibid., p. 7. Quoted from Ellen T. Masters, *The Gentlewoman's Book of Art Needlework* (London: Henry and Co., 1892), p. 59.

[65] Board of Trade, *Ghent International Exhibition: Catalogue of the British Arts and Crafts Section* (London: Board of Trade Exhibitions Branch, 1913). Morris lent a fire screen of a version of her design known as *Maids of Honour* and embroidered by her and Maude Deacon (p. 25); a cushion she designed and, along with pupils, executed (p. 79); and a version of William's design *Acanthus* (V&A: T.66-1939), which she and her pupils stitched. (p. 111). Also exhibited was a version of her design *Fruit Garden*, executed by Theodosia Middlemore (V&A: CIRC.206-1965) (p. 113).

[66] May Morris to Emery Walker, 19 April 1914, William Morris Gallery, S4.4.10, J423.

For Morris, the exhibition 'made one hope for great things for the future of the Arts and Crafts movement'.[67]

At the eleventh ACES exhibition (1916), she exhibited embroidery and jewellery, and textiles that others made to her designs were shown as well. Additionally, she jointly arranged a room display with her friend and colleague Ernest Gimson,[68] and the WGA furnished a 'lady's bedroom'. The latter featured textiles including a set of bed curtains that Morris designed and, with others, embroidered.[69] The exhibition was ambitiously staged despite the war to affirm the values of art making in times of crisis. Morris told the WGA how she hoped that through the 'series of such shows as we have had this autumn the public will become familiarized with the possibilities of co-operative and communal art, and will come to feel that it is the natural and integral part of civilized life.'[70] Morris was being political here. The making of art was envisaged as an alternative to the nature and consequences of war, which fractured communities, catalysed discord and distorted civilised society.

Morris and the Global

Across all the contexts and forms of enterprise examined in this chapter, references to a global range of artworks and historical sources abound. The purview of Arts and Crafts organisations like SPAB and the WGA was not restricted to a single, nationally-define geography; SPAB's campaigns addressed the built cultural heritage of Germany, Italy and Egypt; and the WGA's lecture programme encompassed topics on Greek coins, Post Impressionism, German Arts and Crafts, Persian painting and Serbian home industries, to name but a few. Throughout her publications, Morris discussed historical textiles from across the globe. In her first article (*Hobby Horse*, 1888), she describes chain stitch embroidery made in Goa, India, specifically for a Portuguese export market, as well as a nineteenth-century Resht (Iranian) embroidered patchwork from her personal textile collection (fig. 1.6).[71] Hereafter, her writings examine British homespun linens, Fair Isle knitting, *Opus Anglicanum*, ancient Egyptian patchwork, Coptic textiles, Peruvian and Sicilian weavings, Spanish, German, Italian, Byzantine, Iranian, Indian, Chinese and Japanese embroidery, and Icelandic, Saracenic, Turkish and Bulgarian textiles. Many corresponding examples of these are found in Morris's library

[67] Draft Chairman's Address, 1914, Handwritten by May Morris.
[68] *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Catalogue of the Eleventh Exhibition, The Royal Academy, Burlington House, 1916* (London: Chiswick Press, 1916), p. 207.
[69] The bed curtains were made collaboratively by May Morris, Mary Newill, Dora Webb, G. Cattell, A. B. Simpson, Isobel Catterson-Smith, Mrs Moore, Nan Hornby, M. Dalton and Wilhelmina Edelstein.
[70] Chairman's Address, 1916, Printed. Written by May Morris. Women's Guild of Arts Archive, William Morris Society, WGA/1/1.
[71] May Morris, 'Chain Stitch', *Hobby Horse,* Vol. 3 (1888), p. 27. As regards the Indian embroidery, Morris was mistaken in her view that this was produced in Goa; it is now understood that the type of textiles she described – 'great hangings and coverlets…[stitched] entirely with a fine chain-stitch in one coloured silk, generally yellow' (p. 27) – are embroidered quilts known as colchas and were made in Bengal for a European export market. Morris noted that the V&A 'owns several fine examples of this [type of] work' (p. 27). One of these was a fine seventeenth-century colcha (V&A: 616-1888), which was owned by her father before he bequeathed it to the museum in 1886.

of photographic reproductions and the slides that she used for teaching and lecturing. Beyond textiles, her writings (both published and unpublished) refer to French medieval sculpture, European churches, Egyptian mosques and metalwork, Coptic and Byzantine jewellery, Persian ceramics and carpets, and Chinese and Japanese paintings, among others.

These objects and categories were not idle allusions but fundamental elements in Morris's understanding of the history of art as well as sources with which contemporary designers and makers needed to engage. She encountered and studied these in her family's art collections and on visits to exhibitions, religious treasuries and museum collections in and beyond London. She also saw, recorded and acquired these materials during her international travels. For instance, Morris bought North African textiles and Egyptian dress-making fabrics in Cairene bazaars in 1896-1897.[72] During her USA lecture tour in 1909-1910, she made a special visit to see the collection of Chinese and Japanese art assembled the American industrialist Charles Lang Freer (1854-1919). Whilst holidaying in Spain and the Balearic Islands in 1913, she purchased a white mantilla and picked up reproductions of Byzantine art. Morris was especially invested in the textile furnishings and clothing she encountered during her three visits to Iceland (1924, 1926 and 1931). She bought, commissioned and was gifted animal skin shoes and knitted and woven textiles.[73] She recorded textiles that she saw in the museum in Reykjavík and whilst staying with locals during countryside treks (fig. 1.7).[74] In the diary she wrote up after the first trip, she described the decor of a rural house:

> All wooden fittings to the house: the baðstofa a pleasant room with beds round and a loom by one of the 2 windows. Window curtains of hand woven cotton with pretty striped pattern, the beds having a 'rúm-teppi' of red and black and pale buff. All home spun and woven of their own wool by Mrs Magnússon. She herself was charmingly dressed with embroidered boddice with gold lacings and eyelets. She showed us her winter curtains handsome ones with a blue and buff pattern; also a delicate knitted shawl and lovely wadmal light and soft close, some black, some moorit; also some squares sort of 'damask' in colours on black (see the coverlet Father brought back) and some 'floss' work (raised and cut).[75]

While these travels were largely touristic, they nonetheless offered Morris first-hand opportunities to learn about the arts, histories and languages of these locations. In turn, these experiences provided occasions for her to think critically about art and its making. Such was the case in 1894, when Morris

[72] Thomas Cooper, 'May Morris, Egypt and Coptic Textiles', *Art History*, forthcoming 2024/2025.
[73] In her 1924 diary, Morris notes that she bought skin shoes and a 'gay teppi' of green and red (14 July); admired a shawl 'of fairy-like texture, knitted of graded colours of morrit and grey and white – a choice piece of handiwork' belonging to a woman called Frú Ólina, who subsequently gifted it to Morris (30 July & 1 August); and commissioned a knitted shawl (26 August), see May Morris, Iceland Diary 1924, Society of Antiquaries, unpaginated.
[74] In her notebook for the 1924 trip (British Library, Add. 45348), Morris sketched examples of women's national dress, noting their Icelandic names: peysuföt, skautbúningur and skotthúfa – my thanks to Emily Lethbridge for helping me identify these textiles. In her notebook for the 1926 trip (WMS, VER/1/44) Morris noted that she saw some textiles in 'R[eykjavík]. Museum'.
[75] Morris, Iceland Diary 1924, 4 July, pp. 57-60.

visited the Basilica of San'Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna, Italy. She was awed by the decorative programme and colour arrangements of the church's mosaic interior:

> Just imagine a border of white lambs and lilies alternately, bounding in the mass of the green world, all beflowered and planted with fruitful trees; and then imagine the great globe of Heaven in the centre, intensely blue and sprinkled with gold stars and surrounded by a jewelled border; imagine this hanging in luminous gold flecked with clouds, from which the hand of the unseen Deity is stretched, threatening, soothing, blessing and dooming worshipping humanity.[76]

Morris deployed this intense, phenomenological episode in her writing to make a case for the powerful roles that animals and symbols played in design composition.

Morris thought about makers, markets and aesthetic taste in global terms. In 1893, she considered textiles made in 'the East', and noted that:

> Certainly, nowadays the Oriental craftsmen have fallen upon evil times: their silks and wools are sent to England to be dyed; they consult foreign taste in the production of their goods, and, in short, the European market has reached the East, with its large and imperative orders, its competition and lowering of prices, and good-bye to the meditative production of sumptuous mosque carpets and beautiful embroideries.[77]

This signals her knowledge that an international market was cutting prices and reducing the value of artmaking for craftspeople abroad. Yet she did not inveigh against the impact of this market on the livelihood of its producers. Rather, her critique focused on issues of material process and aesthetic taste.

This commentary on the declined condition of the 'Oriental craftsmen' in the late nineteenth century was not an isolated reflection on an othered group of makers in Arts and Crafts discourse. Indeed, foreign makers were routinely imagined in publications and addresses throughout the period. In 1882, Lewis Foreman Day (1845-1910) reflected on the failings of 'oriental' imitation pottery produced by British manufacturers, who did not understand 'the secrets of the superiority of Eastern ware'.[78] A few years later, Walter Crane (1845-1915) noted how the arts and handicrafts had not faced such a profound severance in continental Europe as they had done in industrial England: 'However degraded the taste of the designer, or debased in type the design, the Frenchman or the Italian designer remained thoroughly in touch with the craftsman, and understood the technical conditions of the work'.[79] And in 1918, Ethel Mairet (1872-1952) argued for obedience within Guild-based artworkers, citing historical paradigms in 'the hereditary craft systems of Egypt or India'.[80] These cases were deployed as comparative examples, which Arts and Crafts practitioners hoped contemporary

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[76] Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – XI, Animals and Symbols', 1894, p. 66.
[77] May Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – V, Gold Work', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXV, No. 2031 (December 8 1893), pp. 744-745, at p. 744.
[78] Quoted in Mary Greensted, ed., *An Anthology of The Arts and Crafts Movement: Writings by Ashbee, Lethaby, Gimson and their Contemporaries* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2005), p. 10.
[79] Ibid., p 19.
[80] Ethel Mairet, *An Essay on Crafts & Obedience* (Ditchling: Douglas Pepler, 1918), pp. 3-4.

designers, makers and manufacturers in Britain would draw upon to raise design standards, repair the dislocation between the designer and the maker and find meaning in cooperative art production.

Unpublished archival materials reveal that Morris imagined herself as a non-European in instances of cultural cross-dressing. In 1897, she was photographed in her home in London wearing textiles that she had purchased in Egypt (fig. 1.8). In this image, she wears four textiles: a striped gown with open-seam sleeves; a dark cloak; a wool and metal scarf, which hangs around her neck; and a lighter veil, secured over her head. While her lowered gaze avoids that of the viewer, the specific implication of this indirect address remains elusive; Morris frequently avoided the direction of the camera's lens when being photographed. However, in this photograph we see a self-assurance in her upright posture and a demonstration of sartorial decision-making, as textiles are arranged on the body to display woven and embroidered embellishments. Concordant with Morris's Western orientalist self-fashioning as an Egyptian figure, the textiles are subsumed into a British domestic interior whose white painted Georgian architrave and moulded door, Morris & Co. *Apple* wallpaper and framed antique maps signal respectability, worldliness and control.

Later, in 1918, Morris was photographed at an exhibition of needlework made by soldiers wounded in the First World War (fig. 1.9).[81] She stands behind a panel of silk embroidery and looks out at the viewer. Morris usually wore her curly hair in a centre parting and tied up at the back in a low bun. Here, however, her hair is coiffured and ornamented with sprigs of blossom in a manner imitative of Japanese women's *Nihomgami* hairstyle. Yet, Morris's experiments in cultural cross-dressing were rare. As theatre and pageants were among her passions, these instances in which she embodied North African and quasi-Japanese identities could perhaps be understood as experiments in performance, which responded to the foreign textiles, modes of dress and customs that she encountered and imagined at home and abroad.

To acknowledge these invocations of global makers, systems of production, markets and cultural identities within Morris's career is to read against the grain of dominant narratives that have been constructed through existing scholarship on the Arts and Crafts Movement. These assert the Movement to be British in its origin and core identity and situate Britain as its most compelling setting, even when the transnational spread of the Arts and Crafts has been demonstrated.[82] Taking

[81] XXX/LON/1-8, Newspaper Cuttings & Kelmscott Fellowship, Lily Huntly Archive, Kelmscott Manor.

[82] For scholarship on the transnational spread of the Arts and Crafts, see: Karen Livingstone and Linda Parry, eds, *International Arts and Crafts* (London: V&A Publishing, 2005); Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Phaidon, 2006) and Julia Griffin and Andrezj Szczerski, *Young Poland: The Polish Arts and Crafts Movement, 1890-1918* (London: Lund Humphries, 2020). *International Art and Crafts* was the catalogue to a major exhibition of the same name, held at the V&A in 2005. In response to this exhibition (an another on the Arts and Crafts in Europe and America at the Los Angeles County Art Museum), Peter Cormack penned a review in *Apollo*, titled 'A truly British movement'. Here, he argued that the V&A exhibition was a missed opportunity to present a detailed study of the 'origins and development of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain', and that, without this, attempts to explore the movement's influence beyond Britain 'remains flawed and problematic.' Peter Cormack, 'A truly British movement', *Apollo*, Vol. 161, No. 518, (April 2005) pp. 48+. *Gale Academic OneFile*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A131607262/AONE?u=anon~64e57d06&sid=googleScholar&xid=64905fb0.

heed of the recent Arts and Crafts scholarship of Tom Crook, Imogen Hart and Jason Edwards as well as discourse within the discipline of art history, these nationally-defined claims require revision.[83] Contrary to broad opinion, from its beginnings the Arts and Crafts Movement was imbricated within a global, multi-directional circulation of ideas, materials, artworks and people. Mid-nineteenth-century British design reform, a key catalyst for the origins of the Arts and Crafts, was fuelled by competition and trade with foreign markets. In the making of their work, designers, makers and manufacturers used materials like cotton, silk, mahogany and indigo, which were procured and traded globally. Moreover, like Morris, dozens of practitioners quoted or took inspiration from a global range of artistic sources, particularly from Italy, Turkey, Iran, India and Japan. Countless examples populated the workrooms, homes, exhibition venues and arts organisations of Morris's career: from Morris & Co. designs copied from Italian and Turkish textiles (*Flowerpot* and *Rosebud*) and fabrics which reference foreign motifs, compositional structures and cloth types (*Utrecht Velvet*, *Snakeshead*, *Iris*, *Bluebell*, *India Chintz*, *Peacock and Dragon*, *Madras Muslin*, *Brocatel*);[84] through Philip Webb's Japanese-inspired mahogany furniture; and to Arthur Edward Henderson (1870-1956), Christina Herringham and Dorothy Larcher's copies of in-situ wall decoration from Christian, Islamic and Buddhist places of devotion in Turkey and India.[85] If not accessed via travel abroad or dealerships at home, these sources were abundant and readily available in museums like the V&A. As Julius Bryant has recently shown, the early development of this museum's collections was assisted by 'international

[Accessed: 15/04/2022] Also prompted by the same exhibition, *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society* felt that the focus of the exhibition required a special issue on British Arts and Crafts, see Alex Werner, 'Introduction', *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present*, No. 28, Arts and Crafts Issue (2004), p. 5. More recently, Alec Hamilton has argued that the 'Arts and Crafts was a deeply British phenomenon – before transatlantic flights, television and the internet, our Little Britain, despite any pretensions to internationalism and a taste for sketching tours of Italy, [which] looked not only inwards but backwards'. Alec Hamilton, *Arts and Crafts Churches* (London: Lund Humphries, 2020), p. 23.

[83] Tom Crook, 'Craft and the Dialogics of Modernity: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Late-Victorian and Edwardian England', *Journal of Modern Craft*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (March 2009), pp. 17-32. Crook proposes the Arts and Crafts as an alternative modernity, 'characterized by a multiplicity of "dialogs" between past, present and future; Europe and the rest of the world; and defining modern processes and counter-processes.' (p. 17) Imogen Hart and Jason Edwards, eds, *Rethinking the Interior, c. 1867-1896: Aestheticism and Arts and Crafts* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010). This volume 're-emphasises the local, European, Circum-Atlantic and imperial contexts of Aestheticism and the Arts and Crafts movement.' (p. 2). Imogen Hart and Dorothy Price, ''The Centre is Nowhere': British Art *and* the Global, *Art History*, Special Issue: British Art and the Global, Vol. 45, No. 3 (June 2022), pp. 454-471.

[84] *Flowerpot*, designed by William *c.* 1876, is 'based on two square, Italian seventeenth-century lacis-work panels acquired by the South Kensington Museum in 1875.', Linda Parry, 'Textiles', in Anna Mason, ed., *William Morris* (London: V&A Publishing, 2021), p. 288. The textile design *Rosebud* (V&A: E.60-1940), designed by John Henry Dearle *c.* 1900, is copied from a Turkish sixteenth-century lampas-woven silk, acquired by the V&A in 1877 (V&A: 1356&A-1877). For *Utrecht Velvet*, *Snakeshead*, *Iris*, *Bluebell*, *India Chintz*, *Peacock and Dragon*, *Madras Muslin*, *Brocatel*, see, Mason, ed., *William Morris*, pp. 294-316.

[85] Between 1895 and 1910, Henderson made tracings of Iznik tiles in the Mosque of Rüstem Pasa, Istanbul; in 1911, Herringham and Larcher, along with local artists, made copies of Buddhist frescoes in the Ajanta Caves, Maharashtra, India.

networks of colonial administrators, diplomats and expatriates who supported the museum as collectors, lenders and donors or as commissioned freelancing field agents.'[86]

Arts and Crafts and colonial interests were just as prominently intertwined in the British Empire Exhibition of 1924. This event has been neglected in literature on the Arts and Crafts, likely owing to the fact it took place after the First World War, which existing scholarship has generally assigned as the period in which the Movement declined. Yet Morris participated as an exhibitor in this event alongside a roll call of Arts and Crafts luminaries, including Grace Christie, Katherine Adams, Ethel Mairet, Christopher Whall (1849-1924) Edward Barnsley (1900-1987), Heywood Sumner (1853-1940), Henry Wilson (1864-1934) and Bernard Leach (1887-1979). 'Designed to display the Natural Resources of the various countries within the Empire, and the activities, industrial and social, of their peoples' and descending from nineteenth-century international exhibitions, this vast exhibition celebrated the natural and material wealth, industry, engineering and arts produced across the 'Dominions and Colonies' of the British empire. Among the exhibits were cotton and machinery from Australia; diamonds and 'Native Craft' from British Guiana; silks and mother of pearl from Burma; rubber and gems from Ceylon (Sri Lanka); and mahogany from Nigeria.[87] Indigenous peoples were displayed too, including 'Yemenite Filigree Workers' in the Palestine display and 'Nigerian Craftsmen at work' in the Nigeria exhibit.[88] Given the global entanglements that this chapter has described, it is perhaps not surprising to find this extensive participation of Arts and Crafts practitioners in an overtly imperialist exhibition, but a dark contradiction is revealed when this is considered more closely. While the Arts and Crafts Movement continues to be extolled for the ways in which its proponents responded to ethical shifts in the conditions and value of labour and ennobled the making of art, those same thinkers, designers and makers were complicit in the public staging and consumption of natural materials, manufactured goods and human labour produced and procured in foreign lands within capitalist, extractive, colonial economies.

These global entanglements frequently intersect with the much more widely understood engagement with the regional, local and vernacular in Morris's career and the Arts and Crafts more broadly. *The Homestead and the Forest*, designed by Morris and embroidered by her mother, Jane Morris (1839-1914), attests to the intermingling of the global and local within artistic production (fig. 1.10). This large embroidery was made with linen and silk, the latter of which was imported to and dyed in Britain. The outer border features verse quotations and proverbs stitched in four languages: Farsi, Italian, Latin and English. The principal scene depicts an expanse of hills and flowered meadows, populated with exotic animals, including a crocodile, elephant, giraffe and flamingo. In the centre lies the eponymous homestead, reminiscent of Morris's Oxfordshire home, Kelmscott Manor,

[86] Julius Bryant, *Enriching the V&A: A Collection of Collections (1862-1914)* (London: Lund Humphries, 2022), p. 79.
[87] *The British Empire Exhibition* (London: Fleetway Press, 1924), pp. 14-16, 20-21, 28 and 37.
[88] Ibid., pp. 35 & 37.

and bounded by a circular river. Anna Mason has pointed out that the textile's composition is evocative of medieval world maps and, specifically, the eleventh-century 'Creation' tapestry in Girona Cathedral, reproductions of which Morris owned.[89] While the embroidery was exhibited internationally in London and New York City, it developed an enduring association with Kelmscott Manor, where Morris showed it to visitors and retained it as a treasured possession until her death.

Similarly, Kelmscott Manor, Morris's temporary residence from the early 1870s and permanent home from 1923 to 1938, should be understood as a site in which the local and the global were intertwined. This rural seventeenth-century stone manor, nestled among elm and willow trees in a quiet village by the upper reaches the river Thames, was deeply loved by its Arts and Crafts occupants. Local craftsmanship inside the manor was documented in drawings and photographs, and its eastern facing was immortalised as the frontispiece to the Kelmscott Press edition of William's utopian novel *News from Nowhere* (1893). Not only was the manor emblematic of an old, unspoilt rural England, but also its surrounding village was located near the Cotswolds. This region became an important centre for the Arts and Crafts through the establishment of country-based workshops and guilds by leading figures of the Movement.[90] Both the Manor and its associated regional setting were at a spatial and temporal remove from the industry, modernity and grime of London.

And yet, as Morris had arranged them, the interior contents of the manor comprised something of an international exhibition in miniature. There is a degree of symmetry between the scope of the London-based museums described at the beginning of this chapter, which were so important to Morris, and the collection at Kelmscott. Indeed, albeit with reference to the 'relics' of William and artworks authored by Morris family members, Kathy Haslam, Julia Griffin and Imogen Hart have identified Morris as the manor's first curator.[91] Upon entering the Manor through the garden door and into the north lobby, Morris would have been greeted by a Persian wine jug and fringed rug, two 'Eastern' brass lamps, a gold lacquered chest, coconut mat and 'Benares' brass vase.[92] Stepping through to the panelled room off the lobby, she would have walked past two Chinese chairs with dragon medallions on their splats and two bronze Persian peacocks. Inside the room, the floor was layered with Persian rugs and runners, 6ft., 9ft. and 10ft. in size. Large ceramic and copper 'Oriental' dishes, 'Oriental' and Persian vases, and Venetian stemmed glasses were placed around the room. In the adjoining China pantry, further Venetian glassware, Egyptian Ushabti, Egyptian, Persian and

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[89] Anna Mason et al., *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer* (London: Thames and Hudson), p. 118. Morris's photographic reproductions of the Girona tapestry are in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
[90] Mary Greenstead, 'Nature and the Rural Idyll', in Livingstone and Parry, eds, *International Arts and Crafts*, pp. 92-107.
[91] Kathy Haslam, 'Our beloved Oxfordshire home': May Morris and Kelmscott' and Dudkiewicz, 'Memorialising her father's legacy', pp. 209-235 in Hulse, *May Morris: Art & Life*, 2017, pp. 191-208 and pp. 209-235; and Imogen Hart, 'May Morris, Dorothy Walker, and the Legacies of the Arts and Crafts interior', *Journal of Interior Design*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (December 2023), pp. 1-13.
[92] *Inventory and Valuation of The Furnishing Contents of the Residence, Oil Paintings, Books, Manuscripts, Silver, Plate, Jewellery, Personal and Miscellaneous Effects at Kelmscott Manor, Kelmscott, near Lechlade, Gloucestershire. The Property of the Late Miss May Morris*. William Morris Gallery, S4.4.8.

‘Eastern’ plates, and a twenty-three-piece set of painted ‘Oriental’ chinaware were stored. On the other side of the north lobby was the green room, which overlooked the west garden. This was Morris’s workroom. Its furnishings included a Turkish carpet, 10ft. Persian rug, carved Italian chest, ‘Oriental’ carved oak box, Indian pipe, Majolica bowl, brown and white skin rugs and two French ware jugs. Off the room was another China pantry, housing Flanders ware, Swedish and Venetian wine glasses, ‘Oriental’ China teapots, cups, saucers and plates, and Chinese vases. Further rooms were similarly decorated. In the dining room were Italian brass and copper pots, Persian carpets, and brown and white skin rugs. Upstairs, the bedrooms contained chintz hangings, Persian rugs, ‘Oriental’ chairs and lacquered boxes. Further pieces of Flanders, Chinese, ‘Oriental’ and Venetian ceramic- and glassware, Persian metalwork and Japanese Kakemono and Makimono filled the house.

In the context of this study, the global corpus of textiles present in the manor at the time of Morris’s death is noteworthy.[93] This collection included lengths of Harris Tweed, Shetland wool shawls, Scottish woollen curtains and a twisted weave shawl; three ‘peasant aprons’, possibly Icelandic; blue Russian textiles and a dress made of Russian fabric; Torchon lace; a Belgian rug; costume, a bolero, linen smocks and linen sleeves from Italy; a Spanish coloured shawl and embroidered black and gold net shawl; two lace Moroccan caps; Greek embroidered chairbacks; a Turkish hanging; a black and gold Egyptian overdress; and two Sudanese djibbah. There was a substantial group of textiles from India: a cotton bedspread, green Sari, embroidered blue scarf, red silk sash, crimson sash, white shawl, small shawl, tray cloth, rolls of spotted and striped muslin, striped mat, two ‘Dhurrah’, and five ‘Chuddah’ (one blue, one red, and two fawn in colour).[94] Additionally, there were a ‘Cashemere’ (sic) shawl and bodice, and there were chintz curtains, bed valances and chair covers, although their places of production are not indicated. Finally, there were lengths of Japanese embroidery and several Chinese textiles: an embroidered cloak, purse, samples of yellow brocade and two pieces of ‘Oriental’ embroidery.

It has been assumed that most of these textiles were acquired by William, but several were collected by Morris. For example, she purchased the lengths of Harris tweed in the Outer Hebrides in 1929, and it is likely that she bought the other Scottish textiles whilst travelling through parts of Scotland around this period. Similarly, it is probable that she acquired the Egyptian overdress and Sudanese djibbah during her trip to Egypt. Textiles such as the Harris tweed were collected by Morris as examples of regional art production. They were representatives of their own localities, and only became symptomatic of a global collection when they were brought to Kelmscott. While the provenance of other textiles from Kelmscott Manor remains unclear, this corpus of textiles should be recognised as a portion of Morris’s larger collection of research and teaching materials, which she

[93] *Kelmscott, Oxfordshire, Sale of a Large Portion of the Furnishings and Effects removed from Kelmscott Manor, The Home of William Morris*, William Morris Gallery, S4.4.8.
[94] A dhurrah, better known today as a dhurrie, is type of hand-woven rug or carpet. A chuddah is a large shawl or veil, worn head to foot by Muslim and Hindu women.

used in her writings, teaching and lecturing and as sources of reflection and inspiration for her own artistic practices.

Conclusion

Through examining some of the different contexts that were crucial to Morris, this chapter has presented an expanded and critically revised account of the artist's long and rich career. More specifically, it has advanced three strands of commentary. The first is a clearer picture of the scale of Morris's endeavours. Her relationships with museums served various purposes, facilitating vital access to artistic and literary resources, fostering networks and providing a site for Morris's legacy-building. Her extensive publication record was diverse in its content, audience and format. She lectured nationally and internationally on a breadth of topics and held a variety of roles in teaching institutions as a class teacher, advisor, inspector and board member. Throughout her career, she was actively engaged with multiple of societies and organisations, and she was enterprising in her roles within them as she exhibited her work, led decoration schemes, supported contemporary makers and promoted her views on the meaning and progress of art. Morris showcased her work in a wide range of exhibition venues and formats, displaying the breadth and inventiveness of her art. Many of her exhibited pieces were reproduced in the printed press, periodicals and book publications.

As her career developed, her ambition did not wane. 1896, the year in which Morris has been seen to have taken a step back, was, in fact, the beginning of the most entrepreneurial and courageous period of her life. Post 1896, Morris expanded her making practices, established a guild for women artists, broadened her horizons to North Africa, the United States of America and Iceland, successfully undertook ambitious publication projects, participated in debates about post-war reconstruction and committed energies to promoting, if not fully realising, innovative projects for the future of the Arts and Crafts.

The second strand concerns her relationship with the work and status of women artists. This is more complex than previous accounts have articulated. From the outset of her career, Morris supported women artists. She trained and supervised workers in the Morris & Co. embroidery workshop and collaborated with and exhibited alongside female family members, friends, colleagues, students and employees. She exhibited three times with the Society of Women Artists, whose members she believed deserved the status of women artist rather than lady artists. Her involvement with art schools influenced the provision and uptake of embroidery teaching, which was delivered by female teachers to a (mostly) female audience. On occasion, her privilege prejudiced her understanding of the economic disadvantages hand embroiderers faced against a market of mechanically-produced textiles. However, by the early twentieth century women's cooperation and peer support became fundamental to her artistic and intellectual activities.

The third strand is the theme of the global. Morris relied on artistic sources from across the globe, engaged with makers and markets abroad and assembled a collection of textiles that was

eclectic and far-reaching in its geographic scope. For the first time, this chapter has revealed the artist's participation in the British Empire Exhibition. The exhibition's elision of art and exploitation runs counter to the ways in which Morris and her Arts and Crafts peers proselytized meaningful labour as pleasurable, and the necessity of embedding artmaking into everyday life. The global entanglements of the Arts and Crafts as embodied in this 1924 exhibition were not new, however; from its beginnings, the Arts and Crafts Movement, and Morris too, were entangled in global imaginaries. Critical assessment of the artist's life and work must attend to these. The following chapters explore further the different ways in which Morris understood the global and the local and how they interlinked, overlapped and diverged in the making of art.

Chapter Two: Stitch

Introduction

In publications and lectures today on Morris's work, the exceptional standard of her stitching is highly praised. It is presented as evidence of her autographed hand, raising the market value of her work, and as an example of professional stitching, firmly distinguished from amateur needlework. This connoisseurial approach is limiting. It privileges technical excellence, reinforces a false binary of professional versus amateur and promotes the misunderstood construct of the designer/maker in the context of her embroidery production. This chapter advances a different approach to understanding stitching in the making of Morris's art. It looks closely at her stitching practice and compares the artefactual evidence of stitching executed by Morris, the Morris & Co. workshop, the firm's clients and women members of the Morris family. The comparison reveals the ways in which their stitching departed from the provisional guide of the drawn design and was highly inventive. These qualities, it is argued, have important implications for our understanding of the creative agency of the embroiderer and the construct of the designer/maker in the production of Arts and Crafts textiles.

The chapter then turns to engage critically with the diagrammatical and theoretical conceptions of stitching that Morris put forward in her publications, which are considered alongside texts published by her contemporary needlewomen makers and writers. This facilitates an evaluative discussion of Morris's relationship with leading practitioners of Art Needlework, and the points of confluence and divergence between them. This reveals some of the deeper meanings ascribed to stitching in the late nineteenth century and articulates in new ways the particulars of Morris's intertwined artistic practices and intellectual interests.

Setting to Work

We have a detailed picture of Morris's stitching practice though surviving photographs of her at work and her extensive writings, including the instruction provided in her book *Decorative Needlework* (1893). Before stitching could begin, the materials and tools were prepared for work. If a frame were used, this might be supported against a chair or table or, more conveniently, set in a stand, which freed both hands for stitching.[1] The frame was placed in a light-filled room, best near or below a window (fig. 2.1). To set the work in a frame, the raw edges of the ground fabric were cut evenly and hemmed to a stout webbing. Strings were threaded through the webbing and secured against the frame to stretch the ground fabric. Larger textiles could be handled with the aid of rollers. Care was taken to ensure the stretch was taut to aid regularity in stitching and a high standard of finish. Cheap lining muslin was sewn over the sections completed or those yet to be stitched to protect them from dust and

[1] May Morris, *Decorative Needlework* (London: Joseph Hughes, 1893), pp. 73-74.

dirt.[2] A smoothly rounded lower joist of the frame provided a comfortable arm support for both stitching and resting hands when work was paused to keep the ground clean (fig. 2.2). Threads were unwound from skeins and wound around cards or winders to prevent knotting. Floss silks were handled as little as possible as they could roughen quickly. For these, ivory or mother-of-pearl winders were recommended as they were 'smooth and clean, and keep the silk fresh.'[3] Metallic gold and silver threads were cut into strips for working in short lengths as they were prone to breaks and spoils, and kept covered from light.[4] Finally, threads were organised into colour groups and labelled.

With the frame set up and materials arranged, stitching could begin. Morris paid great attention to the properties of the thread (thin, thick, twisted, floss), how it was worked on the ground (loose or tight) and the visual effects of the stitches (matt or shiny).[5] Satin stitches densely worked in floss silks produced a smooth surface with an even shine. Floss silk threads could also be laid loosely on the ground in rows and couched with small perpendicular stitches at evenly placed intervals; the visual result is a gentle rippling in the laid threads set under a net of couching stitches. For broad areas of the design, the outlines were stitched first and then the infill stitches were worked inwards towards the centre. Stem stitch was a common choice for outlines, and long and short stitch, which could be worked closely or loosely to achieve varying degrees of density, was useful for filling in spaces.

The choice of stitches had to be considered in relation to the embroidery's function. Unlike satin stitch, which solidly filled the top and underside of the ground, darning stitch sat on the surface and was not durably tethered to the ground. It was therefore not suited to much wear through handling and use.[6] Like satin stitch, long and short stitches covered the front and back of the ground. This stitch quickly used up thread and therefore was best worked in wool as the large quantity of material used would have been costly in silk.[7]

Morris espoused working with a limited range of stitches as she believed that 'variety and effect are more honestly produced by good design and careful colouring'; she encouraged the embroiderer to use only one or two stitch types when working.[8] This view was in line with Art Needlework practitioners who, like Morris, regarded design as paramount and the 'soul and essence of beautiful embroidery'.[9] Most of her embroideries are worked within a small range of stem, chain, darning, long and short and satin stitches. These stitches could be roughly divided into framework and non-framework kinds. Darning, chain and other looped stitches were best done loose in the hand without a frame, although chain stitch could be worked on stretched fabric in a frame with a hooked

[2] Ibid., p. 74. Workshop employees also wore aprons.
[3] Ibid., p. 75. However, plain card or even recycled scraps of paper were used as winders; twisted silk threads belonging to Catherine Holiday are wound around invitations, postcards and printed grocery advertisements: V&A: T.123:1-20-1985. Holiday worked for Morris & Co. as an embroiderer.
[4] Ibid., p. 75.
[5] Ibid., p. 26.
[6] Ibid., p. 31.
[7] Ibid., p. 43.
[8] Ibid., pp. 77-78.
[9] Ibid., p. 79.

needle, which is known as tambour work.[10] Satin stitch could be worked in the hand or frame, while stem, tapestry, long and short, feather as well as couching and appliqué were for the frame. Fine work with metallic threads and jewels was to be executed in a frame too.

Decorative Needlework sets out the hierarchical values that the type and execution of the stitch establish. Morris categorised embroidery into two types: pictorial and decorative. In the former, the ground is entirely covered with stitches to resemble a painted picture; the ground is not visible and is subordinate to the stitches.[11] In the latter, the ground is 'ornamented with borders and designs more or less elaborate', and unworked sections were left visible.[12] Additionally, areas of the ground could be left intentionally visible *within* the stitched outlines and decoration. Here the ground is not subordinate to the stitching but has a key role in the embroidery's aesthetic programme.

Further hierarchies were established by Morris. Pictorial embroidery was usually carried out by professional workers and had more intellectual value.[13] Decorative embroidery, on the other hand, was a more popular type of embroidery and within amateurs' scope.[14] Anthea Callen has argued that this distinction betrays a conventional judgement of value on the relative intellectual content of pictorial versus decorative work, and that Morris therefore replicated a division between realistic pictorial painting and decorative embroidery.[15] Callen found that decorative embroidery is, ironically, more successful as it realises more fully a fundamental aim of the art form: to stitch a fabric surface with a design or decoration which complements the qualities of the ground. Meanwhile, pictorial embroidery is more removed from this aim as it covers the ground entirely. She concluded that Morris's use of the term 'intellectual' to describe pictorial embroidery alienated the type from the basic roots of the medium.

Yet Callen's conclusion suggests a meagre definition of what embroidery could be and simplifies Morris's writings on the values of different embroidery types. For example, darning stitch complicates these hierarchical values as it was used in both pictorial and decorative embroidery. In pictorial embroidery, darning stitch could be used to fill-in the background, often stitched in horizontal rows. According to Morris, this type of stitch did not have much artistic value. Her reasoning was that the visual effect of layered horizontal rows created by the dashed pattern of darning stitch resembles a woven warp/weft structure. This could be achieved through the weaving of the ground fabric itself and did not need to be attained through stitching.[16] There was a second type of darning stitch, however, which 'involves artistic knowledge in drawing lines and in shading

[10] Ibid., p. 77.
[11] Ibid., p. 11.
[12] Ibid., p. 11.
[13] Ibid., p. 12.
[14] Ibid., p. 12.
[15] Anthea Callen, *Angel in the Studio: Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement, 1870-1914* (London: Astragal Books, 1979), p. 114.
[16] Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, p. 27.

colours.'[17] This type did not build a horizontal weave structure but responded to the shapes and lines of the design: stitches followed the curves of leaves or branches expressing natural growth, or radiated outwards from the centre of a flower petal. Thus, intellectual pictorial embroidery could involve non-artistic stitches, while non-intellectual decorative embroidery could involve stitches worked with artistic knowledge.[18] Morris often used both kinds of stitching in the same embroidery (fig. 2.3).

I have argued elsewhere that intellect and mental faculties are required in the production of embroidery as the mind and body work together.[19] Building on recent work on intentionality in stitching by textile scholars, this argument is extended here as the creative agency of stitching is explored.[20] The process of stitching is more complex than scholars have hitherto acknowledged. In the context of Morris's textiles, an embroidered textile can often differ to varying degrees from its associated design, demonstrating that the process of stitching a design is not one of direct reproduction or copying. Rather, stitching is an *adaptation* of a design in which the worker's knowledge, ingenuity and invention are critical. To conceive of stitching in this way enables us to accord greater creative agency to the embroiderer. It also allows us to understand the variation we see across embroideries which are based on the same design as well as our expectations on the relationship between an embroidery and a design.

Agency in Stitching

On 26 February 1895 Morris delivered a lecture at the Society of Arts on medieval embroidery, focusing on *Opus Anglicanum*. This term refers to exceptionally fine embroidery produced in England during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For Morris, this type of needlework epitomised the best of historical embroidery. One of the qualities she admired so greatly in the finest *Opus Anglicanum* was what she regarded as its expression of 'the two opposing characteristics of the Gothic spirit, an eager boldness and a fanciful inventiveness and imagination'.[21] She showed lantern slides of embroideries to her audience, and asked them to note the 'extreme freedom' in the drawing of plant life and 'the rigidity which springs from the energy of life itself' seen in the embroideries. She intentionally alluded to the writings of John Ruskin, who for her was a significant intellectual

[17] Ibid., pp. 28-29.
[18] In her essay 'Of Embroidery' in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society catalogue of 1889, Morris described the effect of this second type of darning stitch as a sort of painting. *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, Catalogue of the Second Exhibition, 1889* (London: Chiswick Press), p. 72. In a later essay on embroidery, she also described the method of 'painting' with the needle in both darning and tapestry stitches, although she advised that it be used sparingly, see May Morris, 'Embroidery' in Arthur H. Mackmurdo, ed., *Plain Handicrafts: Being Essays by Artists Setting Forth the Principles of Design* (London: Percival & Co., 1892), p. 53.
[19] Thomas Cooper, 'Memory and Embodied experience in the Embroidery Practice of May Morris', *immediations*, No. 17 (2020), pp. 23-44.
[20] Joanna Amos and Lisa Binkley, *Stitching the Self: Identity and the Needle Arts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 3.
[21] May Morris, 'Mediæval Embroidery', *Journal of the Society of Arts*, Vol. 43, No. 2207 (March 8 1895), pp. 384-396, at p. 388.

touchstone. She referred to him as 'the master',[22] and, in a survey of nineteenth-century decorative arts in Britain, described his chapter 'The Nature of the Gothic' as 'one of the finest pieces of writing existing'.[23] In her Society of Arts Lecture and she invoked him directly:

> If I quote Ruskin's use of the word rigidity, it is because there is no other to explain the quality described by the master whose wonderful grasp of language has summed up for us the nature of Gothic for the first and last time. I feel sure, too, that you feel the difference between the 'freedom' of a naturalistic drawing of a rose, or a photograph with its plausible completeness, and the 'freedom' of a branch of rose or hawthorn fitted above a cathedral arch. The mason's intellectual effort in transposing his rose to the stone in fair order is worth more to us than dozens of branches 'thrown' – that, I believe, is the proper expression – on a sheet of paper by a clever student, or miles of 'effective' photography.[24]

Rigidity was one of the six characteristics of the Gothic, which Ruskin defines as a quality of energy 'which gives tension to movement, and stiffness to resistance'.[25] This flow of 'elastic tension' is revealed in both 'the whole structure and decoration of Gothic work':[26] the flowing lines of pillars soar into ribs and arches that bifurcate and spilt into fanning vaults; ornament writhes with energy, 'germinating into a blossom, and knitting itself into a branch, alternately thorny, bossy, & bristly, or writhed into every form of nervous entanglement'.[27] It seems obvious that Morris was attracted to rigidity when reading her descriptions on the qualities of good design for embroidery: she wants to see energy, vigour and natural growth. This can be achieved through general principles of variety and contrast, but also in the tension and weight distribution implied in the contours of a curving tendril.[28]

Like Ruskin, Morris urged designers to look closely at Gothic work, at 'the rose and vine-leaves on [its] stone and woodwork', in the pages of its illuminated manuscripts and on its embroideries.[29] Medieval Gothic art was a favourite of hers because it told her something of the maker's relationship with the natural world. In 1896, she reflected that, in general, her society preferred the 'ultra-refined' ornament of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, but she found that the period's 'beautifully-balanced curve and indefinite flowers tell us nothing [compared] to the bold free work of our real forefathers, with the fragrance of the wood and field upon it.'[30] She wanted art to say something about nature; in embroidery this could be realised in the evocation of the depicted plant's natural growth. We will return to this idea the chapter on design.

Morris invoked Ruskin to unpack how nature was adapted by the maker into material form and within the limitations of the medium and surface – the mason's chisel and stone above a cathedral

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[22] Ibid., p.388.
[23] May Morris, 'Decorative Arts, 1880-1885' in H. D. Traill and J. S. Mann, eds, *Social England: A Record of the Progress of the People,* Vol. 6, Section 2. (London: Cassell & Co., 1904), p. 635.
[24] Morris, 'Mediæval Embroidery', p. 388.
[25] John Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic* (London: Kelmscott Press, 1892), p. 82.
[26] Ibid., p. 81.
[27] Ibid., p. 82.
[28] Morris, *Decorative Needlework,* 1893, p. 101.
[29] May Morris, 'Handicrafts in Suffolk-Street', *The Building News and Engineering Journal,* Vol. LXX, No. 2144 (Friday 7 February 1896), p. 195.
[30] Ibid., p. 196.

arch, which we might equate to the embroiderer's needle, threads and ground fabric. This process demands knowledge and thought and produces work that is not mechanical but made with 'intellectual effort'. Throughout 'The Nature of Gothic', Ruskin was theorising an executor who thinks about the forms they produce and who uses their own wisdom, intuition and invention. Along the way, they make mistakes and imperfections, but Ruskin saw these as noble signs of life and liberty in opposition to flawless mechanical reproduction, which he regarded as a kind of slavery.[31] Morris, like Ruskin, envisaged the embroiderer as an executor who does not reproduce a design mechanically but who stitches with originality and personal expression. In her essay 'Of Embroidery', published in *Arts and Crafts Essays* (1893), she wrote: 'The latitude allowed to the worker; the lavishness and ingenuity displayed in the stitches employed; in short, the vivid expression of the worker's individuality, form a great part of the success of needlework.'[32] Later, in 1902, she stressed that 'Home-made needlework should be irresponsible, gay, a little absurd sometimes, and very personal.'[33] This ingenuity was facilitated by the embroiderer's selection of materials, colour scheme and palette, and their understanding, range and execution of stitches.

Morris's own creative agency is readily apparent in an altar frontal she stitched between 1898 and 1899, following a design produced by Philip Webb (figs 2.4 & 2.5). Webb's design provided written instructions for colouring. However, while she retained Webb's overall composition, she made various changes. He recommended that the diamond pattern of the outer border should be like 'glass jewels', coloured in a bright red, a green 'light and soft in colour' and a greyish blue. She met the jewel-effect brief but achieved this through her own colour scheme, which uses pink, a lighter pink and a light lemon. She also introduced a bright, emerald green, but this is used sparingly, appearing only eight times amongst the hundreds of tiny diamonds. Morris did follow Webb's notes for the blue and straw-coloured striped border, and she adhered to his suggestions for the middle border of leaves and flowers on a brown background. But where Webb's design employed a blue background for the five shields supporting the gold crosses, Morris worked the shields in silver silk floss to complement the gold laid work. The silver, in conjunction with the pinks and yellows used in the outer border instead of blue, red and pale green, lightens the whole scheme of the piece.

Webb did not specify the types of stitches to be used. Morris used long and short, stem, split stitches and French knots. She also used two types of couching, a method of embroidery in which stitches are worked over threads previously laid or stitched to the ground; these can be used to secure the previously placed stitches or embellish them. The oak leaves in the frontal's indentations are filled with floss silks laid flat in long rows on the ground and couched in Bayeux stitch, and the five gold crosses comprise metallic gold threads laid in dense snaking patterns, couched down with thin silk

[31] Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic*, 1892, p. 19.
[32] May Morris, 'Of Embroidery', in *Arts and Crafts Essays, by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, With a Preface by William Morris* (London: Rivington, Percival & Co., 1893), p. 213.
[33] May Morris, 'Line Embroidery', *The Art Workers' Quarterly. A Portfolio of Practical Designs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (October 1902), pp. 117-121, at p. 117.

threads. Of all methods of embroidery, couching befits the stitcher's ingenuity and personal expression as it allows for 'play of colour and invention and variety of stitching'.[34] It can range from simple to elaborate work and is infinitely variable. The variations of couching stitches seen in Arts and Crafts and Art Needlework embroidery attest to this, and these signal the capacity for the making of these textiles to engender pleasure and playfulness in free-hand stitching.

The current condition of the V&A altar frontal provides glimpses of the conceptual procedures of Morris's stitching process, as one of the silver shields is decayed and most of its silk stiches have disintegrated (fig. 2.6). Visible on the linen ground are stitching guidelines drawn by Morris. These do not appear on Webb's design and would have been drawn on the linen prior to stitching. These evidence her agency in making and understanding of how a design is best worked into an embroidery; here she uses a guide to work economically with costly materials and achieve an exceptionally even finish.

The interaction between the embroidery and the design after which it was made played out differently in each stitcher's work, and it is striking how multiple embroideries based on the same design vary in execution and aesthetic programme.[35] In the context of Morris's embroideries, it was more common for the stitching to depart from the provisional design on which it was based. Further, comparison of multiple versions of a range of kits and embroideries produced and sold by Morris & Co. reveals that it was the norm for the embroiderer(s) to adapt a design in an original and inventive scheme of stitches and colours.[36]

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[34] Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, 1893, p. 47.

[35] The stitching of *Westward Ho!* (William Morris Society: T177) by Jane differs from Morris's drawn design (William Morris Society: D59). While the design suggests blue-green and yellow colours for the under- and over-sides of the acanthus leaves, respectively, Jane stitched both the under- and over-sides in the same pink colour. She also stitched a chequerboard and striped border edging around the embroidery's perimeter, thus introducing a new element into the embroidery not present in the drawn design. Morris's Kelmscott and Melsetter bed hangings (Kelmscott Manor, Society of Antiquaries: KM233 and National Museums Scotland: K.2014.47.1&2) are based on the same design, but vary radically in execution. For a comparison of their differences, see: Cooper, 'Memory and Embodied experience in the Embroidery Practice of May Morris', pp. 35-37.

[36] In addition to the *Acanthus* examples discussed in this chapter, further evidence of variation across multiple stitched versions of the same designs is found in the versions of *Maids of Honour*, designed by Morris, in Kelmscott Manor, Society of Antiquaries (KM213), Art Gallery of South Australia (977A66), Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections (1909.7) and the William Morris Gallery (F368); *Vine Leaf*, designed by Morris, in the V&A (T.426-1993), Art Gallery of South Australia (20194A86) and Art Institute of Chicago (2018.844); *Fruit Garden*, designed by Morris, in the V&A (Circ.206-1965), Art Gallery of South Australia (20194A83) and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1983.160a-d); two versions of *Adelaide*, designed by Morris, in Art Gallery of South Australia (20194A84 and 20194A85); *Tudor Rose*, designed by Morris, in the V&A (T.61-1976) and the Rhode Island School of Design Museum (85.2000); *Lotus*, designed by Morris, in the V&A (T.364-1976.1&2) and Art Institute of Chicago (1918.298); *Olive and Rose*, designed by William, in the V&A (Circ.300-1960), Whitworth Gallery (T.1985.114), Wightwick Manor (NT1289262), Wallington (NT582942) and in a private collection (illustrated in Anna Mason et al., *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum/Thames and Hudson, 2017, p. 73); *Flower Pot*, designed by William, in the V&A (T.68-1939), William Morris Gallery (F154) and Standen (NT1215017); and *Rose Wreath*, designed by William, in the William Morris Gallery (F435) and the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (1941.71.1).

Kits were designed and prepared by Morris and the workshop embroiderers and were completed by consumers at home. They could be purchased with the required threads and a section of the embroidery partially worked as a guide, or more simply as the ground fabric on which the design had been transferred but left unworked. Customers could specify the type and thickness of thread included and could also request colours of their choosing.[37]

Acanthus, designed by William *c*. 1878, was one of Morris & Co.'s most popular designs, and could be purchased as a kit or fully worked. The five surviving embroidered versions of this design, variously stitched by Morris, Jane, Jenny, and Morris & Co. employees and clients, demonstrate remarkable examples of variation in stitching. While different executed versions of *Acanthus* have been pointed out as evidence of varying interpretations of one design, a rigorous comparison between these embroideries can illuminate, among other practices, the making of Morris's embroideries.[38]

William's watercolour design for *Acanthus* (fig. 2.7),[39] is a quartered section – a configuration that reflects his growing interest in carpets from the late 1870s.[40] Acanthus leaves dominate the design's border and central field. They are visibly pronounced in blue against the terracotta and light-yellow background colours. As the largest elements of the design, the leaves provide the structure. A tracery of green and blue tendrils and leaf sprays, and purple and dusky pink flower heads cluster in the zones marked out by the acanthus leaves. The border is edged with a wave pattern in dusky pink and dark blue, and a small oblique blue and white stripe. The central field is edged with a crenelated pink motif and a larger oblique stripe, also in blue and white. A few hand-written instructions for colouring are written on the design: 'white' for the tulip flower and 'palest green' for their stems in the border. Drawn over the leaves and flowers are small black lines marking out the direction of the stitches to be worked, suggesting the use of the second type (artistic) of darning stitch.

A reduced size version of the hanging was embroidered *c*. 1880, and likely displayed as a sample in the Morris & Co. shop (fig. 2.8).[41] The colour scheme in the shop sample is altered: the background is all blue and the stitching is worked in a muted palette of brown, olive, beige and white, with shading highlights of pastel pinks, blues and purples. The overall design structure is less clear as there is less contrast between the colouring of the stems, leaves and flowers. Elements of the composition have changed too. Both oblique stripes have gone but the wave and crenelated patterns remain. At the bottom of the central field, the soft and curving tendrils and blooming flower heads are replaced with palmettes of pointed leaves, worked in olive coloured laid work couched in brown threads. The use of couching instead of darning stitches here introduces a rougher visual texture.

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[37] Morris & Co. Embroidery Department Day Book, 1892-1896. National Art Library, V&A: MSL/1939/2636.
[38] Jenny Lister, in Mason, *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer*, 2017, p. 69, and Joanna Amos, in *Stitching the Self*, 2020, p. 40, have both remarked on the variations in size, materials and colours in the five stitched versions of *Acanthus*. While Amos points out, further, that the differences between them offer insight into how the makers interpreted the design, a critical analysis of those insights is not pursued.
[39] V&A: E.55-1940.
[40] Mason, *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer*, 2017, p. 69.
[41] Ibid., p. 69. V&A: T.153-1979.

Morris & Co. client, Florence Bell and her daughters worked a full-size version of *Acanthus* with wools on a linen ground, which is left visible between unworked sections (fig. 2.9).[42] The colour scheme is even more muted than the shop sample: a range of dark and mid-browns, fawn, beige and olive, with accents of dark blue, terracotta and pale green. The dark brown, almost black, stems of the acanthus leaves contrast strongly against the pale beige ground and reveal the bare bones of the design's ogival structure. The Bell women followed William's design more closely in their execution but have swapped the outer oblique stripe for a two-tone parallel stripe of blue and green.

A version in Amgueddfa Cymru, probably worked by Jane and Jenny Morris (1861-1935), has a different character altogether (fig. 2.10).[43] Although worn and much faded in colour, the entirely stitched ground glows in a subtle palette of gold, pale gold, brown gold, teal blue, silver blue, black olive and puce silk threads. No outline stitches have been used to demarcate the design's formal elements, and the darning stitches throughout are loosely spaced, rendering the brown linen ground fabric visible between the stitches. The acanthus leaves in the border are worked in two tones of blue with silver stems, and these colours are carried through in the tendrils and leaf sprays in the central field but *not* in the acanthus leaves. Instead, the central acanthus leaves are worked in dark gold and fade into the background. The focus is thus on the delicate leaf sprays and the gold and pink flowers which gently map out the boundaries of the central field. The inner oblique strip and crenelated pattern have gone, as has the outer oblique stripe. The judicious and sparing use of colour combined with clear changes to the design produce an overall more restful effect in the worked embroidery.

A second silk version of *Acanthus*, now in Standen and likely embroidered or overseen in production by Morris *c*. 1890, presents a contrasting result (fig. 2.11).[44] Again, the oblique stripes have been removed. The crenelated and wave patterns remain but they have been reduced to thin lines just one stitch thick, worked in pink stem stitch. The colouring is bold and bright.[45] Dark green, silver green, golden green, yellow, peach, orange, light and dark pink, maroon, pale blue, teal, silver, and ivory all work together in a harmonious scheme through balanced arrangements and pairings. Each element of the embroidery has its own colour and is clearly distinguished with contrastingly coloured outline and infill stitches. As a result, the composition is incredibly clear despite the range of bold colours.

A final version of *Acanthus* was embroidered by Morris and others between 1900-1910 (fig. 2.12).[46] It is worked with twisted silk threads on a blue woollen felt ground and edged with silk cord.

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[42] V&A: CIRC.524-1953.
[43] Amgueddfa Cymru: 39.154.
[44] Standen House and Garden, National Trust: NT1215316.
[45] The colours are extremely well-preserved as the embroidery was stored in a dark environment for many years. Other scholars working on Morris have suggested that this was very likely embroidered, or overseen in production, by Morris, and I would agree with this assessment. The bedcover displays the hallmarks of successful embroidery that Morris outlined in *Decorative Needlework*. Further, the light and dark pink flowers in the corners of the central field are very similar in style and execution to the version of *Acanthus* stitched by Morris *c*. 1900-1910, and which is now in the V&A (T.66-1939).
[46] Mason, *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer*, 2017, p. 69.

Visually, this embroidery feels busier than previous versions and most like a carpet in its distribution of masses and colour arrangement – blues, pinks and silvery-white with shades of red, maroon and green. Morris has abandoned the oblique stripe, crenelated and wave border patterns and instead stitched simple thin lines of red and blue in stem stitch. More significantly, she has stitched the outlines of the acanthus leaves in both the border and the central field but not filled them in. She has thickly couched these outlines, stitching the border leaves in blue with white couching and the central leaves in pink with red couching. The couching creates a visual effect of beading, which softens the edges of the leaves. The acanthus leaves stems are visible in thick darning stitches and provide a faint skeletal structure to the embroidery. Nonetheless, the unfilled acanthus leaves are subordinate to other elements in the embroidery's overall composition. The large areas of the felt ground visible between the acanthus leaves' outlines make prominent the dense grouping of masses in the centre of the embroidery. Despite its visual resemblance to a carpet, Morris's final version of *Acanthus* is demonstrably different from William's design. This and the other versions of *Acanthus* discussed show how the embroiderers' ingenuity and personal expression in their selection of stitches and colour arrangements alter the visual programme and tone of the embroidery as well as its relationship to other textile forms. They also demonstrate that a design is not inherently prescriptive but is suggestive, leaving space for the embroiderer to exert their own creative agency through stitch.

This flexibility is not limited to stitching in embroidery. Adaptation between stitch and design also occurs in Morris's needlepoint. In the 1910s and 1920s, she produced various designs for needlepoint, and these are recorded in a sketchbook now in Kelmscott Manor.[47] Examined closely here for the first time, these works add complexity to our understanding of stitch in Morris's textile making practices. In the sketchbook are several designs for tablemats, which correspond to several surviving stitched versions in the collections of Kelmscott Manor and Standen: *Rose*, *Strawberry*, *Vine*, *Kingfisher*, *Repeating Bird*, *Bird in Flight*, *Bird*, and *Ship*.[48] *Rose* and *Strawberry* match exactly with their equivalent designs, although an alternative drawn proposal for the border for *Rose* is also provided in the sketchbook. The stitched borders in *Vine*, *Kingfisher* and *Repeating Bird* depart from those drawn in their respective designs. A comparative assessment of the sketchbook and tablemats indicates that the borders were intended to be modular and could easily be paired with different central motifs to create new combinations. This is suggested on three accounts: the alternative border proposal for the *Rose* design; the re-use of the border employed in *Vine* in a different design featuring a rabbit eating fruit from a tree; and the repetition of the same border in stitched versions of *Ship* and *Bird in Flight*.

However, the central motifs of the tablemats could also be adapted. In the sketchbook are three preparatory designs for *Bird in Flight*, two in pencil and one in watercolour (figs 2.13 & 2.14).

[47] Kelmscott Manor, Society of Antiquaries: KM613.
[48] These names correspond to the motifs represented in the tablemats. They are not the names by which these tablemats were given by or known to Morris, but they have been chosen here for clarity of discussion.

In the stitched versions of *Bird in Flight*, Morris has used the border from one of the two pencil designs and combined it with the central motif of the watercolour design. But further changes were made. In the central motif of *Bird in Flight*, Morris altered the colours of the bird from blue tones to brown and modified the flower forms in the foreground. Given the detail with which the needlepoint designs were produced – with annotations and diagrammatic shading for colours – it is probable that these adaptations took place during the stitching of these tablemats. Significantly, this departs from the conventional practice of needlepoint in which the stitcher commonly follows the guide of the design or pattern stitch by stitch, counting them line by line. Thus, the modular flexibility defining the relationship between Morris's needlepoint tablemats and their corresponding designs provide yet further evidence of the prevalence of creative adaptation in the stitching of Arts and Crafts textiles.

Designer/Maker

If we start to understand that a design for an embroidery is not prescriptive and that the creative agency of the worker is paramount in its production, two important outcomes emerge. The first is the need for flexibility in the definition of a design for embroidery. The drawn or painted design can range from prescriptive instruction to suggestive example, subject to change and revision by the stitcher(s). When we compare an embroidery with its design, we should expect changes between the design and the worked textile and acknowledge these changes as evidence of the creative value of the executor's process of making.

The second is that we can problematise the designer/maker construct. This is frequently posited in scholarship on the Arts and Crafts Movement and its protagonists as an ideal model in which an object is designed and made by the same person. We are back on Ruskin's factory floor. Ruskin found that industrial production was turning labourers into machines, and this had damaging repercussions on an unprecedented scale. 'It is', he wrote, 'verily this degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more, than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves.'[49] Industrialised processes of manufacture were advancing and refining materials but dehumanising the worker through the division of labour.[50] Ruskin's thesis in 'The Nature of Gothic' is about ennobling labour by reinstating pleasure and value into the process of manufacture. Ideally, he wants the maker and the designer to be the same person to achieve this, believing that one person's thought cannot truly be expressed by another's hands.[51]

It was believed that the standards of design could also be improved through the unification of the designer and the maker. This was promoted in the 1893 Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society essay collection cited above. In his essay on the revival of design and handicraft, Walter Crane argued that

[49] Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic*, 1892, p. 20.
[50] Ibid., p. 23.
[51] Ibid., p. 29.

the increased demand for mass-produced wares had replaced the artist with 'the advertiser and the salesman'.[52] In place of thought and beauty, novelty and falsely imitated skill were pursued to scale up production and reduce costs. Under these conditions, the decorative arts had declined. Morris's survey on the decorative arts in Britain from 1800-1885 corroborates Crane's assessment. What the public admired in the arts displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851 was the display of innovation, but this, she wrote, 'usually means the invention of some cheaper counterfeit of some other processes more costly in labour and material.'[53] Manufacturers strove for originality, but they failed to achieve good quality in design. Of exhibiting carpet designers, Morris wrote that 'the convention of design was meaningless to them, its laws misunderstood, and the study of nature a travesty.'[54] For her, the grossest error of the exhibition was a woven fabric known as the Coventry town ribbon (fig. 2.15). With characteristic acerbity, she scorned it as 'probably the most disastrous piece of wasted labour ever conceived and executed.'[55] Woven on a jacquard loom using 10,000 punched cards, this ribbon was created as a exercise of technical prowess. This process of manufacture afforded minute detail in a highly naturalistic design, but such affordances were, for Morris, excessive and inartistic.

Key to the creation of successful design was an understanding of craft processes and the limitations of making, which was lacking in the manufacture of industrial art. To bring together the artist and the craftsperson was believed to improve the ignoble conditions of labour and the woeful standards of decorative arts. In practice, however, it was hard to realise the designer and maker in the same person. Few possessed equal proficiency in design and technical making, and workshops and production costs often required greater numbers of makers than designers. Nonetheless, what was achieved through the course of the Arts and Crafts Movement were knowledge exchange, closer communion, collaboration between designers and makers, and a primacy accorded to materials and processes of making through the revival of handicraft. These were facilitated through arts and crafts exhibitions, lectures, demonstrations and publications on technical processes, and guild-like workshops and apprentice programmes.

Despite this, the construct of the designer/maker as the same person is lauded as one of the principles of the Movement and, while it was rarely achieved, remains an attractive metric against which scholars qualify the Movement's practitioners today. Morris herself is a rare candidate who fulfils the criteria, excelling as both a designer and maker. But defining her as a designer-maker is unhelpful. As we have seen, in the case of embroidery production, the makers had a critical role in the creative end of manufacture as they adapted designs through inventive and original stitching. Moreover, while Morris designed and made many pieces individually, production of her textiles frequently involved many hands as she collaborated with family members, employees, colleagues,

[52] Walter Crane, 'The Revival of Design and Handicraft', *Arts and Crafts Essays*, 1893, p. 3.
[53] Morris, 'Decorative Art, 1800-1885', 1904, p. 630.
[54] Ibid., p. 628.
[55] Ibid., p. 629. This ribbon is now in the V&A: AP.394:2.

students and friends. Significantly, these collaborations complicate neat conceptions of a singular designer or of assigning single tasks to individuals; the labour of designing and making embroidery was not so much divided as *shared*.[56] A book bag, now in the WMG, was designed by Morris but worked by both Morris and Jenny.[57] Embroideries produced by Morris and her students at Birmingham Municipal School of Art were the result of teachers and students collaborating as designers *and* makers. And Morris conceived the design for the Kelmscott bed hangings, which she then stitched collaboratively with her Morris & Co. employees. The same design was later re-used to produce a second set known as the Melsetter hangings. Of these, one was stitched by Morris, while the other was stitched by her friend and Morris & Co. client, Theodosia Middlemore (1861-1944). The two versions are not identical and, as in other embroideries, the designer/maker construct is untenable.

Writing for the journal *Embroidery* in 1934, embroiderer Elsie Eraut (dates unknown) traced how the developments in embroidery in Britain over the course of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries afforded increased creative freedom to the embroiderer.[58] Eraut, who was likely known to Morris through the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, described a shift in the way embroidery was designed in this period, propagated through the teaching practices and publications of figures such as Grace Christie, Ann Macbeth (1875-1948), Margaret Swanson (dates unknown) and Louisa Pesel (1870-1947).[59] Increasingly, embroidery design was conceived and developed through stitches, and stitching became the means of the design, not merely its ends. For Eraut, this was significant. Designing through stitching offered a potential remedy to the tendency to simply reproduce or adapt historical models of needlework, a way of making embroidery which did not create original work.[60] Further, unlike the process of copying precedents that derived of a past age and set of historical conditions, this new method of working facilitated greater artistic freedom to the contemporary stitcher as 'they were able to express ideas which appealed to them at the moment and which they were capable of understanding.'[61] But this change in the making of embroidery was also influenced by the 'social heritage left by the [First World] war'.[62] According to Eraut, since the war, 'individual lives were appreciated as never before, class distinctions ceased to be any criterion of

[56] Claire FitzGerald discusses the collaborative production of the *Owl* bedcover by Morris, Mary Newill and students at the Birmingham Municipal School of Art. She finds that this collaboration complicates authorship attribution, but she does not point out that this collaboration complicates how division of labour is conceptualised, see Claire FitzGerald, *Women, Craft, and The Object: Birmingham, 1880 – 1930* (PhD Thesis, University of Warwick, 2016), pp. 190-205.
[57] William Morris Gallery: F337.
[58] Eraut exhibited alongside Morris at the fourteenth Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibition in 1928, where she showed a tent stitch panel (made for Crawley Parish Church) and an embroidered curtain, see *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society: Catalogue of the Fourteenth Exhibition, at the Royal Academy, Burlington House, 1928* (London: The Arden Press, 1928), pp. 96-97.
[59] Elise Eraut, 'Embroidery in the Twentieth Century', *Embroidery: The Journal of the Embroiderers' Guild*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (September 1934), pp. 4-5, at p. 4.
[60] Ibid, p. 5.
[61] Ibid., p. 5.
[62] Ibid., p. 7.

worth, and people were valued on their own qualities.'[63] There was greater social encouragement of individual expression, and Eraut believed that this carried over in the different approaches and techniques articulated through modern designers and makers of embroidery. As a result, the variety and originality expressed in the artform increased.

Eraut did not dismiss critical study of historical textiles; in fact, like Morris, she believed that students' judicious application to their own work of the principles and approaches derived from historical models was essential to making successful embroidery. But, like Morris, she was cognisant of the weakening of design standards born of slavish imitation. While Morris was connected to those Eraut named – she was, for example, a colleague of Christie's – and they shared a great deal in how they approached the study and teaching of embroidery, she did not develop a pedagogy on designing through stitching.[64] However, we might perhaps see Morris's position on the creative prerogative of the embroiderer, articulated through the textiles and writings examined in this section of this chapter, as antecedent to the increased artistic autonomy of the stitcher that developed in the early twentieth century. This is beautifully demonstrated in an embroidered tablecloth Morris designed and stitched *c*. 1900 (fig. 2.16).[65] A pattern of swirling tendrils and leaves, all stitched in shades of Morris's favourite colour, blue, gently trails around the four edges of the cloth. The composition is not especially remarkable, being a typical manner of filling a square shaped textile and found in comparable Arts and Crafts embroideries. However, the stitching of the in-fills of the leaves is notable. Close examination of the embroidery reveals that there are over one hundred and fifty different in-fill patterns, of which only a handful repeat, and the tablecloth presents a confounding impression of each leaf being unique. Morris's creativity and invention sing out from this embroidery as she plays with stitches like chain, double running, back, double herringbone, satin, bullion knot, stem, couching, specking, and long and short to improvise and riff on a range of motifs and decorative refrains: dashes, crosses, stars, curves, swirls, waves, crows' feet, triangles, pulses, dots, flowers, and leaves. Significantly, it is the stitches and their different configurations and adaptations through which this variety of pattern is achieved. In this embroidery, the trailing leaf *and* the in-fill stitching are the means of the design.

[63] Ibid., pp. 5-6.
[64] This is revealed through comparison between Morris's writings and Christie's publications, such as *Embroidery and Tapestry Weaving* (London: John Hogg, 1906) and *Embroidery. A Collection of Articles on Subjects Connected with the Study of Fine Needlework, Including Stitches, Materials, Methods of Work, and Designing, and History, with Numerous Illustrations and Coloured Plates of Modern Work. Edited by Mrs. Archibald H. Christie* (London: James Pearsall & Co., 1909).
[65] Crafts Study Centre, Farnham: T.87.2.

Codifying Stitching

To translate a design and effectively stitch with ingenuity, embroiderers needed knowledge of stitches and their principles of application. Morris communicated this via two routes: practical, in-person learning through training and apprenticeship, private tuition, lecturing, and teaching at art schools; and written and visual instruction conveyed through publications. Drawing on the content of her in-person teaching outlined in chapter one, the focus here is on the second means of transmission, in particular Morris's under-researched technical writings on needlework, where stitching is a principal topic.

Instruction on stitching is provided through a combination of written descriptions and drawn diagrams in her essays 'Chain Stitch', 'Embroidery' and 'Of Embroidery'; the series on church embroidery; and *Decorative Needlework*. Morris's writing style combines historical knowledge, didactic instruction, personal recollection and anecdote, colloquialisms and occasional humour. Together these convey a sense of the in-person delivery style that we might imagine students received in her practical lessons. However, what these publications teach the reader about stitching and how successfully they communicate knowledge vary. Throughout these writings, Morris described the general appearance of a stitch and its use in and suitability for different kinds of work, but information on the material particulars of each stitch is limited. She assumed that the diagrams alone 'will explain sufficiently how each stich is taken'; often, however her diagrams are insufficient, and the reader must draw on the limited written description of the stitch's appearance. [66] Moreover, the diagrams often show the working of the stitch in the middle of a sequence. While this relays how a previously worked stitch relates to the next in the sequence, it does not show how to begin the first stitch of the sequence.

Several diagrams are recycled across multiple publications and each successive iteration tends to provide more information than the last.[67] The first diagram for chain stitch, for example, appears on p. 25 of the eponymous article in *Hobby Horse* (1888, fig. 2.17). The loops of the stitch are dense and drawn in thick black line. This diagram recurs on p. 49 of the essay 'Embroidery' (1892) but has been re-orientated ninety degrees so that the needle points down (fig. 2.18). We have here a dotted outline for the stitcher to follow, on which we see the needle emerge. The thread is drawn in a finer black line and the looped chains are more evenly spaced, producing greater visual clarity. The same diagram was then reproduced on p. 14 of *Decorative Needlework* (1893, fig. 2.19). This presents the clearest version of the stitch. The diagram is turned back to the original 1888 orientation with the needle pointing left. We have a dotted line, as in the 1892 version, but new features are included: there are four loops in the chain instead of three; the thread is finer, with a tighter twist; and subtle shadowing

[66] Morris, 'Chain Stitch', 1888, p. 25.
[67] The diagram for stem stitch appears on p. 51 of Morris's essay 'Embroidery' in *Plain Handicrafts*, 1892, and on p. 23 of *Decorative Needlework*, 1893; the diagram for darning stitch (type A) appears in the same publications, on p. 52 and p. 27, respectively.

is introduced where two threads meet at the base of the loops. As she revised and adapted the stitch diagrams, Morris increased the degree of visual literacy and knowledge offered to readers and makers.

Morris's series of thirteen articles on church embroidery, published in *The Building News* between 1893-94, concern predominantly technical aspects of stitching, including appliqué, couching, flat and raised gold work, figure work and white work.[68] These are the most technically rigorous of her writings. Each article focuses on a key historical textile as a case study through which Morris examines her subject, and each features multiple diagrams drawn and labelled by her. These diagrams are distinct from those used and adapted across her earlier publications. Instead of showing generic stitch types, here the diagrams reconstruct specific stitches and worked elements of the historical textile in discussion. The diagrams break down the stitching through labels and notation of materials, and they range from simple to complex. Figure four of the third article, for example, displays the tricky construction of a trefoil worked in raised gold work with three layers of stitching (fig. 2.20).[69] Accompanying each article is a large fold-out photographic reproduction of the historical textile discussed. These illustrations are exceptional in the context of Morris's publications: nowhere else do we find published reproductions of this scale and clarity. The crispness of the images fosters a dialogue with the reconstructed diagrams set in the text, as they enable the reader to sustain an immediate comparison between macro and micro views of the stitching techniques addressed.

In these articles Morris put into practice the rigorous study of historical textiles which she encouraged of her readers and students, and they demonstrate the perspicacity of her visual and material analysis. In the second article, on appliqué, she reproduced a labelled diagram of the stitching of a leaf and described the materials used in its making:

> Let me show how the craftsmen who worked this cope got variety of colour into their couched work, and I will leave the illustration to speak for itself. Fig. 3 shows a portion of an ornamental flower; one side is couched with green silk and the other with yellow, the couching stitches slanting so that they meet mitre-wise (an arrangement I do not much care for, as it always has a 'restless' appearance). The outline on one side (*a*) is a yellow cord, and on the other (*c*) a white one. An inner line of gold (*b*), rather coarse and laid single, follows round the outline a good way in and serves to lay down the long floss stitches beneath, while up the centre runs a line (*d*) of white floss in long split stitches.[70]

Morris owned commercially produced pattern sheets of 'Ancient Embroidery' that were drawn by Agnes Blencowe (1819-1896) and published in the 1840s, copies of which survive in her ephemera collections in the William Morris Society and the Ashmolean Museum (fig. 2.21).[71] Like the diagrams

[68] The series also includes two articles on design and one on animals and symbols.
[69] May Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – III, Couching and Flat Gold Work', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXV, No. 2027 (November 10 1893), pp. 603-604, p. 603.
[70] May Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – II, Appliqué', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXV, No. 2025 (October 27 1893), pp. 533-534, at p. 533.
[71] *Ecclesiastical Embroidery: Working Patterns of Flowers, of the Full Size, from Ancient Examples. Published Under the Superintendence of the Ecclesiological Society*. I have not been able to trace a copy this publication. However, it was reviewed in *The Ecclesiologist*, Vol. 9 (1849), p. 176-177.

in her church embroidery series, these patterns reproduced sections of specific historical textiles with detailed drawn reconstructions and labelled diagrams that describe the stitches, materials and colours used. There was a lively market for reconstructed patterns like these, which were published throughout the second half of the nineteenth century to supply makers of ecclesiastical textiles with patterns to create work imitative of historical embroideries. Conventionalised flowers, highly typical of medieval embroideries, were popular among these publications for the ease with which they could be stitched, in contrast to more ambitious figure scenes.[72] Comparison with these patterns against those published by Morris remind us of the particular purpose she had in publishing her stitch reconstructions in her technical articles. While the commercial patterns were produced to show the embroiderer how they could make at home their own version of a historical textile, Morris's reconstructions were intended to impart broader lessons on the application of stitch type and the relationship between stitch and ground. She wanted readers to extract an understanding of the approach taken in the making of these eminent examples of historical needlework, not to imitate these embroideries stitch by stitch.

In *Decorative Needlework*, mechanical detail of stitch was not prioritised. Instead, Morris provided historical accounts of embroidery in which the use of the stitch is notable. These offer narrative embellishment to her writing on stitch, and, as Anna Mason has pointed out, disqualify the book from being a pure technical manual.[73] Instructive here is a closer comparison of this book with two publications from the period: Letitia Higgin's (1837-1913) *Handbook of Embroidery 1880* and Marian Alford's *Needlework as Art* (1886). Higgin and Alford were leading practitioners of Art Needlework, and both publications came out of the Royal School of Art Needlework. The School became a leading promoter and producer of Art Needlework, a type of free-hand embroidery worked to artistically designed patterns with a limited range of stitches and harmonious colour palettes. Art Needlework as a movement arose in response to a decline in taste for Berlin wool-work, design reform in the decorative arts, growing interest in historical textiles, and an increase in building of new churches, which required high quality ecclesiastical textile furnishings. Proponents of Art Needlework strove to elevate the status of embroidery and proclaim its artistic qualities. They promoted the importance of good design, intelligent use and arrangement of colour and appropriate and high-quality materials. Morris advanced similar views on design and stitching, and much of her embroidery produced in the 1880s and 1890s displays visual characteristics in common with Art Needlework, notably a limited range of stitches and harmonious colour schemes. Higgin and Alford regarded design as the most important element of embroidery, followed by colour, materials and, lastly, stitching. While Morris subscribed to this hierarchy, a comparison of how these three women

[72] *The Ecclesiologist*, Vol. 9, p. 177.
[73] Mason, *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer*, 2017, p. 125.

examined stitch is productive in identifying points of confluence and divergence between Morris and the context of Art Needlework.

Handbook of Embroidery is a technical handbook and provides detailed information on stitches, materials for embroidery and methods of working, but the book is not a beginner's instructive manual. It was conceived as a supplement to practical, in-person instruction as taught by the Royal School of Art Needlework. This is explained in the book's preface, written by Alford, and signalled throughout the book; chapter three, for example, is titled 'Stitches used in Hand Embroidery as Taught at the Royal School of Art Needlework'. The book was therefore aimed at a specific audience of students trained at the School, which contrasts with the much broader audience envisaged in *Decorative Needlework*.[74] Higgin's description of stitches and material types is more rigorous than those of Morris's manual, and the diagrams she included offer more visual information. On p. 21, for example, there are two diagrams for stem stitch, one showing the correct method of working the stitch to outline a leaf, another showing the same outline worked incorrectly (fig. 2.22).[75] The diagrams make efforts to contextualise the stitches within the reader's imagination. Those for satin, blanket, bullion knot, chain and feather stitches feature a basic drawing of a corner of the ground fabric where the stitched is worked, and the diagram for French knotting shows the imagined stitcher's left hand as it pinches the loose thread against the ground fabric (fig. 2.23).[76]

Needlework as Art serves as a complement to Higgin's handbook; Alford believed that a book on the historical and aesthetic questions of needlework, separate to those of technical instruction, was required.[77] It is a dense and diachronic study, written to elevate the artistic standing of needlework. Like Morris, Alford gave historical accounts of different classes of stitches and methods of work. She examined celebrated pieces of needlework, such as the *Syon Cope* and the patchwork funerary tent of the Egyptian Queen Isimkeb (third intermediate period, 1070-664 BCE). Morris discussed these same textiles in her own publications.

Decorative Needlework sits between *Handbook of Embroidery* and *Needlework as Art* as it brought together technical, aesthetic and historical discussion of stitch, but positioned these as interlinked elements within the study and practice of embroidery.[78] All three publications strove to legitimise embroidery as art, although this does not mean that they denounced it as craft. Alford

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[74] In the books' dedication, Morris states that it was written as a guide for study for those who do not possess much prior knowledge of embroidery (unpaginated).
[75] Leitita Higgin, *Handbook of Embroidery 1880* (London: School of Art Needlework, 1880), p. 21.
[76] Ibid., p. 24.
[77] Marian Alford, *Needlework as Art* (London: Samson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1886), p. ix.
[78] It is uncertain whether Morris read *Handbook of Embroidery* or *Needlework as Art* prior to writing *Decorative Needlework*. In both Higgin's and Alford's publications, the method of spilt stitch used in the stitching of the figures in *Opus Anglicanum* is discussed. In 1888, Morris incorrectly identified this stitch as chain stitch on p. 27 of her 'Chain Stitch' article. She later revised her opinion in 1894, identifying the stitch as split stitch, see May Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – VII, Figure Work', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXVI, No. 2035 (January 5 1894), pp. 3-4, at p. 3. This could suggest that she did not know nor read *Handbook of Embroidery 1880* or *Needlework as Art*, or that she disagreed with Higgin's and Alford's view in 1888.

positioned craft as accumulated skill and practical expertise and as a necessary component of the art form, but not its sum.[79] Morris defined embroidery as art but repeatedly stressed the importance in a firm understanding of the material properties and limitations of the stitches – craft knowledge.

All three authors acknowledged the problem in teaching stitching through publications. They argued that written instruction will never be a fully sufficient means of transmission when compared against practical instruction.[80] Their publications were therefore supplementary to in-person teaching, although the intended audience of their teaching varied, as we have seen. Morris, Higgin and Alford each referred to textiles in the V&A, which they encouraged their readers to study as an indispensable component to learning. This reflected their in-person teaching practices, which incorporated handling and close study of historical textiles.[81] Royal School of Art Needlework members 'were expected at once to be competent to judge all old work, to name its style and date and even sometimes its market value. They were able to repair and add to all old work; to know and teach every stitch, ancient and modern; and produce designs for any period.'[82] This range of styles included 'Mediaeval', 'Chinese' and 'Italian'. Morris disagreed with attempts to produce work that was historicist in its emulation of a period style. Rather than pursue what she called 'sham' imitation, she wanted her students and readers to emulate the spirit and aesthetic qualities of historical work within their own original designs and stitching.[83]

Throughout her writings, Morris stressed the importance of first-hand study of historical textiles, believing that 'half an hour's careful examination of a good specimen of old work would be worth a volume of advice'.[84] She assumed that these textiles would be available to her readers at the V&A or a similar institution. This betrays a privileged assumption on her part as to who her readers were and the level of access they had to pre-eminent textile collections. This point has been neglected in existing literature, and it changes our understanding of the target audience of her written publications, like *Decorative Needlework*; this audience had the social and financial capital to be proximate to and able to access a leading collection like the V&A.

In prioritising design in embroidery, privileging in-person teaching, sharing interests in historical textiles and valuing craftwork, Morris, Higgin and Alford were closely aligned. We can also identify a similar pattern of contradiction in the gendering of the designer and maker in publications by Morris and those produced by Art Needlework practitioners. They differ, however, in the treatment of technical information on stitch offered in their publications, how they draw from and use historical

[79] Alford, *Needlework as Art*, 1886 p. viii.
[80] Higgin, *Handbook of Embroidery 1880*, 1880, p. v; Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, 1893, p. 13.
[81] Alford, *Needlework as Art*, p. 397. Morris brought historical needlework samples to her teaching at Birmingham Municipal School of Art and other lecturing appointments.
[82] Ibid., pp. 397-398.
[83] May Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – XIII, Conclusion', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXVII, No. 2069 (August 31 1894), pp. 277-278, at p. 278.
[84] Morris, 'Chain Stitch', 1888, p. 26.

styles of ornament in the production of contemporary embroidery and the intended audience of their teaching.

"In the beginning was textile art"

Yet there is more still to examine of the intellectual contexts shared by Morris and Art Needlework proponents, notably the ways in which they responded and contributed to nineteenth-century debates on the origins of art through their writings on stitching. In their publications, these writers conceived of prehistoric forms of needlework as some of the earliest evidence of art. To do so, they drew from contemporary developments in archaeology as well as the intellectual projects of leading European theoreticians of ornament, Gottfried Semper (1803-1897) and Alois Riegl (1858-1905). Using *Needlework as Art* as a guide, this final section of the chapter reveals further correspondences and distinctions between Morris and her peers in needlework circles, as well as how her thinking about artmaking was imbricated in coeval debates on archaeology and ornamental theory.

Let us return to *Needlework as Art*. While Alford aspired to reach a broad audience through this publication, she endeavoured at the same time to produce a work of dense, erudite learning. The extensive discussion on the origins of art and the transformation of motifs that she developed in this work places her scholarship within a canon of art historical writings concerned with the historical development of ornament. Her book is heavily indebted to Semper, whom she invokes throughout to argue that embroidery was 'the foundation and starting point of all art', and should be understood as a response to his legacy.[85] Mari Hvattum's analysis of Semper's writings provides a useful means of navigating the terrain of the architect and theorist's intellectual project. His two great theoretical concerns were, according to Hvattum, 'the nature of art and how we may know it.'[86] Semper was preoccupied with the beginnings, development and comprehension of art. He located the origins of architecture in rituals, repeated, rhythmic acts of making, and adornment. Textiles played cores role in these. Weaving was one of the four primary elements of architecture, the wall deriving from forms of gathering and enclosure manifest in recapitulated actions of knotting or weaving fibre.[87] According to Joseph Rykwert, this interpretation of the origins of architecture, in which acts of making are foregrounded, offers profound insight 'into the way in which the artist and the craftsman related what they think to what they do'.[88] The relationship between thinking and doing in the making of art was at the heart of Morris's intellectual concerns, as we have seen. But Morris was not picking up where Semper had left off earlier in the nineteenth century. While she, like Semper, understood the making of art to be a product of social, material and historical factors, she did not, as he did, aim 'to establish

[85] Alford, *Needlework as Art*, 1886, p. 16.
[86] Mari Hvattum, *Gottfried Semper and the Problem of Historicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 15.
[87] Ibid., pp. 67-69.
[88] Quoted in ibid., p. 20.

a scientifically sound method by which these factors and their interaction in the artwork could be observed and explained.'[89]

The extent to which Morris was, if at all, influenced by Semper's position on the origins of art is unclear, but, as a well-read intellectual keenly interested in theories of ornament, it is likely that she was familiar with his work. One text we know she read was Friedrich Fischbach's *Ornemente der Gewebe* (*Ornament for Textiles*, 1874), from which she reproduced plates in her articles in *The Building News*; she also discussed at length several plates from *Ornemente der Gewebe* in her lectures on pattern-designing.[90] In 1883, Fischbach published a catalogue accompanying his 1874 volume: *Die Geschichte der Textilkunst Nebst Text zu den 160 Tafeln des Werkes Ornamente der Gewebe* (*The History of Textile Art along with Text on the 160 Plates of the Works in Ornament for Textiles*), which Morris may have read as well.[91] In this, Fischbach opened the introductory chapter with an anecdote of how Semper often began his lectures on the history of ornament with the phrase: "In the beginning was textile art", and he referred to Semper throughout the text.[92]

Alford's book also preceded and anticipated the scholarship of Alois Riegl, who in fact read *Needlework as Art* in the late 1880s.[93] There are several approximations between *Needlework as Art* and Riegl's later publication, *Stilfragen: Grunlegungen zu einer Geschitche der Ornamentik* (*Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, 1893).[94] Like Riegl, Alford was interested in how compositional devices and motifs, such as zigzags, discs and the lotus, developed in antique ornament. She believed that a chain of stylistic continuity was maintained as these motifs spread and transformed through neighbouring geographical areas. Alford proposed that the lotus originated in India and then carried over to Egypt, whence it transformed and developed. In *Stilfragen*, Riegl started with the lotus motif in the art of ancient Egypt, where he showed how it became conventionalised into a palmette, then developed into the acanthus, and thereafter morphed into subsequent iterations as arabesque and tendril ornament. While recurring themes in Alford's text – such as questions of intention, imitation and national style – were later taken up by Riegl, she did not try to identify the force that drove the transformation of motifs in art, as he did.

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[89] Ibid., p. 15.
[90] Friedrich Fischbach, *Ornamente der Gewebe* (Hanau: G. M. Alberti, 1874 [?]). May Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – XI, Animals and Symbols', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXVII, No. 2063 (July 20 1894), pp. 66-67, 'Of Church Embroidery – XII, Design', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXVII, No. 2066 (August 10 1894), pp. 168-169, and 'Of Church Embroidery – XIII, Conclusion', 1894, pp. 277-278.
[91] Friedrich Fischbach, *Die Geschichte der Textilkunst Nebst Text zu den 160 Tafeln des Werkes Ornamente der Gewebe*, (Hanau: G. M. Alberti, 1883).
[92] Ibid., p. vii.
[93] Alois Riegl, *Die ägyptischen Textilfunde* (Wien: R. V. Waldheim, 1889), p. v. Here Riegl cites Alford in a discussion of ancient Egyptian textiles in the British Museum.
[94] Alois Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, translated by Evelyn Kain, annotations and introduction by David Castriota, and preface by Henri Zerner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

However, the arguments Alford put forward in *Needlework as Art* were the kind that Riegl sought to discredit in *Stilfragen*. *Needlework as Art* belongs to the class of nineteenth-century scholarship whose methodologies were underpinned by materialist interpretations of the origins of art, which Riegl attacked. Indeed, to position textiles as the earliest forms of art, Alford drew heavily from Semper, whose materialist legacy Riegl critiqued. Furthermore, in his introduction to *Stilfragen*, Riegl made it clear that one aim of the book was to 'reduce the importance of textile decoration to the level it deserves.'[95] For him, textiles had been unjustly elevated in their ranking as the earliest forms of art; instead, he saw textiles as a subset of preceding types of surface decoration.[96] Although Alford's text was not singled out in *Stilfragen*, Riegl's ambition to revise the standing of textiles within antique ornament, which Alford helped establish, implicitly moves against her scholarship.

How did Morris compare with Riegl? While Morris certainly read German-language textile scholarship, it is not known whether she read or was aware of Riegl's publications. However, Morris and Riegl were writing contemporaneously and shared similar institutional influences and intellectual pursuits. Both had association with museums of art, craft and design in their respective countries of residence: Morris had personal ties to the V&A, whose textile collections she knew intimately, and Riegl worked as textile curator at the museum of art and industry in Vienna, itself modelled on the V&A. As with Semper, Morris and Riegl shared mutual, although not exactly corresponding, interests: they took ornament and craft seriously; they had strong reservations towards design based on eclectic historicism; and they were both actively engaged in reform in building conversation and restoration.

Riegl's understanding of the development of art, firstly based on an internal generative drive of artistic forms and, later, on changes in modes of sensory perception, led him to believe that different artistic periods were not characterised by waves of ascent and decline nor set within a hierarchy.[97] By contrast, Morris firmly saw certain phases in the history of art as better than others; *Opus Anglicanum* was, for her, embroidery as its insurmountable best: as she expressed, 'these masterpieces have never been equalled, nor is it likely they will ever be.'[98] In *Stilfragen,* Riegl set out to refute the materialist conception, associated with Semper, that ornament was predicated on function, raw material and technical production. For Riegl, ornament was initially a means of representing nature, but thereafter proceeded to transform itself internally for strictly artistic purposes. Morris, by contrast, took a materialist view as regards embroidery: function, raw material and technical production do condition ornament. In *Decorative Needlework*, published in the same year as

[95] Ibid., p. 6.
[96] Ibid., pp. 5-6.
[97] For detailed analyses of Riegl's writings and theoretical positions, see Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1993; Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), chapter five; and Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), chapter five.
[98] Morris, 'Church Embroidery – VII, Figure-Work', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXVI, No. 2035 (January 5 1894) pp. 3-4, at p. 3.

Stilfragen, she wrote: 'a seam of a hem would have some little touches of the needle beyond mere piecing together or turning in of raw edges: from this style there grew the enrichment of a hanging or robe for avowedly decorative purposes.'[99] Throughout her writings, she insisted that designers and makers of embroidery work with the material limitations of the medium, not against them.

Alongside debates on ornamental theory, contemporary discourse in archaeology was also a critical intellectual context for those writing about needlework and its origins. Throughout *Needlework as Art*, Alford also built on archaeological literature and excavation findings, aspiring to 'give something of the archaeology of needlework'. [100] Indeed, a key aim of the book was to establish a long ancestry of needlework production to ennoble the art form, with frequent discussion of ancient Indian and Egyptian textiles in particular. Archaeological approaches even infused her writing style. On working out the essential elements of a composition, she wrote: 'Nothing is more interesting than to search for the foundation or the structure which centuries have helped raise, and to dig out, as it were, the original plan or thought of the founder.'[101] Furthermore, the needle was framed as a linking device between the embroiderer and needlework's bygone history, since its form had little changed for thousands of years. According to Alford:

> The attenuated body, the sharp foot, the rounded head, and the eye to hold the thread, are the same in principle, whether it is found in the cave-man's grave, formed of a fish's bone or shaped from that of a larger animal; hammered of the finest bronze, as from Egypt, or of gold, like those found in Scandinavia.[102]

The act of stitching linked the embroiderer to an ancient, global past.

This strategy of establishing the earliest beginnings of needlework through archaeological contexts was promoted throughout publications on needlework from the 1870s to the 1930s.[103] In *Art Needlework*, Mary Smith Lockwood (1831-1922) and Elizabeth Glaister (d. 1892) proposed that the desire to adorn cloth with the a threaded needle 'arose in the earliest times, from the moment that man found himself provided with the necessaries of life', such as weapons and armour.[104] Several commentaries began with explanations of the simplicity of needlework tools fashioned in an imagined pre-historic past. Ellen T. Masters's view that the first kinds needlework comprised sewing together skins of animals hunted by humans to fashion clothes and shelter was broadly representative of this

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[99] Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, 1893, p. 2.
[100] Alford, *Needlework as Art*, 1886, p. ix. On the same page she cites, for example, Charles Thomas Newton, *Essays on Art and Archaeology* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1880). Newton was a friend of Alford's and he read through and provided feedback on her book. On p. 15, Alford also cites William Boyd Dawkins, *Early Man in Britain and His Place in the Tertiary Period* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1880).
[101] Alford, *Needlework as Art*, 1886, pp. 61-62.
[102] Ibid., pp. 194-195.
[103] In addition to Alford, *Needlework as* Art, 1886: Ellen T. Masters, *The Gentlewoman's Book of Art Needlework* (London: Henry and Co., 1892), pp. 2-3; *Exhibition and Needlework. Exhibition and Competition* (Glasgow: Robert Anderson, 1900), pp. 2-5; and Eraut, 'Embroidery in the Twentieth Century', pp. 3-7.
[104] Mary Smith Lockwood and Elizabeth Glaister, *Art Needlework: A Treatise on the Revived Practice of Decorative Needlework* (London: Marcus Ward & Co., 1878), p. 9.

trend.[105] She placed the origins of the needle earlier than Alford's model of a fish bone, supposing that the original needles were made from 'the spines or thorns of plants'.[106] Archaeological approaches were not limited to studies of needlework from the remote past. In 1905, as Morris was working on her four-part series on *Opus Anglicanum* for *The Burlington Magazine for Art Connoiseurs*, she stated that 'a new book on the subject is wanted – from the archaeologist's point of view.'[107] By this she meant a more rigorous methodology in which claims were empirically verified against material evidence found in extant textiles and fragments, rather than rehashing secondary texts by 'other old writers'.[108] Morris never attempted this project herself, however. It was over thirty years until such a book was produced when, in 1938, Grace Christie published the authoritative study *English Medieval Embroidery*.[109]

Yet, Morris's engagement with archaeology can be traced back to the late 1890s. During this period, she visited temples and tombs at the Necropolis at Saqqara in Egypt, collected and studied recently excavated Coptic textiles and read literature by the Swiss archaeologist Robert Forrer (1866-1947). In the twentieth century, she broadened her acquaintance with leading archaeologists and antiquarians, such as Ernest Arthur Gardner (1862-1939) and Marc Aurel Stein (1862-1943), whom she hosted at the Women's Guild of Arts and Kelmscott Manor, respectively.[110] Una Fielding (1888-1869) recalled Morris's fondness for reading books by Stein and Vere Gordon Childe (1892-1957).[111]

Morris's growing investment in the discipline of archaeology paralleled a trend of the period in which textile maker-writers increasingly collaborated with archaeologists and incorporated archaeological knowledge into their research. This is exemplified in Mary Symonds (dates unknown) and Louisa Preece's (dates unknown) tome *Needlework Through the Ages*, published in 1928.[112] Symonds and Preece's chronological survey considers the 'stitches of early man' through to embroidery of the Arts and Crafts, Art Needlework and Modern movements, in which Morris figured

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[105] Masters, *The Gentlewoman's Book of Art Needlework*, 1892, p. 2. The opening paragraph of catalogue of the 1900 *Embroidery and Needlework: Exhibition and Competition*, in which Morris participated, echoed Alford and Masters: 'The art of needlework may be considered as coeval with the existence of mankind upon the earth. As a matter of fact, bone needles have been found associated with the flint implements of primitive man, and from such evidence we are entitled to assume that this art was rudely practices at a very early stage in the history of the race, for the purpose of making a covering to protect the body from the weather. From such utilitarian beginning we can easily conceive the steps that would lead to the adornment or embroidering of the materials used.' See: *Embroidery and Needlework: Exhibition and Competition* (1900), p. 5.
[106] Masters, *The Gentlewoman's Book of Art Needlework*, 1892, p. 2.
[107] May Morris to Cormell Price, 26 February 1905. Collection of Lorraine Bowsher.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Grace Christie, *English Medieval Embroidery* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938). For a contemporary review of this work, see 'Book Reviews', *Embroidery: The Journal of the Embroiderers' Guild*, Vol. VI, No. 3 (June 1938), pp. 60-61.
[110] Gardner delivered a lecture on the topic of 'The Sculptured Tombs of England' at the Women's Guild of Arts on 16 January 1914, see: Women's Guild of Arts Archive, William Morris Society, WGA/1/6. Stein visited Kelmscott Manor on 9 July 1934, see: Kelmscott Manor Visitors' Book, Society of Antiquaries, MS909.
[111] Una Fielding, 'Memories of May Morris', typed manuscript, William Morris Gallery, S4.4.8.
[112] Mary Symonds and Louisa Preece, *Needlework Through the Ages: A Short Survey of its Development in Decorative Art with Particular Regard to its Inspirational Relationship with Other Methods of Craftsmanship* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928).

as a proponent and progenitor. The frontispiece of *Needlework Through the Ages* is a coloured reproduction of an eighth-century Chinese embroidery, now known as the *Vulture Peak* embroidery (fig. 2.24). This was discovered by Stein in a walled-up chapel in Ch'ien-fo-tung, or the Thousand Buddhas cave complex, in Dunhuang, China in 1907 and was exhibited at the British Museum in 1914. The foreword was authored by the archaeologist and expert on Greek island embroideries, Alan John Bayard Wace (1879-1957). Here, he argued that study of historical embroidery could provide profound insight into social history. This research must commence with 'an open but critical mind' with which 'the credentials of the date of any piece' are examined 'severely'.[113] His proposed method of comparing dates with stylistic likenesses approximates the model of contextual seriation, first developed by Egyptologist Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853-1942). What is important about this communion between textile scholarship and archaeology in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was that it espoused a more rigorous engagement with the making and materiality of needlework. Rather than treating embroidery as a denigrated category of applied art and/or women's work, this approach demonstrated that scrutiny of the evidential matter of past needlework revealed new information pertinent to social, cultural and economic histories.

In common with the Art Needlework publications already discussed, several of Morris's writings began by remarking on the simplicity of needlework's tools, although these did not make claims as to their primitive origins.[114] In *Decorative Needlework*, however, Morris reflected on the 'natural and instinctive' impulse of early humankind 'to decorate one's stitchery'.[115] She proposed that the origins of stitching were born out of 'the instinctive desire of man to ornament whatever article he makes with his own hand, to place his *mark* upon his handiwork'.[116] Stitching was a means of assuring 'his primitive wants' and transitioning from 'the first stage of unreasoning savagedom' to a more civilised culture.[117] Morris thus invested the impetus to decorate through stitching with greater creative meaning than her peers. For her, the earliest forms of stitching were about more than fashioning or decorating objects of survival and necessity, like garments and weapons; these instances of stitching were the means through which humankind expressed their selfhood and transcended into a higher condition of reason.

These assertions on the beginnings of embroidery appear in the first few pages of *Decorative Needlework*; they are not elaborated as the book's historical survey swiftly moves on to discuss more recent examples of stitching. Yet, despite their brevity, these claims take on a striking relevance in the discussion of stitch developed in this chapter. How Morris conceived of the earliest forms of stitching

[113] Ibid., viii.
[114] Morris, 'Embroidery', *Plain Handicrafts,* 1892, p. 46, Morris, 'Of Embroidery', *Arts and Crafts Essays,* 1893, p. 212, and May Morris, 'Embroidery', *The Decorator and Furnisher,* Vol. 21, No. 5 (February 1893), pp. 178-179, at p. 178.
[115] Morris, *Decorative Needlework,* 1893, p. 2
[116] Ibid., p. 3.
[117] Ibid., p. 3.

is reminiscent of the ideal temperament of contemporary stitchers who, as she described in her publications and as we encountered above, should be producing work that was personally expressive and conveyed their individuality. While Morris did not firmly propose a relationship between contemporary embroiderers and stitchers from a prehistoric past, as she did with contemporary makers and medieval craftspeople, she was nonetheless interpreting the ancient beginnings of needlework to think through the meanings of artmaking and support her practical arguments around stitching in the late-nineteenth century.

Conclusion

In its close examination of stitching in both material and literary sources, this chapter has developed new ways of interpreting the making and meaning of Morris's embroideries. Rather than approaching these textiles with a predetermined aim to claim them as the work of the designer/maker, it has instead argued that stitching was a flexible, inventive and personally expressive process of artmaking through which embroiderers exerted their own authorial creativity and was understood as a medium ideally suited to emerging modern social conditions.

Existing literature on how Morris made and conceptualised embroidery has defined her relationship with Art Needlework through aligned approaches to stitching and maintained that both Morris and the movement's practitioners afforded stitch the lowest priority among the constitution of embroidery as an art form. In these accounts, stitching is at once a means of thinking about Morris's relationship with her contemporary makers and of reducing the rigour of that discourse. However, unpacking the many relationships between Morris and proponents of Art Needlework demonstrates that stitch(ing) as both a practical method and theoretical topic was deeply meaningful to both parties. Within needlework publications authored by Morris and her contemporaries, rudimentary stitching was conceived as the prehistoric progenitor to the earliest form of art, which evolved from functional necessity to become a civilising mechanism through which humankind expressed their creative impulse and transcended to a higher condition of reason. Deeper investigation into Morris and her relationship with Art Needlework can thus unearth new knowledge of their artistic and intellectual alliances and positions within historical narratives of art.

Chapter Three: Design

Introduction

For Morris, design was the most important element of embroidery and a central theme in her explications on making and looking at art. Existing scholarly literature has considered Morris's approach to design composition and the types of floral and vegetal subjects that populate her designs. Through close study of her sketches, drawings, designs and cartoons, this chapter expands on this scholarship. It unpacks the complexities of conventionalisation vis-à-vis different textile media, interrogates the range of source materials Morris used and examines further proposed relationships between Arts and Crafts embroidery and garden design. The chapter departs from existing accounts as it argues that imagination and enlivenment were crucial components of the artist's design practice and her interpretation of preeminent examples of historical design sources. Both facilitated an affective experience between makers and viewers, past and present. The particulars of Morris's engagement with historical sources are illuminated through a comparative discussion of art historical approaches to the study of ornament that were developed by Morris and her contemporaries around the turn of the twentieth century. Through this, the account here shows how Morris understood and valued design as a means of communing with artists of the past.

Process and Form

In lectures on 'Pattern-Designing' that Morris delivered in the United States of America from 1909-1910, she defined what she meant by a design for a textile: 'the scheme or plan of decoration that is to fill a defined space with pleasant line and mass'.[1] This was a view that she had held since the early 1890s, having advanced a similar argument in her book *Decorative Needlework* (1893).[2] Design was a union between the intention of the artist, the purpose of the worked article and choice of material and colour. Pleasure was key. Good design responds to and provokes the '*pleasure in life*'.[3] Design was also bound by compositional paradigms. Repetition, variety, contrast, conventionalisation and laws of radiation and principality had their necessary places within designs for textiles. Later in this chapter we will look more closely at the content of Morris's lecture on 'Pattern-Designing'. Beforehand, however, it is helpful to understand the process by which she realised her designs, and we therefore begin with an extended study of her sketches, drawings, patterns and cartoons.

Creating a design began with the production of botanical studies and sketches of historical artworks. Morris drew directly from nature throughout her life, capturing what she observed in diverse modes, from quick, simple sketches to detailed, naturalistic studies. She used a variety of

[1] May Morris, 'Pattern-Designing.', p. 3, Typed Lecture Transcript, William Morris Gallery, S4.3.20.1-2.
[2] May Morris, *Decorative Needlework* (London: Joseph Hughes & Co., 1893), p. 82.
[3] Ibid., p. 81. Italics original.

media – graphite, pen, coloured inks and chalks, pastels, watercolour and bodycolour – on assorted surfaces – lined, plain, tracing and laid paper, calico and scrap material like envelopes and letters. Subjects range from sweeping landscape to sunlit gardens, to whole, cut, grouped and individuated flowers, branches and shrubs, showing entire, partial or multiple views of specimens (figs 3.1 & 3.2). Some provide multiple aspects of the same plant on a single page.[4] Many record the name of the plant drawn and its location and date of the drawing.

Morris's botanical drawings demonstrate how her attention shifted from the general to the particular as she made her studies. She frequently began by sketching in rough, light pencil marks the broad mass and form of the subject. Once satisfied with its shape, she drew over these marks in fewer, bolder lines in ink to articulate edges, curves, folds, nodes and serrations (fig. 3.3).[5] Colour was regularly applied, but often before or instead of the second, bolder set of ink lines. Thin, uni-directional hatching strokes were used economically to suggest shadows and depth. Her nature studies reveal her interests in the overall shape of a plant and as well as its distinguishing details, how leaves and flower heads appear from different angles and, crucially, how plants grow. In making these studies, Morris looked closely at natural forms and built her knowledge of their properties and characteristics. She believed that this practice was necessary to the creation of successful textile designs, and she urged designers to undertake direct observation and faithful study of nature to ascertain the 'peculiarities and diversities' of natural forms.[6]

Morris also made studies of historical artworks, though far fewer of these survive than do her prolific nature drawings. A small number of examples is held in the William Morris Society and the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library. These include copies of textiles, stone carving, drawing and painted tiles, dating from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries (fig. 3.4).

These nature studies and copies of historical artworks were part of the extensive repertoire of source material from which Morris drew in creating her textile designs. This was supplemented by the photographic reproductions in her image library, discussed in chapter one, to which she turned for design study and inspiration. A large design, probably intended for a bedcover and not reproduced nor examined in existing literature, provides a rich example of how she incorporated different source materials into a design (fig. 3.5).[7] In the lower section of the design, a small river runs on a gentle slope from left to right. On the bank in the foreground, flowers grow beside a shrub of bryony whose knotting vines and snaking tendrils are a composite of Morris's multiple studies of bryony.[8] On the opposite bank, birds gather at the river's edge to drink and eat from a fruiting blackberry bush. To the

[4] For example, V&A: E.893-1939 and Ashmolean Museum: WA1941.108.119.
[5] Ashmolean Museum: WA1941.108.48.
[6] Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, 1893, p. 84.
[7] V&A: E.31-1940. It was likely produced *c*. 1900-10s. It resembles several large embroideries made in this period, including the *Kelmscott Bedcover* (*c*. 1910), *The Heavens Declare* (*c*. 1910s), *June* frieze (*c*. 1909-10), and the Birmingham Municipal School of Art *Owl* bedcover/hanging (1895-1904).
[8] Ashmolean Museum: WA1941.108.151 and WA1941.108.152.

far left is a mass of tall reeds growing in the water, and these closely resemble a study of grasses in a lake (fig. 3.6).[9] In the context of Morris's design oeuvre, this river scene is unusually naturalistic in the treatment of it subject: ripples animate the surface of the water, and there is a realistically proportional scale between river, plants and animals. Above this, however, the design transforms into a flattened and conventionalised decorative scheme constructed on a scrolling rinceaux scaffold which springs from the bankside reeds Morris was familiar with this type of formal network of curving scrolls through her study of *Opus Anglicanum* and seventeenth-century English blackwork in the V&A; examples of both of these types of textiles are found in her image library and lecture slides (fig. 3.7).[10] In the pockets of the twisting, curving reeds are clumps of flowers and herbs, some of which are named on the design: camomile, pimpernel, thyme, St John's wort and lady's smock. These clumps are contrived vignettes of the plants and conceived to show the plants' leaves, petals and flower heads in full growth, but they derive from Morris's botanical studies and feature characteristics that she observed first-hand.[11] The arrangement of these flower clumps and inclusion of numerous birds and butterflies are highly characteristic of Morris's design style and preferences. Indeed, this design corresponds in many ways with those she created for the Kelmscott and Melsetter hangings, Kelmscott bedcover, *June* frieze, *Heavens Declare* panel, and the Birmingham Municipal School of Art (*Owl*) bedcover (figs 3.8 & 4.2).

Morris believed that, in design composition, nature should not be imitated but recalled in simplified and conventionalised forms.[12] This mode of representation differs from that adopted in her naturalistic studies and drawings. Conventionalisation was essential to decorative work, which required symmetry, order and balance.[13] Additionally, flatness was a critical quality for embroidery design, and a design should not attempt to misrepresent the literal flatness of the embroidered fabric through an illusion of depth. Throughout Morris's designs, flowers, branches, shrubs and trees are stylised, flattened and arranged into regulated patterns. *Fruit Garden*, created *c.* 1888, provides a fine example of this (fig. 3.9).[14] The watercolour design depicts three tiers of trees: pomegranate and cherry trees comprise the top row; below are two shorter trees of apple; and at the bottom are three trees, shorter still, bearing blossom. Swirling like smoke amongst the trees are two rambling patterns:

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[9] Ashmolean Museum: WA1941.108.110.

[10] Among Morris's image library are dozens of photographic reproductions of *Opus Anglicanum* copes in the V&A as well as a reproduction of a seventeenth-century English blackwork jacket from the same collection (V&A: 919-1873).

[11] Honeysuckle, pinks, cornflowers and bluebells appear in the design and these are all found in her nature studies in the Ashmolean Museum: WA1941.108.117, WA1941.108.167 and WA.OA1282 (all of honeysuckle); WA1941.108.115 and WA1941.108.173 (pinks); WA1941.108.174 (cornflower); and WA1941.108.166 (bluebells).

[12] May Morris, 'Of Embroidery' in *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society: Catalogue of the Second Exhibition* (London: Chiswick Press, 1889), p. 72.

[13] May Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, 1893, p. 83-86.

[14] The design was produced for Morris & Co., and the Day book records four orders between 1892 and 1896. This research has revealed that this design, previously believed to have been made in the early 1890s, was made *c.* 1888: a detailed description of a stitched version of the design appears May Morris, 'Chain Stitch' *Hobby Horse*, Vol. 3 (1888) on p. 82.

one of grey-blue acanthus leaves, irregularly twisting and splaying, dotted with blooming pink flower heads; the second a dark green, less frisky tendril, with tight curls and small yellow flowers. With its formulated trees, sinuous acanthus and tendril and generalised flowers, the design is markedly stylised; this garden is not naturalistic.

In the main, Morris's designs show generalised visions of nature that are more controlled and enclosed than wild and open, with conventionalised natural forms, stylised arrangements of plants and fruiting trees, centrally planned compositions and borders that encase the represented spaces. These qualities are well-suited to the flat and self-contained nature of her textiles – from large portières, hangings and curtains to smaller fire screens, cushions, tea cloths, book covers and bags – which require a definite centre, no repeating pattern and a clearly defined border. However, the degree to which Morris conventionalised natural forms depended on the textile medium in which a design was to be executed. *Maids of Honour* is emblematic of her most classical approach to arranging nature in embroidery design: the composition is centred around an entwined pair of near-symmetrical roses, encircled within a wreath of simplified and flattened violets and enclosed within a circular border (fig. 3.10).[15] By contrast, her design for a tapestry seat cover is more naturalistic in its arrangement (fig. 3.11).[16] Tulips, cornflowers and other plants fill the dark blue background, while in the foreground grow two differently sized and angled roses. Behind them a large tulip and blossoming shrub jostle for space. In other designs for tapestry, Morris employed this less formalised and constrained style; in one, she even produced a pictorial composition depicting a figure harvesting fruit in a garden in which lilies, tulips and roses grow freely.[17] This tendency towards naturalism over conventionalisation in her tapestry designs could be explained partly by the fact that flatness was not an essential criterion of the art form, unlike embroidery. Additionally, Morris would have been alert to the conventions in both historical and contemporary tapestry, like that produced by Morris & Co., in which pictorial scenes populated by figures were appropriate for these textiles.[18]

By contrast, Morris's designs for needlepoint increase the level of conventionalisation as subjects taken from nature are drawn simplistically on squared paper, resembling heavily pixelated images (fig. 3.12).[19] Again, the degree of conventionalisation is relative to the chosen textile medium: the squared paper on which the design is drawn corresponds to the squared canvas netting used as the ground fabric for needlepoint, and each square equates to one stitch. In these needlepoint designs,

[15] William Morris Gallery: F368.
[16] V&A: E.960-1954.
[17] V&A: E.35-1940.
[18] A series of photographic reproductions of historical tapestries comprises the principal material of one of the Morris family albums in the National Library of Wales: Llyfrau Ffoto 283 The subjects of the tapestries include Ptolemaic system of astronomy; events from Roman History; Seven Deadly Sins, Seven Cardinal Virtues, and the Struggle of Christ; events from the second chapter of the book of Esther; scenes of the capture of Troy; John the Baptist baptising in the river Jordan.
[19] Kelmscott Manor, Society of Antiquaries: KM613.

Morris adapted the curving forms of plants and flowers into steps, crenelations and diamonds to suit the specific limitations of the medium.

Across all Morris's designs for textiles, communication of the character and vitality of natural phenomena was nonetheless critical. Each element or line of a design must have a purpose or meaning as it relates to the subject: a curving stem should grow, bend and fold because it does so in nature.[20] A composition could be planned from the centre, produced in a quartered configuration or freely drawn. Most of her embroidery designs are arranged around a central motif or set of axes, from which tendrils, flowers and sprays grow outwards. Whichever method of composition was used, however, Morris recommended that each design element be conceived individually around its own central point to provide unity and coherence throughout a decoration scheme.[21]

In devising the compositional framework and styling of a design, Morris frequently looked to a range of historical artworks that were produced across the globe. Some of these sources have been picked up in existing literature. Annette Carruthers has suggested that *Fruit Garden* relates to, among other referents, medieval tapestries in the Musée de Cluny and Italian Renaissance paintings.[22] Hanne Faurby and Melinda Watt have both observed that *Vine Leaf* synthesises Celtic knotwork, the structural device of the Persian medallion (with its ogival curves) and a Japanese-inspired motif of a swirl composed of three tomoe (fig. 3.13).[23] Linda Parry has noted the influence of Chinese pictorial embroidery on a design for a set of bed curtains;[24] and Caroline Palmer has shown that a design featuring St Dorothy combines Chinese elements of a cloudband pattern and a grinning horned dragon, with motifs reminiscent of Persian carpets and roses and fleur-de-lis in the manner of European medieval textiles (fig. 3.14).[25] Additionally, it should be added that St Dorothy's face bears a serene expression familiar to the Saints and Apostles stitched in *Opus Anglicanum* copes.

However, compositional devices and stylistic mannerisms borrowed from a global range of ornament appear not just in these isolated examples but consistently across Morris's designs. The arrangements of flattened, pruned fruit trees interspaced with flower clumps and lines of text seen in the *June* frieze and *The Heavens Declare* panel are reminiscent of a series of embroidered linen altar cloth bands made in Germany in the sixteenth century, acquired by the V&A in the early 1860s, and

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[20] Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, 1893, p. 101.
[21] Ibid., p. 103.
[22] Annette Carruthers, 'Darning, dyeing and embroidery: May Morris at Melsetter', in Lynn Hulse, ed., *May Morris: Art & Life, New Perspectives* (London: Friends of the William Morris Gallery, 2017), pp. 111-129, at p. 121.
[23] Art Institute of Chicago: 2018.844. Anna Mason et al., *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2017), p. 108. Melinda Watt, https://www.artic.edu/articles/953/may-morris-designer-and-advocate [Accessed: 21/07/2022].
[24] These are known as the Cranbrook Hangings, Cranbrook Art Museum, Michigan: CAM 1955.402. Linda Parry, *William Morris Textiles* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2013), p. 41.
[25] Ashmolean Museum: WA1941.108.281.1. Caroline Palmer, 'Picking up the Thread: Exploring the Designs of May Morris in the Ashmolean Museum', *The Decorative Arts Society Journal*, Vol. 42 (2018), pp. 122-141, at p. 131.

on display during the 1880s (fig. 3.15).[26] In designs such as *Australia* and *Persian No. 1*, tulips are styled in an Ottoman idiom: slender, with elongated petals and pointed tips.[27] Knotwork patterns in the borders of a bedcover that Morris designed and made between 1910 and 1930 as well as a wedding gown bodice designed for Amy Carruthers appear to be developed from sketches of Chinese-looking fretwork.[28] The Japanese tomoe swirl seen in *Vine Leaf* is found in several book cover compositions, including those for *The Tale of King Florus and the Fair Jehane* and *The Water Babies*.[29] In the latter, a Persian medallion is used to frame the central motif of the book's front cover. This device also appears in book cover designs for *The Light of Asia* and *Embroidery and Lace*,[30] a possible source of inspiration for which is a sixteenth-century Persian binding (fig. 3.16).[31]

Acquired by the V&A in 1885, this binding would have been available to Morris to study first-hand. It also falls within the broad category of historical artworks from Iran in which she developed a special interest. The same binding likely inspired the design for a whitework altar cloth designed by the artist, now in the Ashmolean (fig. 3.17).[32] There is a remarkably strong resemblance between the setting and treatment of the birds in the binding and the stylised arrangement of the birds in the altar cloth design. In both, the birds are evenly dispersed throughout the scheme, depicted at different angles, perched on tendrils, with tucked-in wings and extended tail feathers, and represented with a clear sense of heightened animation.

Varying iterations of the Persian medallion are found in the compositions for *Wild Peony*, *Persian No. 1*, *Rosebud Cushion*,[33] two designs for chalice veils,[34] a set of four embroidered panels depicting the seasons (private collection),[35] and set of embroidered hangings made to accompany two fine versions of *Fruit Garden*, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.[36] The medallion appears to have been a particular favourite device of Morris's, likely due to several factors: it was an elegant compositional form that suitably complemented the curving and twisting floral motifs of her design vocabulary; it was an adaptable shape that could be modified to suit decorative schemes of varying

[26] V&A: 7024-1860, 7025-1860, 8664-1863 and 1330-1864.
[27] William Morris Society: D41.
[28] These are: WA1941.108.252 and WA1941.108. 270. The design for the wedding gown bodice is in the Ashmolean Museum: WA1941.108.40, and the bedcover is in the William Morris Gallery: F203.
[29] *The Tale of King Florus and the Fair Jehane* (WA1941.108.34) and *The Water Babies* (WA1941.108.31) are in the Ashmolean Museum.
[30] *Light of Asia* (WA1941.108.30) and *Embroidery and Lace* (WA1941.108.32) are in the Ashmolean Museum.
[31] V&A: 353-1885.
[32] Ashmolean Museum: WA1941.108.280.
[33] These three designs are in the William Morris Society: *Wild Peony* (D19), *Persian No. 1* (D18) and *Rosebud Cushion* (D45).
[34] Ashmolean Museum: WA1941.108.239 and WA1941.108.240. The first features the Christogram 'IHS' set on a meandering rose tendril within an eight-edge medallion; the second, includes lily, tulip, rose and vine motifs, set within another eight-edged medallion. A photograph of an embroidered version of the latter design was reproduced in Morris & Co.'s *Embroidery Work* catalogue of 1912.
[35] The set of four panels based on a theme of the four seasons are discussed in Mason, *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer*, 2017, p. 114-115
[36] The set of hangings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: 1983.160a-d.
[36] These are: WA1941.108.239 and WA1941.108.240.

sizes;[37] and, fulfilling the laws of radiation and principality, it was formally appropriate for textile designs that required a definite centre and centrally planned composition.[38]

Morris was uninhibited in combining influences from diverse periods and cultures, and at times mixed in references to her own work alongside these. Salient here is a large preparatory design for an ecclesiastical textile, which constitutes Morris's most ambitious and complex design (fig. 3.18).[39] Written on the lower right edge is the scale: '1" = 1''; the composition measures twenty-eight by twenty-four inches, and this was therefore intended for a monumental textile, twenty-eight by twenty-four feet. The design is in draft form as different proposals for the central zone and borders are offered. The central section is underdeveloped, but the area coloured in rich purple with a diaper of white spots and regularly placed pencil markings indicate that a grid pattern was intended here. Morris described the grid as 'one of the most favourite and obvious forms of construction for flat design.'[40] It offered an effective way to divide the flat textile plane to produce regular zones or lozenges, in which motifs (individual figures, figural groupings, animals, flowers) could be positioned. This composition device was one Morris observed in a range of historical precedents, including Coptic, English Medieval, Persian and Elizabethan textiles, and is a format she used herself in several designs.

Proposals for the ecclesiastical design's borders are worked out in more detail. In the bottom left corner is a pair of angels, kneeling among small grass tufts and praying before a shining globus cruciger. This vignette is nearly identical to a figurative composition of Amie and Amile made by Morris *c*. 1905, and thus references her own work (fig. 3.19).[41] The arcading seen in the borders of the ecclesiastical design echoes the architectonic arches and niches set with heraldic shields that Morris studied in *Opus Anglicanum* copes, chasubles and panels in the V&A (fig. 3.20).[42] Finally, the Persian medallion is employed once again, here framing flowers and shields. The consistency with which Morris drew from, adapted and fused a global range of historical sources should lead us to recognise this as a defining aspect of her practice as a designer.

Morris's surviving designs range from small, experimental schemes to fully realised scaled-up compositions ready to be turned into a cartoon. Annotations, labels and suggestions for stitching appear at all stages of execution. A group of large-scale embroidery designs produced on calico by the

[37] For example, Morris adapted this motif by scaling it up or down, increasing or decreasing the number of curved, and or lengthening the distance between the points of the curves to render the shape elliptic.
[38] May Morris, 'Pattern-Designing.', p. 12.
[39] Ashmolean Museum: WA1941.108.282.1.
[40] May Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – X, Design', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXVI, No. 2042 (February 23 1894), pp. 245-246, at p. 245.
[41] Ashmolean Museum: WA.1941.108.42. This was worked into an embroidered book bag for a Kelmscott Press edition of the thirteenth century French romance *Of the Friendship of Amis and Amile*, which was translated by William and published in 1894. The bag is now in the Lisa Unger Baskin Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, PQ1425.A35 E49 1894. Mason, *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer*, 2017, p. 173.
[42] Columned and arched niches appear in the Bologna Cope, Butler Bowden Cope, Pienza Cope and Toledo Cope, all of which were reproduced in multiple photographs in Morris's image library.

Morris & Co. workshop, now held in the V&A, includes Morris's *Lotus* design (fig. 3.21).[43] It records her colour suggestions for different compositional elements: the letter 'B' is written next to blue acanthus stems, and 'green' is written on some of the smaller tendrils. The choice of a calico surface might have been selected so that the design of this size (245 x 623 cm) could be folded and unfolded without damage and thus re-used; by contrast, in several collections there are embroidery designs and cartoons drawn on thickly oiled tracing paper which are now too brittle to open.

Once a composition was finalised, the design was scaled up to the desired textile size and traced onto tracing paper. The lines on this new surface were pricked to create small holes, often tightly spaced together. This pricked cartoon was then laid over the ground fabric and pounced – fine charcoal or chalk powder was applied evenly over the perforations. Surviving cartoons reveal that Morris used a variety of colours for the pounce: black, white, red, russet and blue. Once pounced, the cartoon was lifted away, leaving a faintly dotted version of the design on the fabric marked out by the pounced powder. This was then joined up by a fine pen, pencil or inked brush, and the fabric was prepared for stitching (see pp. 49-51).

However, close study of Morris's cartoons reveals that their production was more complex than simply replicating the lines of the design, as the composition could be altered during the pricking process. In a cartoon for a teacloth pattern of fruiting vine, not all the perforated holes in the cartoon match up with the lines drawn in the design; here, the pricked lines rectify some wobbles in the design's curves to make their flow more graceful (fig. 3.22).[44] A comparison between the design and the cartoon for a book cover for *A Study of Dante* demonstrates that various details of the design were intentionally omitted in the cartoon (figs 3.23 & 3.24).[45] Speckled dots decorating the front cover medallion and back cover tendrils are neither drawn nor pricked on the cartoon; these elements were intended to be stitched by eye rather than following a guide. Similarly, horizontal lines surrounding the "dante" on the spine of the design are absent from the cartoon. Again, it would have been anticipated that these were to be worked freehand in the stitching stage of production. These omissions show that the cartoon was made with the stitching in mind. This supports and extends the argument made in chapter two: by attending to the making of the cartoon in Morris's embroidery production, it is clear that these omissions played a role in further facilitating the embroiderer's freedom to exercise their creativity and invention in the stitching process as they worked elements of a design without a guide.

[43] V&A: E.33-1940.
[44] Ashmolean Museum: WA.OA1254.
[45] Ashmolean Museum: WA.OA1281 and WA1941.108.50.

Imagining the Garden

Morris's adaptations of ornamental grammar from a global range of sources often serve as the architecture of a design, zoning the composition. Yet, nature was the most important reference point, and flowers, leaf sprays, vines, shrubs and small trees are the principal subjects of Morris's design repertoire. Among her favourites were honeysuckle, tulips, roses, violets, peonies, poppies, fruiting vine, berries, fruit trees and acanthus leaves. Many of the flowers that grew in the garden at Kelmscott Manor are found in her designs. Morris loved this garden, affectionately referring to it time and again as 'my garden'. Among the snippets of her day-to-day life at the manor recorded in letters are mentions of digging, planting seeds and flowers, and potting, growing, harvesting and drying vegetables. In fine weather, she took all meals outdoors and worked – drawing, painting, textile making and writing – in the garden. She experienced powerful bodily responses to the garden's sights, smells and sounds, describing them as 'delicious',[46] and often felt overwhelmed by the 'bewilderingly lovely and luxuriant' garden.[47] In correspondence with friends and family, she provided updates of the garden's general condition, what was beginning to bloom and what was in full flower. In late winter, she picked 'Jasmin, iris, hellbore, borage, snowdrops, violets, primrose, [and] aconite'.[48] In early Spring, 'the garden is a mass of daffies and jonquils, and the 'grey lily' and the wild tulips are coming out.'[49] By April, there were 'crimson primroses…clouds of violets, daffies, perwinkles, hyacinths'.[50] The month of May was a favourite: 'The garden is at its delicious moment, extravagantly profuse in blossom',[51] 'with great masses of peonies, and everything else in full flower.'[52] In June the roses were dazzling, and she was enamoured by their colours of 'scarlet, crimson, pinky, tawny, [and] lemon-yellow.'[53]

Flowers from the manor garden and surrounding meadow – roses, daisies, ragged robin, tulips, irises, poppies, fritillaries, rowan sprays and violets – feature in Morris's so-called *Net Quilt* design (early- to mid-1890s), which she used for the Kelmscott bedcover, embroidered by Jane *c.* 1910 (fig. 3.25).[54] Although made to cover a bed, loops were stitched to the top edge of the textile,

[46] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 9 March 1919, William Morris Gallery, S4.4.16.
[47] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 14 June 1915, William Morris Gallery, S4.4.16.
[48] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 6 January 1935, William Morris Gallery, S4.3.23.1.
[49] May Morrs to Ada Culmer, 25 March 1921, Lisa Unger Baskin Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University, RL. 11210.
[50] May Morris to Gordon Bottomley, 16 April 1936, British Library, Add. Ms. 88957/1/70, f. 11.
[51] May Morris to Gordon Bottomley, 10 May 1935, British Library, Add. Ms. 88957/1/70, f.16.
[52] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 17 May 1934, William Morris Gallery, S4.3.23.1.
[53] May Morris to Mary Annie Sloane, 11 June 1915, WMG, S4.4.16.2.
[54] Kelmscott Manor, Society of Antiquaries, KM233. This design was also used for the bedcover Morris made for Mary Grace Walker, now in Emery Walker's House, 02333. The production dates of the *Net Quilt* design and its embroidered versions have been subject to recent debate – see Parry, *William Morris Textiles*, 2013, p. 39 and Mason, *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer*, 2017, p. 103. A pencil and ink drawing for the *Net Quilt* design is in the collection of Kelmscott Manor, Society of Antiquaries (KM477) and has written on its reverse the date 1895, although it is not known when this dating originated. KM477 exists on one sheet, but cartoons corresponding to the knot and flower motifs set found in the Ashmolean Museum and William Morris Society. These are individuated, like Elizabethan appliqué slips. It is not known when these cartoons were produced, but this research has revealed that the creation of the *Net Quilt* design very likely dates to the mid-1890s. This

which suggests that it could have also been displayed as a hanging.[55] Seen hanging and in full, the bedcover appears like the meadow at Kelmscott, carpeted with flowers, as Morris often described it. This evocation of the meadow surrounding the house is reinforced by the depiction of the manor and garden in miniature in the bottom left of the textile. It was stated earlier in this chapter that most of Morris's designs depict generalised natural spaces. The Kelmscott bedcover, however, is a rare example of a representation of a specific garden in Morris's designs. Another example is the *June* frieze embroidery, in which we find a small scene of the river Thames winding past the estate of Kelmscott Manor, hidden behind elm trees (fig. 4.2).

With their carefully conventionalised, cultivated and pruned vegetal forms, Morris's designs might be appropriately understood as idealised gardens. Relationships between her designs and Arts and Crafts gardens have been proposed in existing literature, but these have not been sufficiently explored. This section of this chapter considers Morris's embroidery designs and theoretical approaches to design alongside the different ways in which garden schemes were conceptualised in the Arts and Crafts Movement. Much like Morris's responses to the sights, smells and sounds of the garden at Kelmscott Manor, her designs for embroidery provide imagined spaces with the potential to generate affect and stir the imagination.

In an analysis of the embroidery of Morris's colleague and contemporary, Mary Newill, Claire FitzGerald proposes that there was a strong affinity between embroidery and gardening in the Arts and Crafts Movement.[56] According to FitzGerald, this was predicated on a historical relationship between the two art forms and the recurrent depiction of native British flowers in Arts and Crafts embroidery, which corresponded with those used in planting schemes that followed the wild gardening trend that emerged in Britain in the 1870s. FitzGerald places Morris's designs within this context, drawing on previous assessments of the repeated appearance of flora found growing in Britain within her designs.[57] In comparing Morris's and William's designs, Linda Parry observes that Morris frequently

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conclusion is based on newly examined evidence found in a small preparatory design for a book cover, overlooked in previous analyses, in the collection of the William Morris Society (P25). Drawn in faint pencil marks above and below the book cover design are very rough sketches of the knotted scheme of the net quilt pattern. The main design of P25 is a slightly altered version of the central motif of Morris's embroidered binding for *The Tale of King Florus and the Fair Jehane*, now in The John Rylands Research Institute and Library, Manchester. The binding is accompanied by a hand-written note, which says that the book was gifted directly from William Morris to Nathan Oppenheim. As this was a direct gift, it suggests that it was given by William prior to his death in 1896. Therefore, the production of the book cover and its designs cannot be later than 1896; this could include the William Morris Society design, which would place the conception of the net quilt pattern to the around the same date: *c.* 1890-96. As the cartoons for the *Net Quilt* were individuated, they were therefore modular and could be re-used in different combinations; this accounts for the variation in the arrangement of the flowers seen across the Kelmscott Manor and Emery Walker's House bedcovers. The Kelmscott Manor bedcover includes additional design elements, such as the lower border, the design of which (in the Ashmolean) has written on it the date '1910'. The Kelmscott bedcover is therefore a composite of an earlier design of the net quilt pattern, likely created in the early 1890s, with additional elements, designed around fifteen years later.

[55] This is Jenny Lister's observation in Mason, *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer*, 2017, p. 103.

[56] Claire FitzGerlad, *Women, Craft, and the Object: Birmingham 1880-1930* (PhD Thesis, University of Warwick, 2013), pp. 200-201.

[57] Ibid., pp. 200-201. FitzGerald argues that Morris's designs reflect her interest in flora native to Britain.

used British perennial shrubs, climbers and annuals, and argues that her designs are 'more characteristically British' than William's, as she favoured the use of the hedgerow bryony as a linking device instead of acanthus.[58] Jan Marsh concurs with this view, arguing that Morris's use of bryony in particular conveys a distinctive character of rural Britain.[59] However, these observations have not propelled a deeper understanding of Morris's designs for textiles and her practice as a designer.

To address this, it is constructive to begin by outlining how gardens were understood in Arts and Crafts thought. In their recent work on the Arts and Crafts designer and architect Ernest Gimson, Annette Carruthers, Mary Greensted and Barley Roscoe credit John Dando Sedding (1838-1891) with establishing the foundations of theoretical thought on the Arts and Crafts garden.[60] An architect and designer, Sedding was also an associate of Morris's.[61] In 1889 he delivered a lecture on 'The Architectural Treatment of Gardens' at the Art Worker's Guild, which provided the basis for his book, *Garden-Craft, Old and New*, published in 1891.[62] *Garden-Craft* presents a series of meanings for the Arts and Crafts garden. Foremost, this was defined in relation to the house it adjoined;[63] in another, posthumous publication, *Art and Handicraft* (1893), Sedding argued that a key function of the garden was to help set a building in its plot and link it with the surrounding scenery.[64] William held an concordant view that the garden should exist in relation to the house.[65] Sedding further averred that gardens were artistic creations in which wild nature was transformed and elevated into conventionalised, abstracted and idealised forms and settings.[66] His description of this creative process resonates strikingly with Morris's approach of conventionalising the particulars of natural forms in textile design and introducing variety and contrast into a decorative scheme. For Sedding, in a garden, 'what [of nature] in its original state was complex or general, is here made chosen and particular; what was monotonous out there, is here mixed and contrasted'.[67] We could read Morris's designs, such as a preparatory draft for a portière, as an imagining of this proposal (fig. 3.26).[68] Here globular flower heads of mixed colours and sizes are combined with dark foliage and light, contrasting tendrils.

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[58] Linda Parry, 'May, Morris, embroidery and Kelmscott' in Linda Parry, ed., *William Morris: Art and Kelmscott* (London: The Boydell Press, The Society of Antiquaries of London, 1996), pp. 57-68, at p. 60.
[59] Jan Marsh, 'May Morris: ubiquitous, invisible Arts and Crafts-woman' in Bridget Elliott and Janice Helland, eds, *Women Artists and the Decorative Arts 1880-1935: The Gender of Ornament* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 35-49. at p. 40.
[60] Annette Carruthers, Mary Greensted and Barley Roscoe, *Ernest Gimson: Arts & Crafts Designer and Architect* (London: Yale University Press, 2019), p. 159.
[61] Sedding was a fellow member of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and an essay he wrote on design was published posthumously in the 1893 collection *Arts and Crafts Essays*, to which Morris also contributed.
[62] Carruthers, Greensted and Roscoe, *Ernest Gimson: Arts & Crafts Designer and Architect*, 2019, p. 159.
[63] John Dando Sedding, *Garden-Craft, Old and New* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1891), p. 2.
[64] John Dando Sedding, *Art and Handicraft* (London: Kegan, Paul & Co., 1893), p. 64.
[65] William Morris, *The Collected Works of William Morris. With Introductions by His Daughter May Morris*, *Volume 22: Hopes and Fears for Art; Lectures on Art and Industry*, (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1914; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 91.
[66] Sedding, *Garden-Craft, Old and New*, 1891, pp. 2-29.
[67] Ibid., p. 7.
[68] Ashmolean Museum: WA1941.108.43. This was made *c*. 1895.

Further correspondences between gardening and designing and making embroidery are apparent. Sedding used the metaphor of 'an ordered mosaic' to suggest an ideal planting arrangement composed 'of the gleanings of [a] woodland carpet'.[69] Morris frequently drew on metaphors of jewels and mosaics to describe artworks, using the latter term to illustrate colour arrangements of decorated surfaces in which different colours are laid alternately or side by side, like a chequerboard, to achieve variety and contrast.[70] The mosaic was one of three schematic models for colouring an embroidery design that Morris outlined in multiple publications: the first being a darkly coloured design on a light fabric; the second a lightly coloured design on a dark fabric; and, the third, 'a *mosaic* of colour', in which the design and fabric colours are nearer in tone.[71] The mosaic scheme was, Morris noted, the most challenging to realise successfully, and one 'in which Eastern artists have always excelled.'[72]

There are other conceptual approaches to composition and colour that link Arts and Crafts embroidery and garden design. These can be found in a comparison between Morris's design practice and the work of a gardening luminary of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932). Like Morris, Jekyll trained at the National Art Training School. She also designed for embroidery. Two of her designs, 'Periwinkle' and 'Iris', intended for chair seats or cushions, are included in Letitia Higgin's *Handbook of Embroidery 1880*, which we encountered in chapter two (fig. 3.27). 'Periwinkle' is a repeating design of gently undulating stems with flat, spiral shaped flowers. Meanwhile, 'Iris' is a bolder design of two large-scale isolated plants, which show blooming flower heads from multiple viewpoints. However, Jekyll was, most prominently, a horticulturalist and prodigious writer on gardening. Further parallels between gardening and embroidery emerge when we compare her book, *Colour Schemes for the Flower Garden* (1911), with Morris's theorisations on textile making. In the case of filling a flower bed, for example, Jekyll recommended that it be planned 'with a good scheme of colour', echoing Morris's suggestions for colouring embroidery.[73] Moreover, both Jekyll and Morris argued that colours should be selected purposefully and intelligently to achieve a harmonious scheme.[74] Thus, the process of planting a bed – of filling the earthen ground with patches of coloured plants – had an equivalent in stitching sections of the fabric ground with coloured threads. Morris's embroidery designs and Arts and Crafts gardens therefore not only adopted

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[69] Sedding, *Garden-Craft, Old and New*, 1891, p. 12.
[70] For example, in *Decorative Needlework* she described the Resht embroidered patchwork, which she owned in her personal collection (and now in BMAG), thus: 'You must imagine a mosaic, as it were, but instead of being made up of bits of marble or of coloured glass, this mosaic is formed of pieces of stuff of different colours, fitted together into certain ornamental shapes and finished with touches of colour in embroidery stitches.' See, Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, 1893, p. 64.
[71] Ibid., p. 118, and May Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – XIII, Conclusion', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXVII, No. 2069 (August 31 1894), pp. 277-278, at p. 277. Of the three schema, Morris proposed that the second, a light coloured design on a dark ground, was the most effective. This was because she found that in this type form and colour had a more equal relationship.
[72] Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, 1893, p. 118.
[73] Gertrude Jekyll, *Colour Schemes for the Flower Garden* (London: Country Life / George Newnes, 1919, fourth edition), p. vii.
[74] Ibid., pp. viii-ix.

corresponding types of flowers and plants, but also embodied parallel approaches to design composition, adaptation of nature into ornament and handling of colour. In this context, embroidery and gardening should be understood as intermedial forms of artmaking.

Sedding proposed a third definition of the Arts and Crafts garden as a site of enchantment where alternative realities could be reimagined. In it, 'alleys with their giddy cunning, their gentle gloom, their cross-lights and dappled shadows of weaving boughs, make paths of fantasy'.[75] It was a place that could be all at once 'man's recreation-ground, children's fairyland, bird's orchestra, butterfly's banquet'.[76] Morris offers a visual response to this rhapsodic criteria in a composition for an embroidered card case, titled 'An Eastern Garden'. This was exhibited at the eighth ACES exhibition (1906) and illustrated that year in *The Studio* (fig. 3.28).[77] A undulating river flows through a flowered meadow upon which a stylised fruiting tree grows straight. The tree's bough is framed by a speckled halo, which is penetrated by the heads of two hovering birds. Below them, on either side of the tree, are two swirling tendrils. While Hilary Laucks Walter suggests that this design depicts a landscape view from Morris's visit to Egypt, it is contended here that the design offers an imagined vision of a fantastical garden.[78] Flowing water, fecund plants and the birds' outspread wings allude to movement and growth, but it is in fact a stilted and surreal composition. Space is flattened. The leaves and fruits of the tree are closed-off. The birds, lodged into the corners of the composition, are constrained. Additionally, the two swirling tendrils are ambiguous, appearing simultaneously as vines growing from the meadow and outsized ornamental scrolls.

The ways in which Morris delighted in the joy she found in the garden at Kelmscott, particularly in its dramatic changes and potential for wonder, resonate with Sedding's conceptualisation of the garden's imaginative potential. She described how the rapid washing away of blanketed snow by heavy rain was like 'magic'.[79] The changes that took place throughout the year seemed, to Morris, to transform the garden's state and character: the flooded mushy ground of the winter could, by the summer, turn to a wilderness of roses or, alternatively, a dry desert. When the nearby river Thames and its tributaries flooded, matter and colour became diaphanous, as she described of one December day:

> yesterday we rode out among snow and sunshine and wide stretches of sparkling water – a day of clear transparent and very tender colour – fairylike: and the only <u>solid</u> colour were the Kingfishers about the overflowing ditches – solid blue jewels darting here and there![80]

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[75] Sedding, *Garden-Craft, Old and New*, 1891, p. 9.
[76] Ibid., p. 16.
[77] *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. Catalogue of the Eighth Exhibition, 1906* (London: Chiswick Press, 1906), p. 66, exhibit 243e. The card case was embroidered by Ellen Wright and exhibited by Morris. See, 'Arts and Crafts Exhibition. Concluding Notice', *The Studio*, Vol. 37, No. 157 (April 1906), pp. 213-229, at p. 221.
[78] Hilary Laucks Walter, 'Another Stitch to the Legacy of William Morris: May Morris's Designs and Writings on Embroidery' in Phillippa Bennett and Rosie Miles, eds, *William Morris in the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 73-89, at p. 85.
[79] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 24 January 1926, William Morris Gallery, S4.3.23.1.
[80] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 30 December 1914, William Morris Gallery, S4.4.16.

Several of Morris's designs reflect the joy she found in nature. Birds dive and wheel in the Kelmscott and Melsetter Hangings. In *The Homestead and the Forest* embroidery, fish dance in a glistening river, while two lion clubs playfight and an old, dour-looking tiger growls at a flowering lily (fig. 1.10). And in a design for a needlepoint tablemat, three porpoises, with large googly eyes, swim in a blue-green sea (fig. 3.29).[81]

How Morris used the garden at Kelmscott Manor around this period corroborates the 'children's fairyland' that Sedding proposed. The garden served as the setting for plays by the Kelmscott Revellers, a youth amateur dramatic group that Morris ran in the early 1920s. In August 1922 she staged a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Children and young adults performed, accompanied by singing, a Tabor drum and a pipe, the last of which was played by Morris.[82] She described to her friend, the poet Gordon Bottomley, how the 'men-actors looked splendid and entered into their parts to such an extent that to me it seemed as though they were just Shakespeare's country folk come to life in the 20th century.'[83] The rehearsals and performance took place on the garden lawn, which was decorated with garlands of roses. Photographs taken of the cast standing in the garden survive among Morris's correspondence in the British Library. Across the back of two of these photographs, she wrote a poem commemorating the production. It describes how, for the duration of the performance, the garden was transported back in time to a 'sunlit fairyland', 'a happy dream of Shakespeare's England, / Fresh with the dew of magic summer nights, / Fragrant with roses and the mellowing hay.'[84]

Alternatively, the garden at Kelmscott was the setting of medieval Norse legend.[85] Fafner (or Fafnir), from the *Völsunga Saga*, was a mythical dragon who guarded a hoard of gold.[86] Mighty and fearsome, he shook the ground as he walked and spouted venom. Fafner lived in the garden at Kelmscott Manor in the form of a yew hedge, first carved by William. In 1923, Morris was photographed posing in front of the hedge (fig. 3.30).[87] Her body faces the camera, but her face is turned towards the manor, matching that of Fafner behind her. Morris was familiar with this saga tale, and there is a sense of sly knowing in her contrived pose in the photograph; she could be imagining herself here as Sigurd, the hero of Old Norse and Germanic legend, who slew Fafner, or perhaps she was envisaging herself, fantastically transformed in the enchanted garden, as the dragon. The garden at Kelmscott was thus a place where realities were reimagined.

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[81] The tablemat design is Morris's sketchbook in Kelmscott Manor, Society of Antiquaries: KM613.
[82] A photograph in the William Morris Gallery shows Morris playing a pipe and wearing theatrical costume, likely taken on the occasion of this production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, WMG, Phj902xxxii.
[83] May Morris to Gordon Bottomley, 3 September 1922, British Library, ADD Ms. 88957/1/70, f.161.
[84] Ibid., ff.166-167.
[85] May Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – VII, Figure-Work', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXVI, No. 2035 (January 5 1894), pp. 3-4, at p. 3.
[86] William Morris, *The Collected Works of William Morris, with Introductions by his Daughter May Morris, Vol. 7: The Story of Grettir the Strong; The Story of the Volsungs and the Niblungs* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1911; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 328-330.
[87] William Morris Gallery, PhJ902xxxiv.

This deeper investigation into the correspondences between Arts and Crafts rhetoric on the garden, Morris's designs and the ways in which she envisioned and used the garden at Kelmscott Manor leads us to interpret her designs in new ways. We can read them as works which not only capture the vitality of natural phenomena but also the fantastical and magical possible in nature. The ordered, conventionalised and tightly bound spatial constructions of her designs do not preclude kinds of expansiveness that are imaginative, joyful and humorous; indeed, in them we see how bankside reeds can transform into flat scrolling ornament; flowers, shrubs, blossom and fruit trees bloom eternally; the river Thames can be shrunk or enlarged; and crocodiles, lions, flamingos and elephants might inhabit the Oxfordshire countryside. In sum, the relationships between Morris's designs and the context of Arts and Crafts gardens are more substantial and significant than previous scholarship has acknowledged, and the approximation in flower type is not the most compelling feature of these relationships. The more profound aspects of the associations between Morris's embroidery designs and gardens are the conceptual approaches shared between these art forms and how, for Morris, the making of a textile design provided a decorative space that, while governed by artistic conventions, could nonetheless be imaginative, fantastical and joyful. This in turn helps us interpret Morris's designs in new ways beyond the denotation of vegetal content to register the affective possibilities they offer to their maker, stitcher(s), and viewers.

Imagination and Enlivenment

Imagination and enlivenment were also crucial to how Morris engaged with historical sources of design. There was vitality in her responses to the wildlife she saw in historical textiles. In her publications of the 1890s, she described the pattern of a woven fabric in which 'the silk designer has let his humour run riot on monkeys riding queer beasts'.[88] She found that Coptic textiles were drawn with 'spirit and familiarity; the wild ducks in the middle of clustered leaves suggest fowling in Egyptian swamps, the spotted beasts suggest hunts in desert places'.[89] In closely looking at the motif of St Michael slaying the dragon in the *Syon Cope*, she imagined that the death of this creature would produce a thrill similar to 'the fateful ending of Fafner, the wearied guarder of treasure.'[90]

Morris's description of monkeys and queer beasts was accompanied by an illustration, taken from Friedrich Fischbach's 1874 publication *Ornamente der Gewebe* (*Ornament for Textiles*) – the publication encountered in chapter two in a discussion of the debate around the prehistoric origins of art within materialist textile scholarship. Fischbach's text was a key influence on Morris's thinking about design across artistic periods. She discussed plates from the book throughout her lectures on

[88] May Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – XI, Animals and Symbols', *The Building News and Engineering Journal,* Vol. LXVII, No. 2063 (July 20 1894), pp. 66-67, at p. 66.
[89] May Morris, 'Coptic Textiles', *The Architectural Review: For the Artist and Craftsman,* Vol. 5, No. 30 (May 1899), pp. 275-287, at p. 278.
[90] Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – VII, Figure-Work', 1894, p. 3.

pattern designing. Morris insisted that students and scholars alike studied historical ornament 'with questioning and watchful eyes' as this provided 'food for thought, for comparison and question.'[91] This was not just about understanding good or bad design. She believed that the greatest examples of historical designs have a spiritual significance: their patterns are immediate, alive and 'felt as an ever-present reality.'[92] To illustrate this, turning to plate 88B in *Ornamente der Gewebe* (fig. 3.31), she asked her audience to observe how

> …the lion is clawing his prey, and the pair of chained wings are all garlanded about with a delicate trailing pattern. You have not merely the contrast of breadth and broken line, but the broken line of tender leafage with the straight slim wing-feathers, and lastly both with the flickering radiance round the lion's cloud-hole, or whatever it is: three different qualities of line united with apparent ease and unconcern. This design is indeed of a very high order both in intention and execution.[93]

Animation was a vital quality in the finest examples of design. In these, natural phenomena are enlivened:

> It must be said also with regard to repeated patterns for woven stuffs and the simple forms of embroidery and painted decorations, that the most interesting designs always have animated life in them, very often they are made up of beasts and birds and humans, indeed. Besides the more definite religious symbolism, besides interlaced mottoes and crowned initials, personal devices, coat amour and so forth, natural phenomena are reproduced in woven hangings and all the drama of the field and forest and desert place – the sun's rays breaking through a cloud, the eagle flying up to the heavens, the lion with streaming main, the stag in a fenced park, the pond with its fish and wild fowl, the castle with its boundaries, its woods and gardens.[94]

This passage has been misinterpreted as a description of a single source that might have inspired Morris's design for *The Homestead and the Forest*, which features a sunburst, eagle, lion, stag, river and dwelling among other motifs.[95] However, what she was describing in her lecture is a compilation of motifs and compositional vignettes, which she had selected from the one hundred and sixty plates in Fischbach's publication. Morris chose a variety of examples that depict natural forces, creatures and settings and described how their appearance within a decoration scheme communicates knowledge of their ontologies. She understood these to be symbolic, but not of an emblematic nature. Rather, they symbolise dramatic episodes that provoke an affective response in the viewer.

Morris expanded on this position in a second, untitled, lecture on pattern-designing. Using Fischbach's publication once more, she considered eminent Sicilian, North Italian and Persian textiles made between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. According to her, their patterns tell stories. One shows 'a spirited picture of two ladies coming from hunting, with a grace of hares on a withy hanging over one shoulder; they have stopped at a handsome foundation by an oak-tree and draw water from

[91] May Morris, 'Pattern-Designing.', pp. 1-6.
[92] Ibid., p. 4.
[93] Ibid., p. 15.
[94] Ibid., p. 18.
[95] Mason, *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer,* 2017, p. 118.

the well, while their dogs – one spotted and one plain – coupled in a leash, drink thirstily at the pool below.'[96] What Morris found so compelling about these designs was how the art from the past could evoke vivid narrative episodes that were registered by the viewer in the present. This required the viewer's imagination, but this was an imagination that was activated automatically by the pleasure they found in the superlative qualities of pattern design – balance, delicacy, rhythm, grace, 'seriousness and playfulness'.[97]

This kind of imaginative response also told Morris something about the makers of these textiles. Through her interpretation of historical design models, she not only encountered vivid and affective experiences through pattern but also got closer to those who wove and embroidered those sources. She explored this communion throughout her writing on historical textiles. Significantly, the position she developed demonstrates her understanding of mainstream art historical accounts of the diachronic development and diffusion of ornament. Yet, at the same time, it shows how her preference for a synchronic study of ornament distinguished her scholarship from the work of her peers. To delve deeper into this relationship, we must broaden the chapter's discussion and examine the intellectual climate concerned with the historical development of ornament that permeated Morris's artistic and scholarly milieux. A cast of scholars, curators and archaeologists are introduced as constituents of this climate and their discursive positions are analysed. Their assembly here does not assume an intellectual unity between them, as their analyses, arguments and conclusions on how ornament developed were not homogenous. Yet, these figures were nonetheless connected through the kinds of artistic resources they studied and the connections they established between them.

Interpreting Sources

During Morris's lifetime, vast quantities of historical artworks became available in unprecedented ways. International and colonial exhibitions took place, showcasing artworks, cultural products and manufactures from across the globe. Institutions like the V&A and the British Museum were establishing unrivalled encyclopaedic collections. The circulation of photographic reproductions of artworks escalated, facilitating designers, collectors and scholars like Morris to assemble image libraries. International travel became easier, offering opportunities for those with sufficient financial resources to cross new geographical and cultural frontiers where they saw, discovered, stole and bought a wide range of foreign artworks first-hand. Furthermore, London, as Morris's home and the centre of the British empire, was host to a rich market for international trade, importing and selling artworks. Morris participated in and benefited from each of these spheres of activity.

One corollary to this influx of source material and the attendant eclecticism that it enabled was an unprecedented self-consciousness around style and historicism. Morris registered this astutely.

[96] May Morris, Untitled, p. 14, Typed Lecture Transcript, William Morris Gallery, S4.3.20.1-2.
[97] Ibid., p. 16.

Writing in 1893, she expressed her uneasiness around the way in which undiscriminating designers derived inspiration from the past when making new work.

> I do not wish it to be thought that I advocate falling back on, say, the 13th or 14th century for inspiration, with no idea of originating for ourselves; but the 19th century is so peculiar and unique an epoch, and bears the weight of so many centuries of tradition, superstition, and history upon it, that as regards the lesser arts of life at least, we have to be content to be eclectic, and do the best we can with stored-up traditions, turning them to account whilst groping about and waiting for the new growth of art, genuine and unconscious, which is certain to spring up in time.[98]

While there was an anxiety of influence around the future of design generated by the quantity and quality of source material at hand, possibilities for creative productivity were born from it, too. Museums like the V&A collapsed space and time: new juxtapositions and combinations deriving from divergent geographical, temporal and cultural pockets of the history of art were at Morris's disposal. In the same building, for example, she was able to examine chain stitch in Bengalese, Iranian and English early modern embroidery or assess how a grid structure was used across designs for ecclesiastical and secular textiles from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

At the same time, museums strove to establish an unbroken chronological sequence of the history of art through these growing collections. This aim was repeatedly tested by discoveries revealed through concurrent archaeological activity. With each new acquisition, curators attempted to understand how an artwork fitted into received art historical narratives. One way to do this was to examine the motifs – or motives, as they were commonly called – present in an artwork's decoration. Chapter two has already introduced several figures who pursued this approach: Gottfried Semper, Marian Alford, Alois Riegl and Aurel Stein. However, along with Morris, they were part of a larger assembly of artists, art historians, curators and archaeologists whose publications attest to an explosion of enquiry into the historical development of ornamental motifs in art. Many of these appeared in *The Burlington Magazine for Art Connoisseurs* in the early decades of the twentieth century. This fertile home for an interest in the diffusion of ornament was familiar to Morris: not only did she own twenty-four bound volumes of *The Burlington*, but she also published four articles in the journal in 1905 and was acquainted with many of her fellow contributors.[99] The journal is therefore a productive context in which our comparative discussion begins.

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[98] May Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery', *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, Vol. LXV, No. 2023 (13 October 1893), pp. 465-466, at p. 465.

[99] The twenty-four bound volumes are recorded in *Inventory and Valuation of The Furnishing Contents of the Residence, Oil Paintings, Books, Manuscripts, Silver, Plate, Jewellery, Personal and Miscellaneous Effects at Kelmscott Manor, Kelmscott, near Lechlade, Gloucestershire. The Property of the Late Miss May Morris*, p. 33. William Morris Gallery, S4.4.8. Morris's articles in *The Burlington Magazine for Art Connoisseurs* are: 'Opus Anglicanum-The Syon Cope', Vol. 6, No. 22 (January 1905), pp. 278-285; 'Opus Anglicanum. II-The Ascoli Cope', Vol. 6, No. 24 (March 1905), pp. 440-448; 'Opus Anglicanum III-The Pienza Cope', Vol. 7, No. 25 (April 1905), pp. 54-65; and 'Opus Anglicanum at the Burlington Fine Arts Club', Vol. 7, No. 28 (July 1905), pp. 302-309.

In a review of the book *Decorative Textiles* published in *The Burlington* in 1919, an anonymous reviewer proposed that a connected, global history of ornament could best be achieved through the history of textile design. Much like the primitivist universalism attached to the act of stitching with a needle promoted in Art Needlework publications (see pp. 71-74) weaving was, the reviewer understood, 'one of the few handicrafts essential to mankind', practised from 'primitive' through to 'super-civilised' societies, and its possibilities in technical variation yielded a 'kaleidoscopic series of decorative forms.'[100] Furthermore,

> The facility with which [textile] stuffs can be carried from place to place, and the adaptability of the loom and the needle in all regions alike, have combined to cause decorative motives invented at one end of the world to find their way incontrovertibly to the other. This has made divergence of view so often the rule rather than the exception and leaves the unskilled in doubt whether one piece of work was made in the 5th or the 15th century, and whether another had its origin in Spain or China.[101]

This neatly captures a problem that encyclopaedic museum collections posed to those grappling with questions around the diachronic development of art: how to explain the relationship between two or more motifs that appeared to have ornamental parallels but were unrelated geographically.

In addition to being essential items for clothing, technically adaptable and easily portable, textiles could be, in the right conditions, remarkably well preserved. Archaeological excavations in Egypt in the late nineteenth century and in North-Western China in the early twentieth century unearthed huge quantities of ancient woven and embroidered textiles which had remained hidden from light and protected in dry desert climates for more than a millennium. It was exactly these sorts of textiles with which Morris and her contemporaries were preoccupied and which could provide ripe material for a 'history of cultural diffusion'.[102]

Reports on these textiles appeared consistently in the early decades of *The Burlington*. Albert Frank Kendrick, curator of textiles at the V&A and a friend of Morris's, published articles on Coptic textiles from Egyptian burial sites, which the museum acquired.[103] Walter Percival Yetts (1878-1957) wrote on art discovered from an expedition led by Pyotr Kozlov (1863-1935) in northern Mongolia from 1923-26.[104] Tracing the motifs present across metalwork, woodwork, stoneware, ceramics and textiles, he identified echoes from Hellenic, Iranian, Scythian, Sarmatian, Chinese and ancient Siberian art. He concluded that 'the discoveries of the Kozlóv Expedition add an important page to the

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[100] 'Review of Decorative Textiles by George Leland Hunter', *The Burlington Magazine for Art Connoisseurs*, Vol. 35, No. 197 (Aug 1919), pp. 79-80 at p. 79. These views echo those espoused by Semper, as recorded by Friedrich Fischbach in his *Die Geschichte der Textilkunst Nebst Text zu den 160 Tafeln des Werkes Ornamente der Gewebe*, (Hanau: G. M. Alberti, 1883), discussed in chapter two of this thesis.
[101] 'Review of Decorative Textiles', 1919, p. 79.
[102] Walter Perceval Yetts, 'Discoveries of the Kozlóv Expedition', *The Burlington Magazine for Art Connoisseurs*, Vol. 48, No. 277 (April 1926), pp. 168-185, at p. 175.
[103] All by Albert Frank Kendrick and published in *The Burlington Magazine for Art Connoisseurs*, 'A Tunic from a Cemetery in Egypt', Vol. 7, No. 27 (June 1905), pp. 238-239; 'Woven Fabrics from Egypt', Vol. 31, No. 172 (July 1917), pp. 13-20; and 'More Textiles from Egyptian Cemeteries', Vol. 32, No. 181 (April 1918), pp. 142-146.
[104] Yetts, 'Discoveries of the Kozlóv Expedition', 1926, pp. 168-185.

history of cultural diffusions, and among the data they provide is concrete proof of one of the channels of communication between China and the West some two thousand years ago.'[105] Notably, Yetts understood the removal of these artworks from the sites in which they were found as a process of 'recovery'.[106] This is reflective of a prevalent colonial view held by many European archaeologists, collectors and curators active in this period, who believed their activities were saving material culture from sites that were being looted by local occupants. [107] Ironically, they did not regard their own interventions of disturbing and taking from indigenous sites of religious and cultural significance as looting.

Aurel Stein and his collaborator Fred H. Andrews (1866-1957), first Principal of Amar Singh Technical Institute, Srinagar, published in *The Burlington* a three-part series on ancient Chinese figured silks, which had been brought to light through Stein's expeditions in 1906-8 and 1913-14.[108] These expeditions were documented in detailed reports. *Serinda*, published in 1921, is an in-depth account of Stein's 1906-8 expedition, during which he found the *Vulture Peak* embroidery, which we encountered in chapter two. During the same expedition, Stein discovered a substantial collection of textile fragments, which he understood as votives left by travelling pilgrims who historically visited the site. [109] While many of the fragments were loose, others had been assembled to form vast altar valances, made of 'pieces cut from ornamented silk fabrics, such as embroideries, figured silks, damasks, gauzes, or prints, used in great variety and without scheme of arrangement.' (fig. 3.32)[110] Crucially, these textiles provided evidence which Stein had been seeking of artistic diffusion and exchange that had occurred along historical silk road trade routes. This 'propagation of decorative textile motifs', as he put it, was demonstrated through the textiles' histories as deposited pilgrimage votives, foreign silk making materials and a historically and geographically wide-ranging programme of iconography and motifs.[111] Knowledge of how ornament evolved and diffused through time and place could be accessed through analysis of historical textiles and their making.

One artist and critic close to Morris who understood and practised this this type of analysis was Christiana Herringham,[112] a founding member of the Women's Guild of Arts and a revivalist

[105] Ibid., p. 185.
[106] Ibid., p. 170.
[107] For more on this in the context of Morris and the collecting of Coptic textiles taken from burial grounds in Egypt, see: Thomas Cooper, 'May Morris, Egypt and Coptic Textiles', *Art History*, forthcoming 2024/2025.
[108] All by Aurel Stein and Fred H. Andrews and published in *The Burlington Magazine for Art Connoisseurs*, 'Ancient Chinese Figured Silks Excavated by Sir Aurel Stein. Drawn and Described by F. H. Andrews', Vol. 37, No. 208 (July 1920), pp. 2-10; 'Ancient Chinese Figured Silks Excavated by Sir Aurel Stein. II', Vol. 37, No. 209 (August 1920), pp. 71-77; and 'Ancient Chinese Figured Silks Excavated by Sir Aurel Stein. III', Vol. 37, No. 201 (September 1920), pp. 147-152.
[109] Aurel Stein, *Serindia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China, Carried out and Described under the Orders of the H. M. Indian Government by Aurel Stein, K.C.I.E*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: The Claredon Press, 1921), p. 902.
[110] Ibid., pp. 900-902.
[111] Ibid., p. 900.
[112] Herringham was a founding member of the Women's Guild of Arts and a close colleague of Morris's. She was also a member of Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

tempera painter. Her six-part series of articles on Oriental carpet patterns, published in *The Burlington* between 1908-09, is worth examining closely as it illuminates wider concepts, approaches to and problems with pursuing a globalised history of art through textile design in this period.[113] While the series was aimed at carpet collectors, Herringham argued that the analyses she developed in her articles contributed to the larger project of understanding 'the universal world development of pattern.'[114] Each article took as its focus a different carpet type – Mosul, Hamadan, Ghiordes and Ladik – or pattern classification, such as geometrical, meander and key. Herringham examined the carpets' visual characters, described their manufacture process and theorised on the origins of their motifs. In part two, for example, she looked at Mosul and Hamandan runners, finding them 'Saracenic in character', by which she meant 'a picturesque, lively, easy treatment, combining somewhat naturalistic leaves and flowers with fanciful arrangements of medallions and panels, founded on octagon and hexagon motives.'[115] In part three, she turned to the rose and pomegranate motifs she saw in Ghiordes rugs. She identified 'distinct resemblances… between the motives of the design in one or two specimens of these rugs that I have been able to examine carefully, and the coloured weavings that have been found in tombs in Egypt dating from the late Roman or early Christian times.'[116] The coloured weavings she was referring to were Coptic textiles, knowledge of which had become available through 'recent discoveries of grave clothes, chiefly at Sakharah and Akhmim'.[117] Morris was familiar with Coptic textiles, having studied examples of these first-hand in the V&A and published an article titled 'Coptic Textiles' in 1899. The formal echoes between Ghiordes rugs and Coptic textiles prompted Herringham to suggest that 'correspondence between the art of middle Egypt and Western Antolia might indicate a wide diffusion and mingling of art throughout the Roman and Sassanian empires.'[118]

A issue with typological approaches like those pursued by Herringham and others were the imaginative leaps of assumption they made in conceptualising the logic of exchange and influence on behalf of anonymous artists of the past. In 'The Snake Pattern in Ireland, the Mediterranean and China', published in *The Burlington* (separately from her Oriental carpet series), Herringham traced the shared ancestry of spirals and scrolls in Irish and Chinese art to the art of the ancient Eastern

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[113] Only Michaela Jones has briefly discussed these articles, noting how their content focuses on pattern type and motif. Jones did not, however, consider these articles in relation to wider debates and issues around the intellectual interest in the global diffusion of ornament. See, Michaela Jones, *Christina Herringham and the Art Collection of Royal Holloway and Bedford New College* (PhD Thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2020), pp. 113 & 121.

[114] Christiana Herringham, 'Notes on Oriental Carpet Patterns', *The Burlington Magazine for Art Connoisseurs*, Vol. 14, No. 67 (October 1908), pp. 28-30, at p. 28.

[115] Christiana Herringham, 'Notes on Oriental Carpet Patterns-II', *The Burlington Magazine for Art AConnoisseurs*, Vol. 14, No. 68 (November 1908), pp. 84-94, at p. 87.

[116] Christiana Herringham, 'Notes on Oriental Carpet Patterns-III. Ghiordes Rugs, Rose and Pomegranate Patterns', *The Burlington Magazine for Art Connoisseurs*, Vol. 14, No. 69 (December 1908), pp. 147-158, at p. 147.

[117] Ibid., p. 147.

[118] Ibid., p. 148.

Mediterranean. As she considered the composite nature of Phoenician art, she surmised that 'The [Phoenician] craftsman possessed certain decorative items as his stock-in-trade, one might almost say picked up where he could get them, migratory art travelling with such trading and religious wanderers'.[119] Like Ruskin's imagining of a free and happy medieval stone mason, Herringham proposed this conjecture through her subjective response to the quality of the patterns, rather than through textual evidence.

Despite gaps in knowledge and unsubstantiated propositions, artists, curators and critics remained gripped by the task of establishing the origins of ornamental motifs and their continuity and change in art. Herringham wrote of the 'genealogy', 'ancestry' and 'parentage' of motifs, trying to wrestle them into a tree of ornament. Alford, Riegl, Yetts, Stein, Herringham and others established models of this tree by tracing its branches and growth in reverse, but, conversely, it was the progressive growth of forms like the lotus, scroll or key through time which made this possible. There was therefore something self-fulfilling about this type of project: growth was something they wanted to find, and which they looked for and found in the morphological development of motifs.

Morris was familiar with these concepts of diffusion and growth. As she told those attending her lectures, patterns reproduced in Fischbach's *Ornamente der Gewebe* were 'strangely intermingled in their borrowing and their development of new features – the East and the West giving and taking interminably though those centuries of eager invention in the arts.'[120] In her publications, she addressed the scholarly practice of tracing the ancestry of motifs. In the eleventh article from her series on church embroidery, she reflected on the early Christian symbols that she encountered in the churches of San Appollinare in Classe and San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy.[121] She understood that these symbols were used in these settings to tell stories and legends from the Christian religion, but she recognised that they were adopted and adapted from preceding pagan traditions. Accompanying the text of her article are several reproductions, drawn by Morris, of the symbols she saw. These include 'the ancient symbol of life or immortality – the two birds or beasts facing each side of the fountain or tree of life', used 'in nearly all periods', and the motif of a Latin cross with the Greek letters for Alpha and Omega (fig. 3.33).[122] Morris noted that the enquiry into how symbols evolved chronologically through different religious contexts 'brings one face to face with anthropological problems of the deepest interest.'[123] However, these were not issues she sought to tackle herself, nor was she concerned with 'whether the Early Christian borrowed Pagan symbols consciously or

[119] Christiana Herringham, 'The Snake Pattern in Ireland, the Mediterranean and China', *The Burlington Magazine for Art Connoisseurs*, Vol. 13, No. 63 (June 1908), pp. 132-137, at p. 134.
[120] Morris, Untitled Lecture, pp. 14-15.
[121] Morris, 'Church Embroidery – XI Animals and Symbols', 1894, pp. 66-67.
[122] Ibid., pp. 66-67.
[123] Ibid., p. 66.

unconsciously'.[124] Instead, her interest lay in attending to the specific use of a symbol in a particular setting and the glimpses these afforded into the lives of those who created and used them.[125]
In acknowledging how the function of the same symbol changed depending on the context of its use, Morris was aware of the mutability of meaning within ornament and the flawed conceit of essentialising a motif in terms of its original denotation. This is evident in her analyses of motifs in Coptic textiles. She understood these textiles to reflect a period of transition between the ancient and modern during the third to seventh centuries CE, and that their motifs and style demonstrated influences from different periods and places, 'twined and netted in many a coil'.[126] Yet, she regarded the task of isolating and tracing those motifs as an 'unprofitable […] attempt to follow out each thread of the tangle with any positive pronouncement.'[127] This was because, she found, a foreign influence quickly became naturalised in its new geographical and cultural setting; on 'Persian soil the Roman element becomes Persian'.[128]

Morris did not attempt to develop her observations on historical textiles from a range of periods into a genealogical tracing of motifs, nor did she weld them to a grand theory accounting for a diachronic evolution of historical ornament that theorised the meaning of art itself. In this respect, she differed from her peers as she looked at, wrote about and made art. Certainly, she examined ornamental motifs and across a global (albeit pocketed) range of material. But the examples she selected were discrete and chosen chiefly to compare their specific execution and composition within a given object rather than their ornamental origins and continuity. This is clear across her writings. In 1899, she compared the making of third- and seventh-century Coptic tapestry-weavings with mille-fleur Flemish tapestry from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[129] In an article published in 1902, she assessed different kinds of embroidery produced in England, Italy, Germany and India. And in 1919, she wrote about Fair Isle knitting, describing it as 'ornamental knitting of the most astonishing quality in colour and elementary pattern.'[130] Of one particular knitted textile, she noted how brick-red, blue, yellow, amber-white and 'the rich browns of the natural wool … all form a fine series of colour, while the design is just that of remote people handling limited material and process with surety – almost one's idea of Phœnician bordering, or Peruvian. Whether this strangeness came from Iceland, Faroe-way, is not to be dwelt on here.'[131] Unlike Herringham, Morris withholds a move to assess her subject against comparative examples from Phoenician and Peruvian art. Her interest here was in setting side by side different textiles from multiple periods and geographies to compare how makers handled the

[124] Ibid., p. 66.
[125] Ibid., p. 67. The phrase she uses is 'into archaic life'.
[126] Morris, 'Coptic Textiles', 1899, p. 287.
[127] Ibid., p. 287.
[128] Ibid., p. 287.
[129] Ibid., p. 286.
[130] May Morris, 'Weaving and Textile Crafts', in *Handicrafts and Reconstruction: Notes by Members of the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society* (London: John Hogg, 1919), pp. 41-52, at p. 43.
[131] Ibid., p. 44.

materials and overcame their limitations within design, rather than to establish the ancestral links between the motifs they shared.

While Morris's artistic critique could be blistering to a fault, her insight into materials and making processes was remarkable. Execution has been characterised a minor issue for thinkers like Riegl, but for Morris it was critical.[132] Engaging with making afforded a means of understanding the past that went beyond ornament and style. In the last few of her series of articles on church embroidery published in the 1890s, she selected woven fabrics as her illustrated case studies. Conscious of the need to justify why she had not chosen examples of needlework, as she had done in the preceding articles, she explained:

> I detest as heartily as anyone that lazy amateur habit of applying a design intended to be reproduced in one method and special materials, to another method and different materials, and therefore hope no one will think me guilty of suggesting any of these illustrations as 'suitable for any kind of needlework.[133]

She felt, however, that these woven textiles demonstrated effectively the 'living nature of mediæval art'.[134] Matters of making told her something of the makers' relationship with nature. Here, she was interested in gathering knowledge of the skills of makers from the past, drawing the reader's attention to how the designs were balanced in their compositions, faithful in their observation of natural forms and expressive of life with which these were imbued by their makers. Her interpretation of these historical sources differed from studies undertaken for teleological purposes to understand the development of motifs and style. Morris wanted to understand not only what past makers were creating on a technical level but also what they were thinking and feeling as they expressed themselves through their designs. Studying isolated manifestations of ornamental motifs in historical sources was a means of unlocking this empathy. In this way, she illuminated a means through which design could enliven the past itself, not just provoke symbolic narratives that were registered in the contemporary viewer's imagination.

Conclusion

Morris's writings and lectures present design as a serious topic. Textile design needed to fill appropriately the decorated surface within medium-specific conventions and express the growth of natural phenomena. The artist's designs for embroidery, needlepoint and tapestry were not only decorative spaces in which natural forms were translated and conventionalised but also compositions which fused motifs and ornamental grammar from a wide range of foreign sources. Moreover, they were artistic creations that were varyingly idealised, playful and fantastical. These additional qualities were commonalities between Morris's design practice and approaches articulated by proponents of

[132] Jaś Elsner, 'The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901', *Art History,* Vol. 25, No. 3 (June 2002), pp. 358-379, at, p. 359.
[133] Morris, 'Of Church Embroidery – XIII Conclusion', 1894, p. 277.
[134] Ibid., p. 277.

Arts and Crafts garden design. Analysis of embroidery and gardening in dialogue reveals that Morris's designs evoke the pleasure and magic that she and others experienced in the garden. In these ways, her designs generate affect and stir the imagination. Such responses were fundamental to the artist's engagement with eminent examples of historical design. Evaluating motifs through discrete, rather than historically sequential, comparisons, she articulated through her lectures and writings how these sources were animated, conveyed symbolic narrative and, most crucially, told her something deeper about how artists of the past valued and interpreted the world around them in the making of their art. Morris's approach shows that interpreting artworks in this manner allows the contemporary viewer to establish an imagined yet empathetic and vital communion with the art of the past and its makers.

Chapter Four: Ground

Introduction

This chapter examines the woven ground fabrics used in Morris's embroidery and her investment in weaving and its associated arts of spinning and dyeing. Scholars of Arts and Crafts textiles have paid little attention to the making and meaning of base fabrics employed in Morris & Co. embroideries and Morris's independent work. Layered beneath stitching and often entirely hidden, ground fabrics have assumed an irrelevance in critical assessments of these textiles. Similarly overlooked is Morris's position vis-à-vis the revival of hand-weaving in Britain, which developed alongside her career. To date, Annette Carruthers's essay of 2017 on Morris's artistic activities in Orkney in the early twentieth century is the only exploration of the artist's practices of spinning and dyeing by hand.

Expanding on this recent scholarship, this chapter begins with a material reading of the fabrics used by Morris for embroidery and an analysis of their methods of production. It then considers the ways in which Morris's later career was imbricated in the hand-weaving revival and appraises how she valued and practised making cloth by hand. For the first time, Morris's diaries of her travels in Wales and Scotland are closely examined. In analysing these writings, the chapter formulates an extended conceptualisation of ground as both an artistic and geographical articulated surface. This welcomes consideration of the interconnections between textile making and landscapes and the ways in which Morris conceived of regionality and the production of local art as linked. Specifically, the discussion explores the relationships between valleys, rock formations, soil structures and plants of Welsh and Scottish locales and hand-weaving, hand-spinning and hand-dyeing in these locations, as expressed by Morris. Finally, the artist's recording of rural artmaking in Scotland is assessed within a broader context of ethnographic research carried out by women makers, collectors and historians. In setting her in conversation with a culture of documenting premodern ways of artmaking, new analyses of the ways in which she conceived of tradition, geography and race are developed. It is revealed how, for Morris, making cloth by hand was a process through which temporal linearity was fractured, the human body was transformed and the maker became an avatar to a primitive state of being.

Fabrics for Embroidery

The types of ground fabrics that Morris used for embroidery were critical to her artistic practice. Her publications from the early 1890s reveal the careful attention given to selecting and using these materials. Only good quality fabrics were suitable.[1] This was about functionality and artistic taste:

[1] May Morris, 'Of Materials', *Arts and Crafts Essays, by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, with a Preface by William Morris* (London: Rivington, Percival, & Co., 1893), p. 365. Materials are also discussed in-depth in May Morris, *Decorative Needlework* (London: Joseph Hughes & Co., 1893).

high calibre materials were more durable and inherently beautiful than their poorer counterparts. Linen, canvas, wool and silk were recommended, but their uses were governed by a hierarchy of propriety: linen and canvas could be embroidered with linen, wool or silk threads; silk was to be stitched with silk and metallic threads only. As Morris instructed, 'to place the poorer on richer material would be an error in taste.'[2] Linen was a favourite choice of ground fabric. It was long-lasting, could be stitched with silk, linen or wool and worked in a frame or in the hand.[3] Morris also admired the fabric's supple feel and shiny aesthetic, both of which improved the more the material was handled.[4]

The 'Day Book', which records the orders processed by the Morris & Co. embroidery workshop between May 1892 and November 1896 makes known that varying kinds of silk, linen, wool and canvas were used under Morris's direction.[5] These were available in several colours, including white, red, pink, gold, blue and green. Multiple orders were made using 'M. clo' or 'M. Linen', denoting cotton and linen made in Manchester, while others were executed on Morris & Co. fabrics produced in their Merton Abbey factory and by external contractors. Frequently, customers supplied a ground fabric of their own choosing for the workshop embroiderers to stitch.

In her authoritative study *William Morris Textiles* (2013), Linda Parry identified some of the cloth types employed in the workshop but did not discuss their manufacture. Apart from Manchester cotton and linen, there is little indication of where and how these cloths were made, except in the cases where identifiable Morris & Co. damask silk fabrics such as *St James* and *Oak* were used as base materials.[6] *Oak* was a popular choice as a ground for Morris's *Fruit Orchard* embroidered hangings.[7] It was manufactured on power-driven jacquard looms by Joshua Oldfield Nicholson, Macclesfield, and, later, on hand-driven jacquard looms at Merton Abbey. In a romanticised recollection of this factory published in *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist* (1936), Morris commented that it 'was always somewhat pathetic to watch the weavers at work … on their handlooms – old men from Spitalfields who had been prosperous once and had been through bad times saddened by the changes in industrial life that with it scurry and thrusting aside had passed them by.'[8] Parry found these sympathies to be misguided, as the weavers at Merton Abbey fared better in pay and working conditions than workers in industrial-scale factories.[9]

Morris was not averse to power-driven machines and their output in the making of art, but she noted their limitations. For her, their use was permitted if they did not 'spoil the quality of the

[2] Morris, 'Of Materials', 1893, p. 366.
[3] Ibid., p. 370.
[4] Ibid., p. 370.
[5] V&A, National Art Library, MSL/1939/2636.
[6] Both fabrics are listed in the 'Day Book'.
[7] Anna Mason, ed., *William Morris* (London: V&A Publishing, 2021), p. 315.
[8] May Morris, *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist*, Volume 1 (Oxford: Blackwell), p. 48.
[9] Linda Parry, *William Morris Textiles* (London: V&A Publishing, 2013), p. 81. Parry suggests that there were likely no more than four jacquard looms installed at Merton Abbey. Weavers wove silk damasks, brocades, and silk and linen mixed fabrics.

materials worked upon nor hamper the thought and design inherent in the finished work.'[10] In her embroidery production, power-woven ground fabrics were viable because they did not diminish the technical and intellectual work of the stitchers.

Cotton was frequently employed as a ground fabric for Morris & Co. embroidery kits. The cloth was not produced at Merton Abbey, but sourced from manufacturers in and around Manchester, where it was spun and woven on power-driven spinning machines and looms. In the 1890s, vast quantities of raw cotton were imported to England from America and Egypt, made into yarn and cloth through mechanised and industrialised processes, and then distributed globally.[11] Morris & Co. were thus active patrons of a product that was created by the type of industry decried by Ruskin as exploitative and which ignited Arts and Crafts discourse concerning the conditions of labour, pleasure of the maker and morality of artistic manufacture.

It seems likely that the Morris & Co. workshop bought lengths of cotton fabric, which they then cut to size as required for individual embroideries. On an unfinished embroidered kit known as *Small Rose*, three edges are folded and hemmed, while the selvedge, created by the manufacturer, appears on the remaining edge (fig. 4.1).[12] The workshop only used cotton ground fabrics when the embroidery was to be entirely covered with stitches, effectively masking the base layer. Implicit is the understanding that cotton's aesthetic qualities were not seen as desirable, despite the recurrent use of this material. Meanwhile, ground fabrics of wool, linen and silk could be left visible within an embroidery's decorative scheme. Across Morris's embroideries, these base materials provide counterpoint in massing, form and colour to the stitching (see pp. 56-58). In rare cases, they contribute to the aims of an embroidery's pictorial ambitions. The large rectangular textile known as the *June* frieze, for example, depicts a scene of a meadow filled with 'clumps of springy heather, strawberries, roses, violets and fritillaries.' (fig. 4.2)[13] Standing among these are four young trees, evenly space across the composition. The trees divide five sections of verse, taken from writings of William and Sir Walter Raleigh (1861-1922), which describe the enchanted settings of the upper river Thames and the pleasures of early summer.[14] In the centre of the scene is a 'little picture of Kelmscott', giving a specific and naturalistic visual referent to the setting conjured through the surrounding stitched flora and verse.[15] However, the ground fabric also plays a part in the evocation of this idyllic riparian landscape. The material is constructed of two long pieces of machine-woven linen, made from coarse, un-dyed yarn. These are hand-sewn together along their length, forming a

[10] May Morris, 'Co-ordination of Arts and Crafts Societies', *Problems of Reconstruction: Lectures and Addresses Delivered at the Summer Meting at Hampstead Garden Suburb, August, 1917, with an Introduction by The Marquess of Crewe, K.G* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1918), p. 306.
[11] *Cotton: The Official Journal of the Manchester Cotton Association*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (20 April 1895), pp. 1-8. Manchester yarn and cloth were exported to Japan, China, India, North and South America and Africa.
[12] V&A: Circ.302-1960.
[13] Anna Mason et al., *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer* (London: Thames & Hudson/V&A Publishing, 2017), p. 136.
[14] Ibid., p. 136.
[15] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 26 August 1923, WMG, S4.2.23.1.

conspicuous horizontal seam running across the textile. The texture and colour of the yarn are important. With much of the ground fabric remaining unstitched, the coarse quality of the linen is suggestive of rough earthen ground, an appearance which is enhanced by the uneven working of the simple wool stitches of the embroidered plants. The linen's natural colouring is a reminder of the material's origins as a plant grown in soil and processed through water.[16] These allusions to land- and riverscapes would have registered more strongly in the original setting for which Morris made the textile.[17] The embroidery was created to hang above a corner sofa, set into a nook beside the fireplace on the north side of the drawing room in her London home (fig. 4.3). If seated from this position, Morris would have looked south out to the garden, which backed onto the river Thames. Meanwhile, her body would have been immersed in the landscape which wrapped around her on the wall, enveloping the seating.[18] Ground fabrics for embroidery could therefore provide substantive aesthetic allusions to enhance a textile's pictorial effects.

Morris and the Hand-weaving Revival

Despite the prevalence of machine-made fabrics indicated by the 'Day Book' orders and Morris's extant embroideries, a small number of embroidered textiles were made with hand-woven ground fabrics. These were more selective, chosen by Morris for one-off pieces and private projects created after she had left Morris & Co. They are the two Melsetter Hangings, embroidered around 1902-5 with linen threads on hand-spun and hand-woven linen,[19] and a set of four hand-woven Italian linen curtains, stitched with wools threads in 1916 (fig. 4.4).[20] The use of these materials coincides with the period in which Morris began to engage more deeply with hand-spinning, hand-dyeing and hand-weaving in her artistic practices and writings.

This development correlated with the revival of hand-weaving in Britain. Beginning in the 1880s, this form of textile making and its integral sister arts – hand-spinning and natural-dyeing – enjoyed a renaissance in the Arts and Crafts. Hand-weaving became one of the most popular and widespread artistic practices, propelled by women art- and craft-workers. This regeneration was, in

[16] Linen derives from flax. Once grown and ready to harvest, flax is pulled out of the ground by the roots and the seeds are shaken out. The plants are then bundled together and immersed in water, where they ferment. This process, known as retting, liberates the inner bast fibres from the plant's outer tissue. Once fermented, the plants are dried in the open air. Finally, the plants are subjected to skutching, which clears away the unwanted outer plant tissue and straightens out the inner fibres. See Luther Hooper, *The Artistic Crafts Series of Technical Handbooks: Hand-Loom Weaving* (London: John Hogg, 1910), pp. 7-8.

[17] As she described to Sydney Cockerell, it was a 'small piece of rough embroidery that I did to go around my sofa corner here' – May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 20 July 1923, William Morris Gallery, S4.3.23.1. The *June* frieze left 8 Hammersmith Terrace in 1923 when Morris sold the embroidery to Cockerell.

[18] This embodied experienced would have been heightened by the *Willow Bough* wallpaper covering the room's walls, which elicited further associations with riverbank settings.

[19] National Museums Scotland: K.2014.47.1&2.

[20] National Trust, Wightwick Manor: NT 1289319.2.1-4. These were made for the eleventh Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society show in 1916. Designed by Morris, they were stitched collaborative by Elsie Robert, Dorothy Hardy, Elsie Mochrie, Alice Gimson and D. K. Kennet. They were later adapted into curtains.

part, a response to the dramatic changes which the landscape of British textile manufacture had undergone since the late eighteenth century. Formerly celebrated centres of industry producing woollen and linen goods were in decline or defunct, overrun by the inexorable tide of industrialisation and changing markets. Seen to reduce time, increase output and raise profits, industrialised methods of power-driven spinning and weaving and use of chemical dyes superseded traditional forms of textile production. Arts and Crafts commentators saw the older, hand processes as precious yet moribund. This diminished situation in Britain was frequently assessed against increasingly accessible foreign textile arts and handicraft methods, particularly those from Sweden, Finland, Central-Eastern Europe and India. These served as vital sources of rejuvenation.

The first concentrated revival was the Langdale Linen Industry. Established from 1882-83 in Elterwater in the Lake District, the industry was well-known for the quality of its hand-spun and hand-woven linen. Spinning and weaving were understood to have had enduring relationships with the region, which never fully disappeared; in Lakeland in the 1880s, the spinning wheel evoked nostalgic memories of older generations to whom the art was a familiar part of everyday life.[21] Morris admired 'the charming linen woven at Langdale' whose 'flat silky thread gives a very pleasant surface', and Morris & Co. were among the industry's clients.[22]

Annie Garnett (1864-1942) was enraptured by 'the little spinning home in Elterwater…the old-world atmosphere, the peace, the restful labour, the purring of spinning wheels, and the music of the loom'.[23] Inspired by this model of textile production using revived methods, Garnett founded The Spinnery in nearby Windermere in 1891 (fig. 4.5).[24] This produced hand-spun linens and woollens, weavings with metal threads, and throwans (composed of linen and silk web).[25] Like Morris, Garnett was a highly proficient textile designer and maker, turned to the natural world for inspiration, and exercised her intellectual interests through study of historical sources in the V&A and British Museum.[26]

In London, Annie Clive-Bayley (1852-1924) was among the most influential figures of the revival. She authored 'Spinning and Weaving' in *Some Arts and Crafts* (1903), an anthology of combined technical and theoretical commentaries written and edited by women.[27] In the early 1890s,

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[21] Jennie Brunton, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Lake District: A Social History* (Lancaster: Centre for North-West Regional Studies, University of Lancaster, 2001), p. 61.
[22] May Morris, 'Of Materials', *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, Catalogue of the Third Exhibition* (London: Chiswick Press, 1890), p. 97. Jennie Brunton notes that Morris & Co. placed two orders with Langdale Linen Industry in 1894 and 1898, see Brunton, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Lake District*, pp. 57 & 75.
[23] Quoted in Rachel Roberts and David Ingram, *Spinning the Colours of Lakeland: Annie Garnett's Spinnery, Textiles and Garden* (Kendal: Museum of Lakeland Life and Industry, 2017), p. 6.
[24] This was first known as The Windermere Industry; it was later renamed to The Spinnery in 1899. Roberts and Ingram, *Spinning the Colours*, 2017, pp. 3-4.
[25] 'Windermere Industry at The Spinnery, Fairfield, Windermere', *The Art Workers' Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 14 (April 1905), pp. 56-57.
[26] Roberts and Ingram, *Spinning the Colours*, 2017, pp. 15, 17-18, & 22-24, and Bruton, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Lake District*, 2001, pp. 140-141. These included Coptic textiles and Italian weavings.
[27] Annie Clive-Bayley, 'Spinning and Weaving' in Ethel McKenna, ed., *Some Arts and Crafts* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1903).

Clive-Bayley set up The London School of Weaving. Shortly after, she spent a full year travelling in Finland, publishing an account of this trip as *Vignettes from Finland: or Twelve Months in Strawberry Land* (1895).[28] Whilst there, she purchased Karelian hand-weavings and visited a weaving school in Sordavala, which at the time was unknown to English travellers.[29] A Nordic influence was registered in the classrooms of Clive-Bayley's school in London, where she taught on Swedish looms.[30] In 1898, she delivered a lecture on 'The Revival of Hand-Loom Weaving' at the Society of Arts, a leading intellectual forum on the arts at which Morris had spoken three years earlier. The lecture was illustrated with hand-woven fabrics and accompanied by demonstrations on a handloom and spinning wheel. To her audience, Clive-Bayley asserted that the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving was already well underway by the late 1890s.[31]

Among her pupils in London were Constance Felicia Phillpotts and Edith Kathleen Holmes (dates of both unknown). In 1896 they established a branch of The London School of Weaving in Canterbury, which went on to become The Canterbury Weavers, an independent philanthropic textile industry.[32] Another pupil was Maude Egerton King (1876-1927), who, along with her husband Joseph (1860-1943), founded The Haslemere Weaving Industry in 1894.[33] Two years later, Maude's sister, Ethel Mary Blount (1863-1942) and her husband Godfrey (1859-1937), established an offshoot of Haslemere, the Peasant Arts Society.[34] Both organisations employed and trained local women and girls, who produced treadle-weavings and hand-tufted carpets among other textiles. Haslemere became a noted centre for the handicraft revival, where 'the modern spirit is gradually emerging', and other weaving enterprises were formed nearby.[35] Luther Hooper (1849-1932), for example, established Green Bushes Weaving Houses in 1901. Author of the detailed technical manual, *Hand-Loom Weaving* (1910), Hooper was a colleague of Morris's at the Central School of Arts and Crafts.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Morris was already familiar with the work of these industries and weavers. She exhibited alongside Langdale, Garnett, Clive-Bayley and Hooper at several exhibitions.[36] Linda Parry has noted that the number of hand-weaving exhibits increased

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[28] Annie Clive-Bayley, *Vignettes from Finland: or Twelve Months in Strawberry Land* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston and Company, 1895).
[29] Ibid., pp. 204-207. Sordavala is now known as Sortavala and is in Russia.
[30] Malcom Haslam, *Arts and Crafts Carpets* (London: David Black), p. 171.
[31] Annie Clive-Bayley, 'The Revival of Hand-Loom Weaving', *Journal of the Society of Arts*, Vol. 46, No. 2372 (May 6 1898), pp. 557-568, at p. 558.
[32] Edward W. Greggory, *Canterbury Weavers, 1564-1905* (London: 1905), pp. 11-12. In 1899, the industry moved into an old house on the banks of the river Stour (Kent), which had formerly been the premises of historical weaving industries. Under the floors and in the gables were found 'old silk looms, pieces of raw silk and wool, bobbins, and other odds and ends'; 'Here the modern revival was linked up, in environment at least, with the old industry.' (p. 14)
[33] R. E. D. Sketchley, 'Haslemere Arts and Crafts', *Art Journal* (November 1906), pp. 337-342, at p. 338.
[34] Ibid., p. 338.
[35] James Guthrie, 'The Exhibition of Handicraft at Haslemere', *The Art Workers' Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 16 (Oct 1905), pp. 186-188, at p. 188. Other handicrafts were practised in Haslemere: woodwork, pottery, bookbinding, fresco-painting, plaster work and iron work.
[36] Three embroideries worked on Langdale linen were exhibited at the second ACES exhibition, see *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, Catalogue of the Second Exhibition* (London: Chiswick Press, 1889), p. 134; five

through successive ACES shows in this period.[37] This trend continued in the four ACES exhibitions held from 1906 to 1916, which were 'dominated by the revival of hand-loom weaving'.[38] Moreover, by this time, Morris had begun her own experiments in hand-spinning and vegetable dyeing. She spent the late summers and autumns of 1902 and 1905 in Orkney, Scotland. There, she met a woman whose clothes were woven by a local weaver from wool that they had 'picked, carded, spun and dyed.'[39] The ground fabric used in the Melsetter hangings was spun and woven by hand on these islands.

Morris herself first learnt to spin in the spinning-room at Melsetter House, home of her friend Theodosia Middlemore, on the island of Hoy. In a later recollection, she described 'the wide hearth with glowing peats, before which lay long baskets of wool where the carded wool was warmed; the fleeces hung about the walls, the great bags of wool, the baskets of dyeing-mosses, the old women picking and carding, the wheels going softly'.[40] Photographs document Morris working at a spinning wheel beside the hearth, surrounded by piles of wool, baskets and tools, including wheels and carders (fig. 4.6). She made sketches of the landscape and plants around Melsetter, including an ink study of 'Old Man' (*Artemisia abrotanum*), which produces a yellow dye that can be used for wool (fig. 4.7). Her dyeing 'experiments' in Orkney yielded blues of an 'Eastern luminous quality' from indigo, 'a clear tawny yellow' from rock mosses, 'different shades of natural brown' and 'a fine rusty black', which together formed 'a charming 'palette'…for pattern-weaving and embroidery.'[41] Hand-spinning continued to occupy Morris's creative activities back at Kelmscott. She owned a set of carders and at least three spinning wheels, one of which survives (fig. 4.8).[42] In 1906 she described her spinning activities to her friend Kate Whitaker (dates unknown): 'I've got the Spinning Wheel in fine working

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embroideries worked on Langdale linen were showed at the fifth ACES exhibition, see *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, Catalogue of the Fifth Exhibition,* (London: Chiswick Press, 1896), pp. 68, 73 & 153; Clive-Bayley displayed a tapestry-woven rug at the sixth exhibition, see *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, Catalogue of the Sixth Exhibition* (London: Chiswick Press, 1899), p. 74; and two embroideries designed by Garnett were exhibited alongside a hand-woven panel and hand-knotted carpet, both designed by Hooper, at the eighth ACES exhibition, see *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, Catalogue of the Eighth Exhibition* (London: Chiswick Press, 1906), pp. 67, 38 & 49. Morris exhibited alongside Garnett at the Ghent International Exhibition, see Board of Trade, *Ghent International Exhibition: Catalogue of the British Arts and Crafts Section* (London: Board of Trade Exhibitions Branch, 1913), p. 91.

[37] Linda Parry, *Textiles of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), p. 76.

[38] Ibid., p. 89.

[39] Morris, 'Weaving and Textile Crafts', 1919 p. 42.

[40] Ibid., pp. 42-43.

[41] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[42] Morris mentions her carders in her Outer Hebrides diary (1929), Society of Antiquaries, MOM/001/007. An English spinning wheel is depicted in Mary Annie Sloane's 1912 watercolour of Morris sitting in the tapestry room at Kelmscott Manor (William Morris Gallery: W158). Two spinning wheels, 'an old English spinning wheel' (lot 809) and 'Modern Welsh spinning wheel' (lot 810), are listed in the Kelmscott Manor estate sale catalogue, *Kelmscott, Oxfordshire, Sale of a Large Portion of the Furnishings and Effects removed from Kelmscott Manor, The Home of William Morris*. William Morris Gallery, S4.4.8. Another spinning wheel was given by Morris to Maude Lewis, on whose family farm in Ceredigion Morris and Lobb camped in the 1910s and 1920s. The wheel has been passed down to the descendants of Lewis and is now in a private collection.

order but it is long work preparing the wool; and in 10 minutes the work of several evenings is gobbled up spinning!'[43] Despite the laborious process of carding, Morris evidently enjoyed spinning.

A prominent revivalist within this lineage was Ethel Mairet, to whom Morris was also connected. According to different accounts, Mairet was largely self-trained, but received some instruction from Clive-Bayley and Hooper.[44] She was greatly influenced by the weaving and dyeing that she had recorded during travels in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka, 1903-07) and India (1910-11). In 1913, she took over from Clive-Bayley a weaving workshop that the older weaver had set up in Shottery, Stratford-upon-Avon.[45] In 1915, she published the pamphlet *The Future of Dyeing, or The Conflict between The Science and Art in the Making of Colour*.[46] Morris read Mairet's 'treatise', which she praised as a work of particular interest to Arts and Crafts contemporaries engaged in vegetable dyeing.[47] She directly linked Mairet's practice with William's dyeing experiments of the 1870s and 1880s, thereby establishing the art as a tradition continuing into the twentieth century and conferring prestige on new directions in vegetable dyeing.[48]

Mairet's pamphlet became the first chapter of her influential publication *A Book on Vegetable Dyes* (1916, fig. 4.9). Close reading of this text reveals parallels between Morris's and Mairet's artistic practices. Both women believed that a purpose of artmaking was a means 'to make life'.[49] They shared an aesthetic preference for strong, bright colours, admiration for 'great Oriental dyers', and distaste for the 'art' colours favoured by the Aesthetic movement.[50] Their views on copying corresponded too. Mairet hoped that the dyeing recipes she provided in the book would be 'applied with imagination and experience than with the slavishness of minute imitation.'[51] These words could be lifted from one of Morris's commentaries on stitching written in the 1890s (see pp. 63-65). Morris was also familiar with Mairet's weaving. In the textile room of the eleventh ACES exhibition held at the Royal Academy in 1916, Mairet exhibited nine hand-spun, hand-woven and vegetable dyed

[43] May Morris to Kate Whitaker, 15 August 1906, William Morris Society, VER/4/2.
[44] Antonia Behan remarks that Mairet was 'largely self-taught', see Antonia Behan, 'Commentary', *Journal of Modern Craft*, Volume 14, Number 3 (November 2021), pp. 281-286, at p. 282. Malcom Haslam notes that Clive-Bayley gave some teaching to Mairet, see Haslam, *Arts and Crafts Carpets*, p. 171; this claim is supported by Margery Kendon's recollection of Mariet's training, who remembered that Mairet was taught by Clive-Bayley in Shottery, see: Barley Roscoe, Typed transcript of 'Report of a visit to Margery Kendon on 13 January, 1982', p. 1, Craft Study Centre, CSC.17.2.1.1. Thomas Hennell also claims that Mairet was taught to weave around 1900, see Thomas Hennell, *British Craftsmen* (London: Collins, 1946), p. 40.
[45] Roscoe, Type transcript of 'Report of a visit to Margery Kendon', 1982, p. 2.
[46] Ethel Mairet, *The Future of Dyeing, or The Conflict between The Science and Art in the Making of Colour* (London: Old Bourne Press, 1915). This short text is a printed chapter of Mairet's then in-progress book (titled, at the time, *Dyeing*), which was later published in 1916, see Ethel Mairet, *A Book on Vegetable Dyes* (London: Douglas Pepler, 1916).
[47] Morris, 'Weaving and Textile Arts', 1919, p. 44. It is not certain whether Morris was, in her 1919 essay on weaving, referring to Mairet's 1915 or 1916 publication. However, as she describes Mairet's text as a 'treatise', this might be taken to refer to the polemical style and short format of *The Future of Dyeing*, as opposed to the instructive manual that is *A Book on Vegetable Dyes*.
[48] Morris, 'Weaving and Textile Arts', 1919, p. 44.
[49] Mairet, *A Book on Vegetable Dyes*, 1916, p. 8.
[50] Ibid., pp. 1-7.
[51] Ibid, p. 9.

fabrics.[52] As Morris was heavily involved in this exhibition and lent pieces for display in the textile room, she would have encountered Mairet's submissions.

By 1920 Mairet had established a new weaving workshop and school called Gospels in Ditching, East Sussex, where an Arts and Crafts community had been developing since 1907. Gospels was crucial to the evolution of the hand-weaving revival in the twentieth century. Artists flocked there to train, learning skills in hand-spinning, hand-weaving and vegetable dyeing. Students were encouraged to weave without a pre-planned design, instead taking inspiration from the loom 'as the spirit moved them', as star pupil Margery Kendon (1902-1985) recalled, and work with colours of their own choosing.[53]

Mairet's understanding of different kinds of fleeces and their uses and focus on yarn texture and colour were influential on the generation of weavers who trained at Gospels. Equally, the contributions of European students (particularly from Switzerland, Germany and Scandinavia), who introduced Mairet to more complex weaving techniques, were well-received in the experimental atmosphere of the workshop.[54] Several pupils, including Kendon and Marianne Straub (1909-1994), became Mairet's collaborators and colleagues, returning to teach at the school and accompanying her on foreign research trips.

While several scholars have demonstrated the extensive impact of British Arts and Crafts ideas and practices on the transnational diffusion of the Arts and Crafts in Scandinavia and Finland, the reciprocal influence of Nordic trends on the development of hand-weaving in Britain has not been noted.[55] Textiles were core forms of artmaking in the Nordic countries and ennobled as true expressions of national cultural heritage. Throughout the 1930s, Mairet, Kendon and Straub travelled through Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Estonia. Following in Clive-Bayley's footsteps, they visited weaving schools and makers, documented craft processes and purchased textiles and tools (fig. 4.10). These engagements with Nordic textile arts should be seen as iterations of the wider influence of Scandinavian and Finnish artworks and techniques on the development of hand-weaving in Britain. Both Clive-Bayley and Hooper wove using Swedish looms. Maude King's husband, Joseph, was the first curator of the Peasant Art Museum in Haslemere, whose collection of European crafts included

[52] *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, Catalogue of the Eleventh Exhibition, 1916* (London: Chiswick Press, 1916), pp. 56, 64, & 74-75.
[53] Roscoe, Typed transcript of 'Report of a visit to Margery Kendon', 1982, p. 13.
[54] Mary Schoeser, *Marianne Straub* (London: The Design Council, 1984), pp. 22-26.
[55] See, 'Nordic Identities: Scandinavia and Finland' in Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Phaidon, 2005), pp. 180-195; and Marianne Aav, 'Finland', pp. 266-272, Denise Hagströmer, 'Sweden', p. 276, and Ingebord Glambek, 'Norway', p. 286, in Linda Parry and Karen Livingstone, eds, *International Arts and Crafts* (London: V&A Publishing, 2005). Morris is imbricated within this diffusion. As noted in Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 2005, Morris was acquainted with the Swedish scientist and social commentator Gustaf Steffen, who published on John Ruskin and William Morris (p. 195). Morris is pictured alongside Steffen and his wife, Anna Oscara, in photograph dating to the early 1890s (National Portrait Gallery: NPG x32598).

Scandinavian mangle boards, Norwegian costumes and Swedish weavings.[56] For Mairet, study of Swedish techniques, in particular, was necessary to the revival of hand-weaving in Britain.[57] In 1932, officials from the Rural Industries Bureau visited Sweden to study successful rural industries initiatives, which had been established there since the nineteenth century.[58] In the same year, the Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers hosted a Swedish delegation of weavers, among whom was the celebrated textile artist Märta Mäas-Fjetterström (dates unknown).[59] Acknowledgement of the multi-directional flow of contact, study and approaches to making textiles across Northern Europe in the early twentieth century expands established accounts of the cross-cultural exchange that characterised much of the arts and crafts in this period.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the hand-weaving revival in Britain flourished as it was increasingly popularised and professionalised. Hand-spun, hand-woven and vegetable-dyed textiles were exhibited apace at the exhibitions of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, Home Arts Industries Association and the British Industries Fair. Private, municipal and national art schools offered courses in weaving, spinning and dyeing. Regional associations sprung up, creating networks through which members could promote, display and sell their work. Successive issues of the journal *Rural Industries: The Quarterly Magazine for Country Trades and Handicrafts* document this growth. Weaving industries, workshops and studios mushroomed across England, ranging from city-based schools to rural, domestic-based enterprises run by individual craftspeople. Hand-spun and hand-woven linens, woollens, tweeds and cottons were routinely advertised for sale, demonstrating a healthy market for these goods. Accompanying finished articles was a varied offering of materials, tools, weaving looms and accessories, practical instruction in spinning, weaving and at home vegetable-dyeing, and DIY pamphlets and handbooks.[60] Together, these offered textile practitioners the skills and resources they needed to begin or enhance their making practices.

Meanwhile, Morris continued to develop her interests in spinning and weaving. In 1919, she authored the chapter 'Weaving and Textile Crafts' in the ACES publication *Handicrafts and Reconstruction*. In 1920, she taught spinning in Ceredigion, Wales. That same year, she assisted an

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[56] Joseph King, *Peasant Arts: A Handbook of the Peasant Arts Section of the Haslemere Educational Museum* (Haslemere: Haslemere Educational Museum, 1927). Mangle boards are used to press and smooth cloth after washing.
[57] Ethel Mairet, 'Hand-weaving in England', *Rural Industries: The Quarterly Magazine for Country Trades and Handicrafts*, No. 26 (Spring 1932) p. 5.
[58] 'The Rural Industries of Sweden', *Rural Industries: The Quarterly Magazine for Country Trades and Handicrafts*, No. 29 (Winter 1932), pp. 5-7, at p. 5.
[59] Mabel F. Dawson, 'Weaving Guilds', *Rural Industries: The Quarterly Magazine for Country Trades and Handicrafts*, No. 27 (Summer 1932), p. 16.
[60] For example, the first issue listed advertisements for hand-woven linens, tweeds and cottons produced by The Weaving Industry, Kendal, Apple Countryside Tweeds, Broadwell, and Haslemere Weaving Industry, Surrey; hand-woven scarves made by Mrs Larkin in Berden, Essex; homespun flax and spinning lessons offered by Mrs Robert Weeks, Avalon, Somerset; daily weaving classes at The London School of Weaving; home-dyeing instruction by J. M. Sawell from Norfolk; a spinning and vegetable dyeing handbook by May Holding, Sutton; and looms and weaving accessories sold by The Weaving Studio, Norfolk. See *Rural Industries: Quarterly Magazine for Country Trades and Handicrafts*, No. 1 (Spring 1926), p. 14.

enthusiastic Percy Lubbock (1879-1965) on sourcing a tapestry loom, recommending to him a carpenter by the name of Mr Spooner in London.[61] In the summer of 1935, she bought a cluster of cottages, sheds and a barn in Kelmscott village. The purchase was made to prevent their demolition and, as she put it, 'save the village from being spoilt'.[62] However, she also saw it as a potential future investment for rural craft production. She planned to run the buildings as a studio or weaving shop, which she would let to a tenant.[63] Even as Morris's age advanced, she was eager to expand the provision for hand-made textiles in Kelmscott. This studio was possibly conceived in emulation of the spinning room at Melsetter House or along the lines she had envisaged in the late 1910s of a women's hall in which dyeing, spinning, weaving and needlework could be carried out in one setting.[64]

Conceptualising and Valuing Processes

Among Morris and her peers, conceptual approaches to methods of spinning, dyeing and weaving by hand were varied and complex. Like the needle, the loom linked the past and the present.[65] Weaving was understood to have ancient origins. For Clive-Bayley, these were biblical: fig leaves from the garden of Eden provided the weaver with 'his first pattern books'.[66] Garnett understood spinning and weaving to be forms of 'ancient industry…from the old world'.[67] In 1912, she opened The New Spinnery. This contained a display of tools that she had collected, which she described as a 'little museum where antiquities connected with spinning, weaving, embroidery, and other handicrafts will serve to show the continuity of these things from prehistoric times to the present day.'[68] Diverging from these universalist claims, Hooper and Kendon drew attention to the long history of weaving industries in England. Hooper noted that weaving guilds had been formed prior to the Norman conquest,[69] while Kendon remarked that, since the time of this same historical event, the English person's 'feeling for wool' had remained unbroken, despite the changes of the industrial revolution.[70]

Time was a persistent yet knotty theme in writings authored by the revival's proponents and commentators. Hand-spinning, hand-dyeing and hand-weaving were precariously balanced, simultaneously understood to be timeless methods of production with prehistoric origins, dying forms of artmaking at risk of being irrevocably lost and living traditions that retained a potent vitality that could be harnessed to enliven modern ways of creating art. For Morris, learning and practising 'the

[61] May Morris to Percy Lubbock, 18 November 1920, British Library, Add. Ms. 45347, ff. 166-167.
[62] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 19 November 1935, WMG, S4.3.23.2.
[63] Ibid.
[64] This is proposed at the close of Morris's chapter 'Weaving and Textile Crafts' (1919) on p. 51. Annette Carruthers considered whether this proposed space could have been conceived by Morris for the Morris Memorial Hall but found no evidence to support this, see Carruthers, 'Dyeing, darning and embroidery', Hulse, *May Morris: Art & Life*, 2017, p. 125.
[65] 'Windermere Industry at The Spinnery, Fairfield, Windermere', 1905, p. 56.
[66] Clive-Bayley, 'Spinning and Weaving', 1903, p. 229.
[67] Quoted in Bruton, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Lake District*, 2001, p. 126.
[68] Ibid., p. 145.
[69] Luther Hooper, 'Silk Weaving in Spitalfields', *Art Journal* (February 1909), pp. 53-53, at p. 53.
[70] Quoted in Hennell, *British Craftsmen*, 1943, p. 40.

still-surviving craft [of spinning] in remote Orkney', surrounded by the scents of burning peat, boiling dyes and sea spray, was life-enriching.[71] However, she expressed unease around craft revivalists who sought out 'old formulæ, hunting up the old spinners'; for her, these activities went against the nature of instruction in traditional crafts, 'which should be carried on almost by 'rule of thumb'.'[72] Her view that these interventions disrupted an organic exchange of tacit knowledge certainly changed by the late 1920s, when she journeyed to meet spinners and weavers and record rural craft production in Scotland (see pp. 116-121). Her peers pursued these activities with zeal. It was felt that there was an urgent need to record and collect endangered craft traditions while they were still being practised. Thomas Hennell (1903-1945) noted that Mairet had investigated 'the still living traditions of Central Europe', while he likened Kendon to Cecil Sharp (1859-1924) in the way she 'collected folk traditions in her craft; and by visiting the last surviving spinners and weavers in Wales, Ireland and Scandinavia, she has acquired their several methods in spinning and weaving, and in making and using vegetable dyes.'[73]

Morris and others proposed a specific type of time and place in which these textile crafts might be best practised. In her 1898 Society of Arts lecture, Clive-Bayley reasoned that, as a result of growing industrialised textile production, there emerged a surplus of wasted time 'in the cottage…and in the homes of the educated classes', which could be put towards hand-spinning and hand-weaving.[74] Practising these crafts was presented as a means of using this 'valuable time, of still more valuable human labour, energy, and intelligent activity'.[75] Morris understood hand-spinning to be 'an incidental craft', to be carried out leisurely and not as a means to earn a livelihood.[76] Hooper regarded spinning and weaving as ideal crafts for domestic settings as they can be carried out intermittently alongside housework.[77] Hand-spinning produced at The Spinnery was carried out by women in their homes in the evenings. This was cast in positive terms: 'All work because they wish to work, because they love the labour.'[78] Pleasure and labour were twinned together as hand-spinning as an adjunct craft practice was framed in moralistic terms: filling spare time and discouraging idleness. Yet, while the spinners

[71] Morris, 'Weaving and Textile Crafts', 1919, p. 43.
[72] Ibid., p. 50.
[73] Hennell, *British Craftsmen*, 1943, p. 40.
[74] Clive-Bayley, 'The Revival of Hand-loom Weaving', 1898, p. 559. She expounded on this in more detail: Machines 'have so increased the artificial value of time, that it is too valuable to use in unproductive arts, *i.e.*, unproductive money. The economy of labour is forgotten, the wasted energy is not taken into account, and the education of our last generation, at all events, was that of know all, but do nothing.'
[75] Ibid., p. 559.
[76] Morris, 'Weaving and Textile Crafts', 1919, p. 43. Annette Carruthers points out that Morris recognises here 'that it was impossible at this time to make a living from hand-spinning, a reality that was also acknowledged by the Home Arts bodies, which promoted it as a spare-time activity for crofter women in the country to bring in a contribution to the household income and help in clothing the family.' Carruthers, 'Dyeing, darning and embroidery', in Hulse, *May Morris: Art & Life*, 2017,pp. 123-124.
[77] Hooper, *Hand-Loom Weaving*, 1909, p. x.
[78] 'Windermere Industry at The Spinnery, Fairfield, Windermere', 1905, p. 56.

were paid for their work, they were not permitted to make a living by it, replicating a pejorative understanding that essentialised the craft as women's daily domestic labour. [79]

While the ways in which spinning was gendered were problematic, the materiality of the spinner's output was venerated. For many practitioners, hand-spun yarn was critical to the texture and quality of the finished cloth. It provided an elasticity and lightness that could not be produced by the mechanised process. To produce a yarn with these properties, knowledge and consideration of the fleece was necessary. Clive-Bayley instructed that the best wool, found closest to an animal's vital organs, was most suitable for spinning (this softer wool took on dye more successfully), and short and long lengths of wool must be separated to prevent knotting when carded.[80] Samples of yarn spun with wool from different sheep breeds were among the teaching materials at Gospels. In *A Book on Vegetable Dyes*, Mairet lists livestock and compares the softness, fineness and elasticity of wool from their fleeces.[81] In wearing hand-spun fabric, Morris felt that she was connected with the material's origins; as she expressed in 'Weaving and Textile Crafts', living and working in homespun clothing 'makes one feel to be clad as are the foolish, useful sheep!'[82] Moreover, she understood hand-spun to be an enlivened material: 'the direct spinning of the fine fleeces being far more durable and producing a textile with more life in it than does machine spinning.'[83] Similarly, Garnett conceived of hand-spun yarn as living. A spinner's 'bobbin is not the same throughout: this may be a matter of temperament or of health, or merely carelessness – hand-spinning is human, literally lives'.[84] In 1899, Garnett visited Joseph King in Haslemere. To her dissatisfaction, she found that he was using machine-spun yarn; for her, and others, textile production needed to begin with hand-spun yarn.[85]

Even though Morris described hand-spinning as 'incidental', her engagement with this art form reveals it to be meaningful to her in several ways. Spinning was an example of the 'arts of life', which she advocated as necessary to living well. Creating yarn by hand animated the material, imbuing it and the ground fabrics, furnishings and clothing from which it woven with life. This process also connected the makers and wearers of these textiles to a sense of place, reminding them of the materials' origins and sensorial associations of the environments from which they were sourced. A woven ground became representative of an earthen ground and the natural ecology it supported.

[79] Roberts and Ingram, *Spinning the Colours of Lakeland*, 2017, p. 11.
[80] Clive-Bayley, 'Spinning and Weaving', 1903, pp. 225-226.
[81] Mairet, *A Book on Vegetable Dyeing*, 1916, pp. 11-13.
[82] Morris, 'Weaving and Textile Crafts, 1919, pp. 47-48.
[83] Ibid., p. 47.
[84] Quoted in Bruton, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Lake District*, 2001, p. 147.
[85] Ibid., p. 134.

Morris in Wales

In the year that she published 'Weaving and Textile Crafts' (1919), Morris and her partner Lobb began holidaying in Wales. These visits took the form of long summer camping stints on the Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion coasts and in the wooded valleys of the Severn and Wye rivers, to shorter winter breaks in 'The Bungalow', in Gwbert-on-Sea, with stops spent with friends in Cardiff and Swansea along the way. Recorded in unpublished correspondence and diaries, these holidays have never been investigated. Appraising these sources provides insight into Morris's engagement with regional artmaking and illuminates the powerful links she apprehended between the production of art and the landscape of its natural environment. It thus deepens our understanding of the notion of ground as both a fabric and geographical surface.

In the summer of 1919, Morris and Lobb camped on the headland of Mwnt, set above the town of Cardigan, on the Ceredigion coast. They pitched their bell tent in a secluded spot, tucked behind a clifftop overlooking Mwnt beach (fig. 4.11). Morris's opening description of the setting immediately invokes a textile metaphor: it was 'a pleasant valley, decked with a musical stream which is now a sheer embroidery of meadow-sweet and willow-weed amid the moorland bracken.'[86] Textiles and landscapes, each a form of ground covered with mass, texture, colour and pattern, could be chiasmic for Morris, as each informed the interpretation of the other. The tent was furnished like Kelmscott Manor in miniature, so much so that Morris called it their 'dear little home in the West'.[87] There was an indoor kitchen, china cupboard, different 'departments' for groceries and stationery and a clothes chest, which doubled as a side-board when covered with a red chintz and a clock, 'ticking and breathing of Home.'[88] They had books, newspapers and sewing for wet days. Driftwood was collected from the beach, which they used for firewood and makeshift candlesticks.

Their campsite was set on a farm owned by a Mrs and Mr Lewis (dates unknown). Morris visited the couple's cottage, where she saw a framed cross-stitch textile, made by Mrs Lewis, of a blue, green and red peacock. She admired the needlework and declared it worthy of exhibition in London: 'This piece is very handsome & effective, and would be welcomed at our Arts & Crafts show, quite an achievement of clever management: very pleasing and shows what can be done on coarse 'count'.'[89]

From Mwnt, Morris and Lobb cycled down to Cardigan. In the town market they admired the 'nice woollen stuffs, also wooden ware, jolly spoons & bowls & c.'[90] On a later holiday in 1922, Morris purchased some woollen shawls at the same market.[91] Surprisingly, her letters and diaries from this period make almost no mention of Welsh weaving production. However, in 'Weaving and Textile

[86] May Morris, *Cardiganshire, 1919,* p. 2 Society of Antiquaries, MOM/001/001.
[87] Ibid., p. 11.
[88] Ibid., p. 11.
[89] Ibid., pp. 2-4.
[90] Ibid., p. 6.
[91] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 17 February 1922, WMG, S4.3.23.1.

Crafts', Morris declared that the spinning and weaving industries in Wales were dead.[92] Perhaps she was trying to help revive hand-spinning in this region when, in 1920, she reported to Sydney Cockerell that she was 'teaching people spinning in Cardigan'. It is probable she was instructing the Lewises' daughter, Maude. Morris had struck a friendly relationship with Maude, and it was to her that Morris gave the surviving spinning wheel.

Morris's assertion that Welsh spinning and weaving industries were dead was not quite true. The Welsh woollen industry had a long history. Prior to the nineteenth century, production was divided among domestic handicraft industries: wool was taken to the spinner, yarn passed onto the weaver, and the woven cloth given to the dryer and finisher.[93] The introduction of industrial machinery transformed this fragmented model into a centralised factory system, which reduced the number and distribution of weaving factories.[94] By the early twentieth century, the once rich Welsh woollen industry was in steep decline. In 1925, the University of Wales, working with the Rural Industries Bureau, conducted a survey of the Welsh textile industry.[95] A gloomy situation was revealed. Consumption of hard-wearing flannel, the industry's chief product, had fallen, driven out of competition by softer, more popular fabrics made in England.[96] The decline of the coal-mining industry in South Wales resulted in an acute economic depression. Previously low wool prices had risen quickly, and textile production, now centralised and run by fewer workers, was disrupted by seasonal farming operations.[97] Furthermore, many factories were nearing the end of their tenancies and, with ageing or dying owners and weavers, were at risk of closure.[98] At the time of Morris's Welsh holidays, the future of the woollen industry in Wales was precarious. Reflecting on the report of the 1925 survey, Joshua Brooke, director of the Rural Industries Bureau, commented soberly that 'The domestic factories will not survive their present owners unless the new revolution in industry now turning us all upside down brings about a general revival of small industry.'[99]

To address this decline, the Bureau posted advisory technical officers, jointly funded by the University of Wales and a grant from the Development Commission, in Welsh mills to consult on designs for fabrics. Their role was to encourage the production of tweeds and furnishing fabrics. Margery Kendon was one of several hand-loom weavers sought out by the Bureau to work with the

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[92] Morris, 'Weaving and Textile Crafts', 1919, p. 48.
[93] H. Maldywn Williams, 'The Rural Woollen Industry in Wales', *Rural Industries: Quarterly Magazine for Country Trades and Handicrafts*, No. 21 (Winter 1930), pp. 3-4, at p. 3.
[94] Ibid., p. 3. It was a staged transition. Firstly, carding and spinning were mechanised, while the yarn was woven on handlooms in weavers' homes. Power looms were then introduced. Over time, the separate stages of production were centralised into one factory.
[95] William P. Crankshaw, *Report on a Survey of the Welsh Textile Industry Made on Behalf of the University of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press Board, 1927).
[96] Joshua R. I. Brooke, 'Fighting Unemployment by Improved Design', *Rural Industries: Quarterly Magazine for Country Trades and Handicrafts*, No. 30 (Spring 1933), pp. 9-11, at p. 10.
[97] Crankshaw, *Report on a Survey of the Welsh Textile Industry*, 1927, pp. 1-3.
[98] Ibid., p. 2.
[99] Brooke, 'Fighting Unemployment by Improved Design', 1933, p. 10.

mills in the early 1930s.[100] Under the advisors' guidance, sample pattern swatches were woven at the Welsh mills, and then sent to an appraisal committee in London, who provided feedback ahead of production development.[101] Brooke noted that the advisors had some early success, particularly in refining the colour, texture and handling of the mills' fabrics, but that this 'experiment' in Wales required further improvement.[102] This was a trial in bringing the artistic abilities and rigorous technical knowledge of these women to revive rural textile production along industrial lines. It was, however, the large-scale aims of the project, which necessitated mechanically powered looms, that ultimately deterred Kendon from pursuing her official advisory appointment long term. Nonetheless, her visits to mills in Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Powys, recorded in letters sent to her colleagues at Gospels, attest to her sustained engagement with regional textile arts. They also correct Morris's misapprehension of the state of spinning and weaving in this region; Kendon found that hand-spinning, hand-dyeing and hand-weaving were being carried out alongside power-driven mechanised processes.[103]

But on these holidays in Wales, Morris was concerned with other forms of artmaking as ways of thinking about the relationship between artifice and nature and their relationships with time. She and Lobb visited prehistoric stone circles, climbed mountains and followed rivers in search of their sources. The times spent in Wales offered Morris occasions to encounter dramatic and wild landscapes and to reflect on the ways in which they were interwoven with geological and cultural questions around water, earth, stone and grain. She captured her surroundings in watercolour paintings, such as a view of Tal-y-Llyn (fig 4.12). In this, her most accomplished watercolour, Morris shows a thrilling view looking northwards over the lake and across the glacial valley. The scene is filled with space, air and light. The brushwork is bolder and more confident here than in her other Welsh watercolours; the dried edges of aqueous paint are left visible on the paper to describe the textual variation of the land. Principal interest is not given to the lake's surface, but the sweeping fall and rise of the valley, hallowed out over time, and to the colours and textures of the hills.

In an entry from the 1919 diary, Morris records a visit to a large, old-fashioned farmhouse. Up in its interior rafters, she spotted 'a row of tassels of grain, mostly wheat but some oats…hung the whole length of the beam'.[104] These were corn dollies (fig. 4.13). Made by plaiting and twisting dried fibre to produce a patterned decorative object, these are a form of textile. Sight of the dollies reminded Morris of James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and 'his many gleanings of old customs that go

[100] Ibid., p. 11. The first appointed advisor was Minnie McLeish. However, McLeish left her post in the Welsh mills to advise rural industries in India. The third advisor, appointed at the same time as Kendon, was a Norwegian weaver called Gerd Bergeren. The fourth advisor was Marianne Straub. Straub was appointed in 1934 and worked with Welsh mills until 1937, see Schoeser, *Marianne Straub,* 1984, pp. 32-47.
[101] Brooke, 'Fighting Unemployment by Improved Design', 1933, p. 11.
[102] Ibid., p. 11.
[103] See Margery Kendon, 'M. K.'s Welsh Letters', typed manuscript, Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft, 3577.7.C.
[104] Morris, *Cardiganshire 1919,* p. 47.

back to early religious rites, the killing & worshipping of the nature-God.'[105] Through Frazer, Morris saw these as remnants of old cultural practices of south Wales; each 'little branch came from the cutting of each year's harvest – a record of some 35 years.'[106] She found them touching, but also of antiquarian interest. Made from the last sheaf of corn gathered at harvest, the dollies not only came from the earth but also embodied and recorded the annual transformation of the landscape as it was worked by agricultural processes: these were textiles from and of the ground.

On a separate holiday on the coast of west Wales, in 1922, Morris pondered on the geological formation of the local stone and how she was able to commune with an ancient, unknowable past through the landscape. Morris's description of the coastline provided in a letter to her friend Gordon Bottomley (1874-1948) is worth quoting in full:

> The stone all about is slate-formation. I've forgotten my geology-study and whether some other stone goes there with; but all the rocks &c are slate, & rather grim, but dramatic and violent. Yes it was jolly the old post lady bringing your book around. Her sound takes her from one ancient farm-stead to another – all so lonesome, so much a part of the land itself – just down-lane & earth & stone dykes & tracks to the steads, & exquisite little valleys narrowing into the rocks above the sea. I don't think everybody would care for this bit of Welsh coast, but I love it dearly; and there are some places where I <u>feel</u> things have happened, where something of past events & long-dead people lingers. The few scraps of legend we could gather were too vague to piece together, but at certain particular spots I receive the queerest impression that one couldn't define, as if one were stretching out to link oneself up with the lives of the past – quite a vague and fantastic sensation, you see.[107]

Patterned lines in the landscape, of rock, ditches and paths forged through time by pressure, water and human use, were expression of its ancient past and the lives formerly lived there. These features of the land formed a visual programme that articulated the earthen ground, much like a weave structure or embroidered stitching defines or embellishes the quality of a textile ground. These patterns also linked human intervention with the earth, and thus corresponded with the corn dollies that so captivated Morris. Like those plaited fibre textiles, the geological coastline of Wales was loaded with vestiges of past and former occupants of the locale. Unlike Kendon, Morris was not seeking living textile traditions nor exploring the application of handicraft to industry to resurrect a dying regional art. Rather, during her Welsh holidays, she was looking backwards to historical beginnings – the origins of local creative customs, the springs from which rivers emerge and the formation of a landscape's geographical features.

[105] Ibid., p. 47.
[106] Ibid., p. 47.
[107] May Morris to Gordon Bottomley, 12 February 1922, British Library, Add Ms. 88957/1/70, ff.181-82.

Morris in Scotland

A different situation pertained in Scotland. Shortly after arriving in the Outer Hebrides in July 1929, an ebullient Morris wrote to Cockerell from the island of Lewis and Harris, 'What a place this is!...We are in the centre of beautiful weaving'.[108] From the start, Morris's travels to the Outer Hebrides were more than recreational. She was there to meet local craftspeople, see regional hand-made textile processes in action and understand the contemporary weaving industry in this corner of the world. Along with Lobb, she undertook two visits to the Outer Hebrides, each lasting over a month, in the summers of 1929 and 1930. As will be evidenced, these were timely moments to explore this region. The first trip was largely contained within Lewis and Harris but included an excursion to the archipelago of St Kilda. The second trip covered more islands: Lewis and Harris, Staffa, Iona, North Uist, Barra and Eriskay.

In 1929, one of Morris's first priorities was the purchase of 'some lovely blue Harris' tweed.[109] To her disapproval, however, she learned that what she had bought was 'Imitation!...humbug & not Harris at all, but mill-made.'[110] Her apathy towards tweed woven by machines in mills signals her desire to find authentic fabric made by hand in this region. It appears that Morris was ignorant of the market for counterfeit Harris tweed when she arrived on the island. This changed when she was shown round the weaving sheds and warehouse of John Mackenzie, district clerk and manager of Lady Seaforth's Weaving Industry.[111] Morris told Mackenzie of buying imitation tweed. In reply, 'He said they had suffered much from under-selling & this use of the name [Harris], and for the latter they tried to get an injunction, but dealing with legal folk who neither understand the principle nor care about it, were unsuccessful.'[112]

Morris's responses to the economic and social realities of people living and working in Lewis and Harris were a mixture of sympathetic, romanticised and misinformed. As she travelled around the island, she admired the traditional croft houses, also known as blackhouses, built of stone with turf or thatched roofs secured with weighted ropes, because they blended harmoniously with the landscape. She denounced the contrasting modern cottages 'of the usual official … type with red roofs' as destructive of the visual geography and 'indescribably out of place here.'[113] The 'official' homes she referred to were prefabricated concrete houses built on the encouragement of the Scottish Board of Agriculture.[114] Morris disliked aesthetic and, by extension, moral dissonances in form, materials and colour between the natural and the man-made.

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[108] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 3 August 1929, WMG, S4.3.23.1.
[109] May Morris, *Outer Hebrides, 1929*, Society of Antiquaries, MOM/001/007, p. 12.
[110] Ibid., pp. 12-16. She sold the counterfeit fabric to Sydney Cockerell.
[111] Ibid., p. 22. This was a highland home industries initiative, began by Mary Stuart Mackenzie, Lady Seaforth, who, Morris notes, 'was anxious to put industry on a sound basis, while preserving old traditions – the vegetable dyes, the hand-spinning and carding.'
[112] Ibid., p. 22.
[113] Ibid., p. 8.
[114] Successive government reports published in the early decades of the twentieth century were concerned with the sanitary conditions of traditional blackhouses in the Western Isles. In pejorative terms, they reported that

The landscape that these old and new houses peppered was, for Morris, melancholic in its beauty. She described the 'barren hills and lochs' as 'doleful', 'wofully [sic] dismal' and yet 'so peaceful in their remoteness'.[115] It was, for her, a land where human habitation seemed unlikely. Morris was particularly struck by the crofting village of Balallan, set along Loch Erisort: 'the beauty of [this] setting along the solemn water touched me very much: it is so far-away & the human effort and struggle with nature so laborious and neverending.'[116] After some weeks spent on the island, the village continued to captivate Morris's romantic affections. 'I want to linger – and indeed stay', she wrote, 'in one of the unspoilt crofting villages, like Balallan… Poor as these places are, they are such an eloquent expression of the life that goes on here in them, that I love them.'[117] Her idealised view of these untouched villages and their heroised inhabitants was blinkered by fantasy. The peaceful remoteness, emerald-coloured hills and fragrant peat smoke of the waterside setting of Balallan appealed to Morris, reminding her of holidays in Orkney. While she noted that the isolation and climate of the rocky geography posed challenges to locals living on Lewis and Harris, she dislocated the economic and social hardships of these constraints from her romanticised experience of the island's landscape.

Morris situated creativity in complex ways, physically, materially and metaphorically, in this region of Scotland. Living and working in the Outer Hebrides was a stern existence in the 1920s. Soil quality was poor and harvests were scant; some islands were unsuitable for cultivation.[118] Many people turned to textile making – dyeing, spinning, weaving and knitting – to supplement incomes. Unlike the ideal condition of hand-spinning imagined by Morris, Garnett and Hooper, these arts were not leisurely pursuits but financial lifelines. In contrast to the leisurely-made textiles created by Morris and her circle, an anxiety enlivened the work of hand-weavers here. As reported in the journal *Rural Industries*, 'Many an anxious thought is spun and woven into those tweeds "Is the colour good?" they ask. "Can we find a market, or shall we have to hand it over to the merchant for goods?"'[119] Organisations like the Highland Home Industries aimed to break down this bartering system by securing fair monetary payment for makers' wares. Nonetheless, the idealised vision of the

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these houses, of 'primitive' and 'backward' design, were often filled with noxious fumes from open peat-fires unaccompanied by sufficient ventilation; humans and livestock frequently lived together within a dwelling, divided by a semi-open partition; and human and animal excrement accrued on the floor of houses, which polluted the local water supply through poor drainage provision. The reports recommended that old houses be improved (with complete partition between domestic quarters and the byre for livestock) and new houses be built of concrete, with enclosed hearths and windows for ventilation. See, *Report. Secretary for Scotland. The Crofters Commission. Social Condition of the People of Lewis in 1901, As Compared with Twenty Years Ago* (Glasgow: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1902); *Report to the Local Government Board for Scotland on the Sanitary Condition of the Lews* (Glasgow: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1905); and John Percival Day, *Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (London: University of London Press, 1918).

[115] Morris, *Outer Hebrides, 1929,* p. 10.

[116] Ibid., p. 10.

[117] Ibid., p. 75.

[118] Jean D. Bruce, 'What the Highland Home industries Ltd. Has Done for the Highlands', *Rural Industries: Quarterly Magazine for Country Trades and Handicrafts*, No. 3 (Summer 1926), p. 5.

[119] Ibid., p. 5.

hermit-like spinner or weaver, remotely making textiles by hand as in the days of her ancestors, was persistent.

Morris's encounters with local craftspeople in Lewis and Harris both affirmed and destabilised this vision. To access Hebridean craftspeople, techniques and products, she relied on word-of-mouth knowledge, recommendations and invitations. She visited the 'charming little white house' of a maker called Mackay, who 'span for us – the graceful Northern way, not dabbing in the wool in the clumsy way so many of our Southern amateurs have unfortunately been taught to do! She showed us a handsome dress of her (Mackay) tartan, of their own wool sent to the mill to make up.'[120] Morris was driven to the home of the Morrisons, where a Mrs Morrison (dates unknown) showed her some eighteenth-century chintz made from linen that was grown in Rodel and spun and woven by her great-great-great grandmother.[121] On the same day, Morris attended a Women's Institute meeting in Leverburgh, and there she saw 'some good solid rugs the ladies had made, & other things – embroideries – not so good; & they looked at the embroideries I am doing in camp.'[122] Here, she was received as an engaged and knowledgeable visitor and partook in reciprocal assessment of women's artwork.

Later, she went to meet Kittie Macdonald (dates unknown) and her aunt, Christina Macdonald (dates unknown), who lived in an old, thatched croft house built of 'rough stones, very thick & well-buttressed'[123]. Iceland, which Morris visited twice before travelling to the Outer Hebrides, inflected her experience. The entrance to the house was 'Icelandic-fashion…in to a blind passage and then into the 'house-place'.'[124] With Kittie acting as translator, Christina, a weaver who only spoke Gaelic, described to Morris what they made, how long it took, where they got their materials from and how much these cost.[125] Their wool was carded at a mill, but Christina dyed and spun the yarn herself. Morris made written notes during her conversations with local textile makers, and here she recorded the plants, lichens and mordants used by the Macdonalds for dyeing and the colours theses yielded. As she wrote in her diary:

> Knapweed = green. Some use only the root, others boil the whole plant. (As far as I gather from their vague talk, alum mordant used for most of the dye-plants)
> Dandelion = yellow
> Heather = green
> Falg roots – green
> …

[120] Morris, *Outer Hebrides, 1929*, pp. 24-25.
[121] Ibid., pp. 27-28.
[122] Ibid., p. 29.
[123] Ibid., p. 35.
[124] Ibid., p. 35.
[125] Ibid., p. 36. It took Christina around three weeks of full-time work to make one web. The Macdonalds owned one sheep, but this only provided enough wool for one web, and so they had to buy in more wool. Morris noted that 20lbs of wool makes a web of 50 yards. At the time of her visit, wool cost between £1.5 and £1.8 per st. (14lbs). Therefore, 20lbs of wool at an average of £1.65 per st. would have cost £2.36.

> Water-lily = black
> Crotal – red brown (they put this in layers in the wool, of course, & use no mordaunt)
> Soot = yellow. The longer you leave it, the brighter yellow. (Note, ask if it is peat-soot).
> There must be other plants, if one could hear. Also yellow: that coarse yellow group-flower we see everywhere on poor ground: I forget the name.[126]

Relationships between textiles and landscapes are brought into sharp relief here. The notation of each natural source and its equivalent colour establish causal relationships between the plants, lichens and soil types of a specific geographical region with its indigenous forms of artistic production.
Morris commissioned Christina to weave an indigo web, finally securing a cloth in her favourite colour, authentically hand-woven in the Outer Hebrides.[127] She placed orders with other local makers. In Stornoway, she visited the workshop of Macrae, a carpenter 'who used to make the big St Kila [spinning] wheels' and had him make a spindle that she had been asked to procure on behalf of a woman she had met in St Kilda.[128]

A highlight of the first visit to the Outer Hebrides was an invitation to the waulking of the cloth. This took place at the home of a Mrs Macdonald. A means of fulling cloth, waulking is a process of rinsing and shrinking by hand a woven web over a long board. Morris recorded what she saw:

> In the living room 6 girls, 3 a-side, sit over an oblong board corrugated smoothly: at the head of this stands a big barrel, & one of them is playing out the cloth from this, and after thumping it thoroughly (which they all do in unison, each side alternating), passing it on by degrees. It goes round, & then is passed back the same way. And at the head stands Mrs Macdonald superintending things, & occasionally measuring the width over her knuckle – 7 knuckles-width it must be. Anything over must be shrunk way until the width is right.[129]

Once shrunk, the cloth was washed with water and cakes of soap. The waulking was then repeated, rinsing out the suds. The event's atmosphere was animated by a mixture of the rhythmic thumping of the cloth on the board, the pungent smell of urine (used to soak the cloth in the barrel) and the merry talking and laughing in Gaelic. Morris begged for a waulking-song. After some discussion, Mrs Macdonald sung a verse and the six girls took up the chorus. 'Two or 3 such songs they gave, strange rough music that might have come down from the twilight of far-off times…One of the girls looked like one's notion of a primitive Hebridean – a dweller in a brook of pre-history such a queer, rough face she had!'[130] The Outer Hebrides were a region in which, for Morris, immediate, local and abstract, prehistoric imaginaries collided. Hebrideans were at once essentialised as being defined by this particular landscape and its climate, geography, infrastructure and artistic traditions, and yet

[126] Ibid., pp. 36-37.
[127] Ibid., p. 37. For the cloth, Morris was asked for 4s 6d, but she paid 5s.
[128] Ibid., p. 72-75.
[129] Ibid., p. 33.
[130] Ibid., p. 33.

primitive avatars of a timeless world. In the processes of making textiles that Morris witnessed and recorded in Lewis and Harris, these different imaginaries co-existed.

For the majority of the second trip to the Outer Hebrides in 1930, Morris was based on the island of Barra, although she boated frequently to neighbouring islands. At a summer fair in North Bay, Barra, Morris bought a knitted cushion cover with a pattern of thistles on a blue background.[131] She later went to meet the maker of the cover, MacKinnon (dates unknown), at her home. She showed Morris woven patterns which she had hand-dyed. Morris then asked if she could see more of her knitting, all of which was hand-spun. She was shown a jumper of indigo with white flecks, which she tried on and bought. She also commissioned from MacKinnon a scarf of the same colour design.[132]

In 1930, Morris attended a second waulking of the cloth, this time held at a large evening Ceilidh in Barra. As before, the fulling was accompanied by Gaelic singing. The first round of songs was melancholic and tame. A second round was more rousing:

> They began softly, but after a while the pace increased & the action changed: they now pushed the webb [sic] violently aslant, and the movement was expressed of some coil[ed] emotion: and then at intervals they screamed – it was like the screeching of a wild wind, extraordinarily exciting.[133]

In their actions and songs, the women fulling the cloth became primal and elemental, and, like the rushing Atlantic winds, part of the Hebridean landscape. A third round of songs followed, 'with more of the witch-calls – prehistoric & unbelievably strange.'[134] Morris was so moved by the demonstration that she felt it transported her to another world:

> It is witches at their ruins – wise women calling on the storm-waves by simulating them – it is every thing that is world-old and of the soil, a savage & inexorable strength in the concerted movement back & forth.[135]

The women were transformed into ancient, savage and fantastical bodies whose movements echoed and conjured tidal forces. Morris's recording of her second waulking in the Outer Hebrides asserts a profound yet ultimately unknowable relationship between textiles produced in this specific region and its surrounding landscape and seascape.

Morris's phrasing 'of the soil' is something we find almost four decades earlier in the writing of John Dando Sedding. Chapter three discussed Sedding's publications *Garden-Craft Old and New* (1891) and *Art and Handicraft* (1893). The latter is a compendium of six essays on architecture, handicraft and design. In the essay 'The Handicrafts in Old Days', Sedding reflected on the relationship between a fictional church and its idealised environmental setting:

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[131] May Morris, *Outer Hebrides, 1930*. Society of Antiquaries, MOM/001/008, p. 22.
[132] Ibid., pp. 55-57.
[133] Ibid., pp. 38-39.
[134] Ibid., p. 39.
[135] Ibid., p. 39.

> The old church that lifts its grey head above the cottages and stack-yards of the peaceful village, backed, it may be, by a slope of green or golden field and the intense blues and dim waving lines of a shadow-swept distance, is rooted to the soil, it is *of* the soil, made by children of the soil.[136]

In another essay, 'On the Study of English Architecture', he noted how English 'art has grown in colder soils' as he compared it with architectural developments in Italy and France.[137] Throughout this essay, Sedding formulated an indelible relationship between a regional natural environment and its local forms of artmaking. This is articulated through metaphors of the growth, life and distribution of natural phenomena. He encouraged the study of English architecture '*as* it grew, *where* it grew.'[138] He equated the regional variation of indigenous architecture with the biodiversity of plants: 'Wide acquaintance with English architecture shows us that, like the plants, it has *genus* and *species*.'[139] These vary according to regional provinces. Just as botanists and ornithologists stated the particular habitats of bee orchids or stonechats, for example, so the architectural student can specify in which regions different types of design and handiwork can be found.[140]

Over twenty years later, metaphors of growth in soil were once more deployed in Arts and Crafts discourse but this time with nationalist inflections. In her 1914 chairman's address to the Women's Guild of Arts, Morris described art in terms of beauty growing – as 'the flower of man's life upon the earth'.[141] She and her contemporaries were concerned with how art would grow and how its growth could be nurtured in the wake of the First World War. Similarly, the making of art was conceived in terms of cultivating the land in the eleventh Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibition of 1916. In his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Henry Wilson, then president of the Society, argued that the exhibition was a demonstration of the creative potential of British arts, which offered a model for social regeneration following the war.[142] He framed the making of art as a national project of working the figurative land: 'There is a British quality in our work. Subtle, elusive, undefinable, but easily recognisable everywhere. Let us cultivate that. It suits our soil.'[143]

Morris's travel diaries in Scotland thus sit within a lineage of Arts and Crafts discourse concerned with the ways in which the production of art was tied conceptually to the natural landscape and understood to grow in the literal and figurative conditions of its soil. But unlike the fertile ground imagined in the mid-1910s, by the late-1920s Morris and others believed that the life of artmaking in remote edge-lands of Scotland was under threat. This is revealed when we situate Morris's activities and priorities in this region within a wider culture from beyond the Arts and Crafts canon.

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[136] John Dando Sedding, *Art and Handicraft* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1893), p. 65.
[137] Ibid., p. 22.
[138] Ibid., p. 15
[139] Ibid., p. 16-17.
[140] Ibid., p. 18.
[141] May Morris, Handwritten Draft Chairman's Address, 1914, Women's Guild of Arts Archive, William Morris Society, WGA/1/1.
[142] *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, Catalogue of the Eleventh Exhibition, 1916*, pp. 18-21.
[143] Ibid., p. 21.

Morris as Ethnographer

In the ways she documented her encounters, observations and recordings of Hebridean crafts and culture, Morris's two diaries of her visits to the Outer Hebrides should be understood as ethnographic accounts. Moreover, her presence in the Western Isles of Scotland around the turn of the 1920s-1930s and her approaches to conceptualising local textile production align her with a network of women ethnographers working across the Hebrides and the Scottish mainland in the early decades of the twentieth century. During this period, women antiquarians, historians, photographers and textile makers travelled independently across the highlands and islands of Scotland. Foremost among them were Amy Murray, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, Lucy Broadwood, Francis Tolmie, Mary Ethel Muir Donaldson, Dr Isabel Frances Grant, Winifred Wrench, Margaret Fay Shaw, Violet Banks, Dr Beatrice Garvie, Florence Marian McNeill and Margery Kendon. They were seeking living traditions, old ways of working and artmaking that were still continued despite the rapid changes of modernity. While alive, however, these traditions were dwindling; they needed to be preserved. Collectively, although not knowingly, the travel, researchers, documentation and publications that these women undertook coalesced into a significant ethnographic movement.

In their projects, these women adopted what Glenn Adamson has described as the 'pastoral stance' of modern craft discourse.[144] This was an ideological position which understood forms of artmaking in peripheral geographies to constitute unbroken traditions. Yet, concurrently, as they sought authentic remnants of pre-modern culture, there is evidence to suggest that some of these women were also searching for alternative spaces in which they could realise nonnormative lives and experiences of intimacy in remote locations. Morris acknowledged that she and Lobb, a queer couple, were well-received in Lewis and Harris. Mary Ethel Muir Donaldson (1876-1958) lived and collaborated with her partner, the illustrator Isabel Bonus (1875-1941). In 1925, they built a home, *Sanna Bheag*, of local materials in a traditional style, located on the remote Ardnamurchan peninsula, Argyll (fig. 4.14). Meanwhile, Dr Beatrice Garvie (1872-1959) lived with her partner, Charlotte Scott (dates unknown), on the island of North Ronaldsay, Orkney.[145]

Between 1905 and 1911, Amy Murray (*b.* 1865), Marjory Kennedy-Fraser (1857-1930), Lucy Broadwood (1858-1929) and Francis Tolmie (1840-1926) independently recorded Gaelic folk songs in the western Highlands and Western Isles.[146] Born on the island of Skye and of Hebridean ancestry, Tolmie lamented the fact that the songs familiar from her youth were disappearing.[147] She wished to 'recall some of the forgotten songs of a by-gone age.'[148] Folksongs had a special relevance to textile

[144] Glenn Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 181.
[145] https://orkneyarchive.blogspot.com/2021/05/in-search-of-beatrice-garvie-1872-1959.html [Accessed: 01/02/2023]
[146] Margaret Fay Shaw, *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), p. 75.
[147] Frances Tolmie, 'Notes and Reminiscences', *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, Vol. IV, No. 16 (December 1911), pp. 143-146, at p. 143.
[148] Ibid., p. 144.

making in this region because they frequently accompanied spinning and weaving. Hebridean textile makers taught Tolmie Gaelic songs, and in a publication of seventy-eight songs in the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, she printed the names of the singers who passed on their knowledge.[149] Broadwood noted that Tolmie's song collection 'undoubtedly forms one of the most important contributions yet made towards the preservation of the purely traditional music and poetry of our British Isles in general and of Scotland in particular.'[150] In 1920, Donaldson published *Wondering in the Western Highlands and Islands. Recounting Highland and Clan History, Traditions, Ecclesiology, Archaeology, Romance, Literature, Humour, Folk-lore, &c.* The book was the product of fifteen years of field research, during which Donaldson took over nine hundred photographs, many of which documented the 'fast disappearing aspects of life'.[151]

In the same year that Morris first visited the Outer Hebrides, Margaret Fay Shaw (1903-2004) moved to South Uist, where she stayed for six years until 1935.[152] In the village of Glendale on the shores of Lochboisdale, she lived with two local sisters, Peigi and Màiri MacRae (1874-1969 and 1883-1972), who became dear friends and respected collaborators (fig. 4.15). Shaw was there collecting folk songs, and sought out unfamiliar, everyday songs 'that they sang when they rocked the cradle or worked the spinning wheel.'[153] Her major publication *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist* (1955) is as much an account of local textile production as it is a record of the island's singing culture. It captures Peigi's methods of washing and dyeing fleece, and of carding and cleaning the wool in preparation for spinning, which was done in winter.[154] Shaw also listed the natural sources Peigi used for dyeing, adopting a manner of notation much like Morris's:

> Crotal – red-brown
> Beard of the rock (lichen) – orange or yellow-brown
> Heather tops – yellow
> Yellow flag – blue or steel-grey
> Peat Soot – dark yellow brown
> Nettle – greenish yellow
> Yellow ragwort – blackish yellow
> Sorrel – red
> Water lily root – black
> Corn marigold – bright, clear yellow
> Lady's bedstraw – orange-red

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[149] *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, Vol. IV, No. 16 (December 1911), pp. 155-156.
[150] Lucy Broadwood, 'Introduction', *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, Vol. IV, No. 16 (December 1911), pp. v-xiv, at p. v.
[151] Mary Ethel Muir Donaldson, *Wandering in the Western Highlands and Islands. Recounting Highland and Clan History, Traditions, Ecclesiology, Archaeology, Romance, Literature, Humour, Folk-lore, &c.* (Paisley: Alexander Gardiner, 1920), p. 12.
[152] This was not Shaw's first visit to the Hebrides; she visited Syke in 1924 and 1927.
[153] Margaret Fay Shaw, *From Alleghenies to the Hebrides: An Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Canongate Press, 1993), p. 81.
[154] Shaw, *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist*, 1955, p. 6.

Bog myrtle – fine clear yellow[155]

In August 1929, Morris visited Hirta, the only inhabited island of St Kilda. There, she met a spinner, whom she affectionately called 'my St Kilda lady'.[156] If life in Lewis and Harris was tough, in Hirta it was severe. Morris found the island to be 'strange & sad beyond telling', although she evidently wanted to help local St Kildans by sending tools that they could not source on the island from Lewis and Harris.[157] The following year, in May 1930, Shaw made a trip to Hirta. During her visit, she recorded the island's textile production, took photographs and spoke to locals.[158] They told her how they were close to starvation. Men had developed stomach ulcers. There was little labour available. Cattle were badly fed, and there was not enough milk for the calves; these had to be slaughtered and fed to the dogs, who were needed to catch the sheep. Islanders had no sugar, soda or potatoes; they begged trawlermen for food.[159] Shaw arrived at a critical moment in St Kilda's history: on the day of her visit authorities decided to evacuate the remaining thirty-six St Kildans living on Hirta. By the time of Morris's second trip to the Western Isles in August 1930, St Kilda was deserted. The eradication of Hirta's population demonstrated the rapid changes that could befall remote, poverty-stricken communities, and highlighted the necessity of preserving local ways of living and artmaking that were in steep decline in this region.

1930 was a notable year for the recording and preserving of Scottish regional crafts and culture in other ways. The Ceilidh that Morris attended in Barra was led by the eminent priest, Father John Macmillan (1880-1951). After the waulking demonstration had finished, Morris asked him the meaning of the final 'wild' song; he told her it was the song a forlorn woman calling out for her beloved, who was lost to the hills. A Gaelic speaker and native of Barra, Macmillan was well-known for his knowledge of folksongs. He authored a two-volume set *Gaelic Songs of the Isles of the West*, published in 1930. Likely on her return home from the western islands, Morris purchased a copy of Macmillan's set in Oban (fig. 4.16).[160] The publication stressed the value of its printing both the melodies and verses of the 'ancient' songs so that 'their original form[s]' could be preserved.[161] Thus, in 1930, Morris was not only recording her first-hand experiences of witnessing waulkings and

[155] Ibid., pp. 53-55.
[156] Morris, *Outer Hebrides, 1929*, p. 72.
[157] May Morris to Gordon Bottomley, 27 August 1929, British Library, Add Ms. 88957/1/70, f. 71.
[158] Shaw, *From Alleghenies to the Hebrides*, 1993, pp. 91-93. 'Some of the women work dresses of dark blue serge, with a very tight bodice and full skirt, sometimes with an apron. Their skirts were trimmed at the foot with a strip of black velvet and they wore little tartan kerchief or little shawl – not a big shawl over the head, as they did in the islands. They had boxes of knitted socks and gloves to sell, blown sea birds' eggs and rolls of the St Kilda murrit tweed. The women were the spinners and the men the weavers. The wool was from the brown murrit sheep on the neighbouring islands of Soay.'
[159] Ibid., p. 93.
[160] Morris, *Outer Hebrides, 1930*, p. 39.
[161] Father John Macmillan of Barra, *Gaelic Folk Songs of the Isles of the West, Volume 1: Six Songs (Traditional and Original*, Translation & Stories by Patrick McGlynn, Music Arranged by F. W. Lewis (London and New York: Boosey & Co., 1930), p. iv.

hearing Gaelic songs, but also acquiring printed records of local songs captured by those with ancestral and, therefore, more authoritative links to Hebridean culture.

In August of that year, while Morris was travelling in the Outer Hebrides for the second time, the historian Dr Isabel Frances Grant (1887-1983) staged *The Highland Exhibition* at Inverness town hall.[162] Grant had been collecting Highland and Island material culture since the early 1920s.[163] Inspired by Scandinavian folk museums and the revival of Gaelic culture and language,[164] the exhibition intended to 'gather together the relics of old [Highland and Island] life 'ere they have been irretrievably lost.'[165] Among the exhibits was a display of arts and crafts, prominently elevated at the end of the hall.[166] A variety of textile materials, tools and articles were shown: flax, plants used for dyeing, vegetable dyed wools, carding combs, mudags, spindles, distaffs, spinning wheels, wool winders, shuttles, looms, blankets, linens, plaids, checks, tartans and tweeds[167] Displayed were some the very same product types Morris had seen and purchased throughout her travels across Scotland: Orkney weaving, and shuttles, looms and tweeds from Lewis and Harris.[168] The exhibition also featured photographs documenting women spinning and dyeing.

Like Morris and Shaw, Grant was interested in local textile production. She enthusiastically collected homespun blankets and bedcovers, which gave her more satisfaction than anything else that she acquired.[169] Attracted to colour and attuned to pattern, she was fascinated by vegetable dyeing and the handling of coloured yarn in the weaving of cloth. Grant was familiar too with Mairet's *A Book on Vegetable Dyes*.[170] She attempted experiments in natural dyeing but found these difficult and admitted that they were not successful.[171] Nonetheless, in turning her hand to practical investigations, Grant advanced her understanding of local textile production. She later recalled how, 'In attempting vegetable dyeing, I very, very soon realised why the Highlanders used their colours in checks or stripes, generally narrow!'[172]

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[162] *The Highland Exhibition, 1930. Illustrating the History, Antiquities, Folk Life, Arts and Crafts, and the Romance of the Highlands and Islands, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day.* (Inverness: The Northern Chronicle Office, 1930). The exhibition was the first iteration of the Highland Folk Museum, which Grant later established on the island of Iona in 1935. It was called *Am Fasgadh*, meaning The Shelter. In 1938, the museum moved to the Cairngorms on the Scottish mainland, firstly to a dis-used church in Laggan and later into a large house in Kingussie.
[163] Isabel Frances Grant, *The Making of Am Fasgadh: An Account of the Origins of the Highland Folk Museum by its Founder* (Edinburgh: NMS Enterprises Limited, 2007), p. 19.
[164] *The Highland Exhibition Inverness, 4th August to 20th September 1930*, p. 7. This small pamphlet, which was separate to the catalogue, accompanied the exhibition.
[165] *The Highland Exhibition, 1930*, p. xxx.
[166] The exhibition comprised fourteen sections arranged across two rooms: Prehistoric; Folk Life; Art and Crafts; Communications with the South; Historical Relics; Prints of Old Inverness; Fishing, Sport, Etc.; Forestry; Land Settlement; Maps; Means of Communication; Electricity; and Portfolios.
[167] *The Highland Exhibition, 1930*, pp. 81-89.
[168] Ibid., pp. 86-87.
[169] Grant, *The Making of Am Fasgadh*, 2007, p. 124.
[170] Ibid., p. 126.
[171] Ibid., pp. 123-126.
[172] Ibid., pp. 125-126.

In 1942, Kendon, Mairet's former pupil turned colleague, came to the Highlands to see the vegetable dyes in Grant's Highland Folk Museum and 'find the lichen (tartaricum)', which yields a scarlet colour (fig. 4.17).[173] Kendon made several visits to the museum, and she and Grant became friends. Kendon set up the warp on a loom in the museum and taught Grant how to spin on a drop spindle and recognise 'the bright yellowish shade of scarlet produced by madder.'[174] In a manner of reciprocation, Grant advanced Kendon's understanding of the socio-economic factors that shaped the history of the Harris tweed industry.[175]

During her research travels, Grant encountered other ethnographers. As she journeyed between the Scottish mainland and islands, she was frequently hosted by Colina Edith MacDougall (1874-1963) at Dunollie Castle, Oban. MacDougall supported the research of Tolmie and Donaldson, with whose work Grant was familiar.[176] In the 1920s, Grant met Florence Marian McNeill (1885-1973).[177] Motivated by the decline of 'old national dishes', she collected traditional Scottish recipes, which she published in *The Scots Kitchen: Its Traditions and Lore with Old-Time Recipes* in 1929.[178] Later, Grant connected with the founder of the Angus Folk Museum, Lady Jean Maitland (dates unknown), with whom she shared a pursuit of collecting knowledge and material culture relating to rural ways of life that were 'rapidly disappearing'.[179]

Therefore, when Morris first arrived in the Outer Hebrides in the late 1920s, she not only entered 'the centre of beautiful weaving' but also a rich culture of ethnographic research, in which she became an active participant.[180] Like her fellow makers, historians and researchers, she documented the landscape and its vernacular customs, making practices and natural resources used for textile manufacture. It many cases, she was concerned with the very same locations, materials, tools, techniques and products as her peers, and she captured knowledge of where these came from and how they were used. Her recordings present an important project of preservation of regional culture and artmaking that were disappearing or approaching extinction. They also reveal an intimate and interdependent symbiosis between the production of weaving and its geographical environment, and thus speak to the understanding of ground as a complex entity, as a surface and structure of both nature and artifice.

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[173] Margery Kendon, *Highland Diary, 1942*, typed manuscript, Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft, 3577.3; Grant, *The Making of Am Fasgadh*, 2007, p. 125.
[174] Grant, *The Making of Am Fasgadh*, 2007, p. 125.
[175] Kendon, *Highland Diary, 1942*, p. 6.
[176] Grant, *The Making of Am Fasgadh*, 2007, p. 41. MacDougall's daughter, Hope MacDougall, became a noted folk collector and a mentee of Grant's.
[177] Ibid., p. 75.
[178] Florence Marian McNeill, *The Scots Kitchen: Its Traditions and Lore with Old-Time Recipes* (London and Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1929), p. vii.
[179] Grant, *The Making of Am Fasgadh*, 2007, p. 107.
[180] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 3 August 1929, WMG, S4.3.23.1.

Methods of Recording

Let us consider further the correspondences between Morris's Outer Hebrides diaries and the coeval ethnographic projects undertaken by this network of women makers, historians and collectors alongside whom she operated. Practical and intellectual knowledge exchange was a fundamental mechanism for the development of these projects. As Morris and others sought out rural craftspeople and industries, they progressed their research through speaking directly with locals, watching how things were made, writing down dye recipes, photographing workshops and processes, buying tools and articles from local suppliers and makers and tapping into word-of-mouth knowledge. Through their conversations with those they met and in later written and published recollections, these women brought together disparate and little-known regional materials, techniques and processes of making, collectively producing a more nuanced picture of rural crafts in the Scottish Highlands and Islands and disseminating knowledge of these more widely. But it should be noted that the priorities and understandings that these women brought to and gained from their travels differed. By examining some of these more closely, we can better define Morris's complex engagement with regional textile production and artmaking in the twentieth century.

In documenting rural crafts and ways of life, authenticity was of foremost significance for many of these women. Yet, it was not consistently assured. Upon her immediate arrival in the Outer Hebrides, Morris desired to acquire authentic Harris tweed, but was duped into buying counterfeit weaving. Owing to problems with translation from Gaelic to English, she could not quite understand all that was said during her visit to Kittie and Christina Macdonald. Consequently, her record of Christina's dyeing methods was incomplete. Relatedly, Kendon noted the challenge in obtaining precise information on vegetable dyes 'when country people don't know the names of the plants.'[181]

One means of attempting to capture authenticity was the making of photographic documentation. This approach was vital to several of the women's research methodologies, including Morris, for whom Lobb took photographs during their travels.[182] Women dyeing, carding and spinning outdoors were recurring subjects in ethnographic accounts, appearing in the collections and publications of Banks, Donaldson, Shaw and Grant (fig. 4.18). However, many of the photographs that illustrated these accounts were staged. The frontispiece to Donaldson's *Wandering in the Western Highlands and Islands* (1927) depicts a woman spinning, titled 'A *Cailleach* Spinning'; the publication also includes a plate showing a woman spinning outside a cottage (fig. 4.19). Both images are likely to have been staged. The exhibition catalogue to The Highland Exhibition features a woman spinning outdoors, reminiscent of Donaldson's frontispiece.[183] *The Highland Exhibition Inverness* pamphlet includes a reproduction of a woman carding at a spinning wheel outdoors (fig. 4.20). The background has been conspicuously cropped out, decontextualising the figure of the woman and the

[181] Kendon, *Highland Diary, 1942*, p. 7.
[182] These photographs are not known to have survived.
[183] *The Highland Exhibition, 1930*, p. 101.

rocky foreground. Contrary to the romanticised vision of a Highland or Hebridean *cailleach*, plying their wheel or spindle outdoors in fields or upon rocky hills, Morris, Kendon and Shaw each learned that spinning took place indoors, often in the winter months.

Materials, tools, techniques and woven articles were not Morris's only focus during her travels in the Outer Hebrides. People were described, categorised and differentiated in her diaries. In observing the waulkings, she noted how human bodies and urine were used to prepare, shrink, measure and rinse the cloth.[184] As they worked and sung, the craftswomen's bodies changed, becoming 'queer, [and] rough' or 'savage' otherworldly witches.[185] Morris was also concerned with the quality and colour of skin, describing Christina Macdonald as having 'pallid brown smoke-dried skin.'[186] These remarks were interlinked with Morris's romanticised responses to the settings in which Hebrideans lived and worked, which reinforced her othering of those she encountered. The 'primitive simplicity' of one village she visited in 1930 reminded Morris of a 'poor Arab village.'[187] And throughout her travels in Scotland, she saw the landscape a dream-like, romance-filled yet baleful 'fairyland…where humans were allowed in sufferance only, where we are strange & unwanted'.[188]

Race was conceived in varying ways among the ethnographic projects discussed in this chapter. Broadwood characterised the Gaelic songs collected by Tolmie as 'primitive',[189] while McNeill described regional life in the Highlands as 'a romantic semi-savagery'.[190] Morris's accounts align with these ideological positions; she described women waulking cloth as 'primitive'.[191] Meanwhile, Donaldson centred the Gaels as a distinct race, and used 'alien' and 'foreigner' as terms to denote non-Highland people.[192] In 1930, Grant praised the 'fiery imaginative [and] poetic mental life' of Gaels and described their peat-fire dwellings as 'primitive'.[193] Later, she asserted that 'old Highland society…of all ranks, was of aristocratic origin and not peasant'.[194] But while she understood their class status as ennobled, for Grant, Gaels remained unsophisticated in their way of life. By contrast, Shaw endeavoured to break down racial stereotypes. She regarded the two sisters with whom she lived in South Uist with great respect and affection, and her account of their lives does not essentialise nor primitivise them. Peigi and Màiri, Shaw wrote, 'had the greatest wisdom, tolerance, cheer, and courage, and yet had so little. They were glad to have nice things, but didn't expect them. They had enough food, and they took great pleasure in what they did possess.'[195]

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[184] Morris, *Outer Hebrides, 1929*, p. 33.
[185] Ibid., p. 33, and Morris, *Outer Hebrides, 1930*, p. 39.
[186] Morris, *Outer Hebrides, 1929*, p. 35.
[187] Morris, *Outer Hebrides, 1930*, p. 57.
[188] Ibid., p. 14.
[189] Broadwood, 'Introduction', 1911, pp. ix-xiii.
[190] McNeill, *The Scots Kitchen*, 1929, p. vii.
[191] Morris, *Outer Hebrides, 1930*, p. 39.
[192] Donaldson, *Wandering in the Western Highlands and Islands*, 1920, pp. 9-12.
[193] *The Highland Exhibition, 1930*, p. 8.
[194] Grant, *The Making of Am Fasgadh*, 2007, p. 17.
[195] Shaw, *From Alleghenies to the Hebrides*, 1993, p. 61.

Examination of Morris's Outer Hebrides diaries alongside these ethnographic projects thus reveals that her priorities, methods and ideological positions corresponded in several ways with those of her contemporaries. We should acknowledge the ways in which Morris's recording of artmaking in the western islands of Scotland essentialised indigenous people as 'primitive' and 'savage'. Yet, we should nonetheless place her accounts among the contributions made to early-twentieth-century ethnographic knowledge of Hebridean culture and traditions, which was formed through women's research and collecting. Moreover, Morris's diaries of her travels in the Outer Hebrides offer insight into her complex conceptualisation of regional artmaking and its iterations within a specific geographic locale. In the Western Isles of Scotland, the making of art was tied to and defined against the landscape through materials, techniques and markets; concurrently, it was a means through which the distinctions between real and fantastical bodies, geographies, temporal parameters and imaginaries collapsed.

'I can't try to be 'modern'.'

Various scholars have declared proponents of the hand-weaving revival as modernists or intermediaries between the Arts and Crafts and forms of modernism that were taking shape in the first half of the twentieth century.[196] Moreover, the ways in which these women adapted traditional textile crafts learned through travel and documentary research have been identified as fundamental to their modernist practices.[197] While this chapter has demonstrated Morris's alignment with these figures and their concerns with making textiles, her artistic practice was not similarly modernist in its methods or aims. As she tried to fund expensive repairs to Kelmscott Manor in the mid-1930s, Morris conceded that she was no longer able to increase her income through writing and designing, admitting to Cockerel that 'nobody wants the Morris tradition and I can't try to be "modern".'[198] Four years earlier, an embroidered quilt she designed and made had been rejected from the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society for their annual show. Morris felt snubbed by the rejection from a society of which she had proudly been an original and active member since the 1880s; indeed, by the 1930s, she felt so much a

[196] Christopher Bailey described the advisers appointed by the Rural Industries Bureau to Welsh mills as 'modernist artists', see Christopher Bailey, 'Progress and Preservation: The Role of Rural Industries in the Makin of the Modern Image of the Countryside', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1996), pp. 35-53, at p. 43. Tanya Harrod notes that women hand-spinners, -weavers and -dyers 'were responsible for bringing together modernism and the crafts, thus transforming the identity of the Arts and Crafts movement.', Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century* (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1999), p. 44. Antonia Behan's research has examined the links between craft and modernism with respect to Ethel Mairet's practices, finding that the artist 'conceptualized her textile workshop and craft practice as a research laboratory for industrial production', see Antonia Behan, 'Commentary', *Journal of Modern Craft*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (November 2021), pp. 281-86, at p. 282. In a separate article in same journal volume, Behan positioned Mairet as a modernist through her approach to biotechnics, see Antonia Behan, 'Ethel Mairet's Textile Biotechnics and the Aesthetics of Materials', *Journal of Modern Craft*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (November 2021), pp. 211-28, at p. 211.
[197] Behan, 'Ethel Mairet's Textile Biotechnics', pp. 211-28, and Tanya Harrod, 'Commentary', *Journal of Modern Craft*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (March 2015), pp. 65-76, at p. 65.
[198] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 27 January 1935, William Morris Gallery, S4.3.23.2.

part of the organisation that she conceived it as her own.[199] In response to the rejection, she resigned from the society, and exhibited the quilt at Morris & Co.'s showroom. The reason for the rejection is unclear, but it is possible that the quilt was regarded as old fashioned, or perhaps not sufficiently representative of Morris's body of work to warrant exhibition. Stitched with ivory twisted silk threads on a plain, cream-coloured cotton ground, the monochrome quilt did not offer what audiences had come to expect from Morris's brightly coloured textiles (fig. 4.21). Showing the quilt at Morris & Co. doubtless deepened the association between her work and the Morris tradition. This association, however, was not one she wished to cast aside.

Some years earlier, in 1914, Morris had reflected on the quality of work in Arts and Crafts shows submitted by younger, up-and-coming artists. To her disappointment, she found that they were not following their forbears, but working in more modern styles:

> I prefer not to think that most or all have gone on Roger Fry lines, but really it seems as if art must be 'new' at any cost. People are mighty afraid of their splendid inheritance of tradition.
>
> I hope there is some big art lying fallow, for the next generation or two to enjoy.[200]

Morris was not disinterested in Fry (1866-1934) and his vision of art. Both figures would have been known to each other for at least a decade through Morris's contributions to *The Burlington Magazine for Art Connoisseurs,* which Fry helped establish in 1903. Later, in 1915, Fry delivered a lecture on the topic of 'Post-Impressionism' at the Women's Guild of Arts.[201] But Morris was concerned that artists working in the twentieth century were pursuing novelty at the expense of 'their splendid inheritance' of the late-nineteenth century. To the Society of Arts in 1918, she pronounced that,

> As the years go by, I begin to realise that three generations have arisen since those wonderful days of 1860 onwards, and that to all the young boys and girls who come on pilgrimage to my house, William Morris is just a great tradition very far away. I should like that tradition to be drawn closer to their lives, and if there was such a permanent record of William Morris's work in the museum of exhibition, that would be accomplished.[202]

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[199] May Morris to Margaret Pierce, November 1931, William Morris Gallery. 'I forget if I told you that my big embroidered Quilt (which looked splendid when finished) was rejected by our Arts and Crafts show at Burlington House, and that I've sent in my resignation, as they want neither my help in arranging the exhibition nor my important work. As an original and active member, I am very sick about it. The work is now at Morris and Company's, and it shown to select clients. By the by our Queen is going there shortly, and they are going to show it to her.'

[200] May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 4 May 1914, William Morris Gallery, S4.4.16.

[201] William Morris Society, WGA/1/6. This took place on 12 February 1915.

[202] May Morris, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. 66, No. 3441 (1 November 1918), pp. 761-773, at p. 770. The idea of a 'Morris room', as it came to be known, was first proposed to Morris by Cecil Harcourt Smith (1859-1944), then director of the V&A, in 1917. For discussion of this scheme, see Julia Dudkiewicz, 'Memorialising her father's legacy: May Morris as curator and gatekeeper of William Morris's estate and the role of Kelmscott', in Hulse, *May Morris: Art & Life*, pp. 209-31, at p. 226, and Thomas Cooper, 'Arranging a 'Morris room' in Cardiff: Mary Lobb and the National Museum of Wales', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 165, No. 1441 (April 2023), pp. 418-421.

She believed that the output of Morris & Co. constituted a 'definite movement',[203] and that a record of this movement needed to be centred within an institution so that it could be studied by future students of art and design.

Morris was, of course, generalising in her assessment that twentieth-century artists were abandoning this tradition. Among the spinners and weavers considered in this chapter, Garnett, Mairet and Kendon each cited the work or legacy of William as venerated forms of inspiration for the making of art. Indeed, textile arts in the 1920s and 1930s were regarded as descendants from his creative practices, notably his contributions to the revivals of vegetable dyeing and tapestry.

But broader lineages constructed by textile makers and commentators varied in the values they conferred on this tradition and its inheritance. In 1922, William Paul George Townsend (1868-1941), co-author of *Embroidery, or the Craft of the Needle* and founding editor of *The Art Workers' Quarterly*, published the first volume of *Modern Decorative Art in England*. The publication aimed to document the characteristics of decorative arts in England as they had developed since being infused with 'a new life' by William.[204] It was also conceived as a 'contemporary history of modern industrial design.'[205] This volume's focus was on woven and printed textiles, a large portion of which were produced by industrial manufacturers rather than hand-made workshops. However, one of Morris's four embroidered hangings, cited at the beginning of this chapter, was reproduced in the volume (fig. 4.4). Townsend praised 'the remarkable subtlety of the colour' and 'delicate tone values' of the embroidery, which demonstrated 'a particular vision and artistic achievement in a craft that has been so much advanced by Miss May Morris.'[206] The textile's formal and aesthetic values took precedence over concerns with making in this analysis. Indeed, Townsend was interested in the surface pattern-designs of the works recorded in the volume, believing that these would together 'show the inrush of the modern spirit'.[207] Morris's work was thus placed within the lineage of William and the 'inherited tradition' and yet examined through frames of references aligned with modernist artistic criticism.

Elsewhere, Mary Thomas (1889-1948), author of multiple technical manuals on embroidery and knitting, reflected on the development of needlework in the twentieth century. This period saw a 'renaissance' of the art, in which embroidery was full of 'life, virility and promise'.[208] Thomas saw this growth in direct opposition to Berlin wool-work and art needlework of the nineteenth century, which she lumped together and claimed had 'stifled' the 'heights of beauty and technique' of preceding ages.[209] This position marked a significant changing of the guard. As we shaw in chapter

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[203] May Morris to Cecil Harcourt Smith, 6 January 1919, V&A Archive, National Art Library, Nominal File MA/1/M2833 May Morris.
[204] William George Paul Townsend, *Modern Decorative Art in England. Volume 1: Woven & Printed Fabrics, Wallpapers, Lace & Embroidery* (London: Batsford, 1922), preface (unpaginated).
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid., p. 11.
[207] Ibid., pp. 1-3.
[208] Mary Thomas, *Mary Thomas's Embroidery Book* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936), pp. ix-x.
[209] Ibid, pp. ix-x.

two, proponents of art needlework and associated textile makers like Morris reacted against Berlin wool-work. They strove to make a new kind of art that followed artistically-designed patterns, was worked in free-hand stitching, and achieved a harmony between composition, colour, material and technique. New directions in the early decades of the twentieth century, however, claimed art needlework to be out of step with modern embroidery, as proclamations for modernity and tradition jostled and fused in discourse around the making and meaning of textiles. Morris was both exalted and forgotten among these shifting critical positions.

Conclusion

While Morris is best understood as an embroidery designer, maker, teacher and commentator, this chapter has demonstrated that she was seriously engaged in the production of woven cloth. The materials, manufacture and composition of ground fabrics used in her embroideries were of great significance. A proficient hand-spinner and knowledgeable advocate for vegetable-dyeing and hand-weaving, Morris was in step with the revival of hand-weaving and its associated arts that developed alongside her career. Her conception of how spinning, dyeing and weaving by hand imbued cloth with life was sympathetic to the practices of textile makers known to and associated with her. Similarly, her recording of traditional iterations of hand-made textile production in remote regions in Britain corresponded in several ways with the views and practices of her contemporary makers, collectors and historians. While Morris did not develop her documentation of rural craft in her own creative practices, her travel accounts reveal new insight into the complex ways that she understood and valued the making of textiles. In Wales, local textile customs were cultural and geological records of the landscape and its use by human occupants. The creation of cloth by hand in the Outer Hebrides was a mode of artmaking that was inseparable from the specific geographical environment of this region and its indigenous inhabitants, shaped by climate, soil, seasonal rhythms and weak economies, and made from local wool and plant dyes. Weaving was understood as an expression of a specific place. And yet, for Morris, to hand-spin, hand-dye, hand-weave and hand-waulk as practised in this locale were ways of fracturing temporal linearity, transforming the human body, and connecting to an abstracted ‘savage’ maker.

The ways in which contemporary art makers in the Hebrides were essentialised runs against the arguments that Morris and her fellow proponents of art needlework made to champion the stitcher as an individual and creative agent. Different priorities were at play. Morris argued for an embroiderer of or connected to the metropole, who made work for the modern world. Meanwhile, spinners and weavers living and working in the geographic fringes of the British Isles were representative of a local culture of making that was precariously slipping away in time and place. In the final decades of her career, Morris conceived of art making in ways that were less stable and more mutable than her assertive proclamations for art that she voiced in the wake of the First World War. The contingent relationship between woven ground and earthen ground was threatened. Textile making was no longer

the beautiful flower growing in fertile nationalist soil. Instead, it was found to be dispersed among rocky cliffs, windswept coastlines and barren islands, its roots both ancient and modern, known and unknown, real and imagined.

Conclusion

'I'm a remarkable woman – always was, though none of you seemed to think so.'[1] Thus Morris wrote to George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) on 5 May 1936. Since the 1980s, this striking statement has been a recurring tagline in scholarship on Morris. Jan Marsh used it as one of two epigraphs to *Jane and May Morris: A Biographical Story*; thirty years later, she incorporated the line into the title of her keynote speech at the WMG's 2016 conference on Morris's life and art.[2] The following year, the publisher Thames & Hudson posted a blogpost titled 'May Morris: A Remarkable Woman', as part of their marketing campaign for the catalogue *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer*.[3] More recently, in February 2022, the William Morris Society hosted an online lecture titled 'A Remarkable Woman: The Art of May Morris'.[4] In these latter recalibrations of Morris's 1936 proclamation, 'remarkable' has transformed into an epithet that signals the artist's exceptionalism, and is deployed to call audiences to pay her greater attention. However, the use of this quotation precipitates a foregone conclusion, which assumes that Morris was indeed a remarkable woman who has been ignored by many. While Marsh queries the extent to which Morris was exceptional, she nonetheless asserts the artist's self-assessment to be an accurate description of her own life and reception.[5]

Yet Morris's reflection is more complex than it first appears, and it requires further scrutiny. Her full letter to Shaw reads:

> Dear Shaw
>
> I have again read your 'Morris as I knew him' with the greatest pleasure. It is searching and profound and exceedingly amusing – especially as all the amusing bits are of sound criticism or apt presentment. And this is a rare and happy combination, and worthy of the subject. Will you kindly look at the proof I enclose as there are two inaccuracies you might correct, and perhaps a passage (about H. H. S. might be modified).
>
> Yes, well, of course Im [sic] a remarkable woman – always was, though none of you seemed to think so. The Hammersmith Terrace Romance might as well stay, as people who don't count will view it as an amusing romance in the Shaw manner, and those who count – so few left – will read understandingly. And, as foresaid, the story-mongers will have no slope hereafter.
>
> I am more touched by and grateful for the whole paper on my father than I have perhaps expressed.
>
> Yours

[1] May Morris to George Bernard Shaw, 5 May 1936, The George Bernard Shaw Collection, Box 52.1, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.
[2] Jan Marsh, ''A remarkable woman – though none of you seemed to think so': The overdue re-evaluation of May Morris's career' in Lynn Hulse, ed., *May Morris: Art & Life: New Perspectives* (London: Friends of the William Morris Gallery, 2017), pp. 9-24.
[3] https://thamesandhudson.com/news/may-morris-a-remarkable-woman/ Accessed: 22.06.2023
[4] https://williammorrissociety.org/event/online-lecture-a-remarkable-woman-the-art-of-may-morris/ Accessed: 22.06.2023
[5] Marsh, ''A remarkable woman'', in Hulse, *May Morris: Art & Life*, 2017, p. 22.

May Morris[6]

In this thankful letter, the tone is good-humoured and, even, playful. The wry admission of her exceptionality is a response to Shaw's description of his encountering Morris one day in entrance hall of Kelmscott House in the mid-1880s. This is recounted in in 'Morris as I Knew Him', the preface to volume two of Morris's book *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* (1936):

> One Sunday evening after lecturing and supping, I was on the threshold of the Hammersmith house when I turned to make my farewell, and at this moment she came from the diningroom [sic] into the hall. I looked at her, rejoicing in her lovely dress and lovely self; and she looked at me very carefully and quite deliberately made a gesture of ascent with her eyes. I was immediately conscious that a Mystic Betrothal was registered in heaven, to be fulfilled when all the material obstacles should melt away, and my own position rescued from the squalors of my poverty and unsuccess; for subconsciously I had no doubt of my rank as a man of genius. Less reasonably I had no doubt that she, too, knew her own value, a knowledge that involved a knowledge of everyone else's. I did not think it necessary to say anything. To engage her in any way – to go to [William] Morris and announce that I was taking advantage of the access granted to me as a comrade-Communist to commit his beautiful daughter to a desperately insolvent marriage, did not occur to me as a socially possible proceeding. It did not occur to me even that fidelity to the Mystic Betrothal need interfere with the ordinary course of my relations with other women. I made no sign at all: I had no doubt that the thing was written on the skies for both of us.[7]

In what Marsh has rightly called a 'very conceited preface',[8] Shaw sanctifies this meeting of a young man enchanted by and 'rejoicing' in the loveliness emanating from Morris as a celestial union of a kind that Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1888) paints in *The Blessed Damozel* (1871-78). Shaw also presents himself as a pitiful yet honourable hero: rich in intellect, monetarily poor and duty-bound by political commitments and social propriety. Yet, all through this, he offers an empowered vision of the young Morris: she is wondrously beautiful, commanding, knowing and discerning, a woman who 'knew her own value' and that of everyone else. It is these qualities to which Morris responded in 1936 when she wrote, 'yes, well, of course Im [sic] a remarkable woman – always was'.

The following clause – 'though none of you seemed to think so' – is harder to decipher. In the context of the letter and its stimulus, this tailpiece suggests that the veneration Shaw heaped on Morris in the 1930s was not expressed by him or others fifty years previously, despite what had been obvious to her at the time. It also reminds Shaw the later writer what his recollections in some ways were: romanticised sentiments looking back with the experience and literary control that the passing of time affords matters of the heart.

There is evidence to support Morris's 1936 statement. Aged seventy-five at the time of writing the letter, she had, in recent years, achieved remarkable feats for a septuagenarian: she had

[6] May Morris to George Bernard Shaw, 5 May 1936.
[7] George Bernard Shaw, 'Morris as I knew Him', in May Morris, *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. xxvii-xxviii.
[8] Jan Marsh, *Jane and May Morris: A Biographical Story* (London and New York: Pandora Press, 1986), p. 296.

organised the 1934 William Morris Centenary Exhibition at the V&A and published the two-volume *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*. Moreover, these achievements were realised at the end of a long and productive career through which this artist, writer and lecturer had been in the vanguard of nineteenth-century embroidery reform, a prominent voice and exhibitor in exhibitions and influential consultant to teaching establishments, and became recognised as an authority on the legacies of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Her belief that no one thought her remarkable was not true, however; many of her contemporaries did regard her as exceptional. News of Morris's death in October 1938 deeply shook members of the Women's Guild of Arts. Letters of condolences flooded in, many of them expressing the greatness of the artist's irreplaceable personality and far-reaching influence she had in shaping women's careers. Writing to Mary Annie Sloane (1867-1961) and Kate Whitaker, guild member Marta Bowerley (1880-1945) relayed, 'I feel sad to think I shall not see her again but am glad to have known someone with so much artistic vitality & really genius'.[9] Indeed, in light of the analysis presented in this thesis, it would be appropriate to describe Morris as a person of enormous artistic vitality. Basil Blackwell was in agreement with Bowerley, recalling Morris as a person of 'genius', but also, in his sensitive and multi-faceted portrait, as kind, proud, shy and whip smart.[10] Guild members also saw her as a direct link to Pre-Raphaelitism. Phyllis Gardner (1890-1939) reflected on the difficulty in imagining the Guild without Morris, 'as she was really its main tap-root down to the Pre-Raphaelite tradition.'[11] Morris was regarded as a vital link between radical British artistic developments of the nineteenth century and the new directions that these energised in women's-led art making in the twentieth century.

Yet, while Morris was notable and highly esteemed, she was not unique. Among her networks were other women who forged pathbreaking careers in the Arts and Crafts, such as Grace Christie, Christiana Herringham and Ethel Mairet. And, as this thesis has demonstrated, her work, ideas and practices across the different contexts of artmaking, teaching, criticism and ethnography corresponded and aligned in many ways with those of her contemporaries.

She was also highly privileged among her peers as an independently wealthy and socially liberal woman and the daughter of one of the most famous men of nineteenth-century British culture. This familial cachet lasted well into the twentieth century. When visiting St David's Cathedral, Pembrokeshire, in August 1927, Morris introduced herself to the Dean, William Williams (1848-1930). As she wryly described to Alfred Powys (1881-1936), Williams greeted Morris like a holy figure: 'He fell on my neck, figuratively speaking, "What, the daughter of the great William

[9] Marta Bowerley to Mary Annie Sloane, 24 October 1938, Arthur Halcrow Verstage Collection, William Morris Society, VER/4/4.
[10] Basil Blackwell, 'May Morris', typed manuscript, p. 3, Merton College, Oxford, BLK/3/53.
[11] Phyllis Gardner to Mary Sloane, 18 October 1938, William Morris Society, Arthur Halcrow Verstage Collection, William Morris Society VER/4/4.

Morris"'.[12] Morris's ties to William have become a double-edged sword. They are links of affection, admiration and duty that were profoundly meaningful to her, and which guided many of her endeavours in the twentieth century. But they are also chains that have tethered her life and legacy to his, particularly in late-twentieth and twenty-first century receptions of her significance.

This study presents an original interpretation of the artist's career and work, and, through revised and newly explored contexts, has sought to understand what the making of art meant for Morris. This was a subject in which she was profoundly invested throughout her long and productive career, as evidence by her varied creative practices, commitments to societies, exhibiting organisations and art schools, extensive writings and lectures, and personal investigations into and recording of artistic production. Using a thematic framework concerned with making and materiality, this thesis has interrogated the practical methods of Morris's making processes and the ways in which, through her writings and lectures, she argued for and conceived the different meanings that art making contained and activated. It was about practising methods of creativity that expressed individual agency, responded sensitively to historical precedents and produced work that was ideally suited to the modern age. Where design was concerned, it was about understanding the appropriate manner of design required by a given medium but also creating decoration schemes that were imaginative, playful and enlivened. Relatedly, looking at imaginatively and studying carefully historical examples of design was a means of enlivening forms of artistic production from the past and illuminating their relevance in the present. And, finally, artmaking was about connecting process, material and product to the earthen landscape and the particulars of a given locale's environment; but it was also about unlocking its links to transcendent temporalities and primitive abstracted states that were dislocated from yet nevertheless reliant on the specificities of place, technique and creative cultures.

Close study of her textiles and designs for textiles has provided new interpretation on their material fabrication, compositional strategies and production values. We have seen the ingenuity and inventiveness of stitching in embroidery, the complexities of conventionalisation in textile design, the selection and adaptation of subject matter, the kinds of imaginative spaces her work suggests, and the range of intentions behind a work of art's realisation: collaboration, use, exhibition as well as its connection to materials, the past and the land. Fresh insights have been given to her involvement with museums, learning institutions, exhibiting organisations and historical societies as well as her global entanglements. Our knowledge of her career has been widened, and the scale of her ambition and commitment to women artists has been presented anew. The different contexts in which Morris and her work have been explored revise those charted within existing scholarship and provide new ones to the field. Thus, this thesis has re-positioned her relationship with Art Needlework; revealed some of the keystones of her intellectual world, such as Ruskin, Fischbachs, Semper and Frazer; located her

[12] May Morris to Alfred Powys, 6 August 1927, Society for the Protection of Ancient Building Archive, St David's Cathedral, Pembrokeshire, SPAB-CWK-1-596.

thought within a theoretical climate concerned with the historical development of art; demonstrated how her interests and making practices aligned with the hand-weaving revival; and revealed how she partook in and contributed to an ethnographical culture that sought to capture rural artmaking in the twentieth century. In articulating these positions and relationships, this research has expanded existing knowledge of Morris's work, practices, networks and interlocutors, reframing her reception in the twenty-first century.

It is hoped that this thesis will instigate further research into Morris's career and work. Her photographic collection, discussed in chapter one, requires further study. At present, it is not known how and from whom Morris acquired her reproductions. Research into her image library collection would complement recent scholarship on the roles of photographs in the history of V&A.[13]

While Morris's primary forms of artistic output were in textile media, she also practised jewellery-making, lectured on jewellery and described herself in 1907 as an 'Embroiderer and Jeweller'.[14] Examples of Morris's jewellery are held today in the V&A, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections and the National Museum Wales. These vary in type and materials, but provisional analysis indicates that Morris used repeatedly similar motifs and construction components across several pieces and was selective in her choice of gems and precious stones. More research is needed to understand how the artist made her jewellery as well as the materials she used and from where she sourced them. Morris's correspondence with Colbran Wainwright (1867-1949), held in the collection of the Royal Entomological Society, in which materials for jewellery-making are discussed, is a useful starting point. Another is the collection of historical jewellery owned by the Morris family, some of which survives in the V&A. Relatedly, the presence of jewels within Morris's writings deserves attention. Time and again in her letters, diaries and publications, she draws on jewel metaphors to describe colours and their arrangements within textiles, architectural decoration and land- and seascapes. What was the significance of these metaphors in her interpretation of the artworks, settings and geographies she encountered?

Another possible topic of research that traverses different objects and locations are the linked themes of theatre and pageants. Scholarship on this topic has been launched by Jemima Wilson.[15] Morris performed in plays staged by the Socialist League in the 1880s and 1890s; authored two published one-act plays – *Lady Griselda's Dream* (1898) and *White Lies* (1903); and ran and directed the amateur dramatic group, The Kelmscott Revellers, for whom she made costumes. It is not known if any examples of these costumes survive. Alongside these activities, Morris sustained a life-long scholarly interest in historical pageants. She delivered lectures on pageants at the Arts and Crafts

[13] Elizabeth Edwards and Ella Ravilious, eds, *What Photographs Do: The Making and Remaking of Museum Cultures* (London: UCL Press, 2022).
[14] Women's Guild of Arts Committee Minutes, William Morris Society, Women's Guild of Arts Collection, WGA/1/3.
[15] Jemima Wilson, *Rediscovering May Morris: A Contemporary Analysis of her Art and Ideals* (BA Dissertation, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London, 2014).

Exhibition Society and the Women's Art Guild in London and during her lecture tour in the United States of America; as noted in chapter one, the Art Worker's Guild contains a box of Morris's lecture slides labelled 'Pageants'. Morris was particularly interested in the role of costume within pageants, and a critical study of her engagement with these types of garments would expand current understanding of her knowledge of historical textiles. Furthermore, analysis of Morris's relationships with theatre and pageants would also extend the arguments around imagination and enlivenment put forward in chapter three of this thesis.

As that chapter demonstrated, the garden at Kelmscott Manor was an important site of transformation and fantasy. This garden was tended to and beloved by Morris and her partner, Mary Lobb, and it should additionally be understood as a site of queer collaboration and intimacy. However, with the exception of Alice Dodd's De Morgan Foundation lecture (June 2023), this had not yet been explored.[16] A pressing need for scholarship on Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement more broadly is a queer study of Morris and Lobb's relationship, which is often pejoratively framed as one of companionship. What roles did queer relations and identity play in the women's labour, love and legacy-building at Kelmscott Manor? How might such investigations expand our conception of the Manor as something additional to (or co-existent with) the curated museum to which devotees of William made pilgrimage? Moreover, how might Morris and Lobb fit into a queer history of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and what might this look like?

Other avenues of research might seek to examine Morris's entanglements with geographies beyond Kelmscott and Europe, such as Iceland, Italy and Morocco, and situate these within a larger project that seeks to uncover the many global dimensions of the Arts and Crafts Movement. This would complement research currently being undertaken by scholars such as Charlotte Ashby, Sara Choudhrey, Lotte Crawford, Adhitya Dhanapal, Hannah Mills, Marie Lo on the histories and legacies of the Arts and Crafts in relation to China, Iran, India, Egypt and the United States of America. Such a project would provide a vital and urgent re-framing of the histories of the Movement, and help place Morris within expanded contexts through which she could be understood alongside her contemporaries and their international activities and global interests.

Investigation into these areas of research would contribute to the expanding scholarship on Morris multiple ways: bringing critical attention to the artist's artwork and making practices; exploring further her intellectual concerns; articulating new narratives that speak to queer identities and politics within the Arts and Crafts; and contribute to the geographical broadening of the field.

[16] Alice Dodds, '"We Are Two Women": Queer Ecology and Lesbian Land Erotics in the Arts and Crafts Movement', De Morgan Foundation online lecture, 09.06.2023.

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Fig. 4.8: Morris's spinning wheel, private collection. Image: Author's own.

Fig. 4.9: Ethel Mairet, *A Book on Vegetable Dyes* (London: Douglas Pepler, 1916), University of California, Archive.org.

Fig. 4.10: Unknown photographer, Margery Kendon carding and Ethel Mairet spinning in Askov, Denmark, June 1933, approx. 15 x 10 cm, Crafts Study Centre, Box 35 Env. 4a. Image: Author's own.

Fig. 4.11: May Morris, camping site at Mwnt, Ceredigion, 1919, watercolour, approx. 20 x 30 cm, Private Collection. Image: Author's own.

Fig. 4.12: May Morris, *Tal-y-llyn* lake, watercolour, 17.2 x 25.9 cm, National Library of Wales, BOCS B157. Image: Author's own.

Fig. 4.13: Unknown maker, Welsh corn dolly, 45 x 15 x 11 cm, Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales, F79.132.2. Image: By kind permission of Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales.

Fig. 4.14: Unknown photographer, photograph of Mary Ethel Muir Donaldson standing outside *Sanna Bheag*, Ardnamurchan, Argyll, 1920s-1930s, dimensions unknown, Inverness Museum and Art Gallery. Image: Am Baile: Highland History & Culture.

Fig. 4.15: Plate 3a from Margaret Fay Shaw's *Folksongs and Folklore from South Uist* (London: Routledge and Paul Kegan, 1955), British Library. Image: Author's own.

Fig. 4.16: Front cover of Father John Macmillan of Barra's, *Gaelic Folk Songs of the Isles of the West, Volume 1: Six Songs Traditional and Original*, Translation & Stories by Patrick McGlynn, Music Arranged by F. W. Lewis (London and New York: Boosey & Co., 1930), British Library. Image: Author's own.

Fig. 4.17: Wools dyed with thistle, foxglove, dandelion and fern in the Highland Folk Museum, KIGHF.G.003, .006, .026 and .030. Image: Highland Folk Museum.

Fig. 4.18: Violent Banks, view of women dyeing wool, 1920-1930, photograph, dimensions unknown, Violet Banks Collection, SC 1115005. Image: Canmore, National Record of the Historic Environment.

Fig. 4.19: 'A *Cailleach* Spinning', frontispiece to *Wandering in the Western Highlands and Islands: Recounting Highland Clan History, Traditions, Ecclesiology, Archaeology, Romance, Literature, Humour, Folk-Lore, &c.* (Paisley: Alexander Gardiner, 1927), British Library. Image: Author's own.

Fig. 4.20: 'Carding', *The Highland Exhibition Inverness, 4th August to 20th September 1930*, British Library. Image: Author's own.

Fig. 4.21: May Morris, embroidered quilt, *c*. 1930, ivory silk on cotton (lined with silk), 203.2 x 106.7 cm, William Morris Gallery, F202. Image: *May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer*, p. 150.

Figures

Fig. 0.1:



Fig. 1.1:



Fig. 1.2:

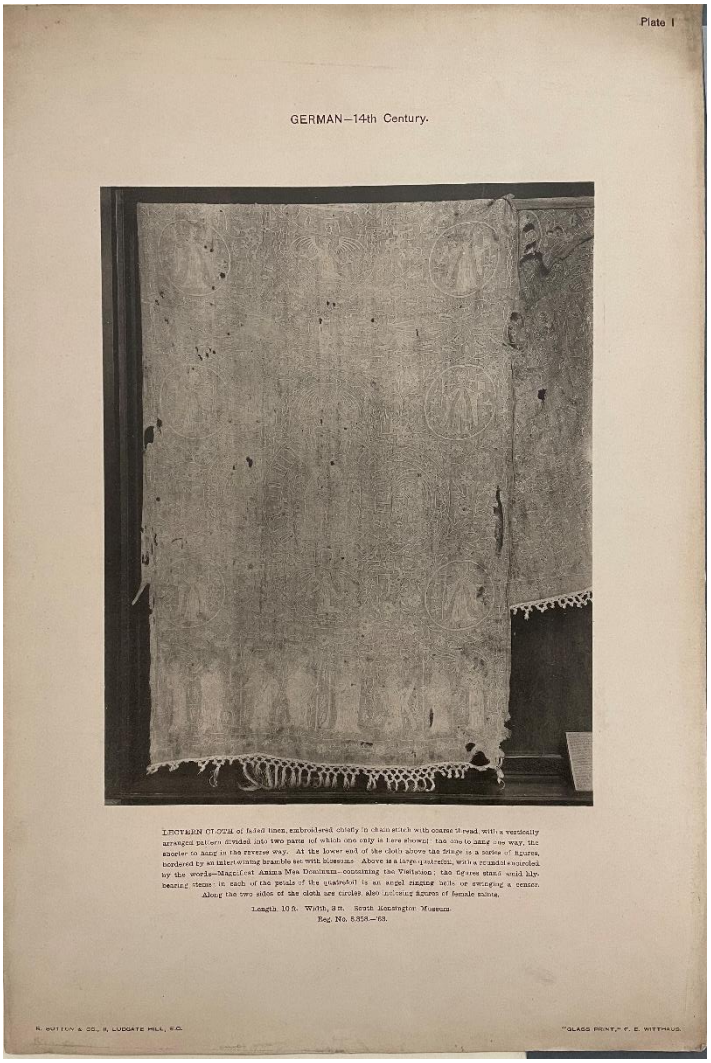


Plate I

GERMAN—14th Century.

LINEN CLOTH of faded tints, embroidered chiefly in chain stitch with coarse thread, with a vertically arranged pattern divided into two parts of which one only is here shown: the one to hang one way, the smaller to hang in the reverse way. At the lower end of the cloth above the fringe is a series of figures, bordered by an interwining bramble set with blossoms. Above is a large quatrefoil, with a roundel enclosed by the words—Magnificat Anima Mea Dominum—containing the Visitation; the figures stand amid lily-bearing stems: in each of the petals of the quatrefoil is an angel ringing bells or swinging a censer. Along the two sides of the cloth are circles also enclosing figures of female saints.

Length 10 ft. Width, 3 ft. South Kensington Museum.
Reg. No. 8.358.—63.

Fig. 1.3:


Medieval Embroidery

Fig. 1.4:


BRITISH · DESIGN
AND · HANDICRAFT
APPLIED · ART
BRITISH
244
BRITISH ART SECTION—Arts and Crafts

Fig. 1.5:



CUSHION BY MAY MORRIS

Fig. 1.6:



Fig. 1.7:



Fig. 1.8:



Fig. 1.9:


Sunday Herald May 12. 1918
Saturday May 11th 1918
Miss May Morris, of the Women's Guild of Arts, with silk needlework done by wounded soldiers and shown at Knightsbridge yesterday.

Fig. 1.10:

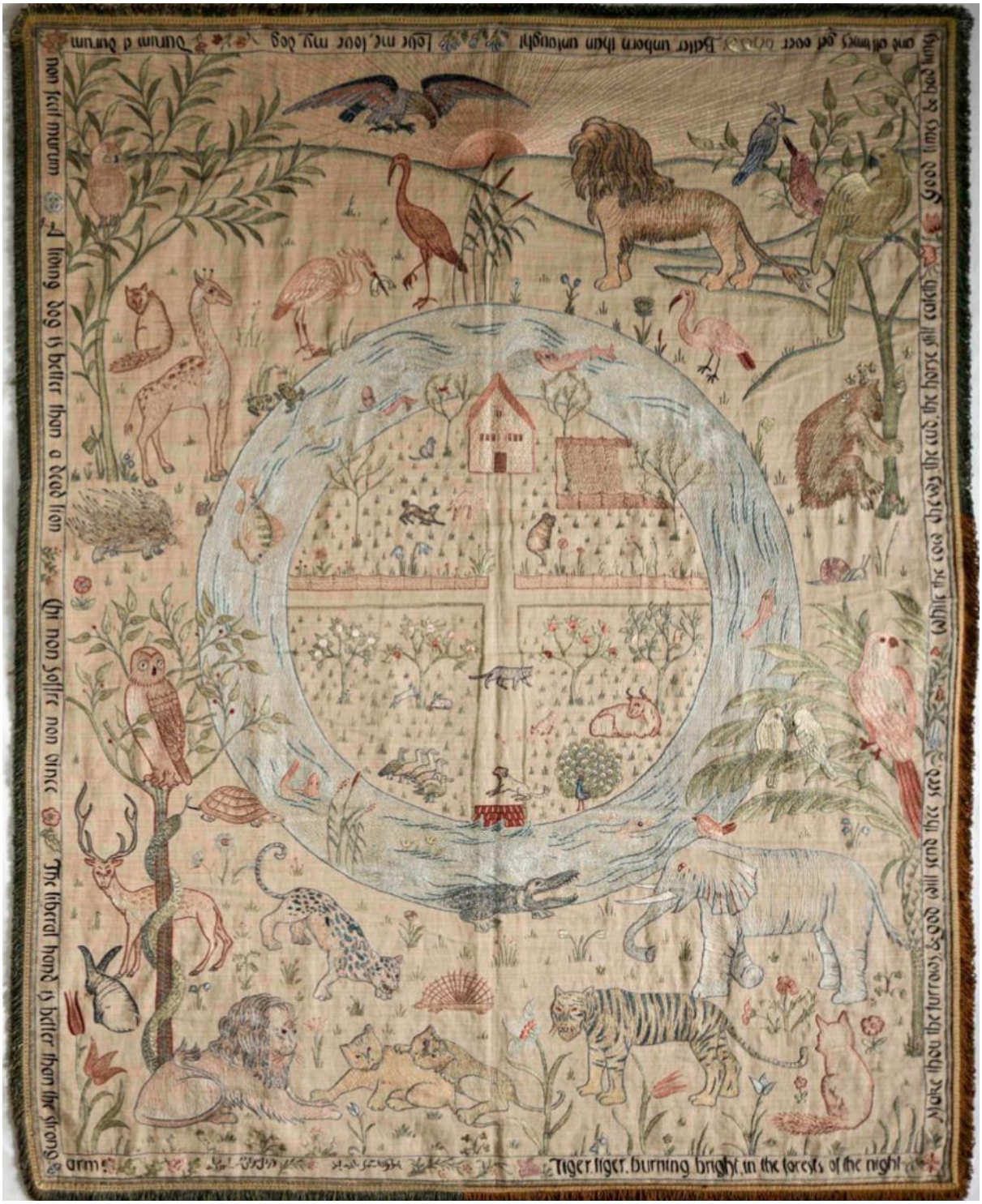

Tiger, tiger, burning bright, in the forests of the night
While the cows chew the cud, the horse will talk
Good times & bad times
A living dog is better than a dead lion
Chi non soffre non vince
The liberal hand is better than the strong arm

Fig. 2.1:



Fig. 2.2:



Fig. 2.3:



Fig. 2.4:



Fig. 2.5:

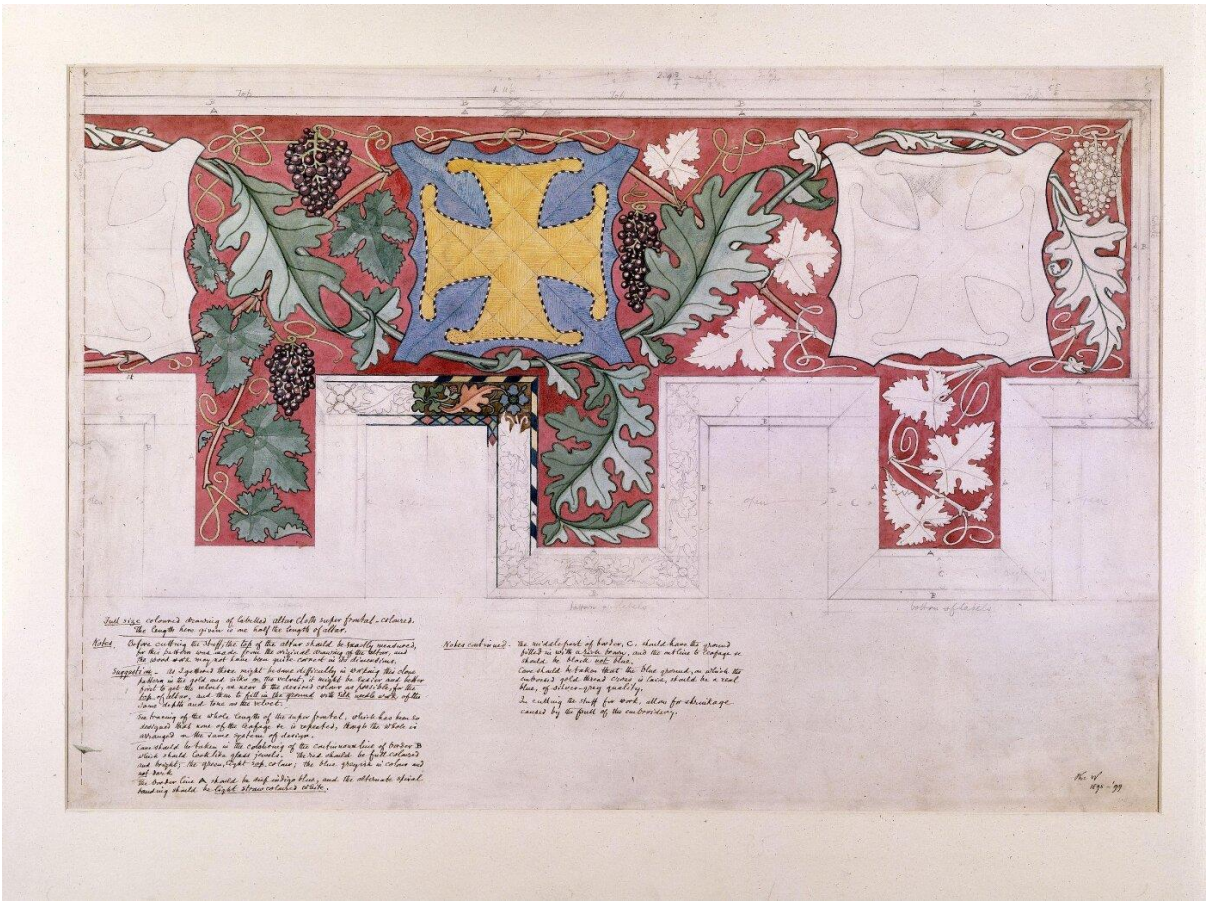


Fig. 2.6:



Fig. 2.7:



Fig. 2.8:



Fig. 2.9:



Fig. 2.10:



Fig. 2.11:



Fig. 2.12:



Fig. 2.13:



Fig. 2.14:



Fig. 2.15:



Fig. 2.16:



Fig. 2.17:

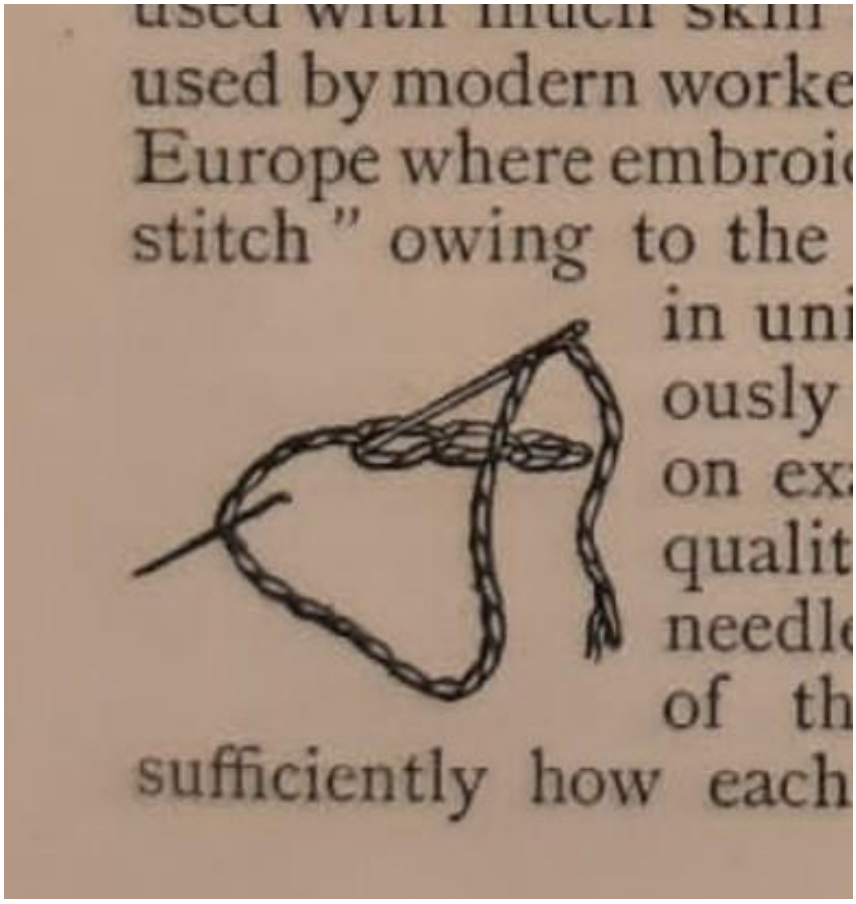

used by modern worke
Europe where embroi
stitch" owing to the
in uni
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on ex
qualit
needl
of th
sufficiently how each

Fig. 2.18:

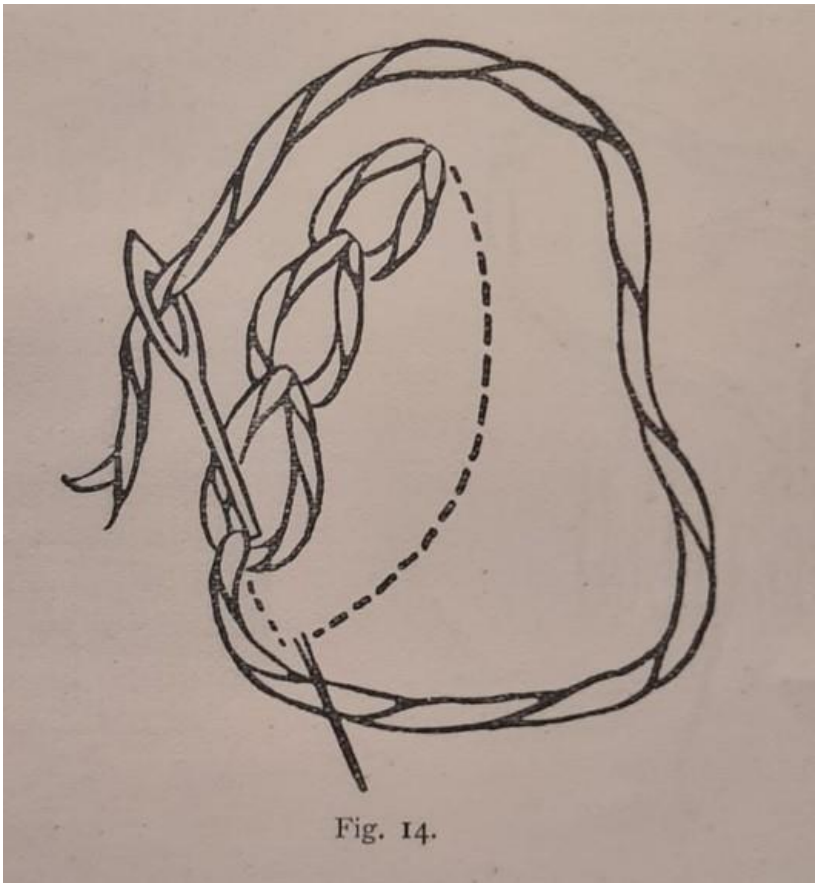

Fig. 14.

Fig. 2.19:

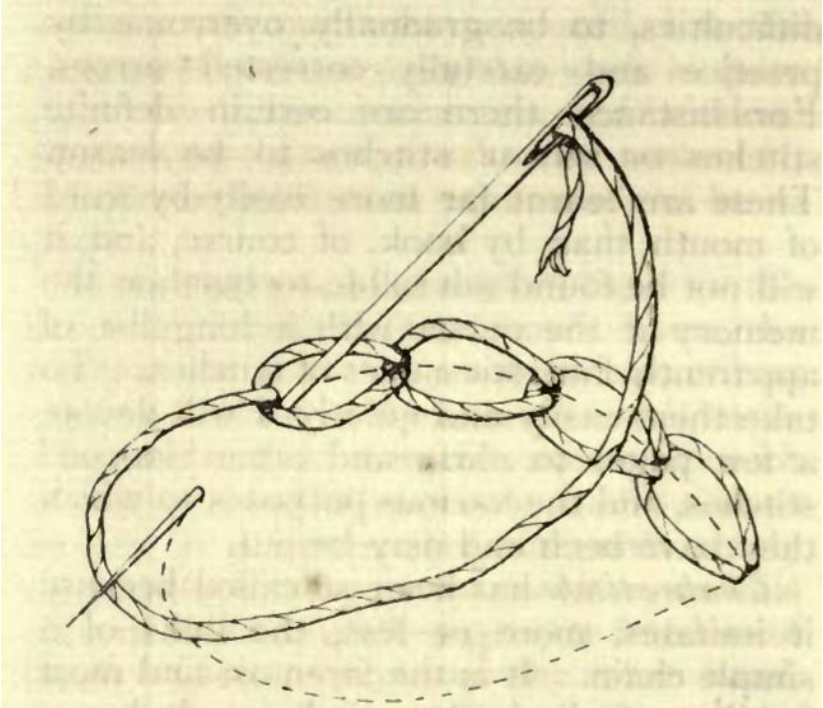
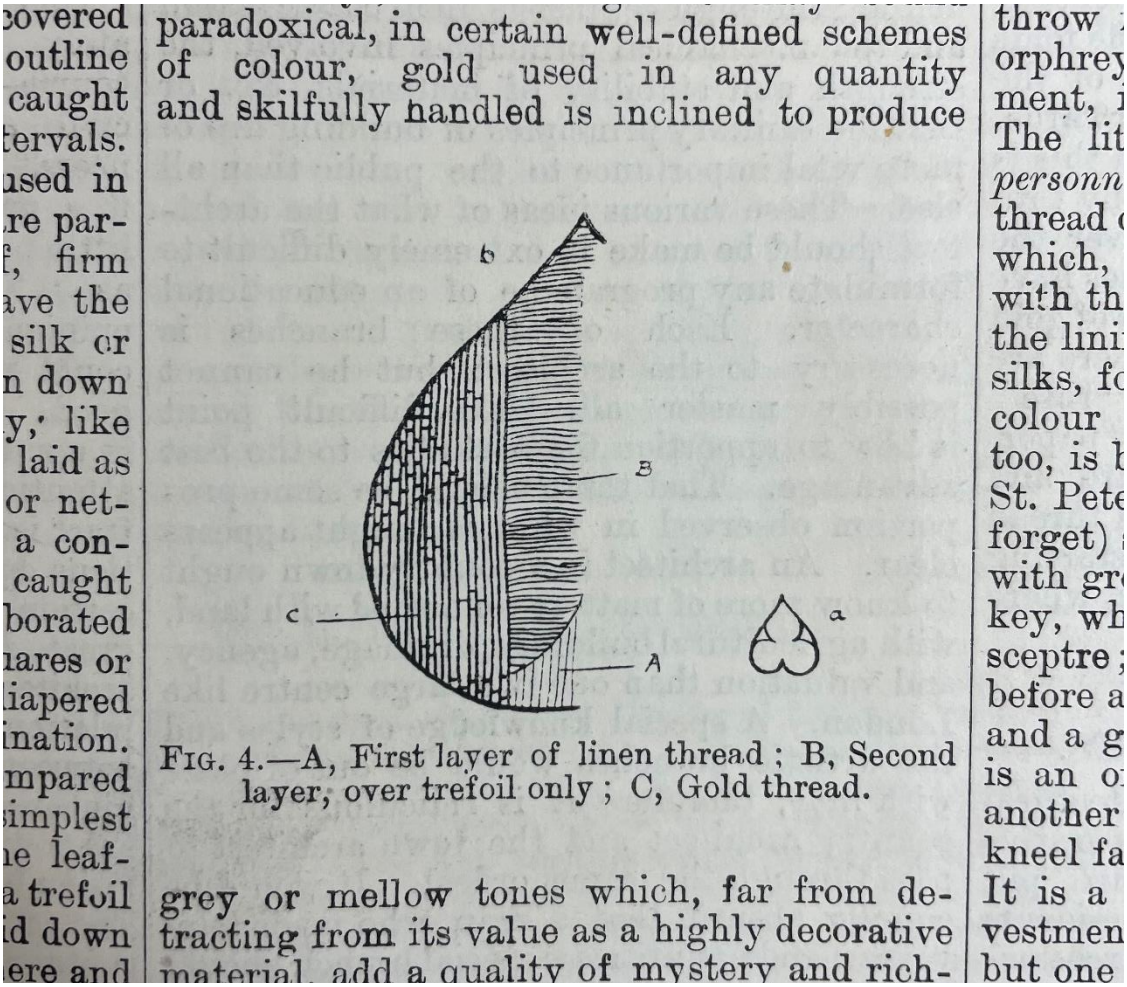


Fig. 1.—Chain Stitch.

Fig. 2.20:



paradoxical, in certain well-defined schemes of colour, gold used in any quantity and skilfully handled is inclined to produce

Fig. 4.—A, First layer of linen thread ; B, Second layer, over trefoil only ; C, Gold thread.

grey or mellow tones which, far from detracting from its value as a highly decorative material, add a quality of mystery and rich-

Fig. 2.21:

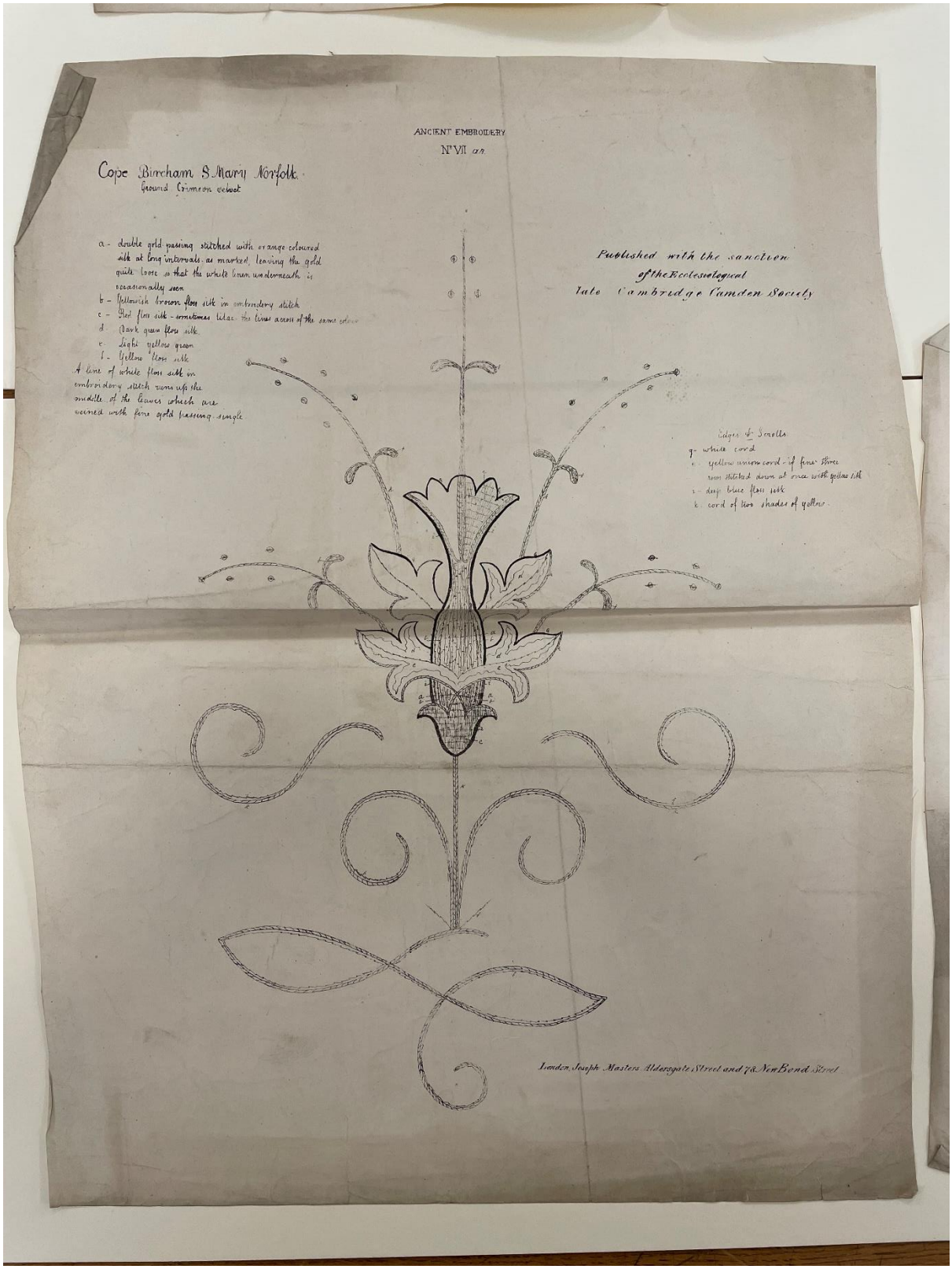
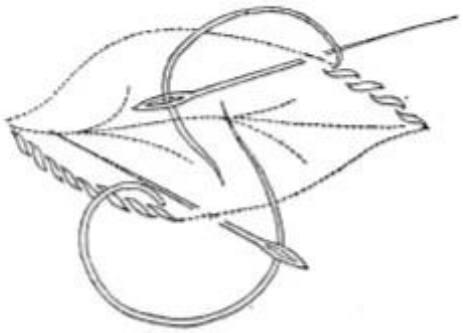

ANCIENT EMBROIDERY
N°VII a.n
Cope Bircham S. Mary Norfolk
Ground Crimson velvet
a - double gold passing stitched with orange coloured silk at long intervals as marked, leaving the gold quite loose so that the white linen underneath is occasionally seen
b - Yellowish brown floss silk in embroidery stitch
c - Red floss silk - ornaments lilac - the lines across of the same colour
d - Dark green floss silk
e - Light yellow green
f - Yellow floss silk
A line of white floss silk in embroidery stitch runs up the middle of the flowers which are veined with fine gold passing single
Published with the sanction of the Ecclesiological late Cambridge Camden Society
Edges of Scrolls
g- white cord
h - yellow linen cord - if four three rows stitched down at once with yellow silk
i - deep blue floss silk
k cord of two shades of yellow
London Joseph Masters Aldersgate Street and 78 New Bond Street

Fig. 2.22:

The reason of this will be easily understood: we will suppose the leaf to have a slightly serrated edge (and



Illustration, No. 2.

there is no leaf in nature with an absolutely smooth one). It will be found that in order to give this ragged appearance, it is necessary to have the points at which the insertions of the needle occur on the outside of the leaf: whereas if the stem stitch were continued down the left side, exactly in the same manner as in ascending the right, we should have the ugly anomaly of a leaf outlined thus :—



Illustration, No. 3.

If the leaf is to be worked "solidly," another row of stem stitching must be taken up the centre of it (unless it be a very narrow leaf), to the top. The two halves of the leaf must then be filled in, separately, with close even rows of stem stitch, worked in the ordinary way,

Fig. 2.23:

covers, mantel valances, blankets, &c., or for edging any other material. It is simply a button-hole stitch, and may be varied in many ways by sloping the stitches alternately to right and left; by working two or three together, and leaving a space between them and the next set; or by working a second row round the edge of the cloth over the first with a different shade of wool.

Knotted Stitch, or *French Knot*, is used for the centres of such flowers as the daisy or wild rose, and sometimes for the anthers of others. The needle is brought up at



Illustration, No. 6.—KNOTTED STITCH, or FRENCH KNOT.

the exact spot where the knot is to be: the thread is held in the left hand, and twisted once or twice round the needle, the point of which is then passed through the

Fig. 2.24:



Fig. 3.1:



Fig. 3.2:



Fig. 3.3:



Fig. 3.4:



Fig. 3.5:

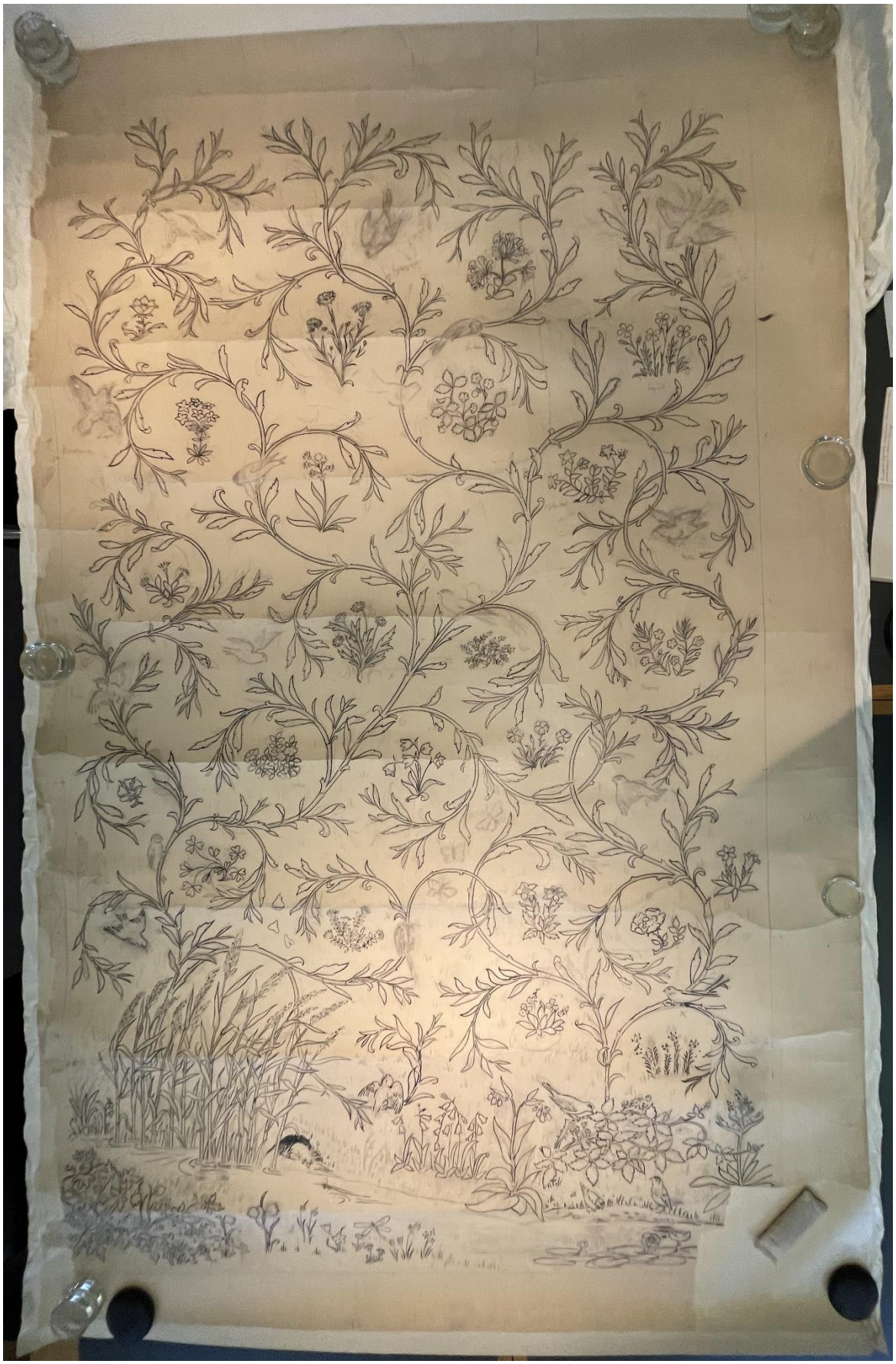


Fig. 3.6:



Fig. 3.7:

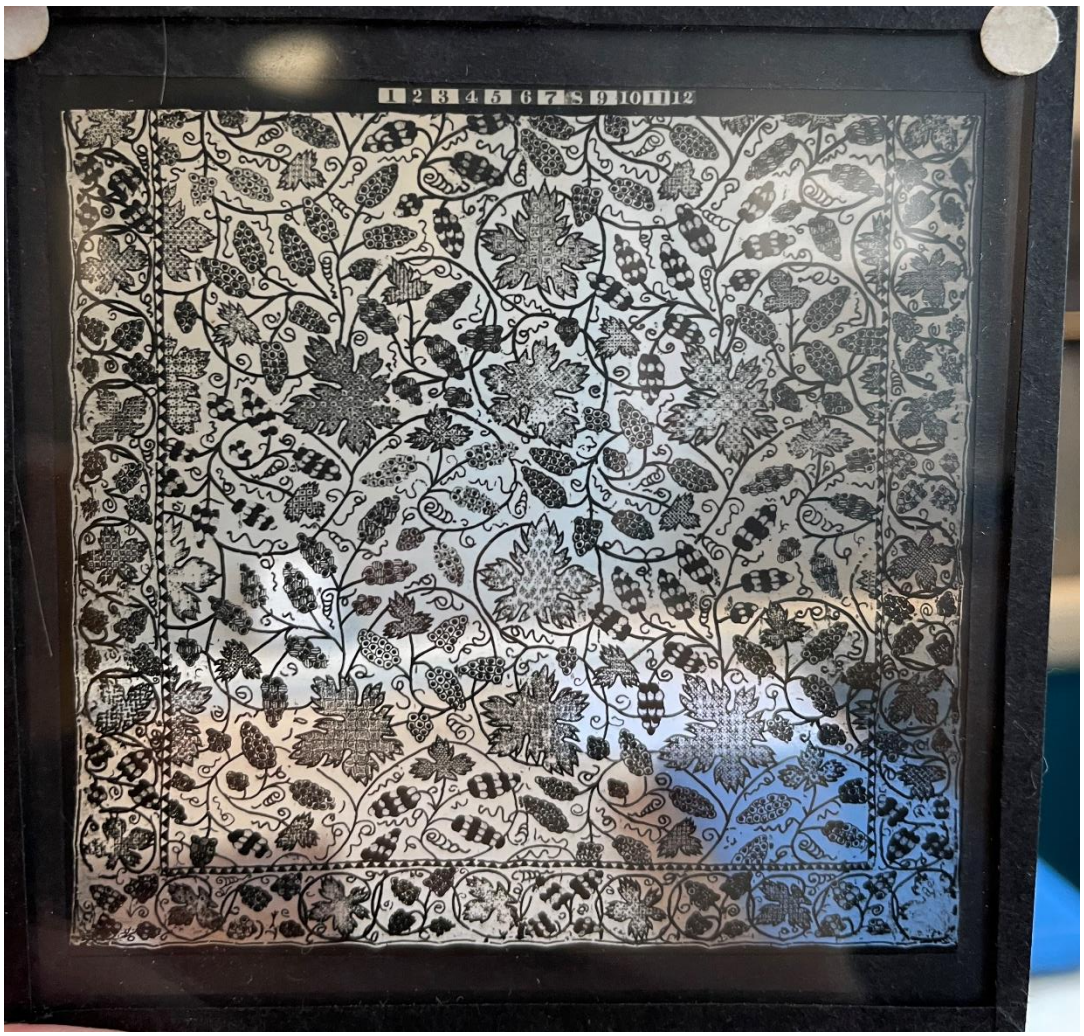


Fig. 3.8:



Fig. 3.9;:



Fig. 3.10:


welcome: maids: of: oxon: to: one: and: all
in: the: spring: time: we: get: gay: weather

Fig. 3.11:



Fig. 3.12:



Fig. 3.13:

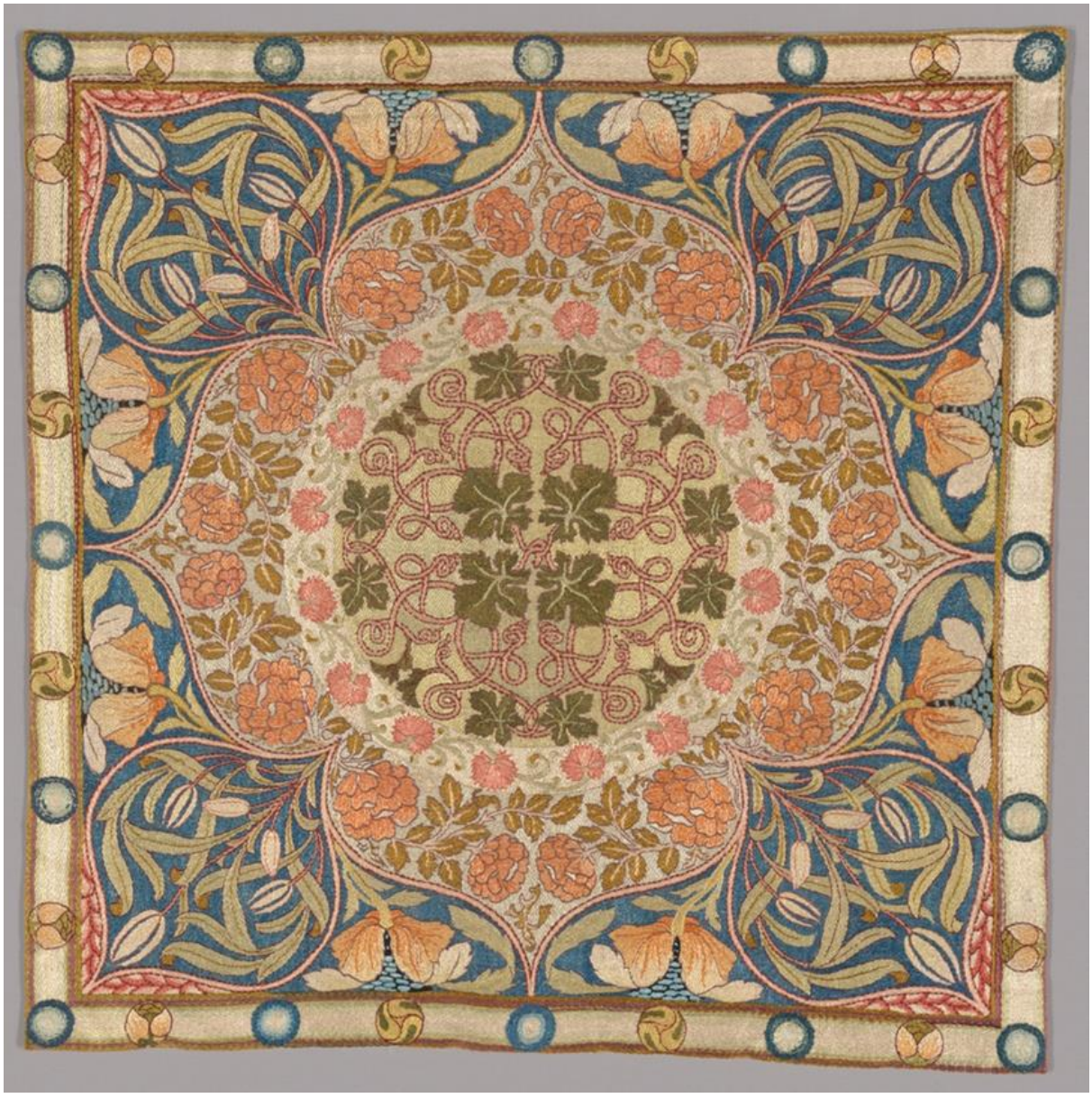


Fig. 3.14:



Fig. 3.15:


maria
pes unica
stabat in
mre dola
rosa iue
ihu xpe
Oceane aue
maria
ursula
barba
katherina

Fig. 3.16:



Fig. 3.17:

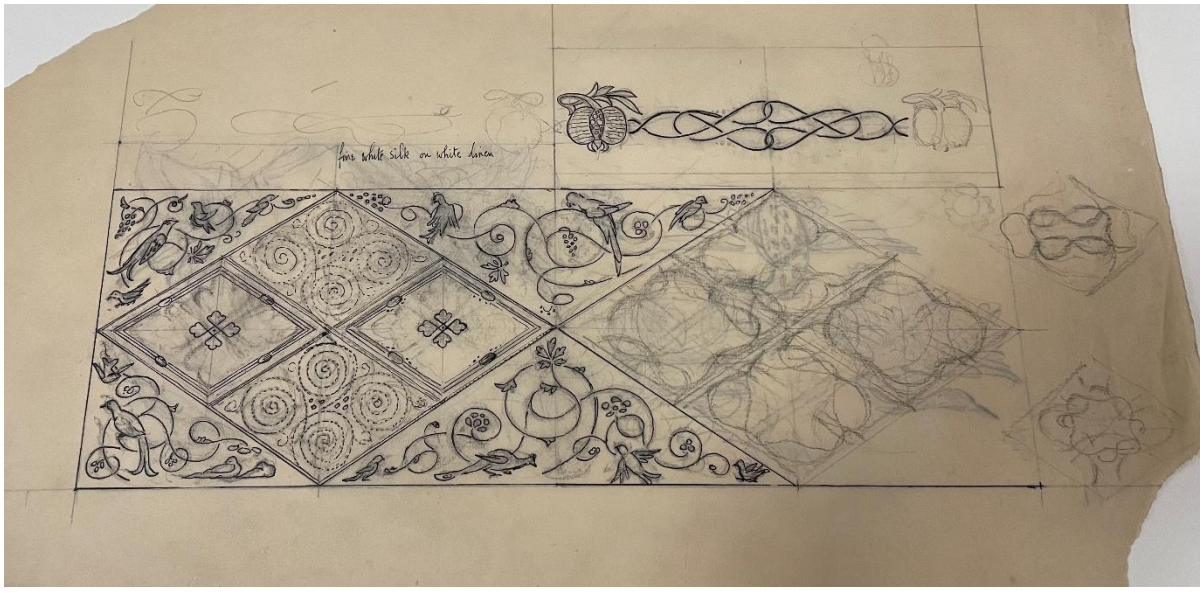


Fig. 3.18:



Fig. 3.19:



Fig. 3.20:



Fig. 3.21:



Fig. 3.22:

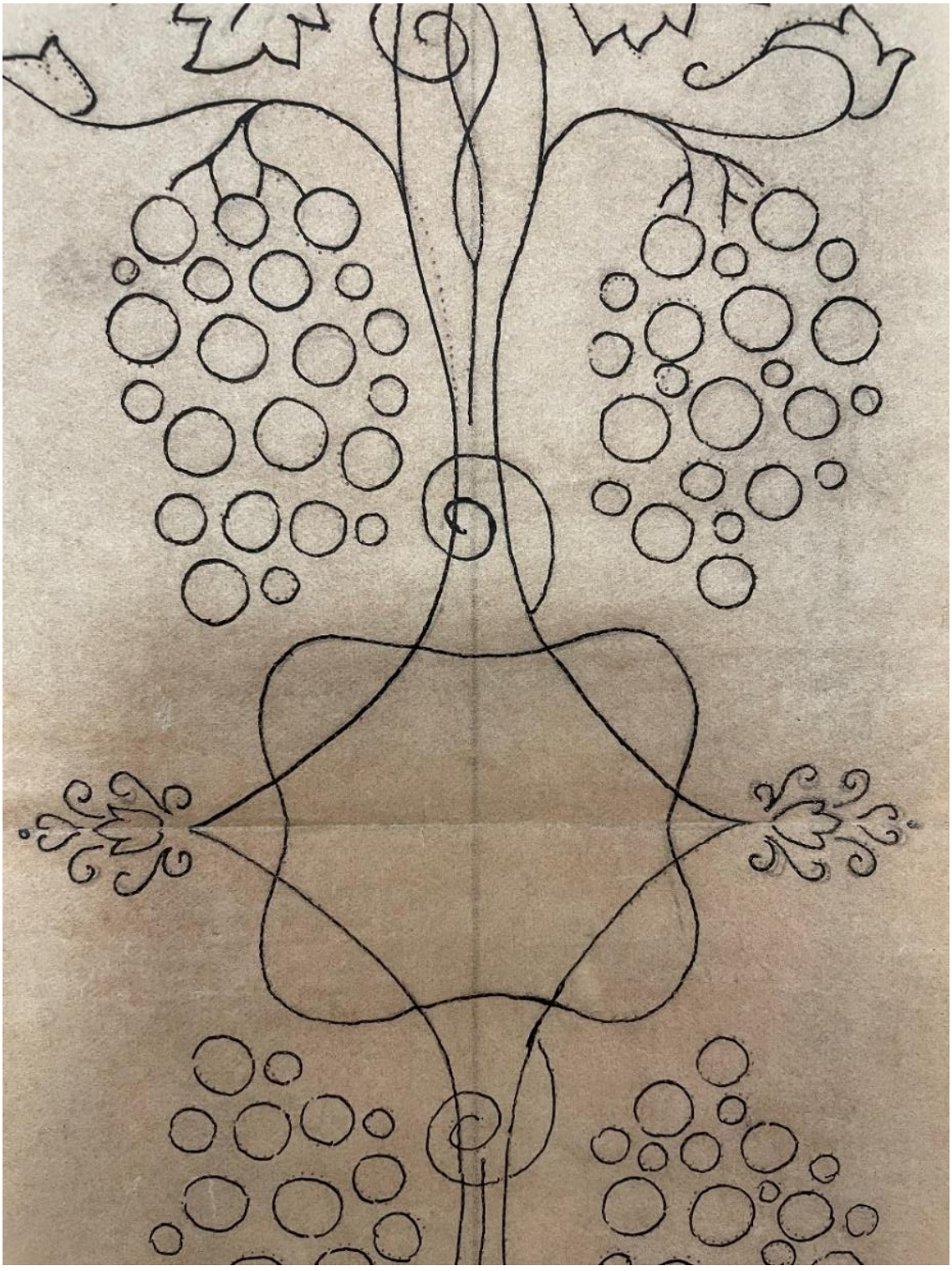


Fig. 3.23:



Fig. 3.24:



Fig. 3.25:

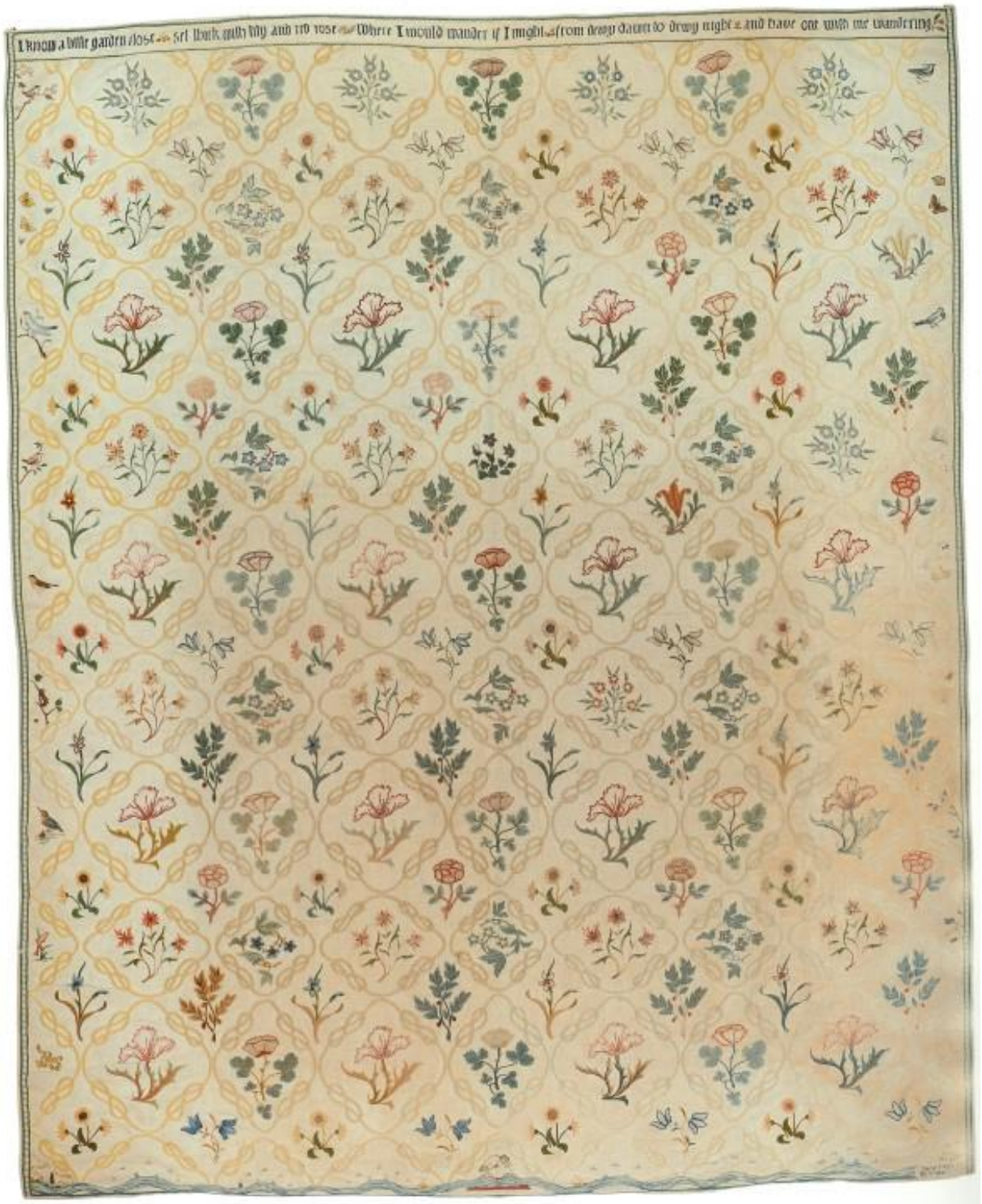
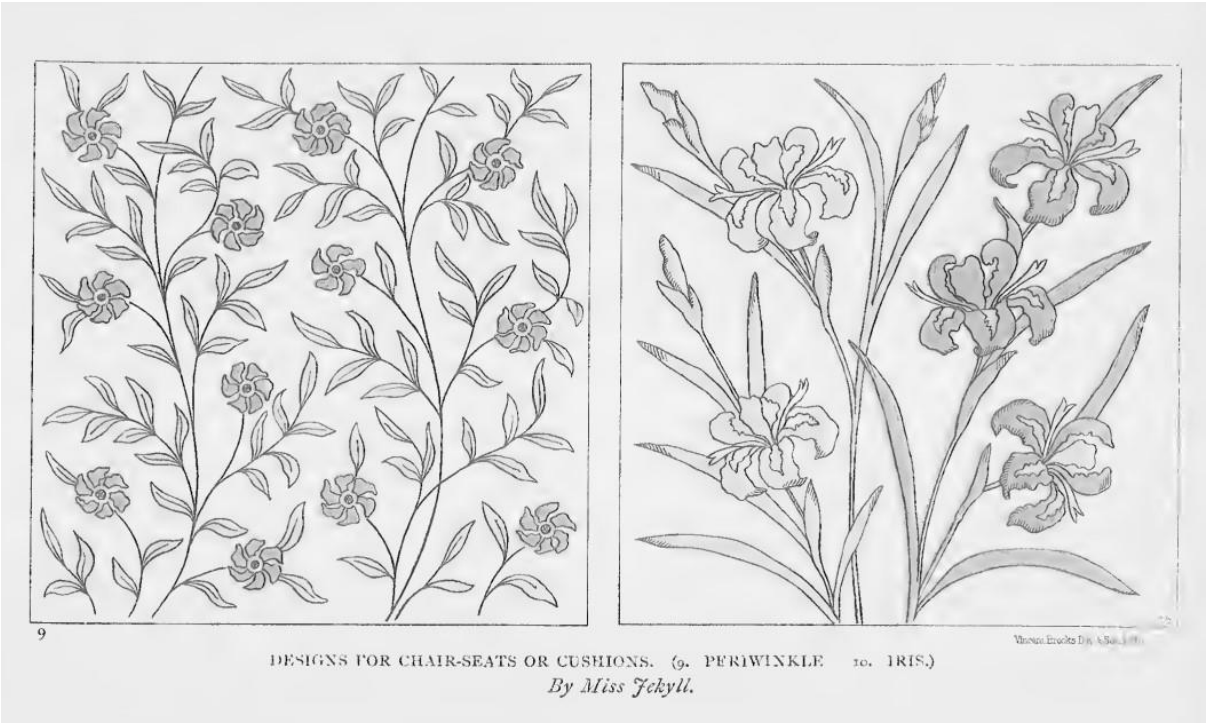

I know a little garden close... set thick with lily and the rose... Where I would wander if I might... from dewy dawn to dewy night... and have one with me wandering.

Fig. 3.26:


portiere
7'8"
silk 8' wide
to Long
Table
Cover
Scale 1" = 1 ft
2½ wide
inside 4'6

Fig. 3.27:



9

DESIGNS FOR CHAIR-SEATS OR CUSHIONS. (9. PERIWINKLE 10. IRIS.)
By Miss Jekyll.

Fig. 3.28:



CARD-CASE BY MAY MORRIS

221

Fig. 3.29:



Fig. 3.30:



Fig. 3.31:

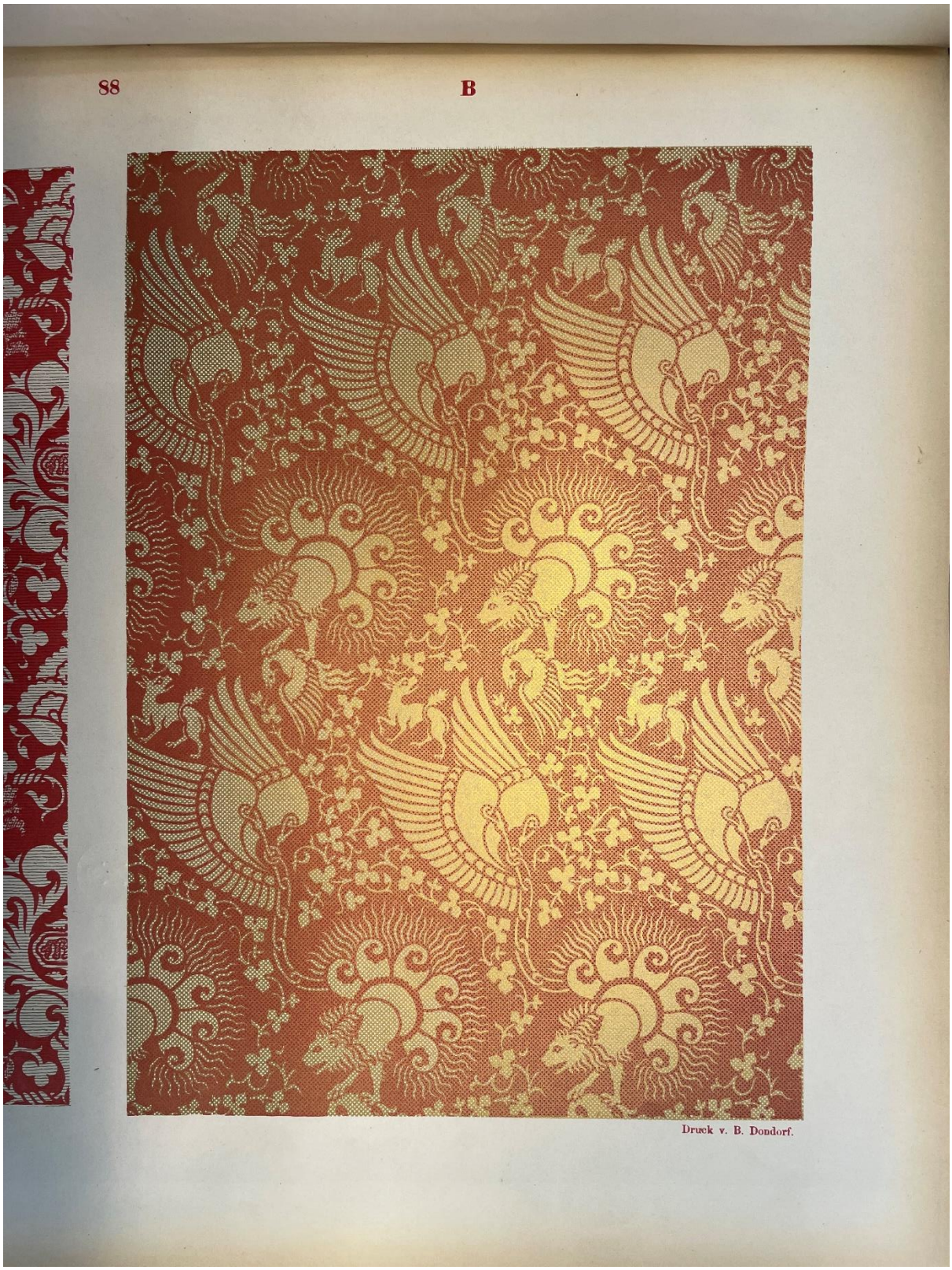


Fig. 3.32:

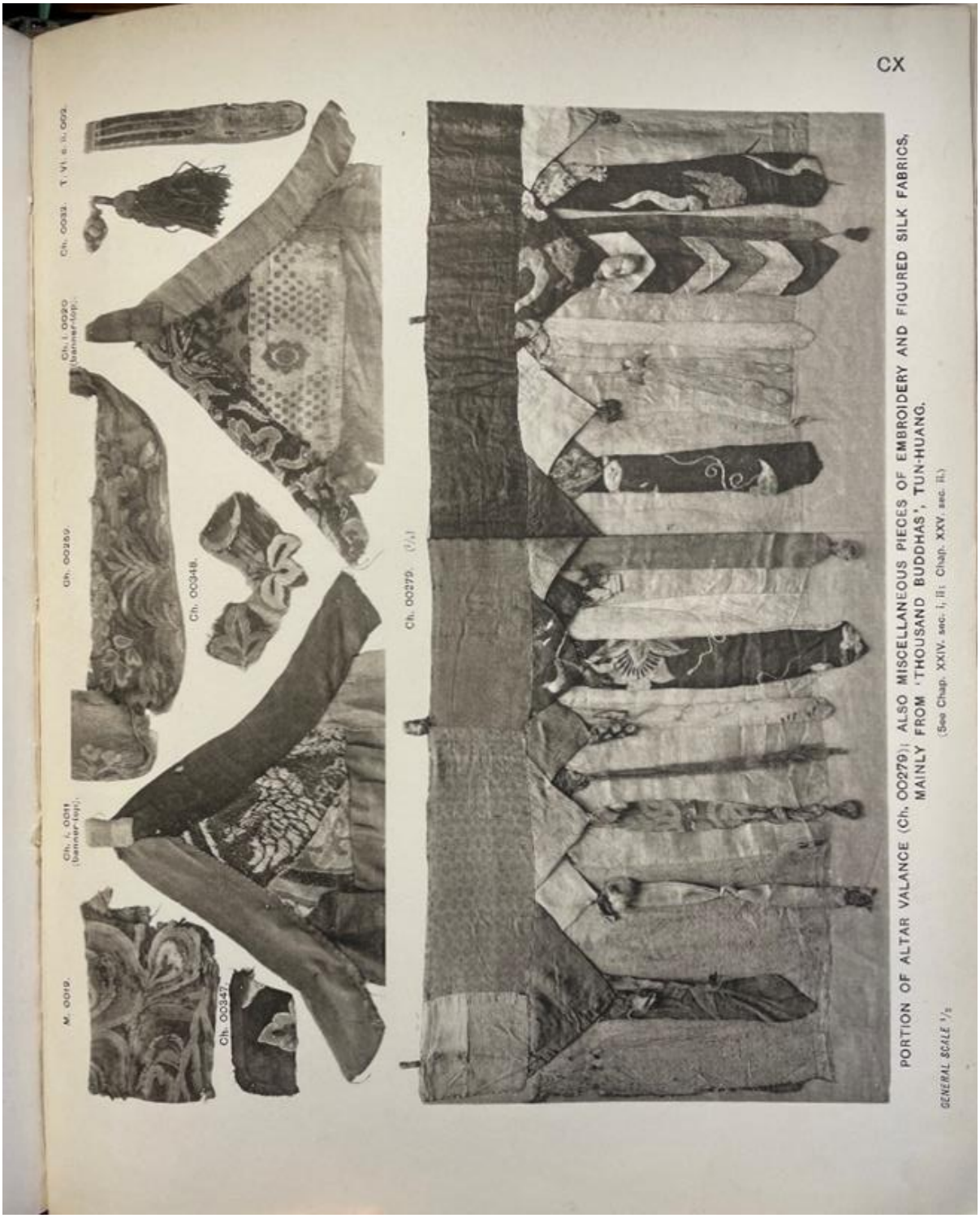

CX
M. 0019.
Ch. i. 0031 (banner-top).
Ch. 00348.
Ch. 00347.
Ch. 00259.
Ch. 00279. (1/4)
Ch. i. 0020 (banner-top).
Ch. 0033. T. VI. a. ii. 002.
PORTION OF ALTAR VALANCE (Ch. 00279); ALSO MISCELLANEOUS PIECES OF EMBROIDERY AND FIGURED SILK FABRICS, MAINLY FROM 'THOUSAND BUDDHAS', TUN-HUANG.
(See Chap. XXIV. sec. i; ii; Chap. XXV. sec. ii.)
GENERAL SCALE 1/2

Fig. 3.33:

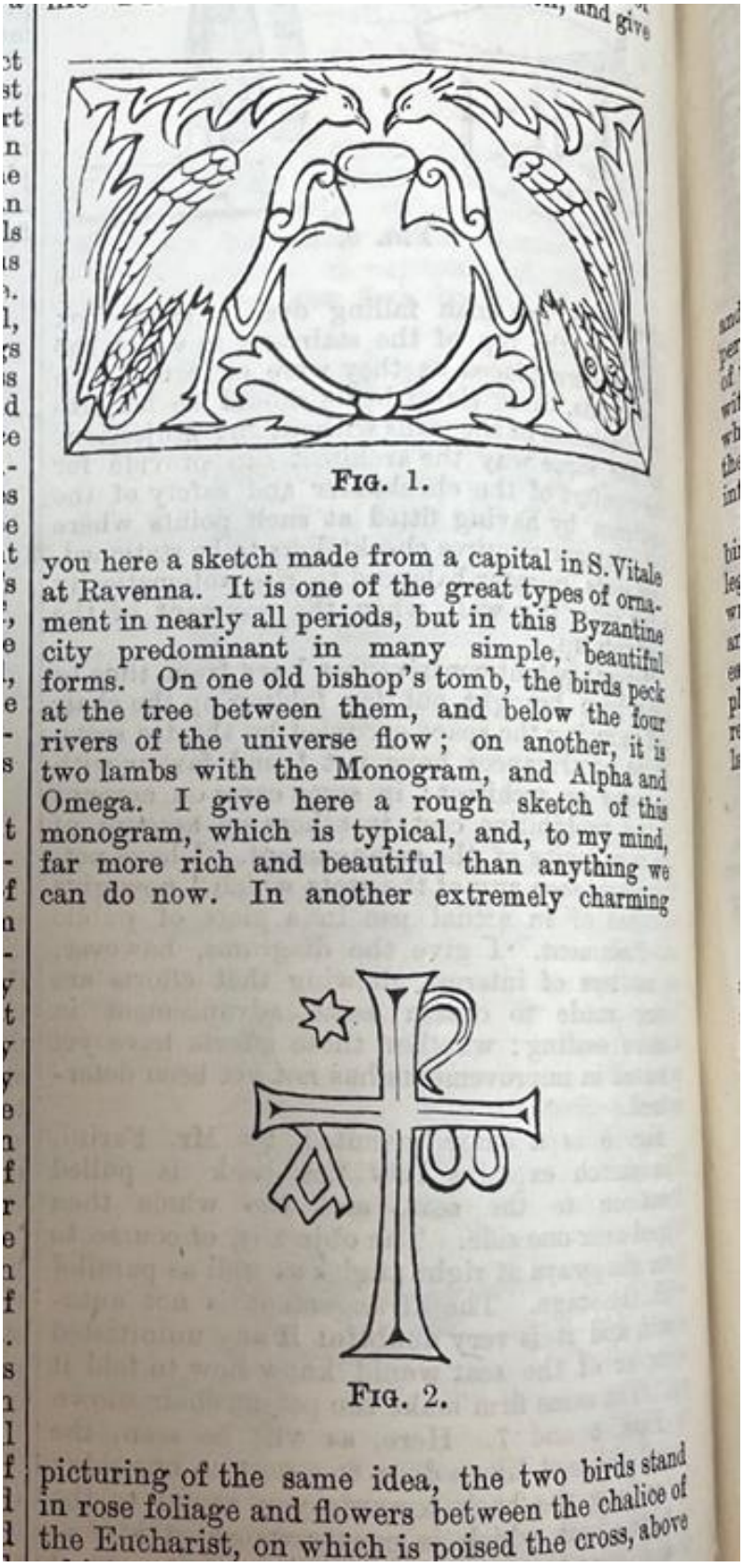


FIG. 1.

you here a sketch made from a capital in S. Vitale at Ravenna. It is one of the great types of ornament in nearly all periods, but in this Byzantine city predominant in many simple, beautiful forms. On one old bishop's tomb, the birds peck at the tree between them, and below the four rivers of the universe flow; on another, it is two lambs with the Monogram, and Alpha and Omega. I give here a rough sketch of this monogram, which is typical, and, to my mind, far more rich and beautiful than anything we can do now. In another extremely charming

FIG. 2.

picturing of the same idea, the two birds stand in rose foliage and flowers between the chalice of the Eucharist, on which is poised the cross, above

Fig. 4.1:



Fig. 4.2:


See we have left
our hopes and fears
behind to give our
very hearts up unto
thee What better
place than this then
could we find by
this sweet stream
that knows not of
the sea that guesses
not the cities misery
This little stream
whose hamlets scarce
have names This
far off lonely mother
of the Thames

Fig. 4.3:



Fig. 4.4:

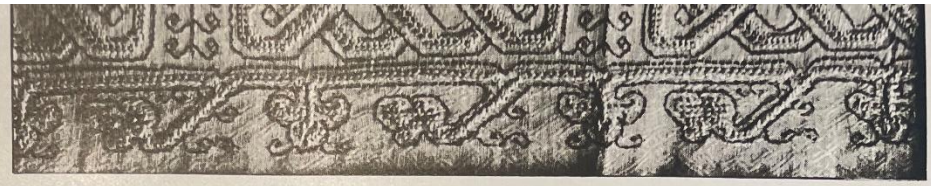


FIG. 5.—PORTION OF DESIGN FOR A BORDER. By L. F. Day.
Worked by Mary Buckle.

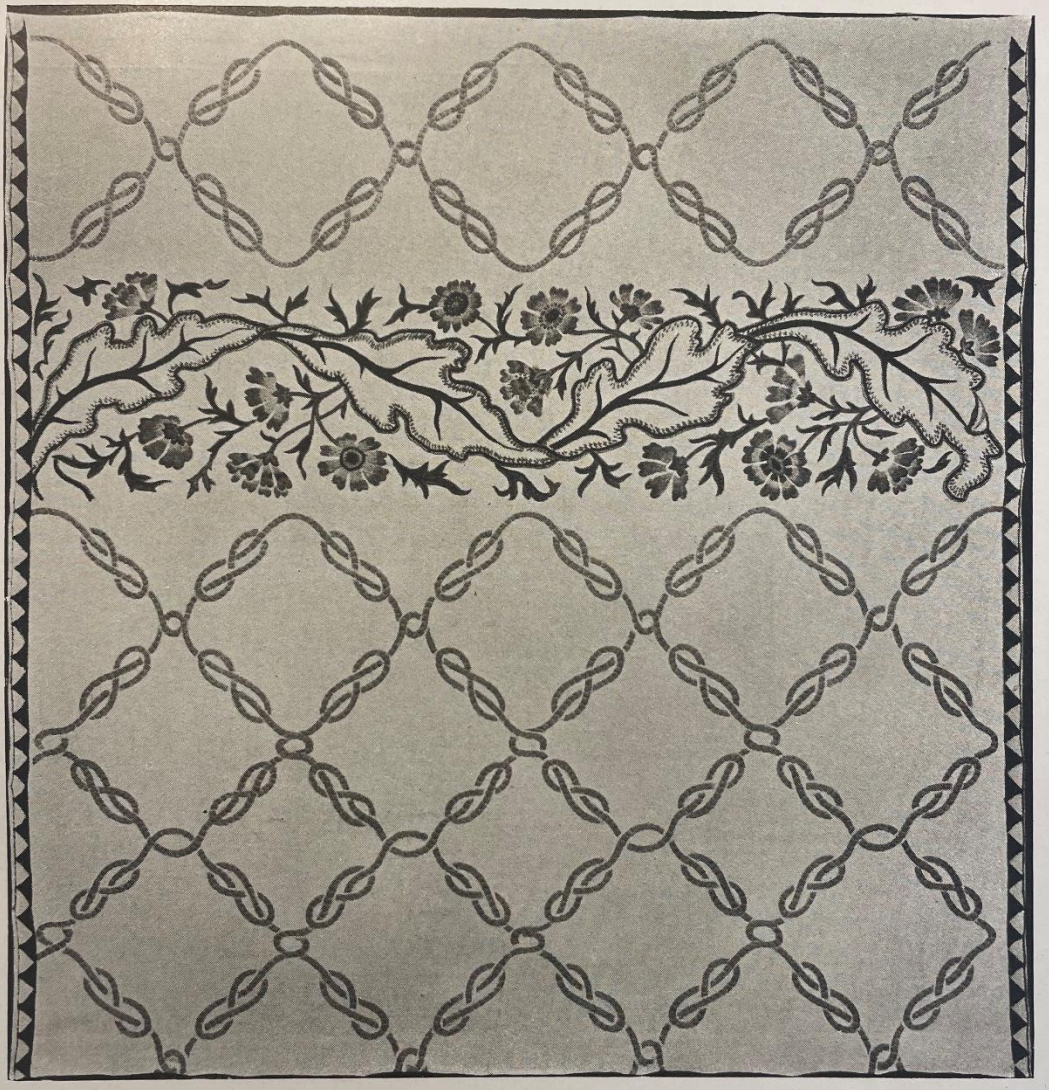
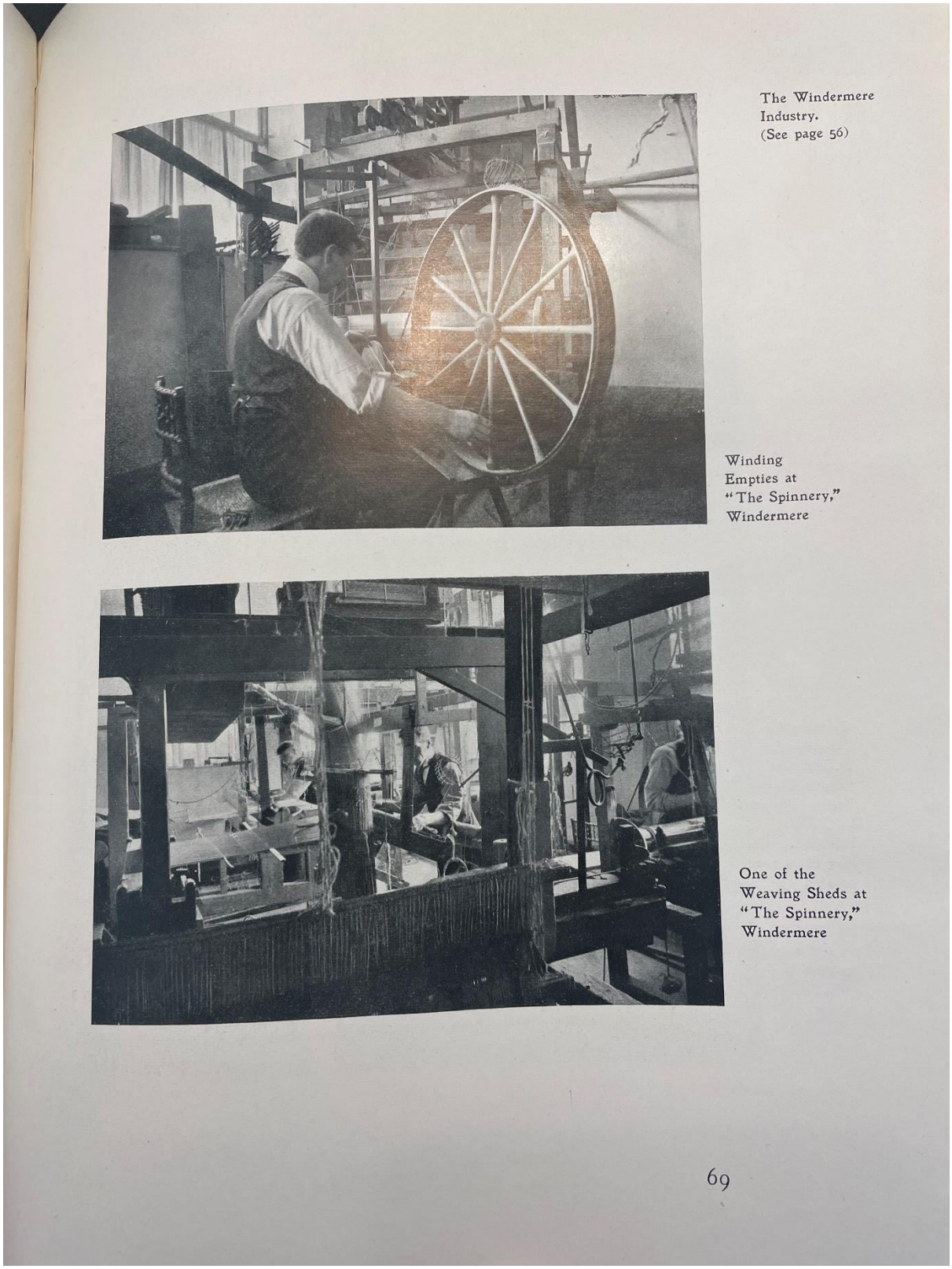


FIG. 6.—YELLOW NET COTTAGE CURTAIN (one of a set of four).
Designed and worked by May Morris.

17

Fig. 4.5:



The Windermere Industry.
(See page 56)

Winding Empties at "The Spinnery," Windermere

One of the Weaving Sheds at "The Spinnery," Windermere

69

Fig. 4.6:

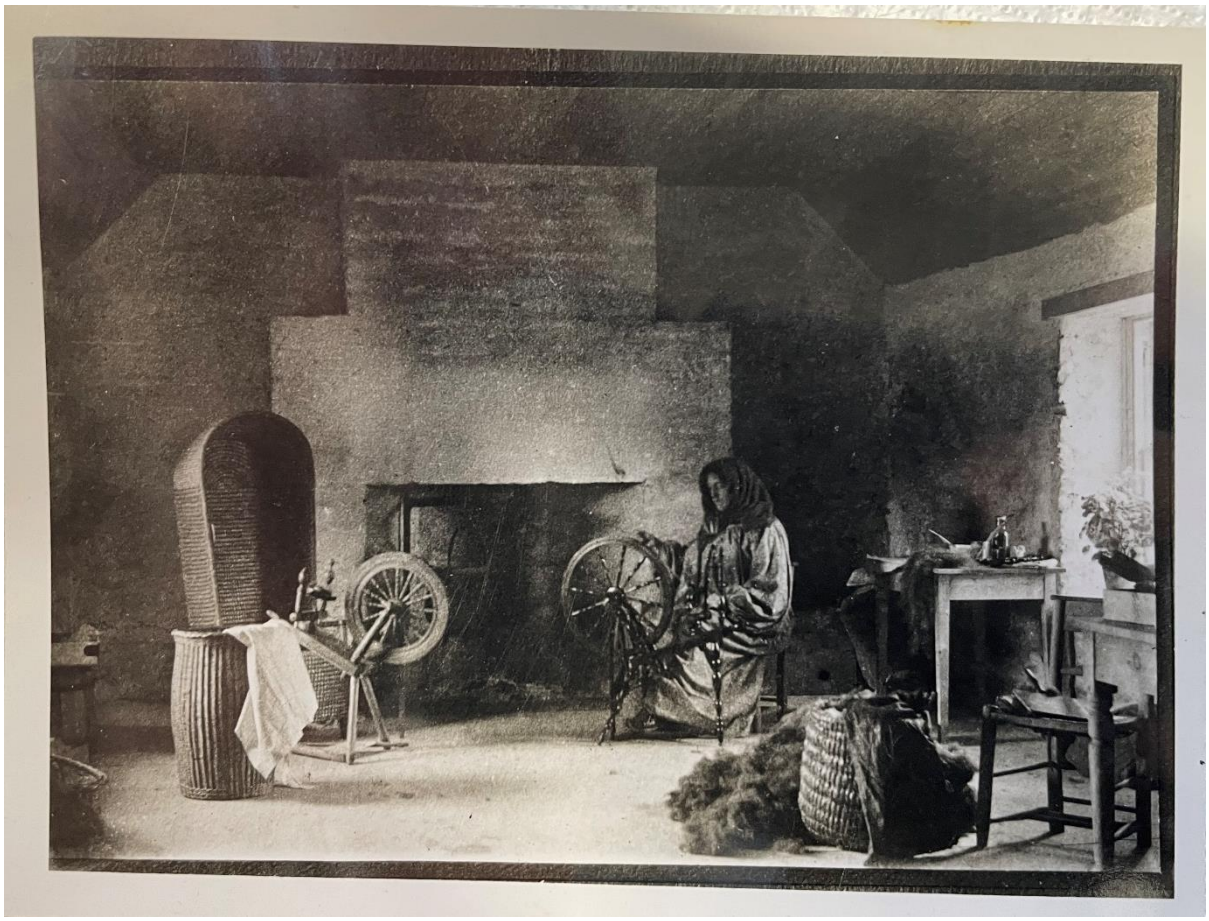


Fig. 4.7:

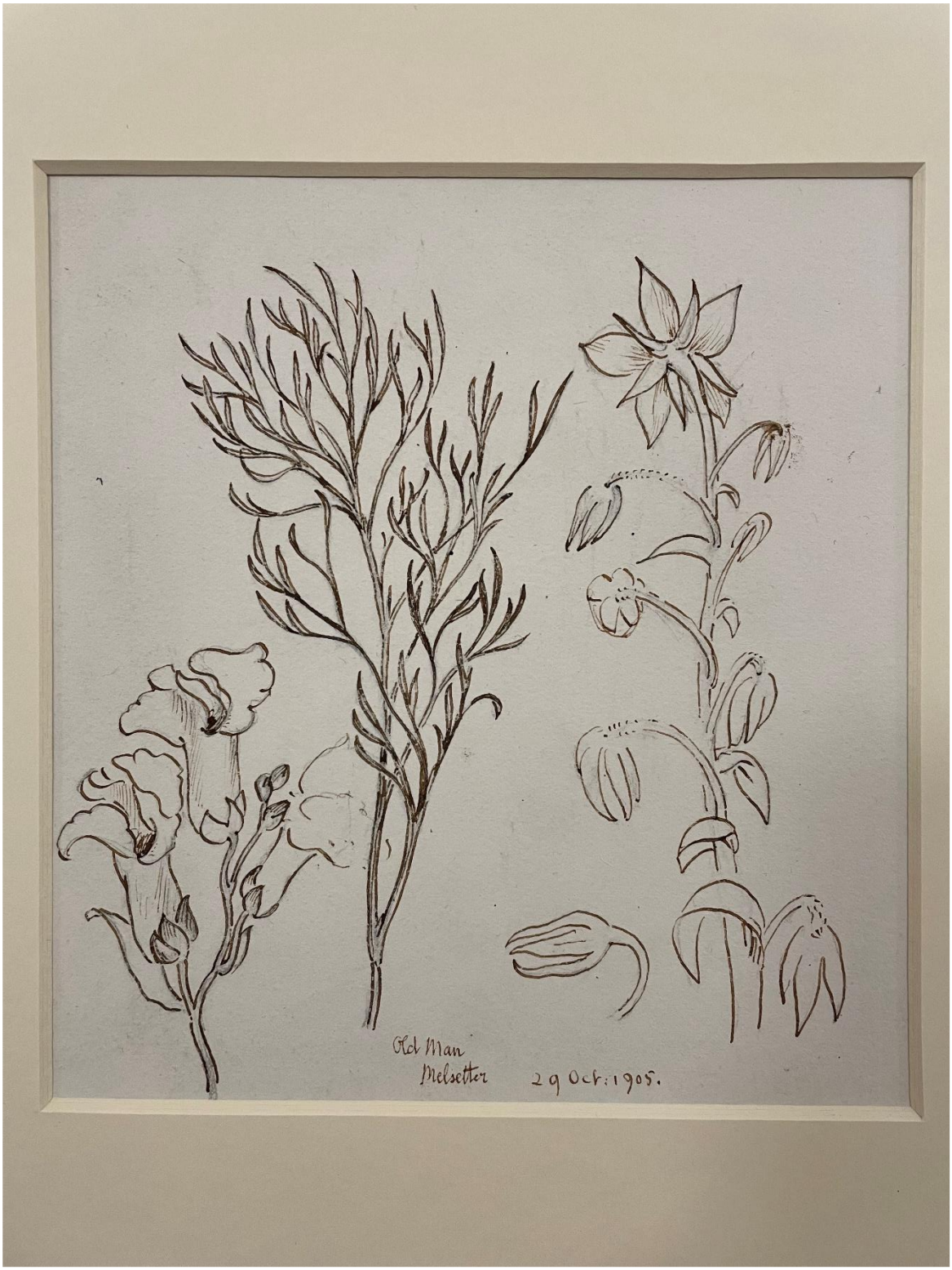


Fig 4.8:



Fig. 4.9:

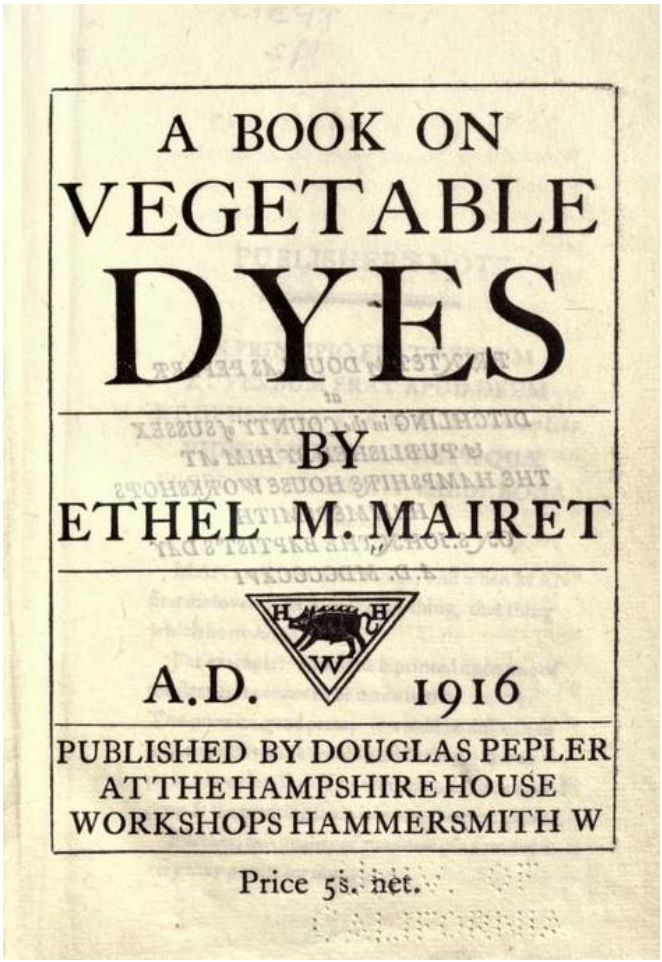

A BOOK ON
VEGETABLE
DYES
BY
ETHEL M. MAIRET
A.D. 1916
PUBLISHED BY DOUGLAS PEPLER
AT THE HAMPSHIRE HOUSE
WORKSHOPS HAMMERSMITH W
Price 5s. net.

Fig. 4.10:



Fig. 4.11:



Fig. 4.12:



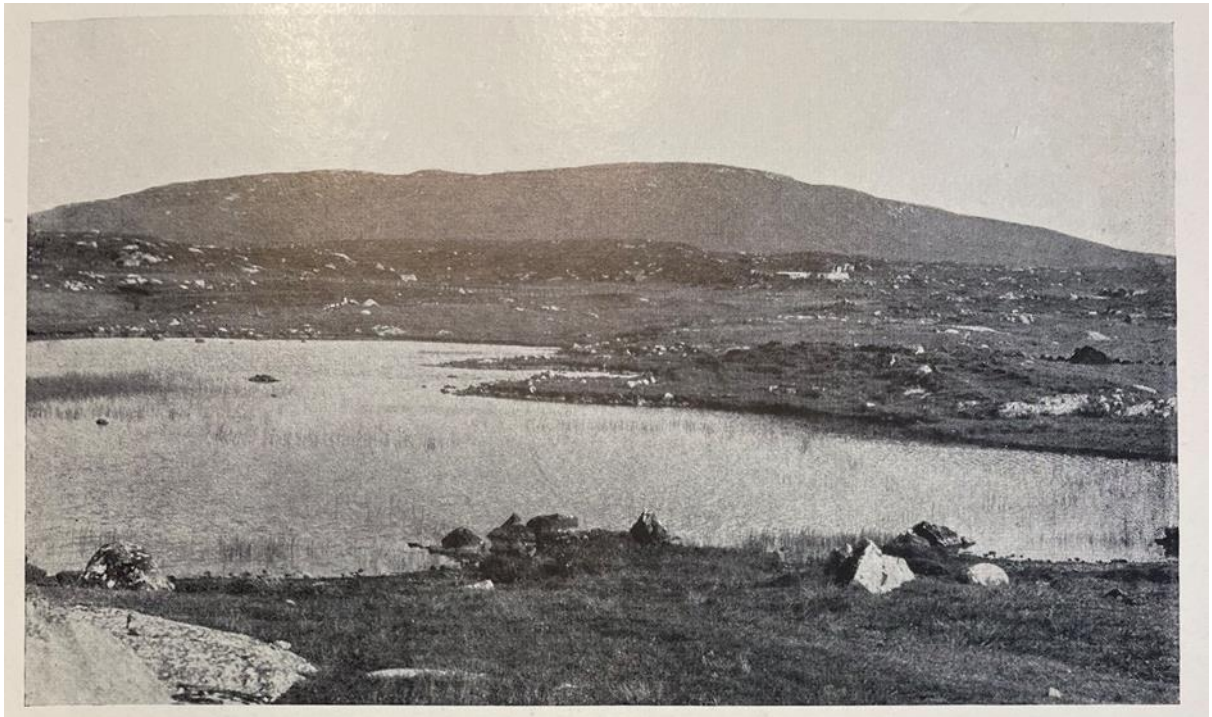
Fig. 4.13:



Fig. 4.14:



Fig. 4.15:



3*a* Peigi and Màiri MacRae's house in North Glendale

Fig. 4.16:

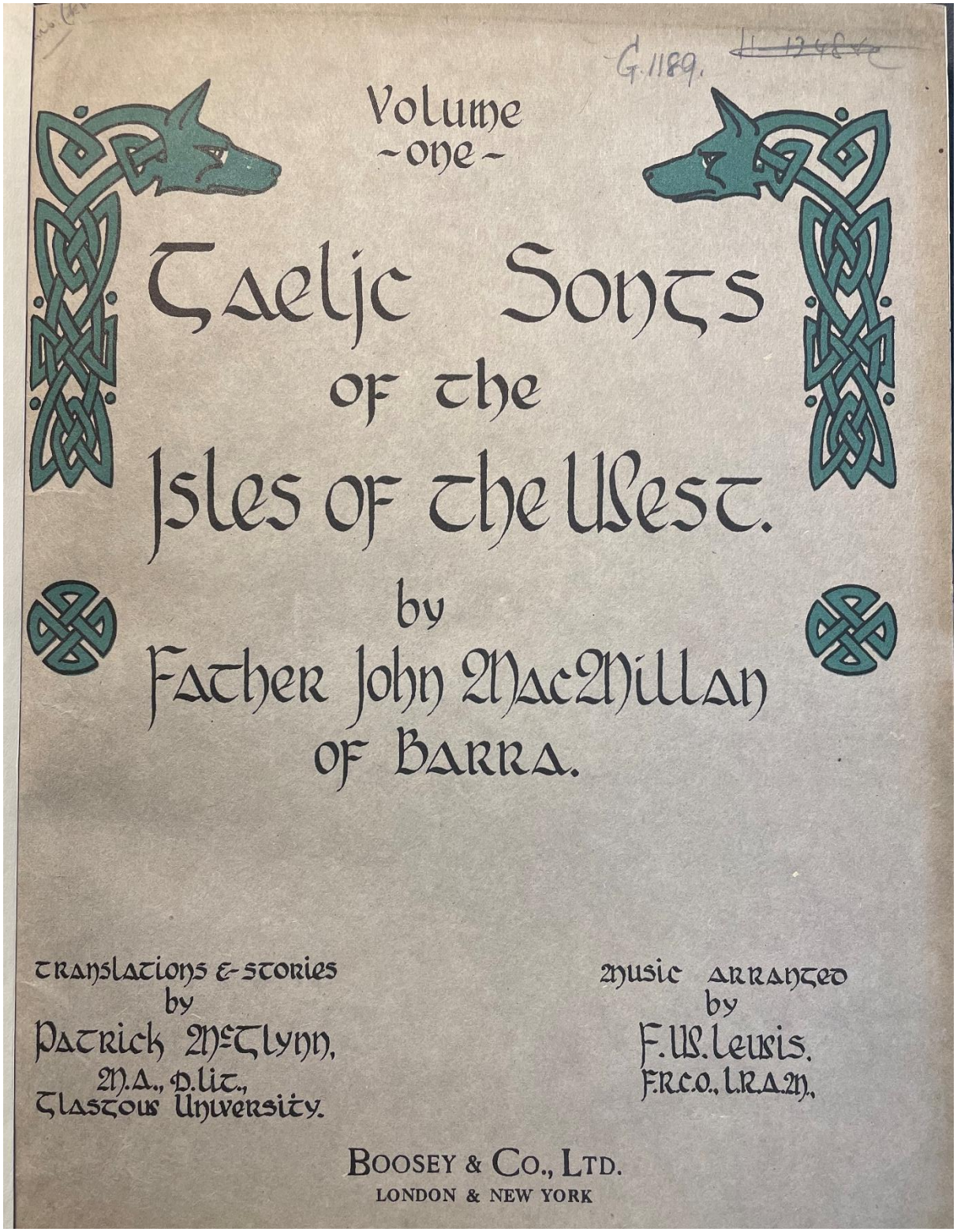

G.1189.
Volume
~one~
Gaelic Songs
of the
Isles of the West.
by
Father John MacMillan
of Barra.
translations & stories
by
Patrick McLynn,
M.A., D.Lit.,
Glasgow University.
Music arranged
by
F. W. Lewis.
F.R.C.O., L.R.A.M.,
Boosey & Co., Ltd.
London & New York

Fig. 4. 17:


Thistle - Cluaran
2
Foxglove - Meuran nan Caillteach Mar Gh
5
with madder
with Rowan
13
Dandelion
Sulphur
Fern.
25

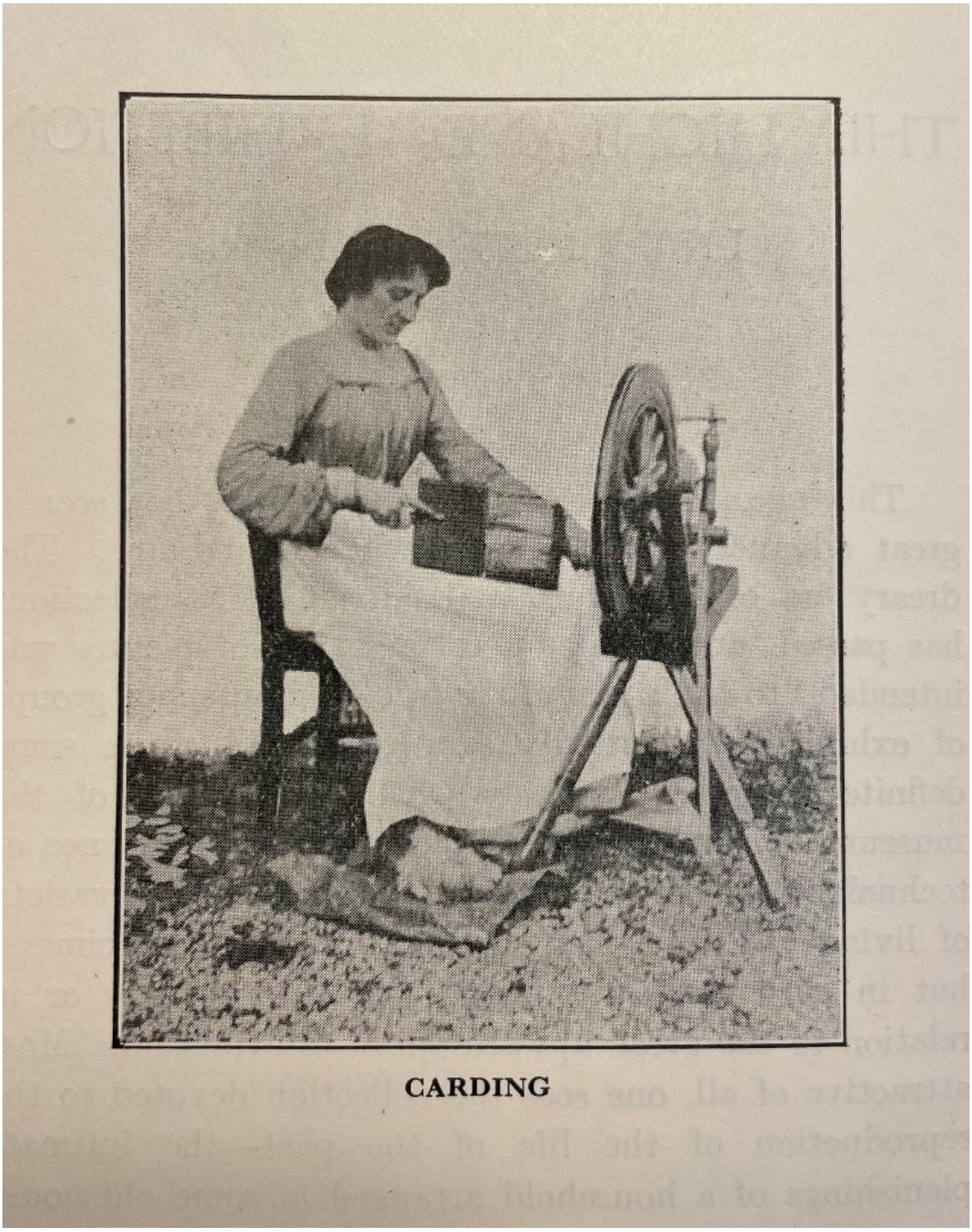
Fig. 4.18:



Fig. 4.19:



Fig. 4.20:



CARDING

Fig. 4. 21:

