Joan Rees also sees the two characters as representing different aspects of the human soul: “What the poem gives us ... is a picture of two kinds of spiritual testing side by side: one test consists of a call to effort and the test is failed; one is a call to suppress normal human yearning and to live and die in hard-won patience” (69).

Here I depart far from Henwood who reads Rossetti’s description of the Prince as indulgent and gentle: The narrator’s tendency to treat the Prince’s character with playful irony does not in any way excuse his failings, but it does invite the reader to indulge in identification with this very human hero” (85). Henwood makes a good point here, but I feel that the frighteningly uncompromising and unforgiving greeting the Prince is given at the Princess’s funeral procession overwhelms any of the earlier humour on the narrator’s part. Perhaps Rossetti, afraid of her own anger, was better able to give it voice through the words of the Princess’s women, rather than those of the narrator.

Works Cited

* “SYMPATHETIC TRANSLATION AND THE "SCRIBE"’S CAPACITY": MORRIS’S CALLIGRAPHY AND THE ICELANDIC Sagas*

William Whitla

In his unpublished *Grundrisse* of 1857-58, Karl Marx raises the problem of how it is possible to reproduce the epics and sagas of heroic oral cultures in the age of industrial capitalism. He asks how modern warfare and mechanical reproduction by printing presses can re-present for the nineteenth century the siege of Troy and the singing of the epics and the sagas: “Is Achilles possible with powder and lead? Or the *Iliad* with the printing press, not to mention the printing machine? Do not the song and the saga and the muse necessarily come to an end with the printer’s brush, hence do not the necessary conditions of epic poetry vanish?” (111).

When Marx later turns in *Capital* to a critique of the division of labour in the printing industry with the resulting deskilling of workers, he sets out the forces and relations of book production that William Morris would resist in his own printing project at the Kelmscott Press in the 1890s. But twenty-five years earlier, Morris and his collaborator Eiríkr Magnússon published twenty-seven saga translations, and Morris wrote out some sixteen of them in variants of six calligraphic scripts, almost as if to demonstrate that the context of epic poetry could be recaptured or at least reconstructed. Morris’s calligraphy demonstrated that the epic and sagas’ "necessary conditions" need not vanish when translated, illuminated, and published the Icelandic sagas. Morris also named as "Bibles" in his choice of the 100 best books for a series in the * Pall Mall Gazette* the classical epics of Homer, Old Norse poetry, folk tales (Norse and the Grimm collections), the historical accounts of the Scandinavian kings, and the Icelandic sagas. They are "more important than any literature. They are in no sense the work of individuals, but have grown up from the very hearts of the people" (*Letters* 2: 414-18).

The expectations of epic poetry, then, might be reconstructed and reconstructed by changing the modes of production, as when Morris wrote out some sixteen sagas on fine paper and vellum in an italic and Roman calligraphy that he revived from Renaissance models for the first time in the modern world. But it was a simulation of earlier social formations: Morris could not reproduce the pre-mechanical culture of the sagas or the epics, and Marx had explained why: “The...
unripe social conditions under which it [epic] arose, and could alone arise, can never return" (111). Over a period of six years, however, Morris's calligraphic control over the material production of his translated sagas as embodied texts became his obsession. At the same time he was constructing his political and social theories based in part on the sagas and saga culture, and later in his socialist lectures and aesthetic writings, he reverts to them for illustration, example, and precedent.

This period of six years from 1869 to 1875 is alluded to in a letter of 1874, in which Morris asked Charles Fairfax Murray to send from Rome more vellum, the parchment made from calf skin used in the Vatican that he had found most satisfactory for his own calligraphy and illumination. He then commented on his own work: "As to what I am doing in my Scribe's capacity--I wrote a book (on paper confounded it) of about 250 p.p. translations of unpublished Icelandic stories with pretty letters to each chapter, which looked well on the whole. I finished this early in February. Now I am at work on an Odes of Horace... To say the truth I have a mind to try and sell a book if I could find a customer: I work much neater now & have got I think more style in the ornament, & have taken rather to the Italian work of about 1450 for a type" (Letters 1:219-20). His "Scribe's capacity," his calligraphic output, consisted of almost two thousand pages of his translations of the Icelandic sagas, as well as calligraphic manuscripts of two Latin texts, Horace's Odes and Virgil's Aeneid, Fitzgerald's Rubáiyát, and a book of his own verses.

Morris's letter articulates the two complementary aspects of translation and calligraphy. "Translations of unpublished Icelandic stories" involve language acquisition and transcription of fair copies for publishers—all utilitarian necessities for public dissemination of multiple copies. "Pretty letters" (literally "calligraphy") involve translating the stories again onto paper, often with decoration—a private act for pleasure or presentation, a capitalist enterprise to sell to a customer, or an anti-capitalist act by reverting to pre-capitalist modes of production. In a paper of 1892 read before the Society of Arts, "The Woodcuts of Gothic Books," Morris argued that "all organic art... has two qualities in common: the epic and the ornamental." Thus he identified the basis for overcoming the rigid separation between translation and calligraphy: "No doubt the force of tradition, which culminated in the Middle Ages, had much to do with this unity of epic design and ornament. It supplied deficiencies of individual by collective imagination (compare the constantly recurring phrases and lines in genuine epic or ballad poetry); it ensured the inheritance of deft craftsmanship and instinct for beauty in the succession of generations of workmen; and it cultivated the appreciation of good work by the general public" (WM: A1WS 1: 320).

Epic and decoration are conceived as one production: "You have not got to say, Now you have your story, how are you going to embellish it? Nor, Now you have made your beauty, what are you going to do with it? For here the two are together, inseparably a part of each other" (1: 320).

Elsewhere Morris draws the same conclusions, as in his unpublished essay on "The Ornamented Manuscripts of the Middle Ages" (c. 1892): "The medieval craftsman had two sides to his artistic mind, the love of ornament, and the love of story" (Ideal 2-4).

In 1895, again writing of fifteenth-century woodcut books, Morris made the same point: "Their two merits are first their decorative and next their story-telling quality; and it seems to me that these two qualities include what is necessary and essential in book-pictures" (Ideal 50). It is this broad conception of translation for both text and design that Morris prescribes for books in his own age:

The illustrator [of an early printed book] has to share the success and the failure not only of the wood-cutter, who has translated his drawing, but also of the printer and the mere ornamentalist, and the result is that you have a book which is a visible work of art... If any real school of wood-engraving is to exist again, the wood-cutter must be an artist translating the designer's drawing... The executant [artist of a book], on his side, whether he be the original designer or someone else, must understand that his business is sympathetic translation, and not mechanical reproduction of the original drawing. (WM: A1WS 1: 330-33)

"Sympathetic translation" links the conception and meaning of the book to its production, and, simultaneously, to its social function as a co-operative social act. The sympathetic translation of the letter designer, calligrapher, and ornamenter, therefore, can be read as a political act, the inscribing of a translation from an earlier culture (whose text itself is the collaborative social and political act of a people declaring their values and mythology in narratives oral or written) into the letters that best mediate its meaning to a new readership. The calligraphy itself is the mediating act of the scribe that transmits meaning from one culture to another.

Hence, the translation of medieval Iceland for Victorian England is mediated in part by the intellectual pleasures of language acquisition and use by Morris. Furthermore, he transforms the private action of calligraphy into a political act by attempting to find the right medium for the text's meaning and communication of cultural values. It is, as we shall argue, the calligraphy that for Morris mediates between the translation for public production under the necessary conditions of Victorian printing practices, as well as for reproduction by hand in the control of the modes of production. In both instances, however, the translations mediate the ethos of the saga culture to Victorian readers.

Such a notion of translation as mediation is now widely accepted in the field of translation studies, as André Lefevere points out: "Translators mediate between literary traditions, and they do so with some goal in mind, other than that of "making the original available" in a neutral, objective way" (Lefevere, Translating 6). Extending the notion into social and political spheres, Lefevere argues that "translation ... [is] a process of negotiation between two cultures: translation is acculturation" (11). That is, a translation does not simply reflect a particular culture...
or social formation, as though it were a derivative form mirroring back the image of an original and authentic one. Hence, a translation mediates not only its source text but also its culture; similarly, in Morris’s work between 1869 and 1875, the calligraphy mediates the translation and its culture.

But questions remain: Why did Morris learn and execute this private handicraft intensely for a period of six years? Was it really to sell his finely lettered and decorated manuscripts to customers if he could find them? Even more interestingly, why did he abandon the Gothic script of the Middle Ages that he first practised in the 1850s in favour of humanist italic and Roman letterforms of the Renaissance; and why did he use these letterforms for his “sympathetic translation” of over fifteen hundred pages of saga literature, some of which he never published, as well as some four hundred pages of other calligraphy?

Such questions are usually answered by stressing the aesthetic qualities of Morris’s calligraphy, the best treatments being those by Joseph Dunlap, Alfred Fairbank, and John Nash. Treatments of the sagas are restricted to literary analysis, though the recent work of Andrew Wawn, The Vikings and the Victorians sets Morris’s work in a wide context of Victorian scholarship, claiming that Morris “wrote by far the best Victorian poems on eddic and saga subjects ... [and] by their philological alertness the saga translations of Morris and his (too easily ignored) collaborator, Eiríkr Magnússon earned an honoured place in the history of attempts to tune in the English language to these elusive narratives” (249). The present essay, however, attempts to combine bibliographical descriptions of Morris’s calligraphic manuscripts with theoretical explanations for his new calligraphic scripts and for the place of the sagas in his political analysis. Morris’s calligraphy is an important stage in preparing the sagas for general publication, following (to a limited extent) the conventions of the Victorian gift and tribute book, but calling into question the established relations between the author, publisher, and printer of the text.

I shall develop this argument in several stages. First, I shall trace the conceptual links Morris draws between calligraphy and architecture. Second, I shall discuss Morris’s calligraphy: from his exposure to medieval calligraphy at Oxford, through his first three calligraphic illuminations in the 1850s, his period of experimentation in the late 1860s, and his six developed italic and Roman scripts. Third, I shall show how his translation of the sagas marked a new stage in the Victorian assimilation of Scandinavian literature. Finally, I shall reconsider Morris’s calligraphy and the purposes of translation in the context of his political transformation from liberal democrat to Marxist. This change corresponds to a shift in his calligraphic model from Gothic to revived italic and Roman scripts based on his own rare copies of the major humanist handwriting manuals of the Renaissance. I shall argue that Morris’s calligraphy mediates the transmission of the Old Norse sagas to Victorian readers in translations that contradict the widely-accepted norms for literary narrative, diction, cultural representation, and the book as material object.

Morris’s 1892 phrase about medieval art’s joining “the epical and the ornamental,” linking the story to its ornamentation, depends upon a theory of the book as an architectural structure. Describing the Kelmscott Chaucer (1896), Morris’s friend and collaborator Edward Burne-Jones relates the epical and the ornamental to architecture and its terminology: “I am making the designs as much to fit the ornament & the printing as they are made to fit the little pictures—& I love to be snuggly cas’d in the borders & buttressed up by the vast initialas...; if you drag me out of my encasings it will be like tearing a statue out of its niche & putting it into a museum—indeed when the book is done, if we live to finish it, it will be a little like a pocket cathedral—so full of design” (Needham 138). Morris’s own earliest memories linked the book to architecture when he was eight years old: “I remember as a boy going into Canterbury Cathedral and thinking that the gates of heaven had been opened to me, also when I first saw an illuminated manuscript. These first pleasures which I discovered for myself were stronger than anything else I have had in life” (Works 12: 259). Three years before his death, and after his work at the Kelmscott Press was well-known, Morris returned in “The Ideal Book” to the same analogy: “Well, I lay it down, first, that a book quite unornamented can look actually and positively beautiful, and not merely un-ugly, if it be, so to say, architecturally good” (WM: AWS 1: 311). At the end of the lecture he reiterated the analogy between the book and the building:

The ornament must form as much a part of the page as the type itself, or it will miss its mark, and in order to succeed, and to be ornament, it must submit to certain limitations, and become architectural.... A book ornamented with pictures that are suitable for that, and that only, may become a work of art second to none, save a fine building duly decorated, or a fine piece of literature.

These two latter things are, indeed, the one absolutely necessary gift that we should claim of art,... the very worthiest things towards the production of which reasonable men should strive (WM: AWS 1: 317-18).

This analogy is common in Morris’s writing: in “The Woodcuts of Gothic Books” he declares that “the only work of art which surpasses a complete Medieval book is a complete medieval building” (Ideal 27); and in “Some Thoughts on the Ornamented MSS of the Middle Ages,” he writes: “If I were asked what is at once the most important production of Art and the thing most to be longed for, I should answer, A beautiful House; and if I were further asked to name the production next in importance and the thing next to be longed for, I should answer, A beautiful Book. To enjoy good houses and good books in self-respect and decent comfort, seems to me to be the pleasurable end towards which all societies of human beings ought now to struggle” (Ideal 1).
Such ideas are also commonplaces amongst the graphic artists and historians of design whose books Morris owned. For instance, Owen Jones’s first principle in his Grammar of Ornament (1856) is that “the Decorative Arts arise from, and should properly be attendant upon, Architecture,” and his second, that “architecture is the material expression of the wants, the faculties, and the sentiments of the age in which it is created” (5). Morris extends such views to read a book and book page architecturally, as a “pocket cathedral.” Similarly, Morris will eventually designate Iceland the “grey minster of lands,” that is, a cathedral housing the saga books as holy writ as well as the tomb of the honoured dead of the sagas. A book, especially a calligraphic book, is an edifice built to house the thoughts and life of the human who wrote it and the characters whose story it is. It therefore should be a well-constructed habitation, in which the calligraphy and the design translate the author’s world and text, as he considered medieval books did. To Morris, Medieval book lovers, students, the “Clerk of Oxenford,” and early Renaissance scholars, “each of these was dealing with a palpable work of art, a comely body fit for the habitation of the dead man who was speaking to them: the craftsman, scribe, limner, printer, who had produced it had worked on it directly as an artist” (Ideal 2).

To Morris, the scribe’s capacity in calligraphy refers to both the architectural design of the page and the writing of letterforms by hand with a brush or pen on a medium, usually vellum or paper, following pre-determined stylistic conventions. He wrote in 1893: “In the Middle Ages, when the craftsman took care that beautiful form should always be part of their productions whatever they were, the forms of printed letters should be beautiful, and that their arrangement on the page should be reasonable and a help to the shapeliness of the letters themselves. The Middle Ages brought calligraphy to its perfection” (WM: AWS 1: 252). Again, in 1895, he began his “Note ... on his Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press” by asserting his interest in beauty, clarity, and calligraphic form: “I began printing books with the hope of producing some which would have a claim to beauty, while at the same time they should be easy to read and should not dazzle the eye, or trouble the intellect of the reader by eccentricity of form in the letters. I have always been a great admiring of the calligraphy of the Middle Ages, and of the earlier printing which took its place” (Ideal 75).

Morris distinguishes between calligraphy and its related art-forms: illumination (decorating the written page, especially with gold that “illuminates it”), ornamental letters, historiated capitals (which depict a scene or story [Fr. histoire] inside the letter), floretiation (decoration with foliage, vines, flowers, or hybrid figures), floriated or filigree work (free penwork in blue or red to decorate capitals), and miniatures (small paintings). Such handcrafts characterize the books of the mid twelfth century: “These books are decorated with borders, ornamental letters, etc., in which foliage and forms human, animal, and monstrous are blended with the greatest daring and most complete mastery.... Gold is very freely used, mostly in large spaces ... which, having been gilded over a solid ground with thick gold-leaf, are burned till they look like solid plates of actual metal” (Ideal 8). Morris distinguishes the calligrapher’s work from the rubricator’s: “Work of great fineness and elegance, drawn mostly with the pen, and always quite freely, in red and blue counter-exchanged, is lavished on the smaller initials and other subsidiaries of the pages, producing with the firm black writing and the ivory tone of the vellum, a very beautiful effect, even when the more solid and elaborate illumination is lacking” (10). Finally, Morris is not only precise about the various skilled craftsmen who contributed to a medieval manuscript; he also comments in detail on their implements: “It was not until parchment and vellum, and at last rag paper, became common, that the true material for writing on, and the quill pen, the true instrument for writing with were used” (7).

Morris also traces the history of calligraphy by connecting it to important social movements, calling Byzantine art the “first style of Gothic” in his first lecture on the Gothic revival:

It is not very difficult to trace the stream of art by means of the architectural monuments still left us, aided by some remains of the lesser arts if so one must call them, pre- eminent among which must be named, the important one of calligraphy and painting in books, which has preserved for us so much of the design and ideas of the Middle Ages which would otherwise have been lost.... The next ... is the art which was taken, apparently directly from Byzantium, by the Germans of the early Middle Ages, and by them carried all over northern non-Latin Europe, including England before the Norman Conquest, and the Scandinavian countries to a certain extent.... It is found unmixed chiefly in Ireland, where in the elaborate pieces of calligraphy which the monks of that country carried out were wrought for us monuments of an art as alien to the general feeling of Gothic as the Arab interlacements. (LeMire 58-59)

Morris’s historical line from Byzantine to Gothic was conventional in England, following the views of John Ruskin, who, for instance, in his lectures of 1869 referred to the “interwoven ornament [that] has been peculiarly characteristic of northern design, reaching greatest intensity in the Irish manuscripts ... and universal in Scandinavia and among the Norman race ... [belonging] as much to Indian, to Arabian, to Egyptian, and to Byzantine work as to that of Norway and Ireland” (19: 254). Such a sequence of art had already been outlined in Owen Jones’s The Grammar of Ornament (1856), where J.B. Waring’s essay on “Byzantine Ornament” traces similar connections between Byzantine ornament and Romanesque and Celtic art (50-54). To Morris this lineage in books and design performed an important act of cultural and architectural preservation, keeping “for us a record of the kind of design which once covered the walls of all our Churches in public buildings through the whole period of the fully developed Middle Ages” (Ideal 5). Calligraphy, then, has a public purpose of ensuring cultural and social continuities between story and ornament, between books and architecture: the “scribe’s capacity” joined to “sympathetic translation” preserves the past and refurbishes it for the future.
The Victorian interest in illumination was part of the Gothic revival, associating lettered texts with the pietry and religion, as well as with the architecture of medieval England, thereby assuring communal continuities and social stability. At the same time it was an aesthetic activity for the leisureed middle classes, producing single leaves for private gifts or decorative testimonials suitable for framing, and so was often cultivated as moral improvement and edification. However, Morris demonstrates in his historical analysis that medieval and Renaissance books were written out in calligraphic letters and decorated with illuminations in close interconnection with the migrations of peoples and changing social formations. Books performed a public function, from a calligrapher on behalf of institutional authority to many readers. Medieval and Renaissance books were adorned with beautiful writing because they were sacred and were associated with either sacred buildings (such as abbeys or cathedrals) or buildings of intellectual or political power (princely courts, universities, and law courts). Such was the case with the illuminated scrolls of the Hebrew Law, or the Bible and its parts, like the Psalter or the Gospels, or because they contained the public laws of a culture, or because they preserved a culture’s defining or canonical literature (see Gellrich 29-50). Such books were finely written not only to signify their cultic or social importance, but also to signal their function in the transmission and communication of the monuments of that culture: they were named for their identification with royal courts, religious foundations, or personal collectors. Before machine production and reproduction, calligraphy marks out the public text as permanent, distinct from the private and ephemeral. What was passing could be scribbled and destroyed; what was public and important was inscribed. As Walter J. Ong says, “The critical and unique breakthrough into new worlds of knowledge was achieved within human consciousness not when simple semiotic marking was devised but when a coded system of visible marks was invented whereby a writer could determine the exact words that the reader would generate from the text” (84). That codification into a system for each script, however, was constructed not by taste or opinion, but by an elaborate interaction of politics and script that determined and controlled letter shapes for public use, as Stanley Morison argues: “This concensus is the result of a twenty-five-century process of evolution inspired by many scribes and sculptors working collectively and individually under the authority of emperors, popes, and patriarchs or abbots or masters of guilds” (Politics 339; see also Martin 153-74).

Morris, then, linked architecture to the design of medieval books, and more specifically to their ornament for the ancillary purpose of story-telling. He “read” a page of manuscript architecturally, drawing on the analogy between a book and a building, placing it within a vast public context of social action. Conceptualizing his own calligraphy in this context, he reacted against some Victorian conventions, even in his earliest illuminations, and at the same time trained his calligraphic eye and hand through the study of medieval manuscripts when he went to Oxford, preparing himself for larger projects in the future that would more closely tie the epic and the ornamental together.

II: Morris’s Calligraphy: From Gothic to Humanist Scripts

Gothic Lettering and Ornament: “The Epoch of Writing Par Excellence”

Morris’s childhood elation at the sight of a medieval manuscript was renewed in his last years by his collection of about 100 museum-quality examples, many now in the Pierpont Morgan Library. When he wrote about Gothic books, he emphasized that their writing is the defining art of the epoch, as he claimed in an essay on medieval illumination in 1894: “The Middle Ages may be called the epoch of writing par excellence” (Ideal 7). Two years before he had made the same point: “The early Middle Ages, beginning with the wonderful calligraphy of the Irish manuscripts, were, above all times, the epoch of writing. The pages of almost all books, from the eighth to the fifteenth century, are beautiful, even without the addition of ornament” (Ideal 27). When he entered Exeter College, Oxford, in 1853 he had not yet examined a medieval manuscript. As an undergraduate he studied them in the Bodleian Library and a little later in London at the British Museum. In 1856-58 he imitated them in his three pages of Gothic calligraphy, following conventional models of Gothic lettering and illumination exemplified in the numerous Victorian handbooks that attempted to revive the craft, but Morris broke with convention by choosing unusual subjects for his examples.

A number of events have been pointed to by Joseph Dunlop as anticipatory of Morris’s interest in calligraphy (“Morris” 141-42; “Road” 11-37). First, at Oxford he read Fouqué’s Sintram and His Companions (1814) in an edition of 1848. An adaptation of Albrecht Dürer’s wood-engraving of “The Knight, Death, and the Devil” as the frontispiece faced a wood-block title-page that has a number of variant narrow Gothic letterforms modelled on the type-face “Elizabethan” introduced by Robert Belsey at the Fann Street Foundry in 1847 (Gray 72-74). From the initial letter S a flowered vine scrolls across the top of the title and down the left border, a decoration Morris returns to in his third calligraphic manuscript leaf. Second, Morris published a journal, The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine with Gothic typography on the title-page by Mary Byfield, a type-designer at the Chiswick Press. Some stories in the journal refer to illuminated manuscripts, such as Burne-Jones’s allusions in “A Story of the North” to “illuminated writing ... dark green and purple melancholy gold” (Feb. 1856: 82). Third, Morris was apprenticed to a leading Gothic revivalist architect, George Edmund Street, in whose office he spent most of a year. Fourth, in decorating the Oxford Union with D.G. Rossett in 1857, Morris was responsible for painting an Arthurian subject (Tristram) and the floral decoration of the ceiling. However, direct exposure to medieval books in the Bodleian Library in Oxford had a more profound and lasting effect on him.
J.W. Mackail says that Morris undertook the "study of medieval design and colouring in the painted manuscripts displayed in the Bodleian. One of these, a splendid Apocalypse of the thirteenth century, became his ideal book. Forty years later he went to Oxford to spend a day in studying it, and looked it over with greater knowledge but unimpaired satisfaction" (1: 40). When Morris was at Oxford, the Bodleian Library had an exhibition room and picture gallery in what is now the Upper Reading Room and another contained the collections of the British antiquary, Francis Douce (1757-1834), which included two famous manuscripts, the Douce Apocalypse and the Ormesby Psalter, as well as many other treasures. The Douce Apocalypse, a manuscript containing the Revelation of St. John with half-page illuminations on vellum (Anglo-French Court School about 1270: Bodleian ms. Douce 180) was Morris's "ideal book," a manuscript that Burne-Jones refers to as the "best book in the world" (Cambridge: Fitzwilliam ms. 1070 f.75v). To Morris, the Apocalypse must have been particularly fascinating because the illumination is unfinished, and shows the various stages in the preparation of the illumination, from drawings to coloured and gilded paintings. He certainly also knew the Ormesby Psalter, with its elaborately decorated pages marking the traditional divisions of the psalter (East Anglia c.1320-30; ms. Douce 366), referring to it as the "Norwich Psalter," an allusion to the Cathedral priory to which it was given, as noted in the Douce description of the manuscript (Ideal 12).

Other notable books from the Douce collection included the small Benedictine Psalter written in two volumes by two collaborating artists (Flemish, c.1320, mss. Douce 5, 6), with elaborate initials, figures in the margins, and many grotesques and filigree decorations, somewhat similar to those in his own early manuscripts. He and Burne-Jones certainly knew the Roman de la Rose with illuminated pictures (French, c.1490, ms. Douce 195), that Burne Jones drew on for some of his illustrations to the Kelmscott Chaucer translation. It appears likely that Morris also knew another Oxford manuscript of the Roman (Paris, c.1348, ms. Selden supra 57), whose first folio is a particularly splendid illuminated page. He also asked to inspect the Romance of Alexander in 1857 (Treheruz 168; ms. Bodley 264). Another book that was to have significance for Morris's later calligraphy and printing was Pliny's Natural History, printed on vellum in Venice in 1476 by Nicholas Jenson and decorated with elaborate Florentine illuminations (ms. Douce 310). Much later Morris recalled studying the Pliny: "I have a vivid recollection of the vellum copy at the Bodleian" (Letters 3: 124-27).

A number of manuscripts in the British Museum were well known to Morris who copied details of letters with annotations in a notebook May Morris dates from 1862 when he was undertaking his first design work for the company that was nicknamed "the Firm," and when he was living at Red House. The notebook has drawings from ms. Harley 2952 and ms. Add. 45336 (Wm. Andrews 1: 393-95). His daughter records that Morris knew some manuscripts in the British Museum "as though they belonged to him.... Both he and Burne-Jones spent many happy hours in the manuscript room of the British Museum" so that no one except the staff "was so familiar with its treasures" (Works 9: xviii). In his later writings he refers to several manuscripts he had consulted and recommended for study, including the Arundel, Queen Mary, and Tenison Psalters in the British Library and the Norwich (Ormesby) Psalter in the Bodleian (Ideal 5, 12, 121). Through all of this study Morris became familiar with important examples of medieval calligraphy and illumination and reproduced them in his own sketches and designs.

As well as his early exposure to medieval manuscripts at Oxford and London, Morris was also a part of the popular revival of calligraphy and illumination in mid-nineteenth-century England propagated in introductions and handbooks that used facsimiles of medieval manuscripts as models for copying. In the third volume of Modern Painters (1856), John Ruskin laid claim to initiating, or at least promoting, the revival of medieval calligraphy, though it had been flourishing for over a decade:

It is with a view ... to the reopening of this great field of human intelligence, long entirely closed, that I am striving to introduce Gothic architecture into daily domestic use; and to revive the art of illumination, properly so called; not the art of miniature-painting in books, or on vellum, which has ridiculously been confused with it; but of making writing, simple writing, beautiful to the eye, by investing it with the great chord of perfect colour, blue, purple, scarlet, white, and gold, and in that chord of colour, permitting the continual play of the fancy of the writer in every species of grotesque imagination, carefully excluding shadow; the distinctive difference between illumination and painting proper, being, that illumination admits no shadows, but only gradations of pure colour. (5: 130)

The revival in calligraphy was aided by such developments in the printing industry as chromolithography by Owen Jones in the late 1830s that enabled books to have colour plates with gold and silver. The numerous publications of Jones, Henry Noel Humphreys, and Henry Shaw fed the fashion for calligraphy in the 1840s with a flurry of chromolithographed alphabets and pages from medieval manuscripts, followed by handbooks on the craft of illumination that increased in popularity through the 1850s and 1860s (McLean 83-86). Most illuminated texts celebrated ceremonial occasions—testimonials, pious or sentimental mottoes, heraldic inscriptions for organizations or schools, or biblical quotations. Some handbooks, such as W.R. Tyrwhitt and Matthew Digby Wyatt's The Art of Illuminating (1860), which Morris owned (Catalogue lot 1034, 1865 edition), suggested numerous mottoes under separate headings, drawn from folk sayings and biblical and literary sources, appropriate for illumination and framing for every room in the home (54-63). The lettering style recommended was exclusively Gothic or "black letter," as in the popular book by the Audsley brothers, Guide to the Art of Illuminating and Missal Painting (1861), together with the manuals by J.J. Laing with which it was usually bound, giving advice on the history of design and symbolism, and practical advice on materials, techniques, and practices.
The auction Catalogue of Morris’s library sold after his death shows that Morris owned a number of these books on calligraphy and illumination, providing him with the history of lettering and ornamentation styles as well as practical models. He had Henry Shaw’s Encyclopedia of Ornament (1842; lot 1063) that includes many examples of ornamental metalwork, painted architecture in stone and wood, and stained glass, but no book pages. He also owned other illustrated books of Shaw’s, including Specimens of Tile Pavements (1858; lot 1064) and Specimens of the Details of Elizabethan Architecture (1839; lot 1120), and Henry Noel Humphreys’s History of the Art of Printing (1867; lot 717). On famous manuscripts and traditions he had W. de Gray Birch’s History of the Ulrich Psalter (1876; 1019) and Sir Henry James’s collection of Facsimiles of the National Manuscripts of Ireland (1873-74; lot 916). To help him with the practical aspects of the preparation of vellum and gilding, he owned R. Hendrie’s translation of Theophilus on the Arts of the Middle Ages (1847; lot 1045).

More importantly, Morris owned and carefully read Shaw’s The Art of Illumination in the Middle Ages (1870; lot 1065), correcting several misprints. Shaw’s detailed history of illumination points out links between Celtic and Byzantine styles, just as Jones and Ruskin did: “The Irish, Hiberno-Saxon school of illumination merits a distinct notice, since it is of a peculiar and marked type, and characterized by a design and execution not found in manuscripts of other nations. It is founded, doubtless, on oriental types, as the same character of interlacing may be met with in the earliest Eastern metal-work” (5). As well, Shaw comments in some detail on a number of manuscripts that Morris had examined in Oxford and London at the British Museum, illustrating many of them in colour, including the Arundel Psalter (BL ms. Arundel 83), the Egerton Gospels (BL ms. Egerton 608), the Queen Mary Psalter (BL ms. Royal 2 B VII), the Tenison Psalter (BL ms. Add 24686), and the Douce Apocalypse (Bodleian ms. Douce 180). As in Shaw’s Art of Illumination, Tyrms gives a detailed history of medieval calligraphy and illumination, illustrating his account with many chromolithographs, some of which might have been known to Morris when he did his first three illuminations. While still at Oxford, Morris presented to Louisa Macdonald, a sister of Georgiana Burne-Jones, a copy of Noel Humphreys’s Illuminated Illustrations of Froissart (1844; see Letters 1: 136), yet one more indication that he was familiar with the manuals that provided history, examples, and practical instruction.

Morris’s library also contained one of the most elaborate of all chromolithographed books, Owen Jones’s The Grammar of Ornament (1856) in the 1868 edition (lot 730; he also had Jones’s Examples of Chinese Ornament, 1867; lot 729). Each national or stylistic section of Jones’s illustrations was introduced with a history of the particular stylistic tradition, some written by experts in the field, such as the essay by Waring referred to above. Jones’s own section on Gothic ornament illustrates borders, letters, and leaves from illuminated manuscripts from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. Commenting on them, especially the vine and tendril designs that surround letters as in a letter N (from the Arnstein Bible, BL ms. Harley 2799, fol. 185v), Jones says that such examples are “not surpassed” as “pure decorative writing,” and that it is “certainly Eastern and was probably a development of the illumination of the Byzantines” (104). Morris returned to examples like these, especially the white-vine decorated letters based on Romanesque models revived by the Italian humanist illuminators, for some of his own decoration in his later calligraphic manuscripts as well as in the design for his tendril-entwined wood-block capitals designed for the Kelmscott Press.

Morris, therefore, had a variety of treatises on medieval design, calligraphy, and illumination in his library. Such books indicate not only Morris’s interest in learning about the history and development of calligraphy and illumination, but also his involvement early in his career in the popular craze for calligraphy. He was setting about it in a systematic manner, building on his direct exposure to medieval manuscripts which he drew on in his first illuminations.

Morris’s First Three Calligraphic Experiments: “In All Illumination... Quite Unrivalled”

Shortly after he had come to know Morris in 1856, Dante Rossetti described Morris to a friend: “In all illumination and work of that kind he is quite unrivalled by anything modern that I know--Ruskin says better than anything ancient!” (Doughty 1: 312). Rossetti was certainly writing with the knowledge of having seen Morris’s calligraphic illuminations, the first two done that very year.

Morris’s first illuminated manuscript is a lyric from Robert Browning’s Paracelsus (1835). In August, 1856 Burne-Jones describes the probable occasion of the illumination:

We know Rossetti now as a daily friend, and we know Browning too, who is the greatest poet alive... Topsy [Morris]... has written several poems, exceedingly dramatic--the Brownings, I hear, have spoken very highly of one that was read to them; Rossetti thinks one called “Rapunzel” is equal to Tennyson; he is now illuminating “Guendolen” for George. (Mackail 1: 107-08)

It was very likely at this meeting with the Brownings or shortly afterwards that Morris presented them with an illumination of Browning’s lyric, Paracelsus’ complete song from Book 4 (15 lines from the 1849 edition: 4: 190-205). Burne-Jones also mentions Morris’s second illumination, his own poem “Guendolen,” given to Georgiana Macdonald, which we discuss below.

The Paracelsus manuscript is a single sheet of vellum (see Appendix A: Gothic Script), with two stanzas written in the Gothic calligraphy known as textura quadrata (textura, woven and densely-spaced lettering, and quadrata indicating that the pen is held at an angle to produce diamond-shaped feet on many letters) or littera textualis quadrata, used in late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century
The second example of Morris's illumination is the gift Burne-Jones refers to that Morris gave in the late summer of 1856 to Georgiana Macdonald (whom Burne-Jones was to marry). The single vellum sheet is an illumination of the text Burne-Jones had called "Guendolen" (fig. 1), part of one of Morris's own poems from the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine entitled "Hands" (published in July 1856). It was later incorporated into "Rapunzel" as the prince's song (ll. 287-304) in The Defence of Guenevere in 1858. Morris's poem is an extrapolation from the Kinder und Haus-Märchen of the Brothers Grimm (translated as Household Stories by E. H. Wehnert, 1853) that Morris drew on for the whole of Rapunzel, though no episode in the story parallels the poem. Morris used Household Stories for other poems in The Defence of Guenevere and also for his third illumination, "The Iron Man." In the Grimm story and Morris's poem, "Rapunzel" is the name given to the girl by the witch who locks her in her tower. Her "unknown name" of "Guendolen" is recalled in the prince's song from a dream-vision he had earlier. The name and some of the context may also have been suggested by the "Guendolen" of Walter Scott's poem, The Bridal of Triermain (1813).

Morris's illumination is written in textura quadrata letters similar to the Paracelsus manuscript, but the penmanship conforms more closely to medieval models or to the "Elizabehan" type fonts of the Sintram title-page, showing much greater control and regularity, especially in stanzas four to six. On the other hand, the first three stanzas are cramped because of the space taken by the large floriated letter T. In many medieval examples, such as psalters, the lines after a large illuminated letter are written without cramping, any incomplete lines being completed with decorated line-fills of the kind that Morris inserts at the beginning of some lines in his manuscript. Morris treats the ascenders h and the upper vertical of the p as well as the descenders as in the Paracelsus manuscript; other ascenders bend left. The decoration of this leaf, however, is much more ambitious, though incomplete. The entire text is enclosed by a leafing vine whose tendrils break into the space of the poem once. Incomplete drawings in pencil indicate that it would do so twice more, and possibly in the bottom margin as well. The page is dominated by the large initial Roman T, with leaves at the middle and ends of the blue crossbar and at the bottom of the red vertical. A hybrid dragon bites the vertical and curls about the letter as a vine with leaves, the whole somewhat similar to a twelfth-century letter T in Jones's Grammar of Ornament (plate LXXI). Morris also planned three separate coloured capital letters for each stanza, though only three are complete. Six others are incomplete, six are sketched in pencil, and three are not begun. After the first four similar letters G beginning "Guendolen," Morris introduces variants in the shape: most are Lombardic with two spirals on either side of the letter. Two hybrid dragons are in the midst of the text, and below the text Guendolen holds strands of her golden hair over the water (a desert in the Grimm version), perhaps towards the prince in the miniature of the initial O in the last stanza. Although incomplete, the illumination shows a variety of experimentation.
with capital letterforms and design; the irregular placement of the refrain, however, is unaligned on the right side, just as the line beginnings on the left are irregular, unlike most medieval examples.

The third single vellum page of Gothic lettering from this early period, dating probably from 1857, is now in the Wormsley Library of Sir Paul Getty. It too is based on a story from the Brothers Grimm (tale number 136), and consists of Morris’s incomplete prose translation of Der Eisenhans (The Iron Man or Iron Hans). This manuscript was presented to Georgiana Macdonald’s sister, Louisa (Works 9: xi). The text is crowded and difficult to read. John Nash describes the Gothic lettering as “so formless as to look brush-written, though it’s most likely that a soft, badly-cut quill was to blame” (301). The Gothic script is known as textualis rotunda (with the minims rounded off with an upwards curve). The letterforms, however, are inconsistent in shape and control, with variations in size (some near the top of the right column being considerably smaller than the rest), spacing between letters and lines, and differences in the thickness of strokes, perhaps attributable to a badly-cut pen. Lombardic initials in green, red, and blue begin the paragraphs. The large Lombardic initial N encloses an illumination of the cage that imprisons the wild man in the story. It terminates in a hybrid dragon, but is surrounded with geometric spirals of multi-coloured vines like the Sintram and those that decorate the IV of the opening words of St. John’s gospel in the twelfth-century Arnsn Bible in the British Library (ms. Harley 2799 f. 185v), which is reproduced in full in Humphreys and Jones’s Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages and the letter N only in Jones’s Grammar of Ornament (Plate LXXXI: 12). Furthermore, as Julian Treherz has pointed out (156-61), this page of the Arnsn Bible had already been used in Charles Allston Collins’s painting, “Berengaria’s Alarm” (1850), first exhibited with other Pre-Raphaelite paintings in the Royal Academy exhibition of that year. Morris’s page leaves room for a miniature (not begun) in the lower third, or for more text as in medieval manuscripts of commentaries, like the Decretals of Gregory IX (BL ms. Royal 10 E IV).” “The Iron Man” is designed symmetrically around a central axis dividing the text into two columns, though the narrow columns on either side of the space for the illumination are difficult to read.

Three further early experiments in calligraphy are more indirect than the manuscripts we have already referred to. First, Morris’s single easel painting, La Belle Iseult (1858), shows a small illuminated book open on the table in front of Iseult, decorated with floretted initials to which Morris would return in his later calligraphy. Second, in the painted glass and carved lettering Morris designed for his new home, Red House, that he moved into in 1860, his recently-adopted motto “st je pults” (adapted from Jan Van Eyck’s Aliscян Kanne) is displayed in thirteenth-century Gothic letters: the i and j are reverses of one another; the s is angular; the e is carefully drawn and marked by a slanted hair crossbar (Mackail 1:110; Dunlap, “Road” 38-57). There is only a suggestion of feet on any of the letters. Third, in 1862, there is a remarkable change in lettering in the Trisn and Isoude series of stained glass panels that Morris designed and executed for Walter Dunlop’s house near Bingley in Yorkshire (now in Bradford Art Gallery: see Sewter 2: 26-27). Some capitals are based on Roman models, others on Gothicized Lombardic, while still others have new forms: the lengthened s, the letter k with a descender on the right stroke as in “The Iron Man” manuscript, and a Lombardic lower-case e and d. The same lettering occurs in six other St. George stained glass panels (perhaps also for Dunlop’s house, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Harrison 122) and the Sleeping Beauty tiles of the same date (Victoria and Albert Museum). The lettering indicates that Morris found other models for decorative lettering than the Gothic that the Firm generally used—possibly the writing manuals of the Italian humanists. But when he came to his most intense period of calligraphy from 1868 to 1875, he had an entirely different body of texts to work with, his translations from the Icelandic sagas, and to them he applied a renewed study of historical scripts.

Morris’s first experiments in calligraphy, then, are undertaken as personal gifts to honour friends: they were a part of his interest in medieval modes of communication and book production in the 1850s when he was just beginning his work as an architect and designer and setting about establishing the Firm. These early experiments are written in the conventional Gothic style recommended in the manuals on illumination. But however much Morris improved in his design and ornamentation from the first to the third illuminations, his calligraphy shows problems with consistency of thick and thins, equal or visually acceptable spacing of letters, words, and lines, alignment of words on the page, inter-relation of text to ornament (especially in “Guendolen”), and the fundamental problem of legibility, all the result of the calligrapher’s inexperience and tools rather than deficient models. Using Gothic lettering for modern purposes he failed to a considerable extent in finding an appropriate medium for cultural translation and so his efforts were limited to one page only.

One final aspect of this trial period is of crucial importance for Morris’s later calligraphy. He did not follow the customary practice of illuminating testimonials, popular maxims, proverbs, or quotations from the Bible for personal edification or pious decoration in private homes. Instead he chose contemporary poetry, that of his friends and his own, as well as a popular art form, one of the Household Stories of the Brothers Grimm. These reconstructed folk-tales of Germany, then assumed to be transcriptions of oral traditions of story-telling, are analogues in Morris’s view to the folk-tales and sagas of the north. In decorating those sagas he is able to combine the ornamental and the story-telling aspects of medieval illustration that he considered essential to book making in the Middle Ages. It is this distinguishing mark of his early calligraphy, the stress on story and decoration, on making the popular and the oral contemporary, that Morris carries forward to his next massive calligraphic project, the writing out and illuminating of complete collections of his own and others’ poetry, the sagas, and the classics. But Morris needed to find an appropriate medium to communicate through his translations of Icelandic sagas not only the ancient stories, but also what was wrong with Victorian Britain.
"This Change of Hand-Writing": A New Calligraphy for the Sagas

Except among a few specialists it is little known that Morris is identified as the inaugurator of the revival of handwriting in the modern period. For instance, Ruari McLean asserts Morris's pre-eminence: "William Morris also practised italic ... and may be said to have started the modern movement to reform handwriting as well as printing" (Osley, Scribes 17). Similarly, Philip Hofer points to Morris's innovation: "A renewed interest in calligraphy ... began, for the western world, in England with William Morris and Edward Johnston at the end of the nineteenth century" (Osley, Scribes 95-96). In qualifying for this accolade, however, Morris set out to reform his own handwriting, accomplished in various identifiable stages, working on his lettering on Sunday mornings for six years from 1869 to 1875, and producing, as Alfred Fairbank claims, "more than 1500 pages of careful writing in several styles of script, and a great deal of ornament," though he underestimates the number of pages by some 400 (65-66).

When writing The Earthly Paradise from 1866 on, Morris experimented with different handwriting in preparing his manuscripts for the publisher. Customarily he wrote out drafts in notebooks or on separate sheets of blue foolscap, correcting as he wrote, and again as he revised. He usually wrote in what May Morris suggests is his "composing" hand (fig. 2): "pointed writing, close and concentrated" as in the example she gives from the opening of "The Ring Given to Venus" (c.1868; BL ms. Add. 45302). The letters are of uneven height, with looped ascenders and descenders, \( u \) and \( n \) (as in lines 1 and 2) are identical, \( r \) is in the conventional written form, and the crossing of a \( t \) carries forward to begin the next word (fine 2).

The passage continues with what May Morris calls Morris's "copying hand" normally used for the printer's copy (fig. 3), "rounder, more upright and formal, very clear" (Works 5: xxxv). The height of the letters is more uniform though the ascenders and descenders are still looped, while the \( u \) and \( n \) are more clearly distinguished. Joining the crossing of the \( t \) to the next word still continues. It was on the basis of Morris's ability to control his handwriting, to change from his composing to this copying hand that he began to experiment with different scripts (see Appendix A: Transitional Pages).

In Oxford in August 1867 Morris read out part of the prologue to The Earthly Paradise ("The Wanderers," perhaps written before the manuscript of "The Ring Given to Venus"). In the middle of that text (BL ms. Add. 37499, f. 36) there is a passage of five lines where the handwriting changes completely (fig. 4), experimenting with a more upright lettering of single strokes without his customary looped ascenders and descenders. The tail of the \( g \) opens into a wide curve, the \( a \), \( e \), and \( r \) approach conventional italic forms. The following five lines use some characteristics of the first five (like the single stroke ascenders and descendans), but much of the writing reverts to the "copying" hand.

During the same period (1867-68) Morris experimented briefly with another hand-writing style, a copper-plate hand based on the engraver's style taught in children's lettering books from the eighteenth century. The fair-copy manuscripts for three tales of The Earthly Paradise, all in the same volume ("The Palace East of the Sun and West of the Moon," BL ms. Add. 45309, ff. 1-49; "The Story of Dorothea," ff. 50-81; and "The Proud King," ff. 82-108), are written in a copper-plate hand with a steel nib. Clearly Morris was testing various letterforms, but had not yet found one that suited him.

These experiments coincided with the next large project that Morris began in late 1868 and early 1869, the translation of the Icelandic sagas. He wrote out a translation of the first of the sagas that he and his Icelandic teacher and collaborator, Eiríkr Magnússon, did together, the Eyrbjöggja Saga, and on five pages in the middle of his manuscript he changes from his copying hand to what appears to be a Roman script, but that, upon closer examination, proves to be a version of humanistic italic (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam ms. 255; p. 99 is reproduced in Needham plate XLI). Morris alters his customary longhand to a slightly slanting sans serif, with rounded, closely-spaced letters using tall, un-looped, single-stroke ascenders and descenders. Sometimes at the right margin and elsewhere Morris reverts to his conventional hand for letters \( b \), \( r \), and \( s \), but the sudden transformation is still impressive for the ways it conforms to the calligraphic models he adapts.

This new writing was based on Italian humanist script that had been developed early in the fifteenth century in Florence, first by Coluccio Salutati (1330-1406), then a Roman hand by Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459), and a cursive script that gave rise to the first printer’s italic of Aldus Manutius, invented by Niccolò Niccoli (1363-1437). Their scripts were derived in large measure, as B.L. Ullman has demonstrated, from their own collections of twelfth-century manuscripts of the classics. They used their examples of Carolingian minuscule script as the foundation for "lowercase" letters, and classical Roman inscriptions for capitals (16-19, 54). The humanists’ aims were, first, to make the manuscripts of the classics eminently readable and unifying to the eye in ways that Gothic script could not: second, to confer on them the dignity of fine writing (that is, calligraphy) which they believed the classics deserved in the written letterforms deriving from classical models most suited to them; and third, to write them for posterity, not as ephemeral productions—each also a justification that can be advanced for Morris’s calligraphy. Through Poggio, who became a scribe and teacher of writing at the papal chancery in the Vatican, the new letter forms were carried to Rome and to the Italian humanist courts where scribes copied out the texts of the classics in the new hand (Ullman 79-109). Especially through the patronage and power of Cosimo de’ Medici in Florence, the new hand gained a political ascendency, as Morison has pointed out: "Cosimo had decided to support by his example, his wealth, and by every other means the copying of Latin literary texts in the novel script which he knew under the title of 'littera antica'... Without Cosimo the new script, first
fashioned by Poggio and Niccoli ... would never have emerged from the narrow circle which gave it birth” (Politeia 306-07). Humanist script migrated quickly to the civil chanceries among those responsible for keeping the records of the emerging bureaucracies, the banking and commercial houses of Florence and Venice, and the theological and civil courts. This slanted script was named “cursive” for its leaning letters and quick writing, sub-divided into cancellaresca corsiva from the Vatican chancery offices and the source of italic type and the cancellaresca formata, its more vertical version. A number of these humanist texts of the classics came to English, and Morris might have known several at the Bodleian or the British Museum (such as Plutarch’s Lives: Bodleian ms. Douce 214; Cicero’s Orations with connections to Poggio: Bodleian ms. D’Orville 78; Virgil’s Georgics: Bodleian ms. Rawl. G 97; Augustine’s Commentary on the Psalms: BL ms. Add. 14779; Sanvito’s illuminated Virgil: BL ms. King’s 24; and Arrighi’s Lucian commissioned for Henry VIII: BL ms. Royal 12.C VIII).

By the 1520s the new humanist script was being promoted in the first Renaissance writing manual, La Operina (1522: “The little work ... for learning to write the Chancery letter”) of Ludovico Vicentino degli Arrighi, himself employed in the Vatican chancery. Morris owned this manual in the very rare second edition of 1525, engraved on wood-blocks by Ugo da Carpi. His copy was rebound in the eighteenth century together with three other manuals, Arrighi’s second book, Il Modo de temperare le Penne (1523: “How to cut your quill pens”), Giovanniantonio Tagliente’s Lo presente libro Insegna la vera arte dello eccellente scriverre (1524, in the second edition of 1525: “The present book teaches the true art of excellent writing”), and Thesaurro de Scrittori (1525: “Thesaurus of scribes”) ascribed to Sigismondo Fantu but, in fact by Ugo da Carpi, this being one of only five surviving copies. The copy is described in detail by A.S. Osley (“Kelsmcoat”). Morris listed this book among his possession in the catalogue of his library prepared about 1876 but, as John Nash argues, he probably bought it (for two guineas) from the bookseller P.S. Ellis in the late 1860s (297). It was auctioned after his death (lot 256) when Emery Walker bought it and returned it to May Morris, who took it to Kelmscott Manor where it still remains.

Morris’s use of this important collection of Renaissance writing manuals inaugurates the advent in the modern world of reform handwritings; according to Alfred Fairbank the event “marks the beginning of the italic handwriting reform now engaging world-wide attention” (Morris and Magnisson 55). Importantly for our purposes, the calligraphic pages in the middle of the Erybgygia Saga have some characteristics that can be related to models in this collection of Renaissance writing books. First, the pages have been written not with a pointed steel-nib, but with a squared nib, possibly a quill, as Arrighi’s second book in the collection instructs. Second, although at first glance the writing appears more upright like a Roman hand, it has a slant of about 10° to the right from the vertical (the incline illustrated in Arrighi’s La Operina), though Morris’s angle is not consistent, some ascenders being as little as 3°. Third, some of the letterforms approximate the letterforms in the italic of Arrighi and Tagliente, notably the curved, two-stroke, open-volume bodied a, though the upper and lower curves of the letter are more rounded than the flat top and sharper angled bottom of Arrighi’s a. There are equivalent similarities with the letters e, r, and s. Fourth, some ascenders, b, f, h, l, and p whose vertical stroke ascends, but not the majority, show some right bends or kinks at the top of the stroke, not so strongly marked as in Arrighi’s models, but closer to those than to anything earlier in Morris’s practice, and like nothing else in other writing of the period. In a few instances the descender of the f turns to the left as in Arrighi. Finally, some letters, notably the g, does not follow Arrighi and Tagliente’s cursive models with a sweeping tail, but is closer to the Roman antiqua tonda illustrated in a unique plate only in Morris’s copy of Arrighi’s La Operina, substituting for a plate of italic hand, or in Tagliente’s Roman antiqua tonda page in Lo presente libro (Morison Early 194).

The pages of calligraphy inserted into the manuscript of the Erybgygia Saga, then, represent serious practice sheets where Morris inaugurates a new writing script, though his lack of control and consistency in letterforms indicate an early stage of learning. His early trials posit an alternative to the composition and copying hands that he customarily used, and to the Gothic of his first illuminations. Most importantly, Morris models his letterforms on the writing manuals of the Renaissance, and behind them on the humanists’ scripts that were based on Carolingian manuscripts and classical inscriptions. It is these forms that he developed and mastered to a remarkable degree in his later calligraphic manuscripts of the Icelandic sagas.

There is, however, one further stage of experimentation in The Earthly Paradise manuscripts where Morris draws variant letterforms in the margins. Marginal letters occur in The Story of Rhodope (1868, BL ms. Add. 45304) and The Lovers of Otradune (1869, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam ms. 25F), both published in volume three of The Earthly Paradise (1870), in Bellerophon in Lycia (1869, BL ms. Add. 45301), published in volume four (1870), and in the unpublished “The Story of Orpheus and Eurydice” (1869, BL ms. Add. 45307). In Bellerophon in particular Morris experiments with Roman capitals, sometimes with flourishes ("swash" letters), with small letterforms (adding hair-strokes to h, l, m, n, p, and t and a definite left-turning kern to the descender of f), and with variant capitals (Nash 302 and Needham plate XLIII). All of these trials for The Earthly Paradise are indebted to Morris’s study of the italic of the writing manuals, cancellaresca corsiva, and to the upright Roman based on the antiqua tonda. Some variant letterforms are tested, including three variants of the capital T (one upright Roman, another Lombardic, and one italic), and different versions of the letters a, h, g, l, and s. Such pages show Morris developing a repertoire based on models in his library, but not testing any styles at length.

Two final pieces of evidence need to be adduced concerning Morris’s experiments in the new lettering. One is an undated fragment proving that Morris
began to study hand-writing with a Mr. Jones (not otherwise identified, though Dunlap notes that Owen Jones has been proposed as the teacher: "Road" 143-46). Owen Jones was known as calligrapher of Gothic scripts (as on the title page of his Grammar of Ornament). He died in London on 19 April 1874. On 18 February of the same year Morris wrote to Charles Fairfax Murray: "I hear from Mr. Jones that you have got to Rome ... so I hate to trouble you about a matter of my own: Vellum to wit" (Letters 1:214-15). Since this letter is concerned largely with buying vellum and calligraphic activities ("I have much improved by the way in my ornament & my writing in that line since I last saw you"), it may be assumed tentatively that Owen Jones was Morris's teacher and a common friend, perhaps also acquiring vellum from Murray.

On a half sheet of paper addressed to an unnamed recipient, Morris wrote with a steel nib in his usual composition hand with links between words and large crossings of the letter t: "this is my hand-writing before I went to Mr Jones and this afterwards." He added two lines in a humanistic italic bearing some resemblance to Arrighi's littera da breve (illustrated in Nash 302): "what do you think of this change of hand-writing," signing his name to it (Oxford: Bodleian ms. Autograph d. 24, f.95). These lines are far less practised and controlled than the other examples discussed: the spacing is cramped, perhaps the result of informality, haste, or inexperience, suggesting a date in early 1868, certainly before Morris changed to a quill pen—or at least he is not using one here. Although the example shows Morris's developing facility with cursive letters like those in his writing manuals, such as a, e, f, and r, other letters, such as the t, slip back to his composition or copying hand. This "change of hand-writing," however, is crucial evidence that he took his training seriously enough to take lessons from Mr. Jones.

Finally, one other single practice sheet (fig. 5) has survived (Pierpont Morgan ms. MA 4011), in which Morris tries out seven different hands and copies out in the same italic script a passage from the title page of Arrighi’s Il Modo, part of his collection of writing manuals. The practice sheet is written on a piece of vellum discarded from his calligraphic work on Virgil’s Aeneid in 1873-74 (it has some Latin text from Virgil on the verso). At the top in an italic hand related to the manuscript of his translation of Haroon al Rasheed Morris writes:

perhaps a pointed hand would be best on the score of quickness though at present it don’t seem to matter much; the w was good, and the thick pen if I could get it to go always

This passage indicates that he is not only trying out the lettering, but also is testing the cutting of the pen; evidently it was not working well since it has scratched on the page, spraying ink over words in the last line. Written the other way up are at least six different hands. The first is, as he says, "between pointed and round," that is, between the pointed of the italic cursive and the round of the Roman antiqua tonda, though with the letterforms of the latter, especially the letter a:

Another line follows, beginning with a more slanted italic, with letters joined by diagonals. The final phrase, "too broad," is in an upright Roman minuscule, with elements of Arrighi's antiqua tonda that Morris used in his last manuscript, Virgil's Aeneid. A single line follows in another variant italic perhaps modelled on Tagliente's chancery (e, f, g, and h). The line is Morris's own translation of Virgil's Aeneid 12: 670, published in early November 1875 (dated 1876): "His burning eyeballs toward the town, fierce hear[td, did he roll]" (Works 11: 278). Hence, the sheet was written after he had completed his translation of Virgil in the summer of 1875. Then follows a passage that looks like his copying hand and that Dunlap finds is like a fair-copy of the manuscript of Lancelot du Lac at Kelmscott Manor ("William" 113; Society of Antiquaries ms. 65):

a good piece of work is not to be done with such a very broad nibbed pen upon vellum with only common ink, but I can write fast enough upon it however; I wonder how it would go upon the parchment: I dont like to write a nice MS on common paper anyhow: the parchment was no good it all ran together and would scarcely mark at all.

In fact, however, this script is a variant of the italic written at cursive speed with a slant of 25-30° from the vertical, without the right bends at the tops of the ascenders, as in Arrighi's littera da breve (slant of 15°, illustrated in Nash 302). The next passage links the sample sheet beyond any doubt to the Italian writing manuals. It consists of a quotation from the title page of Arrighi's manual on the preparation of quill pens from 1525: modo de temperare le penne Con le varie Sorti de littera ordinato per Ludovico Vincenzo In Roma nel anno [How to cut your quill pens with the various kinds of letters put in order by Ludovico Vincenzo in Rome in the year], exactly following the lettering on Arrighi's page except that Morris's ascenders are somewhat shorter and the lines are drawn with a thicker pen. A final line adds another comment: "no good at all: it all ran together and would".

As well as writing out samples of various scripts, Morris says, in effect, that he is testing the quality of the quills he has prepared or had prepared for him, as well as the quality of the ink he was using, the writing itself demonstrating the technical difficulties he was having with both. His too-broad pen has been unable to sustain enough ink to completely fill some vertical strokes, and in other instances has spilled out too much. A well-known illuminator of the next generation, Graily Hewitt, reported that May Morris told him that Morris did not prepare his own quills (6), and another noted calligrapher, Alfred Fairbank, says that it is doubtful that Morris cut his own (60). Contrariwise, this sheet shows that Morris was using the manuals as a source for various humanist scripts, and was copying out the title page of the first Renaissance manual on preparing quills for writing; he also writes
on the same practice sheet about the breadth and narrowness of the quills. May Morris also says that his writing table had "quill pens, from a goose quill to a crow quill" and "finely tempered knives," the pen-knives used for the preparation and recutting of quills (Works 9: xxi). The difficulty with ink, although solved for his calligraphy, resurfaced with the Kelmscott Chaucer printed in the last year of his life (see Peterson).

These transitional documents lead into the first phase of Morris's major period of calligraphy, ten years after he had abandoned Gothic letterforms, when he was learning a hand-writing style based on the manuals of the Italian humanists. After a series of efforts to improve his copying hand, then a flirtation with copperplate, he finally turned to the writing masters themselves, and tested out their letterforms in some trial pages and in the margins of poems that he was already in the process of writing or transcribing. He was now almost ready to exercise his "scribe's capacity" fully.

But how can Morris's numerous calligraphic manuscripts be grouped for analysis? It would be possible to consider the adequacy of his production (completed manuscripts, incomplete manuscripts, and fragments), recipients (the manuscripts given as gifts, and those retained), subject matter (his own poems, the writings of others, and the sagas), date (from first experiments to last productions, assuming some kind of development or improvement), or style of lettering. A discussion of Morris's calligraphy arranged by date, as Dunlap does ("Morris" 147-54; "Road" 109-311), has to face the difficult problems that most are undated and virtually all of the incomplete manuscripts and many fragments use more than one script. Nevertheless, classifying Morris's calligraphy primarily on the basis of letter style, and within each style on the basis of date, is the method suggested by two of the most recent writers on his calligraphy, though neither is comprehensive: Fairbank says that his writing "can be divided into set cursive and roman hands, and then subdivided" (56), while Nash is more specific, suggesting that Morris had a "repertoire of five scripts--two based on Renaissance humanist (now called 'roman') minuscule, three on humanist cursive, or 'italic'--" (298). An elaboration of Nash's scheme sets out four italic and two Roman scripts in detail in Appendix A and is summarized here.

Morris's first italic manuscript develops directly from Lancelot du Lac (fig. 6) and the calligraphic insert in his translation of the Eyrbyggja Saga discussed above. Soon after working on that translation, in late 1869 and early 1870, he began to letter the first 36 pages of The Story of the Dwellers at Eyr (Eyr I), in which, as Nash has pointed out (298), Morris combines in the one text his first two italic and first Roman scripts (see Appendix A for details). Most of the text is written with a round-nosed nib; it uses a large italic that he used only twice more, once for Lancelot du Lac (1874) and a further variant in the unpublished Story of the Men of Weapon-Firth (1874), in a more slanted hand, perhaps owing something to Tagliente's cancelloresca nodaresca.

The second italic script in Eyr I (the chapter headings, added to the manuscript later when Morris had mastered the further technical control that the letters needed), uses a square-nosed nib. It is a smaller flattened italic with hairline diagonal slashes that link letters and with tall ascenders that bend to the right. These characteristics reappear in each of Morris's italic hands. The second italic script was used again for five manuscripts between 1869 and 1873-74, some of them elaborately decorated with illuminations and miniatures. The first manuscript is Volsunga Saga: The Story of the Volsungs and Niblung, written in late 1869 and early 1870. By controlling the differences between thick and thin strokes Morris established much greater uniformity in the shapes of the same letters and in their height and spacing. This partially decorated manuscript uses heavy vertical semicursive letters with very fine diagonal hairlines; the capitals are Roman. Morris's first extended calligraphic works then, rather than being A Book of Verse, often taken as "his first important venture" (Whalley xii), are, as Dunlap argues ("Road" 155-65), The Story of the Dwellers at Eyr and Volsunga Saga.

The other examples of the second italic script include A Book of Verse (1870), a collection of his own poems illuminated with floral designs, floreate line fills, and miniature paintings by his friends Charles Fairfax Murray (the portrait of Morris on the title-page), Edward Burne-Jones, and George Wardle (fig. 7). The first of four presentation books to Georgiana Burne-Jones, it is also one of the few books in which the text and illumination are both completed. The remaining examples of the second italic script include a second composite version of The Story of the Dwellers at Eyr (Eyr II) at Birmingham, made up from Eyr I and new additions, the second presentation copy to Georgiana Burne-Jones (in 1871) that ultimately consisted of 254 pages with illuminations and gilding; other examples are the Oxford manuscripts The Story of Hen Thorir and The Story of the Banded Men (1873-74). The latter two show far greater control of the script which in every instance exhibits tall ascenders and numerous diagonal hairline slashes that function as serifs on the letters. From the letterforms in the last example, it is evident that Morris is turning again to the Italian writing masters, especially Tagliente's littera antiqua, a Renaissance model that looked back to the Carolingian minuscule manuscripts that the humanists admired, collected, and copied.

The third (fig. 8) and fourth italic scripts develop from the Volsunga Saga by rounding the letters, making them smaller, and adding decorated initials, in some samples with white-vine scroll work, imitating Renaissance models from about 1450 (as Morris said to Fairfax Murray, Letters 1: 219-20), themselves derived from twelfth-century models. The diagonal slashes of the second italic script are gradually reduced, but the capitals are increasingly Lombardic forms, extended with elaborate flourishes.

The chief manuscript of the third italic script is Fitzwilliam ms. 270 whose 238 pages contain three different sagas, Hen Thorir, The Banded Men, and Howard the Halt, all dating from 1873-74, and all with Lombardic interlinear capitals and
white-vine initials on the title pages. This manuscript was the fourth presented to Georgiana Burne-Jones. The fourth italic script eliminates the hairline flourishes (except on the lower and upper-case f, and has two major examples, the fourth calligraphic manuscript of FitzGerald’s *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1859) that Morris did in 1874 (his other three versions are all in Roman script completed earlier and are discussed below), and Horace *Odes*, the culmination of his work in italics (fig. 9).

Horace’s *Odes* (1874) is written on small vellum sheets (16.8 x 11.7 cm.) in a small, pointed, and condensed hand, with Roman capitals. The only completed title-page is that for the second book, and it is adorned with acanthus leaves surrounding a frame of golden poles, very much like the *Acanthus* wallpaper of the same year. Each of the odes is decorated with an elaborate white-vine illumination, ending in numerous flowers and sun-bursts, eighty-six of them being completed, eleven unfinished. White-vine scrolls are illustrated in Owen Jones’s *Grammar of Ornament* (plate 73: 2), but Morris might have known some notable twelfth-century examples in the Bodleian (like the Gospels, ms. Laud. Lat. 25, or Jerome’s commentary on Isaiah, ms. Bodley 717), or humanist versions of white vine, like the golden vine leaves adorning the title-page of the preface in one of his favourite books, the Douce Pliny (Jenson’s printed text of 1470 adorned with illuminations: ms. Douce 310). Flowers and sun-bursts (often called hair-spray with gold disks or seed heads) are common in books of hours from the middle of the fifteenth century, and Morris might have known such decoration in the humanist Douce Plutarch of about 1440 (ms. Douce 214) or on the calendar pages of the Gothic Hours of Engelbert of Nassau (ms. Douce 219, 220). The same manuscript also has acanthus borders in a solid frame (ff. 38, 63r-64, 74, and 79v-80, though used with trompe l’œil effects). Similar borders are in the *Grammar of Ornament* (plate 73: 11-13). Some of Morris’s decorations of letters and margins are close to illustrations in Henry Shaw’s *Illuminated Ornaments Selected from Manuscripts of the Middle Ages* (1833), especially white vine within the dark letter square shown in Shaw’s plate XXVII (BL ms. Harley 4902), “flecked with small white dots, [and with] the same flower-terminals in the corner of the letter square” (Gallant 64).

Gallant also proposes that Shaw or his source might also have provided models for Morris’s seed heads which decorate the vines and margins extending from initial letters (plate XVII: BL ms. Harley 2952). The over-all effect of variation in decoration from page to page, with gold and silver overlays, often on top of coloured ground to show through the gilding, along with the leaves and flowers show, as May Morris claims, “great variety of invention and handling” to make this “jewel-like” book the culmination of his study of italic script and the technicalities of design and execution (Works 9: xxii; 11: xxvii-xxix).

Morris’s first Roman script is also found first in *Eyr 1* where it is used for running heads, added to the manuscript after the text was completed. His Roman scripts are very likely based on the *antiqua tonda* samples in Arrighi (his copy of *La Officina* is unique in having this script on a substituted page, though there is another example in *Il Mudo*, illustrated in Nash 302), and in Tagliente. The manuscripts classified in the first Roman script in general have horizontal serifs where the italic had diagonal linking slashes, except on the ascenders of the h where the serif is a small wedge. The second Roman script, a small Roman minuscule, is regular and undecorated, its chief exemplar being Virgil’s *Aeneid* in Latin that Morris lettered in 1875.

There are twelve manuscripts in the first Roman script, differing considerably in layout, size, length, decoration, and completeness. The first (after the sampler of *Eyr 1* is *The Story of Kormak*, complete in 42 pages of double columns, though the decoration is incomplete. Morris did not publish this saga in his lifetime. The second example is another well-known and often-reproduced illuminated presentation copy, the third to Georgiana Burne-Jones. It is a 23-page manuscript of FitzGerald’s *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* on vellum sheets the same width as the Horace, but even shorter in height (fig. 10). Morris did all the Roman lettering, with low serifs and tall ascenders; he and Burne-Jones designed the figures which were all painted by Charles Fairfax Murray. May Morris rightly called it “another jewel-like book,” identifying the blossoms of this “flower garden turned into a book” (*Works* 9: xxii). Walter Crane wrote about it in a sonnet that concludes:

The book of Omar saw Ilimmed with gold,
And decked with vine and rose and pictured pause,
Enwrought by hands of one well skilled and bold
In art and poetry and Freedom’s cause—
Hope of Humanity and equal laws—
To him and to this hope be mine escrolled.  (BL ms. Add. 45345 f. 103)

Morris completed two more versions of the *Rubáiyát* (a total of four, including the one in italic script noted above). One on paper with floral decoration, written in 1873, was given to Burne-Jones who also painted its six illustrations (*Rubáiyát* I). Another on vellum (*Rubáiyát* II) is in a smaller and rounder Roman, with decoration in white vine only on the first two pages.

Other major manuscripts in the first Roman script include further work from the sagas: *Heimskringla* (Snorri Sturluson’s *Preface* and the first saga, *The Story of the Inglings*) decorated with illuminated initials and marginal vines, flowers, and animals. Two other manuscripts of the same script and decoration have the same size vellum sheets, and date from the same year, 1873; both are contained in Pierpont Morgan ms. MA 3471: *The Story of Halfdan the Black* and *The Story of Harald Hairfair* (the latter concluded in Bodleian ms. Eng. misc. d. 263). Another saga with a completed text is *The Story of Frithiof the Bold*, 22 pages on paper. The decoration, though planned and sketched in, was not completed. Similarly, *Gunlaug the Worm-Tongue* was lettered in 1873-74 but even the text was broken off, in part by Morris’s turning of his attention to the work on his Virgil, a line of
which is included at the end of *Gunnlaug*. One final trial was the smallest book Morris wrote out (8 x 7.3 cm.), in which he makes several starts to the opening of the *Völsunga Saga*, but its four pages remain a curiosity.

Morris’s final manuscript was the mammoth task of writing out Virgil’s *Aeneid*, taking more than a year working at it on Sunday mornings (fig. 11). The opening page of each book was to have a picture covering half of the text space, with the remaining text in golden caps. Burne-Jones designed the twelve large pictures, and Morris coloured in the first, later re-painted by Charles Fairfax Murray. The running heads are Virgil’s name in blue caps on the verso (P. VIRGILII MARONIS) and the title in gold on the recto (AENEIDOS LIBER I), with gold caps in the text on the verso, blue on the recto. Morris designed and executed 22 decorated initials, usually with acanthus leaves (45–72), beginning part way through so that when he returned later to the beginning of the text he would have settled on a coherent scheme (*Works*: 9: xxiv). The Roman script is possibly based on a 15th-century manuscript of St. Jerome in the British Library (ms. Harley 45309), an open, flattened Roman (as in letters a, m, and n) with low serifs. But the lettering remained incomplete: he was already engaged in a translation of Virgil (published 1875), but even so he completed 177 volumn pages (35 x 22.3 cm.) and designed initials.11

Hence, during the six-year period when Morris was completing almost two thousand pages of calligraphy, he was simultaneously translating over thirty sagas with related poetry (like Sigurd the Völsung). Some translations were long, like the *Story of Grettir the Strong* (1869) and *Völsunga Saga* (1870), but many others were either short sagas, or short saga episodes from longer works. He took two trips to Iceland, for two months in 1871 and two weeks in 1873, to study Icelandic and to visit the sites of the sagas.12 As well, Morris perfected his techniques in calligraphy and manuscript illumination through these six styles, including elaborate decorative work on two manuscripts of the classics with which he concluded his development of the italic and Roman scripts. His writing out of all of these manuscripts in a renovation of handwriting was something new in the modern world. Then, in 1875, as he was ending his work on the Virgil manuscript and his translation of it, his attention was drawn away into his next craft, the dyeing of fabrics, that absorbed his interests in the ensuing years. In effect, he had accomplished his goals, and gave up calligraphy, except for the 1890 catalogue of his burgeoning library of medieval manuscripts and early printed books.

III: “I Must Have the Story”: Translating the Sagas

When he began his experiments with Renaissance humanist scripts in 1869, Morris was on the eve of becoming the major translator of the Icelandic sagas in the nineteenth century. A survey of the Old Norse materials available to Victorian readers, including Morris at the beginning of his translating activity, is followed by an assessment of the methods and range of his work in Icelandic translation.

Although he already had a good working knowledge of Old Norse literature and antiquities by 1868, as J.N. Swannell (367) and Oscar Maurer (422) have shown, to undertake a larger project of translation Morris first had to acquire the language, and so worked on it from 1869 with Eiríkr Magnússon. He “suggested we had better start with some grammar, ‘No I can’t be bothered with grammar; have no time for it. You be my grammar as we translate. I want the literature, I must have the story’” (Magnússon 109). To get the story, he became proficient in Icelandic.

Icelandic is one of the Scandinavian languages, part of the old Germanic group, connected to Old High German and bearing some resemblance to Old English. A large migration of nobles left Norway for Iceland during the reign of Harald Harfager (850–933), resisting his attempts to exert centralized authority, and continuing in their ancient religion longer than any other Scandinavian country until they were Christianized about 1000. Their language, referred to as Old Norse, continued almost without change for a thousand years in its written form, and in its vocabulary until the present, though its pronunciation changed somewhat. Old Norse was the language in which the sagas were composed: most manuscripts date from the thirteenth century and later.

These manuscripts include the *Poetic Edda* or *Elder Edda*, a collection of 27 mythical alliterative poems and poems concerning the heroes of the period of the Germanic migrations, many associated with the exploits of Sigurd the Völsung. The *Prose Edda* or *Younger Edda* is a work on the craft of the poet and his materials by Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) who also gathered together a collection of sagas on the history of the Kings of Norway, called *Heimskringla*. In a lecture on “The Early Literature of the North—Iceland” (1887), Morris discusses the country, its mythology and poetic traditions, and finally summarizes its literature, first considering the mythological poems in the *Elder Edda* and then the later *Prose Edda*. The rest of the literature he divides into “Romantic early poems,” the “historical sagas” or the “King-Stories,” and “the tales of family events or feats in Iceland itself.” (LeMiere 191-94). This classification, already widely used among Icelandicists when Morris was writing, is substantially the one still used (see Clover and Lindow’s *Old Norse-Icelandic: A Critical Guide* for a survey of recent scholarship).

This vast literature was accessible to Victorian readers in only very limited ways, chiefly through summaries but rarely in translations. Wawn has laid out “the reception of northern antiquity in nineteenth-century Britain” (1x), tracing its antecedents back to the major publications of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many bought by Morris for his own collection. At Oxford, Burne-Jones introduced Morris to Benjamin Thorpe’s collection of summaries of Icelandic stories in *Northern Mythology* (3 vols. 1851-52), still in his library at his death (*Catalogue* lot 1029; Mackall 1: 39). Morris also knew I.A. Blackwell’s edition of Paul Henri Mallet’s *Northern Antiquities: or, An Account of the Manners, Customs,
Religion and Laws ... of the Ancient Scandinavians ... with a Translation of The Prose Edda (1859). In addition, he read Sir George Dasent’s translations of some of the sagas (such as *The Story of Burnt Njal*, 1861; lot 231 and Gisli the Outlaw, 1866; lot 280), as well as his translation of the *Prose Edda* (1842; lot 248). As Wawn says, “very few other Englishmen at that time would have been able to wrestle convincingly with the saga’s language” (144). Morris used these materials in his own writing before he began his detailed study of Old Norse and the Icelandic sagas. For instance, in *The Earthly Paradise* he used Thorpe’s *Northern Mythology* (1:108-13) as the major source for “The Fostering of Aslaug.” The tale was added to (before Morris published it in late 1870), since some of the details of the narrative are not in Thorpe but in the source, *Ragnars Saga Loðbrókar*, available only in Old Norse as a sequel to the *Völsunga Saga* that Morris had translated by May of 1870. The *Völsunga Saga* and perhaps Thorpe were also sources for an unpublished tale for *The Earthly Paradise*, “The Woeing of Swanbild,” very likely dating from late 1869. Most of the original saga materials, however, remained untranslated and were unknown to his contemporaries.

To prepare for his task of translation, Morris set out systematically by gathering a substantial library of reference books on Old Norse language and literature, about 152 volumes—guide and travel books, books on the geography, flora, and fauna of Iceland, collections of Scandinavian mythology, folk-songs, and stories, books on antiquities and archaeology, dictionaries of Icelandic, and the texts of the sagas themselves, sometimes in parallel editions (Latin, Old Norse, and Danish), sometimes in German. His library contained numerous editions of saga collections and individual texts, as well as the most important historical texts. For instance, he owned what Wawn has called two of the “indispensable folios of the north European renaissance—Olaus Magnus’s *encyclopaedic Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1555), and the first edition (1514) of Saxo Grammaticus’s *12th-century Gesta Danorum*” (17-18). Morris’s copy of the former in the first edition (lot 781) was augmented with the first English translation (1658; lot 782). His copy of the first edition of Saxo (lot 1106) was backed up with P.E. Müller’s edition of 1839 and Oliver Elton’s later translation (1894; lot 1005). Morris also had a wide range of contemporary reference books, such as Sveinbjörn Egilsson’s *Lexicon Poeticum Antiquae Linguae Septentrionalis* (1860; lot 249), the *Icelandic English Dictionary* of Richard Cleasby and Guðbrandur Vigfussson (1874; lot 42), Bjorn ÍRhaltorson’s *Lexicon Islandico-Latino-Danicum* (2 vols. 1814; lot 475), Theodor Möbius’s bibliography, *Catalogus Librorum Islandicorum* (1856; lot 645), Erasmus Rask’s *Grammar of the Icelandic or Old Norse Tongue*, trans. G.W. Dasent (1843; lot 821), and the original edition of his *Lexicon Islandico-Latino-Danicum* (2 vols. 1814; lot 1053). As well as several editions of the *Eddas*, he owned virtually all of the antiquarian and contemporary scholarly editions of the sagas (lots 446-51, 834-53, 893-902), including those for the five major sagas—*Njáls Saga* (2 vols. 1875-83), *Egils Saga* (ed. G.J. Thorkelin, 1809), *Eybyggja Saga* (ed. Thorkelin, 1787), *Laxdela Saga* (ed. Gunnlaugur Oddsson et al., 1826), and *Grettis Saga* (ed. Gisli Magnússon and Gunnlaug Thordarson, 1853)—as well as numerous minor sagas. Among the basic collections of sagas, he owned the three volumes of C.C. Rafn’s *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda* (1829-30; lot 841), the two volumes of *Islandinga sögur*, edited by Pálsson and Ólafur Helgason (1829; lot 841; and two volumes of a later edition, 1843-47; lot 848), twelve volumes of the *Formmanna sögur series* (1825-37; lot 842), and the standard critical commentary, P.E. Müller’s *Sagabibliothek* (3 vols., 1817-20; lot 835). He also had collections of traditional Scandinavian poetry, such as Robert Jamieson’s *Populär Balladi och Sånger* (1806; lot 453), E.G. Geijer’s edition of *Svenska Folkvisor* (1814-16), J.M. Thiele’s *Danske Folkesager* (1819), and *Udvalgte Danske Viser fra Middelalderen* (1812; lot 1022). Hence, rather than being casual towards the details of philology and grammar as some of his remarks to Magnússon suggest, and as some modern critics have repeated, he had all the basic scholarly materials and used them, though he often complained about the difficulty of the translations and the complex verse forms (see *Letters* 1:71-72; 168-69; 180-81; 211-12; 242-43).

In the preface to *Grettis Saga: The Story of Grettir the Strong* (1869), by comparing *Grettir* with other sagas, Morris in effect maps out with Magnússon his programme of translation and calligraphy for the next six years:

> For the original tale we think little apology is due; that it holds a very high place among the Sagas of Iceland no students of that literature will deny; of these we think it yields only to the story of Njal and his sons, a work in our estimation to be placed beside the few great works of the world. Our Saga is fuller and more complete than the tale of the other great outlaw Gisli; less frightful than the wonderfully characteristic and strange history of Egil, the son of Skallagrím; as personal and dramatic as that of Gunnlaug the Worm-tongue, it if lack the rare sentiment of that beautiful story; with more detail and consistency, if with less variety, than the history of Gudrun and her lovers in the *Laxdæla*; and more a work of art than that, or than the unstrung gems of Eybyggja, and the great compilation of Snorri Sturluson, the History of the Kings of Norway. (Works 7: xxvii)

Morris and Magnússon here set out a range of saga literature, referring explicitly to seven of them, five of which they would translate, *Njal* and *Gisli* having already been translated by Sir George Dasent in 1861 and 1866, both in Morris’s library (lots 231 and 280). For such a project to come to fruition, Morris had to follow his usual procedure of learning about a skill from the ground up. His first task was to learn Old Norse in order to read the literature.

He was not content, however, merely to learn grammar and vocabulary, though he did work hard at those skills; he wanted to put them to immediate use. His Icelandic mentor describes their first encounter: “Our acquaintance began first in August, 1868, through the medium of one of his partners [Warrington Taylor] whom I had accidentally met out at a party. I made my appearance on the day appointed and met in the hall of 26 Queen Square my new acquaintance who, with
a cordial ‘Come upstairs’ was off at a bound, I followed until his study on the second floor was reached’ (Magnússon 109). According to Morris, Magnússon was a ‘good philologist and scholar’ who taught him ‘the tongue’ (Letters 1: 66), beginning in October, 1868. Morris consolidated the fluency needed to become reasonably expert in the language by his two trips to Iceland in 1871 and 1873. On these trips Morris discovered that the sagas continued as part of a living Icelandic culture where saga-telling and reading, along with detailed knowledge of the legendary sites and familiarity with the Old Norse language, were everyday experiences: ‘We are come into Viðidal now ... and are kindly received by the border ... [who] knows the sagas well, and tells me that at his stead they always read over his stock of them every winter’ (Works 8: 94).

From the beginning of their collaboration, Magnússon was impressed with Morris’s grasp of the language: ‘He entered into the spirit of it not with the pre-occupied mind of the foreigner, but with the intuition of an uncommonly wide-awake native... But look here, I see through it all, let me try and translate.’ Off he started, translated, blundered, laughed; but still he saw through it all, with an intuition that fairly took me aback... In this way the best of the sagas were run through at daily sittings, generally covering three hours’ (Works 6: vii). Translations of the sagas suddenly began to be completed at an astonishing speed, the product of their three-hour meetings thrice weekly. His daughter summarized their procedures: ‘Morris decided from the beginning to leave alone the irksome task of taking regular grammatical exercises. “You be my grammar as we go along,” was the rule laid down by himself from the beginning’ (7: xvii).

Their method of working was that Morris studied the vocabulary, and together they read a saga in Old Norse, and after the lesson, Magnússon wrote out a literal prose translation of what they had gone over. Morris then revised it, put the poetic parts into verse, and re-translated the whole before they went over it again. But soon there was a greater reciprocity. In the preface to volume VI of the Saga Library Magnússon explained the later method: “Having read together the sagas contained in the first three volumes, Morris wrote out the translation and I collated the MS. with the original. For the last two volumes of the Heimskringla the process was reversed, I doing the translation, he the collation. The style, too, he amended throughout in accordance with his own ideal” (6: vii; see also Harris 119-24).

Their first work in 1868 was translating part of the Eyrrbyggja Saga, the compilation of a Benedictine monk about 1240, dealing with the settlement at Eyrr on the Staafellsnes peninsula in the west of Iceland, but only an incomplete draft was written at this time (Fitzwilliam ms. 255). Soon after they read the Saga of Gunnlaug the Worm-Tongue, translating it into finished form, and publishing it within two weeks in the January 1869 number of the Fortnightly Review. Immediately after they began work on the Grettis Saga, publishing it in May 1869 as a complete book, Grettis Saga: The Story of Grettir the Strong.

After Grettir the Strong, Morris and Magnússon translated the Laxdela Saga into prose in the summer of 1869 (unpublished). Based on this translation Morris completed his version in verse, “The Lovers of Gudrun,” published in part 3 of The Earthly Paradise in November. During this same period they also translated forty chapters of Egils Saga, not published until May Morris issued them (WM&A W 1: 564-636). Shortly after, in December 1869, he and Magnússon began work on two versions of the story of the Niblungs (Letters 1: 98-99). The first was the German Nibelungenlied, for which Morris completed 216 four-line stanzas (three stanzas only were published by May Morris 1: 473-74). The second was the Icelandic Völsunga Saga, for which Magnússon had completed a prose version in the previous summer to send to Morris who was in Germany with his wife. Morris got down to work at it in the autumn, and the revised manuscript went to the publishers in February 1870. It was published in May, the first translation of the saga into English; another did not appear for sixty years (see Kennedy). Völsunga Saga: The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs, included ten songs on Niblung motifs from the Elder Edda. They also worked on a translation of Kormáks Saga, not published for one hundred years. This brisk speed of study, translation, revision, and publication, not only of the sagas, but also of new tales for The Earthly Paradise, as well as Morris’s calligraphic work, continued until 1875 with remarkable results.

Then, in 1890, in another burst of translation, Morris and Magnússon undertook the publication of a series of fifteen volumes (five were first issued in the Saga Library, published by Bernard Quaritch (1891-95). Three of their early translations were somewhat revised and printed in volume one: The Story of Howard the Halt, The Story of the Banded Men, and The Story of Hen Thorir. Volume two contained The Story of the Dwellers at Eyrr and The Story of the Heath-Slayings. Volumes three to five were devoted to The Stories of the Kings of Norway Called the Round World, their translation of the Heimskringla, compiled by Snorri Sturluson in the thirteenth century, part of which had been translated in 1873, and the rest completed in 1891 when Morris was in the midst of setting up the Kelmscott Press. The Saga Library was a monumental literary and scholarly task, one that required great diligence in translation, research into scholarly sources, and annotation, finally supplied by Magnússon in the sixth and final volume (issued in 1905, nine years after Morris’s death), consisting of a long introduction, annotated indexes, and genealogies.

There is considerable disagreement, however, amongst Morris scholars about how many of the sagas were translated, how many published, the completeness of the unpublished manuscripts, and how many were transformed into calligraphic manuscripts. Indeed, some scholars have confused and conflated some of his translations with some of his own poems adapted from the sagas, as well as his use of different sources, especially misreading his original poem Sigurd the Volsung (1877) as though it were his translation of Völsunga Saga: The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs (1870).

Altogether, Morris and Magnússon published 27 saga translations, 17 of them in the 5 volumes of the Saga Library (see Appendix B). Their translations included
long heroic sagas such as Völsunga Saga: The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs and shorter family sagas collected in Three Northern Love Stories and Other Tales (1875, containing seven translations from Icelandic). Ten poems from the Elder Edda were included in Völsunga Saga and three other mythological poems from the Elder Edda, some of considerable length, were published after Morris’s death. Two other works were published posthumously, The Story of Egil, Son of Skallgrím and The Story of Kormá, the Son of Ogmund. Four other sagas remain unpublished, bringing the total number of translations to 33 sagas and 13 poems from the Elder Edda. As well, Morris published three narrative poems in The Earthly Paradise based on Icelandic sagas (plus one other incomplete and unpublished poetic narrative, “The Wooing of Swanhild”), his own poetic rendering of the Sigurd story in Sigrud the Volsung, and a range of other prologues, poems on Iceland, sonnets, lectures, and other writings. He also translated and published two Icelandic ballads and four Danish ballads in Poems by the Way (1891), an astonishing range of translation and publication. This translation project, moreover, had substantial implications for Morris’s social and political theories.

IV: “The Treasure-house of the Mythology of the Whole Teutonic Race”:
Iceland, Ideology, and the Sagas

Morris and Magnússon begin the introduction to the first volume of the Saga Library by claiming that their long project of the translation of Old Norse literature is “addressed to the whole reading public, and not only to students of Scandinavian history, folklore, and language” (Saga 1: v). This anticipated wide readership is appealed to for three reasons. First, the Old Norse literary heritage is “akin to British traditional culture because the language and laws of Iceland, preserved ‘scarcely unaltered since the thirteenth century,’ are ‘akin to our own’ (1: v). Second, Iceland’s ‘historical past, unlike that of most of Europe, has its well-remembered history, while the earlier folk-lore is embedded in that history’ (1: vi). Third, the language, law, and historical memory are preserved in a literature that is broad in appeal, stylistically realistic with “no word wasted,” and dramatic in narrative: “in short, the simplest and purest form of epical narration is the style of these works” (1: xi). Morris summarizes the import of this history and literature:

It was but natural that the freemen of Iceland should have retained the memory of the mythology and hero-tales of the Gothic tribes; but, moreover, the poetic life and instinct which made Iceland the treasure-house of the mythology of the whole Teutonic race, did not stop there. The dwellers in Iceland had still abundant intercourse with other lands in the north of Europe, including the British Isles.... Amidst this restless life, the deeds which they did and witnessed, the histories and traditions which they heard, cried on them for record and not in vain; for the Icelanders became the historians of the mainland of Scandinavia, which, but for them would have no record of its early epoch.

(Saga 1: vii-viii)

Hence, the ancient Icelandic literature is to Morris the “treasure-house” of both mythology and history, not only of their own inhabitants, but of the nations whence they came, and in part which they encountered. Thirty years earlier in the preface to Grettir the Strong he had the same theory about the sagas’ representing “a race of men akin to ourselves” (Works 7: xxxviii).

Accordingly, Morris does not set out to translate the sagas merely because of their intrinsic literary qualities or as transmissions of self-evident, ahistorical cultural values. Instead, he sees his project as a transformation of a literary form, from Icelandic saga to English “story” that is necessary for it to function in its new historically specific social formation, Victorian England. In the terms of recent translation studies, Morris converts the text in the source language (Old Norse) into the target or receptor language (English), attempting to make accessible to new readers the society, culture, and literature of a different age, people, and tongue.

“Free Tribal Customs ... in that Romantic Desert”:
The Teutons and Victorian England

In his 1887 lecture “The Early Literature of the North--Iceland,” Morris draws a similar connection between the contemporary inhabitants of Iceland and their forbears whose literature had transmitted the preserved culture of Teutonic Europe to nineteenth-century England:

They are the representatives, a little mingled with Irish blood, of the Gothic family of the great Germanic race: their forefathers fled before “the violence of kings and sorciers,” as they wrote it, to save their free tribal customs for a while in that romantic desert, and of the indomitable courage and strong individuality it beheld that the rugged volcanic mass has become the casket which has preserved the records of the traditions and religion of the Gothic tribes, and collaterally of the Teutonic also; the instrument of this preservation is the language of their fathers, which is still current amongst them almost intact; the shepherd boy on the hill-side, the fisherman in the firth still chant the songs that preserve the memory of the Germanic race, and the most illustrious are absolutely familiar with the whole of the rich literature of their country and know more of the Haralds and Olafs of the tenth and eleventh centuries than most of our “cultivated” persons know of Oliver Cromwell or William Pitt. Therefore I look upon these poor people with a peculiar affection and their country is to me a Holy Land. (LeMire 181)

The “casket” which has preserved the records was already a cliché in nineteenth-century Gothic romances. To Morris, however, it represents the dead land of volcanic stone as both a tomb and as “the romantic desert” where “free tribal customs ... indomitable courage and strong individuality” flourished. At the same time it is a kind of shrine in the “Holy Land” in which are preserved the “records of the traditions and religion” of the Teutonic peoples who are “akin to ourselves.” Finally, the casket is identified with the language, the “instrument of this preservation,” no longer a symbol of death, but “still current.”
Such an identification of the Gothic tribes and Teutonic peoples with the Anglo-Saxons and their English descendants was a nationalist commonplace among British historians in the nineteenth century, though the concept has a long history. Morris's stress on the traditions of northern freedom, for instance, can be found in Gibbon: "The most civilized nations of modern Europe issued from the woods of Germany; and in the rude institutions of those barbarians we may still distinguish the original principles of our present laws and manners" (1:250). In *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1840) Carlyle devoted the first chapter to Odin and Scandinavian mythology, identifying "Scandinavian Paganism" as "the creed of our fathers" (14) and Odin as "the Type Norseman; the finest Teuton whom that race had yet produced... The fruit of him is found growing, from deep thousands of years, over the whole field of Teutonic life" (26).

To Carlyle, "that whole Norse way of looking at the universe" is "the stifled voice of the long-buried generations of our own Fathers, calling out of the depths to us, in whose veins their blood still runs" (27). Following the same racist argument on the continuity of blood, Charles Kingsley in *The Roman and the Teuton* (1864) argued that the English were a northern Teutonic race who kept "unbroken the old Teutonic laws, unstained the old Teutonic faith and virtue" (17). This notion was given more significant historical status when E.A. Freeman traced the British Constitution from "the first Teutonic settlers" to "the Norman Conquest" when "the many small Teutonic kingdoms in Britain had grown into one Teutonic kingdom of England, rich in her barbaric greatness and barbaric freedom, with the germ, but as yet only the germ, of every institution which we most dearly prize" (42).

Freeman developed his arguments in *The Growth of the English Constitution* (1876) to show that the genealogy of the British parliament could be traced in unbroken descent to the earliest Teutonic institutions. In *The Constitutional History of England* (1874-78) William Stubbs advanced similar arguments (MacDougall 89-103; Helgason, 58-62). At the same time, the sagas represent the authentic life of medieval Iceland, as Desant claimed in the subtitle to his translation of *Brynja: Life in Iceland at the End of the Tenth Century* (1861), and their heroes bear comparison with those of Homer: to Morris, *The Story of the Volsungs* is "the Great Story of the North which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks" (Works 7: 286).

Based on the dissimilarity between medieval Iceland and Victorian Britain, however, Morris in his 1887 lecture interjects an important qualification to the relation of Teutonic mythology, Icelandic sagas, and the English. He maintained that the political and social system that had developed in England was vastly different from that in medieval Iceland, and very far removed from that of the sagas, even though Old Norse words for aspects of government and law are similar to those used in Victorian Britain: "This state of things was really so very different from ours in spite of our using the same words as our forefathers" (LeMire 183). Freedom in medieval Icelandic society, he maintained, was unlike that in Victorian England. In Iceland it was "based ... on the equal personal rights of all free-men" (184), who formed into a bond of a "chief with his thralls many of whom he freed and gave land to on his coming to the new country" (182-83). According to a recent historian, this gift of land in the middle ages involved a concept of the "Mark" as both a plot of land and as a voluntary community of free households settled on community land (MacDougall 96). This relationship of freedom and land was different from other medieval European societies, though it had been projected unproblematically by Victorian popularisers into a basis for present-day freedoms and property rights. Morris used the historical context himself in *A Tale of the House of the Wolfings and All the Kindreds of the Mark* (1889), but he rejected such popular continuities, asserting that freedom was tarnished and largely vanished in Victorian England, and that property rights were the evidence of continuing class and economic exploitation. In Morris's political view in the later 1880s, the subjugation of workers to the economics of class warfare effectively removed their freedoms, replacing them with slavery to the machine and their capitalist owners.

"Old Norse Literature ... a Good Corrective": Politics and the Sagas

Morris had made exactly that point in contrasting Iceland and England in his autobiographical letter to his socialist friend Andreas Scheu in 1883. He had written to Scheu about the relations among his early literary works, *The Earthly Paradise*, and his Icelandic studies and writings:

In 1858 I published a volume of poems, *The Defence of Guenevere; exceedingly young also and very medieval; and then after a lapse of some years conceived the idea of my Earthly Paradise, and fell to work very hard at it. I had about this time extended my historical reading by falling in with translations from the old Norse literature, and found it a good corrective to the muddering side of mediævalism.... About 1870 I had made the acquaintance of an Icelandic gentleman, Mr. E. Magnússon, of whom I learned to read the language of the North, and with whom I studied most of the works of that literature; the delightful freshness and independence of thought of them, the air of freedom which breathes through them, their worship of courage (the great virtue of the human race), their utter unconventionality took my heart by storm.... In 1871 I went to Iceland with Mr. Magnússon, and, apart from my pleasure in seeing that romantic desert, I learned one lesson there, thoroughly I hope, that the most grinding poverty is a trifling evil compared with the inequality of classes. (Letters 2: 229)

Morris makes two references to mediævalism here, one in relation to *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858), written and published when he was doing his first three calligraphic manuscripts in a Gothic style, and one in relation to *The Earthly Paradise*, in which the Icelandic sagas are a corrective to the muddering side of mediævalism with their different ethic, literary style, language, and cultural values. Furthermore, and most important for our argument, the translation of the sagas is put into two political contexts, one in relation to the literary utopian convention of
instance, took the opposite view: “A poem, therefore, which, like Sigurd, reflects, with hard, uncompromising realism, an obsolete code of ethics, and a barbarous condition of society, finds itself irreconcilably at discord with the key of nineteenth-century feeling.... It can only appeal to the intellect as a work of art or as a more or less successful attempt at antiquarian restoration. It may be admired and applauded by the lettered few; but it will not be taken to the nation’s heart, nor its language incorporated in the common speech” (Faulkner 262-63). Other reviews praised the poem as Morris’s finest, as one of two national epics (the other being Tennyson’s Idylls of the King) responding to the needs of a modern audience, and as reproducing the ancient world as contemporaries feel it (Faulkner 230-67).

Morris’s ideological assimilation of the ethos of the sagas and his cultural incorporation of that world into his translations raise other questions—about its warfare, expansionism, pillaging, and other forms of imperial conquest. This list of social practices points to what Tejaswini Niranjana refers to as “the post-colonial context of translation” (1). Translation in a post-colonial context is “a significant site for raising questions of representation, power, and historicity.” The context is one of contesting and contested stories attempting to “account for, to recount, the asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races, languages” (1). In his writings on Iceland, Morris contests the Victorians’ notion of a transparent assimilation of supposed Teutonic precedents for what he considered to be a repressive Victorian state apparatus.

Morris is also able to use the sagas to question Victorian contentment with the repletion of society as a utopia achieved and expanding in the British empire. The imperial expansion that carried British values and ideals to the colonies was much worse, in Morris’s view, than the exploits of the ancient Norse colonizers, explorers, and raiders, as he said with heavy irony in a lecture on “Early England”:

> These men of the earlier world were rough, predatory, cruel, or at least of ungovernable passions which led them into cruelty; but there is no parallel between them and the offscourings of our commercial civilization as certain fifth-rate romantics are apt to try to make us believe: the ruffians who are the quite worthy pioneers of American or English colonial civilization are to the backbone commercial ... i.e. thieves under the protection and encouragement of the laws...

> Now if you ask me how I know that these terrible sea rovers who founded the English nation amidst rapine and bloodshed in these islands were free from this foulest of qualities I can tell you, first that they bore with them a literature, unwritten of course, but fragments of which having been afterwards written down are still left us ... [such as] the epic of Beowulf. (LeMire, 162)

Morris continues at length to contrast the “hideous card-sharpening border ruffians of America and the colonies” who are “terrible to friend and foe alike” and who are “pure individualists” with the “Teutonic tribes” who were “corporate bodies of men united into artificial families for self-preservation and the satisfaction of the mutual needs of their members” (163-64). Of the later Viking raids on English coasts,
Morris uses the term “pillage,” but also warns against equating these raiders with later-day pirates like Captain Kidd, “the chivalry of the later Middle Age,” or the institutionally-sanctioned brigands like Drake and Hawkins. The Vikings returned home as worthy people in two respects: first, they were “respectable agrarianists,” and, second, “almost every one could settle a copy of verses on occasion” (168-69). Whatever the validity of such Viking virtues, to Morris planting for harvest and writing poetry are linked together by him in saga culture, along with free association and mutual self-help. The translation of the sagas, then, given this context, contests accepted notions with contested narratives. In a sense Morris anticipates an aspect of contemporary translation theory, an emphasis not on interlingual verbal equivalence, but on raising questions about representation, power, and historicity—about cultural difference from source text and culture to receptor language and culture (Lefevere Translating 11-14; Translation 1-40; Venuti, Rethinking 1-17; “Translator’s”).

To Morris the sagas provide “contesting and contested stories” that attempt, as Niranjana says, “to account for, to recount, the asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races, languages.” The fundamental contradiction for Morris in late Victorianism is the paired evil of economic servitude and classism that he considers central to both the condition of England question and to imperial expansion. It is this notion of resistance to complacent utopianism that Terry Eagleton claims can have an important role in tracing the contradictions in the present: “A utopian thought that does not risk simply making us ill is one able to trace within the present that secret lack of identity with itself which is the spot where a feasible future might germinate—the place where the future overshares and hollows out the present’s spurious repetenness. To ‘know the future’ can only mean to grasp the present under the sign of its internal contradictions, in the alienations of its desire, and its persistent inability ever quite to coincide with itself” (25-26). These comments on utopia raise two possibilities for relating Morris’s ideological concerns and his use of calligraphy: the first, dealing primarily with translations, concerns Morris’s use of archaic diction; the second, dealing primarily with calligraphy, concerns the ideological role of the saga manuscripts as holy books.

**Archaic Diction and “The Teutonic Element in Our Speech”**

The first internal contradiction in Morris’s counter-utopian sagas is his archaic diction, which contemporary and modern critics have both praised and derided. In contemporary reviews, Morris’s diction was often praised as faithful to the originals. For instance, G.A. Simeon praised the diction of the *Volsungs and Niblung* in the Academy: “The quaint archaic English of the translation...has just the right outlandish flavour” (Faulkner 153). To the anonymous reviewer in the Spectator, the translators have achieved “beauty of the language” despite “certain archaisms which become intolerable” and the proclivity to “Chaucerize” (160-61). To Swinburne the diction and the long metres become a liability: “Let him build—and burn—as many halls or homesteads after the pattern of Burnt Njal’s as he pleases, but for any sake withhold him from more metrification to a Piers Ploughman.... It is my belief that you encourage all this dashed and blank Volusungi which will end up by eating up the splendid genius it has already overgrown and encrustcd with Icelandic moss” (198). The most damning of all evaluations is that of Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell who, in their collection of Icelandic poetry, denounce Morris for “affectation or archaism, and the abuse of archaic, Scottish, pseudo-Middle English words. This abominable fault makes a Saga, for instance, sound unreal, unfamiliar, false; it conceals all diversities of style and tone beneath a fictitious mask of monotonous uniformity, and slurs over the real difficulties by a specious nullity of phrasing” (1: cvx). Eventually they were answered by Magnusson in the last volume of the Saga Library: “Anyone in a position to collate the Icelandic text with the translation will see at a glance that in the overwhelming majority of cases these terms are literal translations of the Icel. originals.... It is a strange piece of impertinence to hint at ‘pseudo-Middle-English’ scholarship in a man who...might be said to be a living edition of all that was best in M.-E. literature.” Magnusson rightly goes on to ask whether “it is worth while to carry closeness of translation to this length” (6: viii), acknowledging that some readers find the translations hard going without a glossary which he here supplies.

Recent critics have evaluated the saga translations from the same extremes, some defending, some attacking Morris’s diction. Among the attackers, Dorothy Hoare is harshest, claiming that Morris “did not grasp the style and the matter with which he was dealing” (54) and so she claims “from any point of view the translations are failures; they are too exact in their effort to follow the words and syntax and they fail lamentably to give the particular feeling of the original” (62). Bassnett-McGuire calls the translations “deliberately, consciously archaic, full of such peculiarities of language that they are difficult to read and often obscure” (67-68). Aho lists a number of these archaisms (“Iceland” 107-11). On the other hand, Robert W. Gutman refers to Morris’s “superb translation” of *Volsunga Saga: The Story of the Volsungs and Niblung* (13). More precisely, scholars like Linda Gallasch, in a very detailed study of Morris’s diction, has corroborated Magnusson’s assessment. She concludes: “The majority of Morris’s archaic forms can be found in Chaucer, Malory, or Lord Berners, in three of the works which Morris himself said had particularly influenced his writings.... Morris’s diction was greatly influenced by his study of Old Norse. Over half of the compounds not listed in the OED...have Old Norse equivalents” (158). More recently, various Old Norse scholars have re-assessed Morris’s translations. For instance, Wawn compares Morris’s diction in *Heimskringla* with Samuel Laing’s translation of 1844 (in Morris’s library; lot 431): “The Morris version, carrying more philological firepower, seems tauter with its retention of kennings and alliteration, its internal
rhyme, its avoidance of elaborately premodified noun phrases, its greater compound noun creativity, and its resistance to abstraction" (103). Various critics have been at pains to show the care Morris took with the revisions of Magnússon’s transcriptions, such as Karl Litzenberg who addresses the question of the fleshed medievalism of Morris’s diction by showing that in the sagas of Three Northern Love Stories the supposedly pseudo-Middle English diction is based assiduously on Old Norse roots or authentic Chaucerian usage except for a few neologisms. Similarly, J.N. Swannell shows how Morris and Magnússon avoided Latinisms and conventional newspaper jargon (375-77). Aho also mentions Litzenberg’s argument by looking at the use of Icelandic terms, Chaucerianisms, and replacements of Romance by German language words in Three Northern Love Stories (xvii-xxi).

In his lecture on “Early England,” Morris laments precisely this loss to English of the Saxon and Norse word-boards in the face of the dominant culture of France after the Norman invasion: “Literature also became Frenchified and here to its great misfortune as I think. The great works of the English poets ever since Chaucer’s time have had to be written in what is little more than a dialect of French and I cannot help looking on that as a mishap. If we could only have preserved our language as the Germans have theirs” (LeMire 177). In the saga translations he seeks also to remedy the loss not by casual efforts, but by a principled theory of translation based upon the historical and linguistic affinities of Old Norse and Old English, augmented by Middle English words, and exhibiting a preference for German over Romance elements, as Magnússon explains:

Morris was... widely read in Middle English literature. This reading early gave his poetical diction a certain old-time flavour. But this was the marked difference that, while Middle English is markedly coloured by the use of Romance words, Morris’s poetry and his narrative prose are markedly Teutonic. He often used to say that the Teutonic was the poetical element in English, while the Romance element was that of law, practice and business.

From the beginning Morris was strongly impressed by the simple dignity of the Icelandic saga. There must be living many of his friends who heard him frequently denounce it as something intolerable to have read an Icelandic saga rendered into the dominant literary dialect of the day—the English newspaper phrase. Hence William Morris used to say, we know the secret of the Homeric dignity of the saga style: the tale is told of the aristocrats of the sword to their aristocratic descendants. This dignity of style cannot be reached by the Romance element in English. If it is to be reached at all—and then only approximately—it must be by means of the Teutonic element in our speech—the nearest akin to Icelandic. (Works 7: xvi-xvii)

Morris’s specific role in the translation work was to convert Magnússon’s academic formalities into a text that conforms to these literary priorities and historical associations. To Magnússon he wrote: “I am deeply impressed with the necessity of making translations literate: only they must be in English idiom and in un-degraded English at the same time; hence in short all the difficulty of translation” (Letters 2: 213). Accordingly, Morris revises the diction to recover philological cognates with Old Norse, Chaucerian and other medievalisms, Germanisms, and an extensive range of little-used subordinating conjunctions. Such deliberate word choices are meant to distance a reader by dislodging conventional literary idioms in favour of archaic words and phrases. That is, Morris uses a process that came to be called “defamiliarization” by the Russian formalists, making language difficult, challenging accepted canons of euphony and artistry, and purposely rendering concepts and meanings obscure. Morris foregrounds the fact that his is a translation from a foreign tongue, not an English text recently written, but a text of long ago and far away. Such a text is disassociated from present language and customs by interlingual compounds, obsolete usages, and coinages, by re-arrangements of words into non-conventional syntax, by strange spellings and connotations that continually force upon a reader the unfamiliar that stresses the foreignness of a translated text.

The resulting defamiliarization of the diction in the sagas allows the source language text to be rendered in the receptor language not only as an interlingual but also as an intercultural transformation, what André Lefevere calls “acculturation” (Bassnett-McGuire 67-68; Lefevere, Translating 11-14; Prow 85). Morris’s contradiction of accepted norms of conventional poetic English and conventional hierarchies of genre is an attempt, in Eagleton’s words, “to trace within the present that secret lack of identity with itself,” the secret lack of identity between the people of the sagas and their English kin, between their literatures, histories, and languages; and by stressing just this defamiliarization through diction, Morris’s translation project “hollows out the present’s spurious repetitiveness.”

“The Whole Writing Legible”: Calligraphy and “Competitive Commerce”

Morris not only published many of the translations that he and Magnússon completed, but, as we have seen, he also lettered some fourteen calligraphic manuscripts of the sagas. Having translated them, why bother to letter them all out again? This question points to a second contradiction regarding Morris’s use of Icelandic sagas as a counter-utopia to Victorian complacency. He later explained how the antiqua tonda lettering of Ludovico Arrighi (Nash 302) helped him letter the first draft of the frontispiece of the Kelmscott Press A Dream of John Ball (1892): “I helped myself out of that piece of Ludovico” (Letters 3: 440). For the frontispiece to his account of the Peasant’s Revolt of 1381 with its striking parallels with the political agenda of the Socialist League six hundred years later, Morris turned again to the humanist calligraphers. Writing to a student of calligraphy he praised the same letterforms and the early twelfth-century models on which they were-based: “The writer should look at some old books printed or written before the 16th century... The writer should study some fine book written about 1120 or even earlier in which he will find the forms of the letters very good & the whole writing legible” (Letters 4: 235).

Hence, by using “that piece of Ludovico” Morris was able to inscribe the sagas calligraphically to make “the whole writing legible.” By using this mode of
handcraft production, Morris contradicted the utilitarian value systems of the age that were already under attack in Dickens's characterization of Bounderby and in Carlyle's of Pluvson of Undershot. Here again Morris confronts the present's spurious repeteness and utilitarian focus on mechanical reproduction. He is "hallowing out" by hallowing. He confers on the sagas the distinction of enshrining them in a "treasure-house" (the word that he used for Iceland's preservation of the sagas), but a treasure-house of calligraphy and decoration. They are the holy books of the north, from a country that he had called a "Holy Land." Consequently he lavished time and artistic effort not only on learning the language and translating the sagas, but on adorning them to bestow the status accorded to the religious books of medieval Europe. More significantly, by using humanist script, Morris follows the tradition of the Renaissance scribes who copied the classics in the same script, thereby bestowing honour on "the Great Story of the North, which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks—to all our race first, and afterwards, when the change of the world has made our race nothing more than a name of what has been—a story too—then should it be to those that come after us no less than the Tale of Troy has been to us" (Works 7: 286). Just as the humanist scribes had re-discovered the unknown literary manuscripts of Greece and Rome, translated them, and preserved them by copying them out in italic and Roman calligraphy for their age and the ages to come, so Morris re-discovered the almost unknown sagas of Scandinavia, translated them, and preserved them by copying them out on fine paper and vellum in the same italic and Roman calligraphy used by the humanists for the classics.

The calligraphy mediates the sagas to the Victorians in that the legibility of the italic and Roman scripts normalizes the sagas: "the forms of the letters are very good & the whole writing legible." The sagas are not set apart in a Gothic lettering, which was the convention advocated in Victorian lettering manuals that tied calligraphy to the conventions of piety in medieval Christian Europe. Instead, Morris adopts for the Icelandic classics the Renaissance letterforms used by the humanists to copy the literature of pre-Christian Europe, the classics of Greece and Rome. Such letterforms were conventional in printed books from the first Roman and italic fonts of Aldus Manutius and his followers in the fifteenth century. Though their letterforms had, in Morris's view, become degraded in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century letter-press printing, the calligraphic forms that he re-discovered from the humanist manuals, and that he used for the sagas, presented scripts that were improvements on many of the printers' fonts of Morris's day. Hence, even the defamiliarized dictum is normalized in a legible calligraphic (as well as printed) form. The diction of the sagas, intrinsically Germanic or "Teutonic" as Morris argued, is represented in familiar letterforms, through calligraphy virtually unused in the world since the Renaissance, allowing that diction to be apprehended and assimilated on its own merits in the telling of the tale. Furthermore, his calligraphy allowed Morris control over the modes of production and dissemination of his lettered works, a matter that became of greater and greater importance in his theories of handcraft, work, and the appropriate uses of labour. Such control over the modes of production was not possible to him in the printing of his works until he established the Kelmscott Press in 1890; until then, he had become increasingly frustrated over the appearance of his printed texts.

From the late 1860s, just at the same period when he was developing his calligraphy and undertaking his study of Old Norse and the translation of the sagas, Morris experimented with various ways of improving the appearance of his printed books. He and Burne-Jones projected from about 1865 a lavish edition of The Earthly Paradise with some two or three hundred woodcuts. Some, especially for the story of Cupid and Psyche, were drawn on wood by Burne-Jones and the blocks were cut by Morris; some pages, long thought lost, were actually set up by the Chiswick Press using both Caslon and Basle Roman type faces (Dunlap Book; Morris Story). But Morris abandoned the project, probably because of the inadequacy of the type when balanced with the black intensity of the woodblock illustrations. Other efforts included a plan for Love is Enough (1873) with decorated woodcut borders by Morris and other illustrations by Burne-Jones, but only trial pages were printed, as well as the trade edition. Not until he carefully supervised the printing of some of his prose romances in the late 1880s, before the establishment of the Kelmscott Press, was Morris able to exercise a more complete control over production.

From 1869 to 1875, however, calligraphy provided for Morris an interim solution to authorial control over text and design: he could experiment with calligraphic letterforms that to him were appropriate for the sagas and could also embellish them with appropriate decoration and ornament. He was attempting, as Jerome McGann has maintained, "to come to grips with this problem of poetry's relation to its material encoding" (45), obliterating the distinction between poem and text: "One of Morris's greatest insights ... is the understanding that no distinction should be permitted between the conception of the poem and the conception of the text" (46). As well as discussing the experiments in printing to which we have referred, McGann describes Morris's calligraphy in A Book of Verse (1870) as "a total integration of all its textual elements," in which "cooperative design dominates the book from execution to finished product" (59; 60). The calligraphic sagas were also cooperative productions. Morris always insisted that Magnússon be given proper credit for his work (Letters 1: 513-14), and often collaborated in the illumination of the sagas, though not in the design or calligraphy. In these calligraphic books the semantic is almost overdetermined by the semiotic, a system of signs that draws attention to its own material conditions of production.

In the nineteenth century, what Marx in Grundrisse called the "necessary conditions of epic poetry," had vanished. The new conditions, precisely when Marx was writing, included new modes of production exploited by industrial capitalism that transformed the relations between the author, the publisher, and the literary
text, such modes as the steam press, the circulating libraries with three-decker novels, changes in the factory laws, the rise of the periodical and newspaper press with their mass circulation, and the use of expanding railways for dissemination. The impact of such transformations has been analyzed in relation to the Victorian novel by Norman Feltes, whose central argument has a particular application here. As a result of the changes in property and copyright law from the Statute of Anne (1709) to the Donaldson case (1774) there comes to exist “a property right in the text itself” and so it becomes marketable: “What I propose to label a ‘commodity-text’ is such a text, produced in the new capitalist mode of production, produced in struggle by the new ‘professional’ author within the new structures of control over the publishing process” (Feltes 8). On the one hand, Morris’s commercial publication of The Earthly Paradise extended its marketability by serial publication in four volumes, building a market based on consumer demand for completion. On the other hand, his efforts to produce an illustrated and finely printed edition was, to some degree, an attempt to opt out of this process. By adopting in his calligraphic translations a manual reproduction of all of the conditions of production, Morris was attempting to challenge the necessary conditions of the commodity-text.

In Victorian publishing, the production of surplus value in such a commodity-text as it is multiplied and disseminated permitted great profit for the publisher and the author. But at the same time it depended upon a system of labour conditions in the printing industry that came under increasingly critical scrutiny. Parliamentary commissions examined the abusive conditions in the printing trades in the 1850s and 1860s, attacking them for their unhealthy working conditions, the use of sweated labour, the rampant incidence of tuberculosis because of the fumes and chalk dust; the high incidence of lead, antimony, and arsenic poisoning from the compositors’ habit of distributing or sorting type by holding some of it in their mouths, the abuses practised on young children in working long hours, and finally the collapse of the very old apprentice system in the trade when children who grew too tall were simply dismissed as no longer usable. Such reports culminated in the fifth report of the Children’s Employment Commission (1866), but even with changes in the Factory Acts Extension Act (1867) children could still work twelve hours a day (Plant 356-74).

In the first volume of Capital (that Morris read in 1883), Marx writes about such abuses in the printing industry brought on by the division of labour and the deskilling of workers:

A great part of the children employed in modern factories and manufactures are from their earliest years riveted to the most simple manipulations, and exploited for years, without being taught a single kind of skill that would afterwards make them of use, even in the same factory. In the English letter-press printing trade, for example, there formerly existed a system corresponding to that in the old manufactures and handicrafts, of advancing the apprentices from easy to more and more difficult work.

They went through a course of teaching until they were finished printers. To be able to read and write was for every one of them a requirement of their trade. All this was changed by the printing machine. It employs two sorts of worker. On the one hand there are adults, testers, and on the other hand there are boys, mostly from 11 to 17 years of age, whose sole occupation is either to spread the sheets of paper under the machines, or to take from it the printed sheets. They perform this weary task in London, especially, for 14, 15, and 16 hours a stretch, during several days in the week, and frequently for 36 hours, with only 2 hours’ rest for meals and sleep. A great proportion of them cannot read, and they are, as a rule, utter savages and very extraordinary creatures. (I: 615)

Marx’s description sets out the devastating effects of the division of labour upon children through the collapse of the apprentice system, the neglect of literacy, and the impact of machine production on handicraft industry, all the result of what Morris had called “the inequality of classes” in his letter to Schue. Marx’s language points to just the “kind of skill” that Morris wanted workers in “the old manufactures and handicrafts” to be taught to become “finished” craftsmen. In his own working practice he carried out the same principles, learning a craft from the bottom up to become proficient in it, as he wrote in the same letter to Schue: “We only use the old methods that obtained before the apotheosis of shoddy, and the free exchange of adulterated wares, I have had to learn the theory and to some extent the practice of weaving, dyeing and textile printing... Both my historical studies and my practical conflict with the philistinism of modern society have forced on me the conviction that art cannot have a real life and growth under the present system of commercialism and profit-mongering” (Letters 2: 227-30).

Two months later Morris wrote to the Pall Mall Gazette about his continuing opposition to competitive commerce from the very time of his calligraphic work on the sagas: “My life for upwards of twenty years has been one of combat against competitive commerce on behalf of popular art. It is this combat which has driven me into some knowledge of the methods of production both of the medieval and the workshop or 17th-18th century periods, and has finally forced on me the conviction that the fully-developed system of competitive commerce must be fatal to art, and that the remedy for this threat to civilization is not reaction, but the entire abolition of all class supremacy” (2: 247). In his calligraphy, then, Morris simultaneously avoids two “necessary conditions” within the printing industry, a reliance upon the commodity-text as an “apotheosis of shoddy” resulting from competitive commerce, and its ancillary, a reliance upon the “class supremacy” of capital with its abusive labour practices. In his calligraphic texts he controls “the methods of production,” and practices “the old manufactures and handicrafts.” But his calligraphy does not engage with the abusive conditions of production in the printing industry. His is a mode of production that depends upon leisure, time, and money.

In an important sense, Morris’s calligraphy also has to be assessed as a form of textuality and representation. On the one hand, it surrenders control as a mode
of communication, giving everything over to the owner of the manuscript for whom it is a private possession, unlike the reproduced commodity-text. The calligraphic book is inaccessible, costly, archaic, and private. On the other hand, as a work of art it has not undergone that process of mechanical reproduction which turns it from being an object of high culture to a commodity in either Pelvis's sense or in Walter Benjamin's: a manuscript, even more than a painting, "is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience, as it was possible for architecture at all times, for the epic poem in the past, and for the movie today" (Benjamin 234-35). Instead, the mechanical reproduction of the sagas in printed form detaches them, as Benjamin shows, "from the domain of tradition" (221). It is in this context that the original court production of the sagas by the skalds, their representation in the family circle by the bards, and their reinscription in small communities by the scribes, articulate Benjamin's "fabric of tradition." Morris's translations rearticulate that tradition by transmitting cultural values, from twelfth- and thirteenth-century Scandinavia to Victorian England. At the same time, calligraphy allows an ambivalent but important position of opposition to be established by Morris against the mechanical production he saw around him with its potential and real abuses, an opposition that enabled to be re-established a historic handicraft, one of the lesser but essential arts of the people that he came to praise in his later socialist and art lectures.

For these reasons Morris's calligraphy and illumination can be assessed in different ways. First, his contribution was direct, upon those who saw his books, especially at the first exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1888 where Morris exhibited a number of illuminations that he had presented to Georgiana Burne-Jones, including The Rubáiyát (first Roman script), The Dwellers at Eye and A Book of Verse (second italic), and pages from Horace's Odes (fourth italic). He also had an influence on those who saw him work and learned his methods, such as Sydney Cockerell who passed on his techniques and interests, and who showed Morris's calligraphy to Edward Johnston, one of the most influential calligraphers of the twentieth century. Second, his importance was indirect, through those who were influenced by his innovative use in modern times of a humanistic script. He was not, however, a professional calligrapher--his work lacks the required even regularity and consistent attention to models for letterforms. But he was a brilliant amateur, and profoundly affected the later generations of professionals. Further, in the matter of marginal decoration he freely invented and refined his floriated initials and organic designs, opening up the calligraphic page to all kinds of variations in his own printed fabrics, wallpapers, and tapestries, and to further development by later scribes. Third, Morris's knowledge of the history of lettering, supplemented by his large and important collection of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts and printed books, some of which were also exhibited and well-known in his life-time, were a basis for the designs of type that he made for the Kelmscott Press that has had such an impact on modern printing. He was, then, one-of-the important pioneers in the nineteenth century in the recovery of italic handwriting that Edward Johnson, Graily Hewitt, and Alfred Fairbank amongst many others, and through them into the school systems of Europe and America, have made to the revival of handwriting and modern calligraphy in the twentieth century. Finally, the translations of the sagas themselves initiated a strong revival of interest in Scandinavian literature that continues to the present.

V: Conclusion

One way of tying this argument to Morris's larger political projects is to contextualize his translation and calligraphic practices with his utopian romances, and to read the contradictions between calligraphy and translation as consistent with the contradictions in the projection of an ideal future. The process of writing utopian romance critiques the present by projecting an ideal future free of the limitations of the present social formation. Within this utopian project the contradictions of present political discourses are resolved by extension into the future. Morris's attempts to use a humanistic calligraphy for utopian ends cannot be resolved by a projection into a future. Instead he is constantly faced with differences between cultures, languages, and letterforms; hence, an attempt to find an appropriate letter form to resolve those differences is doomed to continual failure as is evidenced by his unremitting experiments with calligraphic letterforms, settling on each new one for only a comparatively short time until he moved on to another variant of the humanist hands, sometimes returning to an earlier one, all of them anticipatory of his finally settled letterforms for the typefaces at the Kelmscott Press.

The point is not to resolve the difficulties by extolling the beauty of Morris's calligraphy in uncritical or even critical terms, nor by elaborating inconsistencies or failures on Morris's part, but rather by reading these experiments and difficulties as part of his utopianizing effort "to trace within the present that secret lack of identity with itself which is the spot where a feasible future might germinate" (Eagleton 25). A feasible future can only be defined by grasping the present under the sign of its internal contradictions, with all of the gaps and omissions in a thorough programme and strategy that implies.

For Morris, this strategy entailed a looking to the past for alternative literary and social models, to the sagas and Iceland, to the Iliad and the other ancient epics whose "necessary conditions" of production, as Marx said, had vanished. From his present, Morris's attempt to project artistic and political alternatives, whether in his calligraphy, his saga translations, or his political agenda, is fraught with difficulties. Morris had by necessity to adopt the capitalist practices of the book industry for his publications, at least until he set up the Kelmscott Press in 1890, but in his calligraphic texts from 1869 to 1875 he was able to resist for a time the dominance of the commodity-text, and use the scripts of the Italian humanist scholars to
preserve and transmit the culture of Iceland in the sagas as the humanists had done with the texts of Greece and Rome.

In each of his projects Morris learns about the alternative sites—knowing the past—and in his later projects he attempts to alter the future by political action in the present. Just such concern for Iceland led Morris to take a leading role in the establishment and work of the Icelandic Famine Relief Fund in 1883-84. Here, in the "sympathetic translation" of the sagas and the "scribe's capacity" of his calligraphy, he translates the past from a very different culture to his own, preserving it in a form of language and script whose meaning and textuality are embodied in the same material object, a semiotic system under his control as a cooperative activity. In 1891 the political aspects of the project, as well as the frenetic activity of Morris's work from 1889 to 1875, has settled down in the future predicted in *News from Nowhere*: "What's the use of a lot of ugly writing being done, when rough printing can be done so easily. You understand that handsome writing we like, and many people will write their books out when they make them, or get them written; I mean books of which only a few copies are needed—poems, and such like, you know" (24). The "handsome writing" of the Renaissance humanists had mediated the acculturation of Victorian England with the sagas of medieval Iceland. Calligraphy for the sagas made "the whole writing legible" in more than one sense, though "a few copies" had also to be disseminated by "rough printing" and by "competitive commerce" to ensure a wider audience for "the Great Story of the North."

Notes

1. Eventually Morris got five copies of various editions of Pliny for his own library, two printed in Venice by Nicholas Jenson. The first (Catalogue lot 597, now in the Huntington Library) was the same edition as Bodleian ms. Douce 310, but without elaborate illumination, bought between 1876 and 1890, very likely earlier in the period, and was used by Emery Walker and T.J. Cobden-Sanderson for the design of the Dove's type (Needham 30). The second copy, printed in 1472, ornamented with marginal decoration and calligraphic letters in Blue and red (lot 594), is now at McGill University. The fonts Jenson used were models for Morris's Golden type for the Kelmscott Press (see Needham 122).

2. In 1854 Ruskin delivered three lectures at the Architectural Museum of London, discussing the colours, conventions, and ornament of medieval calligraphy and illumination, with the aim of making it "fashionable" (12: 484), both for books which are "the means of making human thought the most transcendent and evanescent of all things—the most permanent of all things" (12: 476) and for public lecturing in churches (12: 483). Though unpublished, the lectures were reported in detail in *The Builder*, which Morris then "took in regularly" (Mackail 1: 40). See Phimister.

3. Ruskin's lectures led to numerous examples of such handbooks, including the following: H. Noel Humphreys, The Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages (1844) with plates chromolithographed by Owen Jones; Henry Shaw, *Alphabets, Numerals and Devices of the Middle Ages* (1845); Humphreys, *The Art of Illumination and Missal Painting: A Guide to Modern Illuminators* (1849); and Shaw, *Handbook of the Art of Illumination* (1866). David Dehar's Elementary Instruction in the Art of Illumination and Missal Painting (1850) went through seven editions and J. W. Bradley's *A Manual of Illumination on Paper and Vellum* had eight editions in 1860-61 and eventually achieved a 27th edition, claiming twenty-eight thousand copies printed; up to 1876, only two years show no new titles or reprints (Dunlap "Road" 110-11).

4. Morris's copy is in the Library of Massey College, Toronto (McLean Q2 58, e.3).

5. Huntington Library (ms. Hb6478); a coloured illustration is in Naylor (95). Naylor implausibly dates the illumination "c. 1870," nine years after the death of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and at least a year after Morris had resumed his calligraphy with quite different lettering and ornamentation. The sheet remained in the Brownings' possession until it was sold in the auction at Sotheby's in 1913 (Kelley and Coley A 1690).

6. The manuscript leaf was sold in the Alan G. Thomas sale at Sotheby's on 21 and 22 June 1993 (lot 248) to Mr. and Mrs. E.B.100, its present whereabouts are unknown. The manuscript is illustrated in the sale catalogue page, and in *Books books 216*. Thomas had bought it at the Mrs. J.W. Mackall sale at Sotheby's, 22 December 1952; she had inherited it from her mother, Lady Burne-Jones (to whom Morris had presented it). See the convincing arguments about the dating of the "Guenolien" manuscript before that of "The Iron Man" in Dunlap, "Road" 122-23.

7. Morris's library at his death had three thirteen-century illuminated manuscripts and two early printed editions by Peter Schoeffer (1473) and B. Ramboldt (1510) of the *Decretals of Gregory XI* all using the design of a centred text and surrounding gloss in smaller lettering. The manuscripts are all decorated with historiated and floriated initials (Catalogue lots 550-64).

8. While some editors (Boos 400; Latham 36, 151) have conjectured that these manuscripts were written by an anonymous and that only the Cambridge Fitzwilliam ms. 25F of these tales is in Morris's autograph, Dunlap convincingly argues that the copperplate version in the British Library (ms. Add. 45399) is also in Morris's autograph, based on close analysis of the flourishes on his capitals as well as other details ("Road" 131-33).

9. The term "cursive" is often used indiscriminately. To some historians of calligraphy, italic was called "cursive" in England, but it is equally argued that the new handwriting was called italic in England. Stanley Morison tends to use "cursive" to refer to Renaissance hand-written forms, and "italic" for typographical forms (Early 32-43), while Donald Anderson writes: "English scholars call their writing italic, and this is the third name for the same writing. Humanistic cursive is the foundation name; Chancery cursive refers to the calligraphic tradition emanating from Venice and Rome c. 1490-1500 into modern times, and italic is the name given to historical and contemporary typefaces based on this tradition of cursive letters" (123). But the inventor of italic type, Francesco Griffo, called his type "cursive" (Oxley "Oxypus" 110; see also Oxley Scribers 1920).

Cursive writing is often distinguished from calligraphic script on the basis of its root meaning, running or rapid. In a cursive hand the pen is rarely raised from the paper except between words: hence, it is characterized by joined letters. To the Italian humanists pen links between letters became important, especially in ligatures, and were often flourished. Historically, this cursive hand was given a name when it was used in the Vatican and other chanceries, cancellaresca curvata. The formal handwriting employed by the Renaissance Italian writing masters, a script that provided models for the type-face known as "italic." Throughout this paper "cursive" refers to rapid handwriting, employing pen links between letters, where speed rather than fine writing is important; "italic" refers to the slanting scripts modelled by the Renaissance writing manuals and the typographical fonts derived from them. In Appendix A the term "cursive" is used technically.

10. The title is from a book much admired in *Pre-Raphaelite circles* after D.G. Rossetti discovered it in 1859, *Edward FitzGerald's The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*: "Here with a loaf of bread beneath the bough/A flake of bloom beneath a bough/ Beside our cups and chalice / Beside me singing in the wilderness, /And wilderness is paradise now" (1859, stanza 13). In the book's colophon dated 26 Aug. 1870, Morris states that Charles Fairfax Murray painted the pictures (including Morris's profile on the title-page) except for one on the first page by Edward Burne-Jones. George Wardle drew all of the ornaments of Powell's guide to the leaves and flowers in regular rows on the first ten pages (much like a simplified version of Morris's second wallpaper design, *Daisy* of 1864). Morris coloured them and did the rest of the decoration that changes when he takes over to an organic vine
growth that spirals up the page and into the line-fills, covered with leaves and flowers. Wardle also did all of the coloured letters. Morris did the calligraphy throughout. The change in decoration coincides with the development of organic designs in Morris's fabrics and wallpapers such as *Jasminella* (1868-70), *Scroll* (1871), *Jasmin* (1872), and *Larkspur* (1872), and prefigures the kind of decoration Morris did for the borders of Kelmscott Press books (see also McGann 59-67).

11. Morris sold the manuscript to Charles Fairfax Murray who commissioned Oracy Hewitt to complete the lettering and Louise Powell the decoration. On 20 May, 1869, The Times reported that Morris's *Aeneid* was sold by Christie's in New York in 1869 for $1,550,000, "a record not only for Morris but for any modern illuminating manuscript" (3).

12. Biographers have often claimed that Morris's concentration on the sagas, calligraphy, and his two trips to Iceland were different means of effecting a psychological escape from the troubling pressure of the continuing affair between his wife and Dante Rossetti. See, for instance, Calder's *Introduction to Morris and Magnússon's edition of Kormak 7-17 and Lindsay 152-89. Gary Aho discusses other aspects of Morris's trips to Iceland and representation of Iceland, including his neglect of the issues of slavery and the relations of masters to tenants and labours, his conversion to the gloriification of the "noble" Vikings and their culture, and his disquiet over such romantic conventions and "certitudes about literature and society" when he was exposed to the harsh realities of Icelandic life in the 1870s ("Iceland" 111-28).

13. Morris translated some 706 separate poems from the Icelandic. Most were part of the sagas that he translated and were incorporated into his translations, but each is listed separately in Pearson's *Catalogue* (601-80). They are mostly in the form of the *dróttkvætt* (court poems, which Morris called vers, the metrical line of Old Norse poetry), the commonest and most complex skaldic verse form. Often Morris attempts to imitate the formal qualities of the eight-line stanzas, each line with six syllables and three stresses. There is also internal rhyme, full rhyme in the even lines, assonance in the odd. Every two lines are tied with alliteration, two in the first line, and a necessary alliteration on the first stress of the second line. The verse also makes elaborate use of kennings or word substitutions, periphrasis, and epithets, such as "brand" for "sword," or "seal's field" for "sea." Of course, the kennings greatly complicate the dictio, making it much more obscure, especially in Morris's proem for Old English equivalents to avoid common Latinate phraseology. This form of Morris's verse translations has received little critical attention, but see Wawn 260-63. Gary Aho has examined Morris's revisions in the text of the "Gunnlaug the Worm-Tongue" in *Three Northern Love Stories*, finding that the poems in it were rewritten from rhyming laimbic tetrameter couplets in 1869 to imitate the prosody of the *dróttkvætt* for the 1875 republication (Introduction xxv-xxvi).

14. Morris corroborates this chronology of their translation work, writing in the colophon of the completed calligraphic manuscript: "I translated this book out of Icelandic with the help of my master in that tongue, Eiríkr Magnússon, sometime of Heydalur in the East Firths of Iceland; it was the first Icelandic book I read with him. I wrote it all out myself and did all the ornament throughout the whole book except the laying on of the gold leaf on pp. 120 and 239 which was done by a man named Wilday, a workman of ours" (Birmingham: City Museum and Art Gallery, ms. 9220, p. 253).

15. Fiona MacCarthy says that "Of Morris's total eighteen [calligraphic] manuscripts of the 1870s twelve are Nordic" (268). From the evidence in Appendix A, sixteen out of twenty-three of the calligraphic manuscripts, not counting fragments and repeats, are based on northern materials. Alfred Fairbank says that Morris wrote "more than 1,500 pages of careful writing in several styles of script, and a great deal of ornament" (56). By my count there are upwards of 1870 pages.

16. Susan Bassnett ("Engendering" 53-57) mistakenly conflates these two texts, leading her into a series of pronouncements, false assertions, confusions of texts, and errors in titles, sources, and persons: "In 1876, William Morris published his translation of the Icelandic *Volunga Saga*, entitled *The Story of Sigurd and the Fall of the Niblunga* (53). Sigurd was indeed published in 1876, but it is an original work by Morris, not a translation, developing motivation, characters, setting, and background—a re-writing of the saga in verse. His translation was not Sigurd, but *Volunga Saga, The Story of the Volunga and Niblunga* published in 1870. Bassnett continues:

"He made a prose translation with Magnus Magnusson in 1870 and has also translated other shorter Icelandic poems, but the *Volunga Saga* was his greatest translation work" (53). Morris's collaborator was Erlfrit NOT Magnus Magnússon, the latter being one of the current translators of the sagas for Penguin Books. Bassnett asserts here that Sigurd, not *The Story of the Volunga*, was his "greatest translation work." It is indeed generally claimed by literary critics to be his greatest work, though not a translation. She then compounds the confusion by accusing Morris of extrapolation: "It [Sigurd] was no less than four times the length of the Old Norse poem, written in a verse form" (53). Here it becomes clear that Bassnett is indeed thinking that Morris's Sigurd is his translation, and he faults him improperly for extending the text. The original *Volunga Saga* was mostly in prose, with some interpolations in verse as in Morris's translation; Morris also translated the poetic Volunga materials from the Elder Edda and added them to *The Story of the Volunga*.

Furthermore, Bassnett claims, anachronistically, that Morris took Chaucerian materials and elements of medieval French Romance from his Virgil (1876) and incorporated them into his earlier work, "into the Volunga Saga, 'romanticizing it'" (54). Finally, Bassnett claims that Morris had a "tendency to censorship" (57) because he omitted graphic and violent details, such as the testing of Sigil's children's resistance to pain by sewing gloves to their skin before pulling them off, and making bread with a vaper already concealed in a meal sack—details that Morris does indeed omit from Sigurd *The Volunga*. But he includes them in their entirety without censorship in chapter seven of his 1876 translation. Hence, Bassnett's unwarranted attack on "his habit of expurgating unsuitable materials [that] would be regarded today as rable" (62) is unwarranted on the basis of Morris's fidelity to his translations to his sources.

17. In the poem that he wrote on the site of Gunnar's tomb in Iceland in 1871 ("Gunnar's Hue" in *Poems by the Way*), Morris refers to Iceland as a cathedral, "this grey minster of lands, Whose floor is the tomb of time past." In his journal of his first tour of Iceland (1871), Morris refers to "ruin-chimney-looking rocks" (Works 7:151). In his lecture on "Early England" (1886) Morris also refers to a casket: "The history and mythology of Scandinavia was engraved in the rough casket of Iceland" (LeMire 167). On Morris's approbation of the colour "grey," see Wawn 254-55.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. "Guðnýsdóm." Courtesy of Sotheby's International.

Fig. 2. The Ring Given to Venus, BL ms. Add.45302, f. 1, Works 5: after xxiv.

Fig. 3. The Ring Given to Venus, BL ms. Add.45302, f. 1, Works 5: after xxiv.

Fig. 4. The Wanderers, BL ms. Add.37499, f. 36, Dunlap, "Rossetti" 130.

Fig. 5. Practice Sheet, Fleetwood Morgan ms. MA 4011, Morris and Magnusson, Kormak, after 72.

Fig. 6. First Italic Script: Lancelot du Lac, Antiquaries ms. 65, Works 9: opposite xxi.

Fig. 7. Second Italic Script: "Prologue to the Volunga Tale," A Book of Verse, V&A ms. L. 13-1953.

Fig. 8. Third Italic Script: King Hafsrar and King Siward, Bodley ms. Eng. misc. e. 233/2, Morris and Magnússon, Kormak, after 72.

Fig. 9. Fourth Italic Script: Horace, Odes, Bodley ms. Lat. Class. e. 38, Works 11: opposite xviii (Dk. I, Odes 26, 27).

Fig. 10. First Roman Hand: Fitzgerald, Rúðjóðs of Ómar Khayyám, BL ms. Add. 37382, Works 22: after xxviii.

Fig. 11. Second Roman Hand: Virgil, Aeneid, private collection, Morris and Magnússon, Kormak, after 72.

Figures 2 through 11 courtesy of Scott Library, York University, Toronto.
APPENDIX A: William Morris’s Calligraphic Manuscripts

This classification of Morris’s calligraphic manuscripts expands John Nash’s account by subdividing his second italic script into two, and adding many other manuscripts as well as details about each manuscript. Dating is established, where possible, on the basis of annotation in the manuscript, evidence from Morris’s correspondence, watermarks, or stylistic similarities with other manuscripts, but it is often conjectural. Morris’s manuscripts are widely dispersed in public and private collections as indicated. A few manuscripts have completely texts and decoration by Morris and his associates; others have completed text but incomplete decoration; many others are incomplete with respect to both text and decoration. Numerous fragments and trial pages have survived. Some manuscripts exhibit different scripts or variations of one or more scripts throughout. Hence, the classification of them into one or another category of script is a matter of stylistic and other analysis, depending on variations in letterforms, possible models, decoration, and codicology. In general the terms used to describe the calligraphy and manuscripts are those set out by Edward Johnson, Michelle P. Brown, and Brown and Lovett. The present classification extends the work of previous scholars, including Joseph Dunlap, Alfred Fairbank, John Nash, and Richard Pearson, to each of whom Morris scholars owe a large debt. Measurements list height first, followed by width. Some sources for reproductions are given.

ABBREVIATIONS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Society of Antiquaries at Kelmscott Manor</th>
<th>Naylor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bodleian Library, Oxford</td>
<td>Neesham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Fairfax Murray</td>
<td>PML</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheltenham Art Gallery: Emery Walker Library</td>
<td>&quot;Road&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emery Walker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzwilliam Library, Cambridge</td>
<td>SCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgiana Burne-Jones</td>
<td>V and A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Paul Getty: The Worsley Library</td>
<td>VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntington Library, San Marino, CA</td>
<td>WM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>William Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banham, Joanna and Jennifer Harris, eds. William Morris and the Middle Ages.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Citations refer to the Works Cited list

A. GOTHIC SCRIPT. Morris’s Gothic scripts are irregular and inconsistent in letter shapes, though all three have a half-uncial a. The first two are variants of littera textualis quadrata with characteristic wedged serifs at the feet of the minims, while the third is a variant of textualis rotunda in which the minims are rounded off with an upward curve (Brown Western 84, 88; Brown and Lovett 87-93).

TITLE, DATE, & PUBLICATION

1. [Song in Robert Browning’s Prencezal (1849 ed., bk. 4, ll. 190-205)]
   Summer 1856
   Unpublished by WM

   CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION
   Huntington ms. HM 6478
   Vellum leaf
   27.9 x 21.6 cm.
   Naylor 94

2. ["Guerdoléen"; sometimes known as "Guerdoléin"][1]
   Poem: June/July 1856
   Calligraphic ms.: Aug. 1856
   Entitled "Hands" in Oxford and Cambridge Magazine (July 1856)
   Republished as the Prince’s song in "Rapunzel" in The Defence of Guenevere (1858)

   Present location unknown. Sold Sotheby 1993 from collection of Alan G. Thomas for £16,100 to Matsuzawa.
   Vellum leaf
   24.7 x 19.3 cm.
   Sotheby’s Catalogue (Alan G. Thomas Sale, 1993, lot 244)
   PPL plate 5

   FEATURES
   Two stanzas of eight lines each are written in uneven textualis quadrata lettering, with curved fish-tail serifs at the top of the ascenders b, h, and k. The text is framed in two florested hybrid dragons, painted mostly in red and blue. The stanzas are surrounded by filligree penwork in red and blue. Each stanzas begins with a large Lombardic initial on a gold background. Presented to Robert and Elizabeth Browning.

   Six three-lined stanzas are in textualis quadrata, each beginning with a large initial, most incomplete. Curved fish-tail serifs are at the top of the ascender of h and on an extended ascender on p. There is a greater control over thickness and thinness than in #1. The first stanza has a large initial I with floral vine decoration enclosing the whole poem within the florestion. The bottom border is a scene of Guenoléen’s holding her hair out to a knight in the initial O. Presented to Georgiana Macdonald (GB-J).

   Morris’s incomplete translation of Der Eisenhauzen by the Brothers Grimm is written in textualis rotunda lettering, with ascenders bending to the left in k, h, i, t, and the extended vertical of p. The concluding stroke of h descends below the base line and curves to the left. The text opens with an elaborately historiated initial N, with coloured vine tendrils like humanist white vine (bianchi gironi), as well as other decorated capitals and ornaments. Presented to Louisa Macdonald.

3. ["The Iron Man"]
   1856/57
   Unpublished

   Getty
   Vellum leaf
   37 x 23.5 cm.
   Photograph BL ms. Add. 45347, f. 63
   Nash 301
   Zaczek 48-49

   Morris’s incomplete translation of Der Eisenhauzen by the Brothers Grimm is written in textualis rotunda lettering, with ascenders bending to the left in k, h, i, t, and the extended vertical of p. The concluding stroke of h descends below the base line and curves to the left. The text opens with an elaborately historiated initial N, with coloured vine tendrils like humanist white vine (bianchi gironi), as well as other decorated capitals and ornaments. Presented to Louisa Macdonald.
B. TRANSITIONAL PAGES. These pages illustrate Morris’s composing and copying hands and his first experiments with humanistic italic and Roman scripts.

TITLE, DATE, & PUBLICATION

1. "The Wanderers"
c. 1867
_The Earthly Paradise_ 1 (1868)

CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION
BL ms. Add. 37409, f. 36
_Paper Notebook [The Wanderers Notebook]_
ILLUS:
"Road" 130

FEATURES
Calligraphic insertion into copying hand.

2. Three tales from _The Earthly Paradise_ c. 1867-68
Two published in _The Earthly Paradise_

(a) "The Palace East of the Sun and West of the Moon"
1869
_The Earthly Paradise_ 2 (1870)

(b) "The Proud King"
1867
_The Earthly Paradise_ 1 (1868)

(c) "The Story of Dorotha"
c. 1865-66
[both using Fitzwilliam ms. 25F]

CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION
BL ms. Add. 45309
Blue foolscap paper, watermarked 1855
ILLUS:
"Road" 130

FEATURES
Copperplate hand by Morris ("Road" 131-33).

3. _Eyrbyggja Saga [The Story of the Dwellers at Eyri]_
Oct. 1868
Saga Library 2 (1892)

CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION
Fitzwilliam ms. 25F, ff. 99-105, rectos only
Paper; some pages watermarked 1867, 1868
P. 134 is dated "15 Feb to 15 March [1869]"
ILLUS:
Needham XLI (#46, p. 99)
"Road" 135

FEATURES
Five pages in italic are inserted in the middle of the ms. (entitled "Eyrbyggja Saga") which is otherwise written in WM’s copying hand.

4. Marginal lettering in _The Earthly Paradise_

(a) "The Story of Orpheus and Eurydice"
1869-70
Unpublished by WM; Latham "Variorum" (1982); Latham "Rewriting"

CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION
BL ms. Add. 45307
Blue and White Paper, watermarked E Towgood 1868 and J Allen & Sons Superfine 1869
ILLUS:
"Road" 138

FEATURES
Marginal lettering experiments with Roman and italic letters and words.

(b) "The Story of Rhodeope"
1869
_The Earthly Paradise_ 3 (1870)

CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION
BL ms. Add. 45304
Paper, watermarked 1867
ILLUS:
"Road" 138

FEATURES
The letter R on p. 3 is repeated with variations.

(c) "The Lovers of Gudrun"
1869
_The Earthly Paradise_ 3 (1870)

CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION
Fitzwilliam ms. 25F
Paper, some leaves watermarked 1867, 1868
ILLUS:
Nash 302 (f. 43); "Road" 141; Needham XLII (f. 47)

FEATURES
Eight Roman initials on p. 6 (A, D, N, M, and S) are enclosed in square frames, three with floral backgrounds.

(d) "Bellerophon in Lycia"
1869
_The Earthly Paradise_ 4 (1870)

CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION
BL ms. Add. 45301
Paper, watermarked 1867, 45 x 33.5 cm.
ILLUS:
Nash 302 (f. 43); "Road" 141;

FEATURES
Variations of Arabic numbers occur in some margins, as on p. 47 where the number 16 is written out eleven times, often in calligraphy corresponding to "old face" fonts, with the numeral 1 at x-height, and 6 as an ascender.

4. Writing Sample A
Undated (1868?)
Unpublished by WM

CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION
Bodley ms. Autograph d. 24, f. 95.
Paper
ILLUS:
"Road" 144

5. Writing Sample B
Undated (September 1875?)
Unpublished by WM

CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION
PML ms. MA 4011
Vellum
16.4 x 12.6 cm.
ILLUS:
_Kormak_ XII; Nash 297;

FEATURES
This sample sheet illustrates WM’s changes in his "hand-writing before I went to Mr. Jones and ... afterwards," showing aspects of his first italic hand, including ascenders with a bend to the right.

6. Writing Samples B
Undated (September 1875?)
Unpublished by WM

CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION
PML ms. MA 4011
Vellum
16.4 x 12.6 cm.
ILLUS:
_Kormak_ XII; Nash 297;

FEATURES
This sample sheet displays seven different scripts, including a quotation from WM’s translation of Virgil’s _Aeneid_, with calligraphy from Virgil’s _Aeneid_ in Latin on the verso.
C. FIRST ITALIC SCRIPT. This script, like all Morris’s italic, derives from the humanistic littera humanistica cursiva, cancellaresca, or cancellaresca all’antica (Brown Western 134). The first example is an “italic with connecting strokes and curved ascenders which are definitely Renaissance based” (Nash 298). Many swash capitals have looped or extended flourishes, some descending below the base line, as in the alphabet pages of Arrighi’s Operastra. A variant of this script, with fewer curves in the ascenders in #s 2 and 3, draws on the slanted italic of Tagliente’s cancellaresca nodaresca and Arrighi’s Il Modo.

**TITLE, DATE, & PUBLICATION**

1. *The Story of the Dwellers at Eyr [Eyr I]*  
1869  
*Saga Library 2 (1892)*

**CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION**

Boolley ms. Eng. misc. c. 265, pp. 1-36  
Paper, watermarked J & J G Smith 1865  
36.5 x 25.5 cm.  
ILLUS: *Kornak IV* (p. 1)  
Nash 303 (pp. 28-29)  
Naylor 92 (p. 1)  
Needham XLIII (# 48, p. 1)  
“Road” 157 (p. 1)  
*P* plate 10 (p. 1)

**FEATURES**

The first part of the text is written with a round-nibbed pen (pp. 1-36), with some control developing through the ms. over the thick and thins. Pronounced diagonal slashes link letters and end words. Ascenders bend to the right and *f* has a double bend, like Arrighi’s letters in *Il Modo*. This ms. exemplifies three of WM’s scripts: see Second Italic Script # 1 and First Roman Script # 1.

WM’s translation of the medieval French prose version (two copies were in his library; lots 747, 748) had already been transcribed in his copying hand in three volumes (Antiquaries ms. 64). In this calligraphic ms., WM uses a heavily slanted italic with few kerns on the ascenders and descenders. Otherwise the letter slope resembles that of Tagliente’s cancellaresca nodaresca and the most slanted cursive hand in Writing Samples B. Some letters, however, like capitals *L* and *C* and lowercase *e*, *s*, and *g* resemble Arrighi’s *Il Modo*. May Morris refers to this writing as WM’s “beautiful Italian hand” (*Works* 9: xxxiv).

Three and a half chapters are completed in a more regular and decorated form of the heavily slanted italic script of *Lancelot* (# 2). Some ascenders bend to the right; many have slight fish-hook bar serifs at the top. The descender of the *f* is extended, terminating horizontally. The capitals are variable, but many have models in Arrighi and Tagliente, such as *A*, *B* (with an extended vertical or a kered stroke leading into the upper bowl), double-curved *E*, *G* with a descending tail, *L* with a swash that descends under the subsequent letters, *R* with a kern leading into the bowl, and a large curved bar on *T*.

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D. SECOND ITALIC SCRIPT. This “small flattened italic script is furnished with many extraneous hairlines” (Nash 298). Numerous hairline diagonal link letters, with tail ascenders bending to the right, often with diagonal slashes at the top. Decorated initial letters begin chapters, followed by Roman small capitals in gold.

**TITLE, DATE, & PUBLICATION**

1. *The Story of the Dwellers at Eyr [Eyr I]*  
1869  
*Saga Library 2 (1892)*

**CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION**

Paper, watermarked J & J G Smith 1865  
36.5 x 25.5 cm.  
ILLUS: *Kornak IV* (p. 1)  
Nash 303 (pp. 28-29)  
Naylor 92 (p. 1)  
Needham XLIII (# 48, p. 1)  
“Road” 157 (p. 1)  
*P* plate 10 (p. 1)

**FEATURES**

Descriptive chapter headings (added later); same ms. as First Italic Script # 1, but text script changes at p. 47, using flat-nibbed pen. Pp. 37-46 and 51-144 have been moved to be incorporated into *Eyr II* (# 4 below) and are re-numbered.

The text is five-sixths complete; with diagonal hair-strokes to *m*, *n*, *h*, curved descenders to *f*, *y*; straight descender to *p*; carless *g* with sharpened flourish. Swash flourishes on *A*, *P*, and *T*. Other flourishes like those in *Eyr I* disappear after chapter 15. The first page has sketched-in flowers arranged regularly to cover the margins, none coloured in. One of eight minstrel figures is coloured, the rest drawn in. The historiated initial shows *Sigurd* sitting on the head of *Fafnir* the dragon, painted by CFM.

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2. *Volsunga Saga: The Story of the Volsungs and Niblunga*  
Dec. 1869-Jan. 1870  
*Saga Library 2 (1892)*

**CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION**

Paper, watermarked C Ansell 1864  
29 x 23 cm.  
ILLUS:  
*Middle Age* (218, p. 1)  
Nash 304 (ff. 21v-22)  
Naylor 93 (p. 1)  
Needham XLIV (# 49, p. 1)  
“Road” 163 (p. 1)  
*P* plate 11 (p. 1)

**FEATURES**

This collection of WM’s poems is one of the few with completed text, calligraphy, and decoration. There are diagonal hair-strokes to *d*, *h*, *k*, *m*, *n*, and *p*. The letter *g* has an ear and a pointed link between the bowl and the closed loop. The ascenders bend to the right; the descender to *p* is straight. Gold vertical capitals at the beginning of each line are Roman with occasional italic *A* or *T*. The manuscript is decorated by WM, EB-1, and George Wardle. Wardle painted evenly-spaced floral sprays on pp. 1-10; from p. 11 WM
7. Calligraphic Catalogue of the 
Books in Morris's Library 
1890 
Unpublished

Collection of Bernard H. Breidauer 
8 leaves, 13 pp. completed 
Paper, watermarked Whatman 
23.4 x 19 cm. 
ILLUS: 
Needham II (# 3) 
"Road" 302

E. THIRD ITALIC SCRIPT. This script develops from that of Yōtoku Saga (Second Italic Script # 2) as a "small, formal rounded italic with flourished f and 'sharpened' g" (Nash 307), introducing such important variants as flourishes as curved wedge serifs on the w (an initial minim with no slash to link it to the preceding part of the letter that looks like v) and elaborate flourishes on the ascenders of the j. The versal capitals at the beginnings of lines are Roman but internal capital are Gothic capitals based on Lombardic letters, often with additional flourish on the capitals D, H, I, and S.

TITLE, DATE, & PUBLICATION
1. King Haflur and King Siward 
1873 
"Haflur and Signy" in Poems by the Way (1891)

CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION
Boody ms. Eng. misc. e. 233/2, ff. 1-9 
17 pp. 
Paper, some leaves watermarked 1870 
20.8 x 13.5 cm. 
ILLUS: 
Kormak IX (ff. 2v, 3v) 
Nash 306 (ff. 2v-3)

2. Haroon al Rasheed [Tales from the Arabic and Persian / The Arabian Nights] 
1837? 
Unpublished

Boody ms. Eng. misc. d. 265, ff. 2-7: pp. 2-8 
Paper, some leaves watermarked 1872 
23.6 x 19.7 cm. 
ILLUS: 
Journal of the William Morris Society: 1:1 (1861) (ff. 8) 
Nash 300 (p. 1) 
Needham L (# 58, p. 1) 
"Road" 270 (p. 1)

3. The Story of Hen-Thorir [Hen-
Thorir ll]

Paper, watermarked Whatman 1870

Written in small italic with cursive links between letters with four colourer initials. The capitals are Roman. The ms. is wrongly described by Pearson as "in a Gothic hand with serifs" (304). The ms. also contains The Tale of Haldor (see Third Italic Script # 7).

FEATURES
Fifty-six quatrains out of ninety are completed. Broad swelling ascender: narrow at the bottom, and at the top the diagonal is emphasized. Diagonal hairlines remain on d, e, k, m, n, and t. The f has no descender, but the descender ends in a flourish; w is also flourished; the descender on y turns to the left; versals are Roman in alternating blue and red; internal capitals are Gothic based on Lombardic models. Dated by Pearson as "c. 1870-71."

Translated from Jonathan Scott's Tales...Translated from the Arabic on Persian (1800) [The Arabian Nights]. The script ("angular Gothic italic [Nash 299]) resembles the inverted script at the top of Writing Samples B. The script has some characteristics of Eyr: a flourished f and y, and slant diagonals that link many letters together almost as a cursive. The capital resembles that in Eyr. The initial f has elaborate pen flourishes. Tall ascenders bend to the right. Capitals are Lombardic letters with flourishes: B, D, and I, anticipating the flourished letters in Fitzwilliam 270* (# below).

Tall ascenders with some diagonal slash. Lombardic capitals without elaborate pen flourishes. The initial f on the title-page is in white-zinc scv.
4. The Story of the Banded Men
[Banded Men II]
1873/74
Sage Library 1 (1891)

ILLUS:
Kornack VIII (p. 1)
Naylor 145 (p. 1)
"Road" 276 (p. 1)
PP plate V (p. 1)
Zaccagni 40

5. The Story of Howard the Halt
1873/74
Sage Library 1 (1891)

ILLUS:
Needham LIII (# 61, p. 133)

6. The Story of Egil Son of Scaldvrim
1874?
WMG; AWS II: 564-636

ILLUS:
Pencils marks on p. 1 indicate a title in capitals, a 4-line initial and four lines of capitals. SCC had the ms. bound by Katherine Adam with Morris’s catalogue of his library (Second Italic Script # 7).}

7. The Tale of Haldor
1874?
Collection of Bernard H. Breslauer
12 leaves, 3 pp. completed

Unpublished

Pencils marks on p. 1 indicate a title in capitals, a 4-line initial and four lines of capitals. SCC had the ms. bound by Katherine Adam with Morris’s catalogue of his library (Second Italic Script # 7).

F. FOURTH ITALIC SCRIPT. This script is a small regular italic without flourishes except a hairline curlicue on the top of the 'f'. Many letters are linked by diagonals from the bottom of the minutiae as in humanistic book script (Itineraria humanistica curvis libraris: Brown Western 132) and Tagliante’s Lo presene livro.

FEATURES

Stanzas 1-50 of the fourth Rubáiyát that Morris penned, and the only one in italic (see First Roman Script, # 4, 7, and 15). After six stanzas in differing italic scripts, the ms. begins the text again, using “a small pointed italic that closely resembles the script used for the Odes of Horace though not quite as condensed” (“Road” 279-80).

Italic trial pages for Rubáiyát IV described by Pearson as Roman (486).

This ms. is one of WM’s smallest. The text is complete; 86 ornamental initials are completed, most in white vine decoration; 11 are unfinished. Elaborate decorated openings were planned for each book, but only that for Book II is complete, with blue and green scintillae leaving incised four golden poles in the margins surrounding the text, with a small head in each corner, painted by WM; others are by CFM (Works 11: xxvii-xxviii). The initial M is in white-vine decoration, using gold, as in the capitals of the headings, versals, and running heads. Each ode is decorated with an ornamented initial with white vine, sprays of flowers, and golden sun-bursts. The versals in the odes are in gold, silver, red, and blue. To Fairbank this script is influenced by Arrighi’s cancellaresca italic (58), while to Oelsey it shows “Tagliante’s chancery hand” in Lo presene livro (“Kilmacott” 360).
G. FIRST ROMAN SCRIPT. Morris's Roman scripts are based on humanistic variants of Renaissance hands, known as littera humanistica textualis, littera antiqua, or lettera antica (Brown Western 130). Nash describes the first as a “rather laboured roman minuscule (perhaps influenced by ‘antiqua tonda’ models to be found in Arrighi and Tagliente)” (298). Some serifs resemble the slashes in WM’s second and third italic scripts but usually are horizontal except on the ascender of h.

CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION

1. The Story of the Dwellers at Eyr [Eyr I]
   1869
   Saga Library 2 (1892)
   Bodley ms. Eng. misc. c. 265
   ILLUS:
   Nash 303 (pp. 28-29)

2. The Story of Kormak
   1871 dated by SCC, or 1873
   with Frithiof
   The Story of Kormak (1970)
   Paper, watermarked Whatman 1870
   40.1 x 27 cm.
   ILLUS:
   Kormak I-III (ff. 1-2)
   “Road” 204-5

3. The Story of the Dwellers at Eyr [Eyr II] (contents, prologue, and epilogue)
   1871
   Saga Library 2 (1892)
   Birmingham ms. 9220: 5 leaves
   Paper, watermarked J. Whatman 1870
   36.5 x 25.5 cm.
   ILLUS:
   Pre-Raphaelite Painting [microfiche]

4. Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám
   [Rubáiyát 1]
   Trans. Edward Fitzgerald; first version (1859)
   1871-72 WM’s note in ms.: “I
   Vellum
   15.5 x 11.7 cm.
   ILLUS:
   Works 22 after p.xviii (stz. 58-63)
   Kormak VII (f. 12)
   Nash 304 (ff. 11v-12)
   Naylor 144 (f. 12)
   Needham LIV d (# 54 f. 12)
   “Road” 213 (stz. 38-63); 214 (stz. 64-70)
   YP plate 13 (stz. 58-63);
   Zacek 3, 44-45 (ft. 11v-12)

FEATURES

The running heads, added later to the body-text of the ms., use a flat-nosed pen. See First and Second Italic Scripts, #1

Double columns of 40 lines to a column, with tier title and chapter headings in Roman capitals. Chapter headings are for chapters 1-3, the rest pencilled in. The tier text is complete in Roman minuscule with low horizontal serifs from pp. 3-36 (col. 1). The serifs are abandoned thereafter and also on pp. 1-2 (added later as conjectured by Dunlap “Road” 206). The bar on the e is horizontal and the a has a left-arching first vertical stroke over the bowl. The script resembles the antiqua tonda of Arrighi and Tagliente.

WM added front and back matter to Eyr II (see Second Italic Script #4) in the same Roman hand used in the running heads of Eyr I (#1 above). In the verse prologue and epilogue the versals alternate in gold and silver; the text is in brown ink.

The script on these very small pages is a “tiny, formal, almost monoline roman minuscule, with straight y, cut-off f, g with rounded flourish and sticking up ear, and tall ascenders with minute tick serifs” (Nash 298). Each stanza number and versal is in gold. The figures are painted by CFM, and the painted and gilded decoration of many different kinds of flowers, fruits, and vines by WM, filling the margins on four pages, as well as line fillers. Presented to GR-J.

Italian script on f.17; some Roman script on f. 17v. Folios 26-33 are trial sheets in First Roman Script for Rubáiyát I Bound with Gunntaug (#14) and Rubáiyát IV (Fourth Italic Script #1).

Trial pages for #4.

Opening of “The Lovers of Gudrun,” with repetitions and a quotation from 3rd stanza of the Rubáiyát in a script like #3.

Roman minuscule with serifs. Because the pages are numbered 3 and 4, it is clear that the first two folios are missing. The running heads in gold are “The Story of” and “Ogier the Dane” on each of the surviving folios. The versals at the beginning of each line alternate gold and pale blue. The space from the end of the lines to the right margin is filled with decorated vines and flowers. The script is like that of Rubáiyát 1, though the letters are strictly vertical, have slightly larger serifs, and the bowl of the e is slightly larger. The text is a thirteenth-century French romance. The ms. also contains The Story of Harald Harfag and Haroon al Raschid.
8. The Preface to Skorri Sturlason
1873
Saga Library 3 (1893): Preface to WM's translation of Heimskringla

Antiquaries ms. 50, ff. 1-4 (7 pp.)
Vellum
25.5 x 21.0 cm.
ILLUS:
"Road" 239

The title, in Roman capitals, is set in a willow frieze followed by a two-line initial. The script bears some resemblance to the italic of Æyr II, including the ear on the g, the small bar on the e, and the serifs and flourishes on the ascenders and descenders, including a curved italic descender on f for the first page and first line of page two only; thereafter the f's at the base line. The letters are more vertical than Æyr II. Hence, the script can be considered transitional between italic and Roman. This manuscript continues with the first tale of the Heimskringla, The Story of the Ynglings in Roman script. The line rules in the Preface extend to the edge of the page, unlike those in the Ynglings, probably indicating a different time of writing.

Untitled but with coloured capitals in red, blue, and gold, some only sketched in. This script changes the italic elements of a somewhat similar script into Roman (see Second Italic Script, #6 and First Roman Script #12a).

This ms. also contains a Fragment of The Story of the Ynglings (see #9).

This manuscript begins with The Preface to Skorri Sturlason in italic script (see Second Italic Script #6 and First Roman Script #6). The text of the saga is decorated with illuminated initial letters, marginal decoration of vines, flowers, and animals, some painted by Philip Webb, though the decoration is incomplete. The script is a small Roman (misidentified by Patterson as "italic [cursive] script" [702]), with an incline of 3° to the right of the vertical. The e has a horizontal bar and the half-circular a, italic until the middle of p. 11, when it changes to Carolingian minuscule (the conventional Roman a) with a slanting first stroke arching over a small oval bowl. Ascenders and descenders have diagonal slashed serifs and the g has an arching ear.

12. Fragments
1873, but dated by SCT: in ms. as "not later than 1871"

(a) The Story of the Ynglings
trans. 1873; calligraphy 1873
Saga Library 3 (1893)

(b) "Hafnar and Sogny"
trans. 1870 (Works 9: xxxvii);
calligraphy 1873
Poems by the Way (1891)

(c) The Story of Frithiof the Bold
1873
Three Northern Love Stories (1875)

13. The Story of Frithiof the Bold
1873
Dark Blue Magazine Mar.-Apr.

PML ms. MA 4011, ff. 2-3v
Paper
Cheltenham "Fragments," ff. 21-22
Paper
Antiquaries ms. 50, ff. 5-53: 97 pp.
Vellum
25.5 x 21.0 cm.
ILLUS:
Needham LIvβ (# 56, p. 23)
"Road" 241 (pp. 10, 65)

PP plate VI

This manuscript is the same size and script as The Story of the Ynglings (#7), except for a more emphasized diagonal hair-slash at the top of the i. The decoration is incomplete.

This manuscript continues from The Story of Hafdeyn the Black (#8), and includes chapters 1-20 of Harald Hairfair. The text is completed (chapters 21-39) in Bodleian ms. Eng. misc. d. 263, ff. 9-24v. The script resembles The Story of the Ynglings (#9) except that WM adds flourishes to some capitals later in the manuscript: the bar of the 6, a loop joining the diagonals of K, and on the first ascender of N.

Each of these fragments is in double columns like Friðþjófsdrættir (#13). The script is like that of Kormákr (#2), except that the bar on the e is slanting.

Panels across the top of both columns are labelled for the miniatures of the Norse gods.

Eighteen quatrains. Some capitals are in blue; others, together with the decoration, are sketched in pencil. See Third Italic Script #1.

Chapters 6 to 9 with running heads in gold capitals over the two columns. Some initials are completed in red and blue.

WM completed the whole text in two columns, and laid out the decoration, partly done by CPM, completed by Graily Hewitt and Louise Powell. The text is Roman minuscule, with serifs on the ascenders and descenders, and
1871
Three Northern Love Stories
(1875)
ILLUS:
- Nash 305 (cols. 39-40)
- Needham XLVIII (# 33, cols. 5-6)
- "Road" 207-8
- Zacezek 51 (cols. 39-40)

14. The Story of Gunlaug
the Worm-Tongue
Oct. 1868 (text)
late 1873-early 1874
Fornightly. Jan 1869
Three Northern Love Stories
(1875)
ILLUS:
- Bodley ms. Eng. misc. e.233/1, ff. 1-16v
32 pp.
- Vellum
- 15.2 x 10.8 cm.

Transcription of the first chapter only, similar in design, script, and layout
to Bodley ms. Eng. misc. e.233/1 (# 14).

Trial Pages for Gunlaug
late 1873-early 1874
Vellum
14.7 x 11.5 cm.

Complete transcription of the first saga that WM and Magnússon translated,
but not WM's first calligraphic ms. (see First Italic Script # 1). In 1873 WM
was preparing several sagas for publication in Three Northern Love Stories
(1875), including Gunlaug which was written about the same time. Space
is left for the title and an illumination on f. 1 and for others throughout.
Roman script similar to Rubáiyát I. On f. 15v WM inserts the first three
words from Virgil's Aeneid in the script of Horace's Odys, and on f. 16v (p.
30) line 17 breaks off with "he looked at" and adds the complete first line of
the Aeneid in Latin. Another unconnected line follows in the same script,
and another, "Longwater," half in Roman, half italic.

15. Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám
(Rubáiyát III)
1874
Published by Fitzgerald 1859
ILLUS:
- Needham LII (# 60, f. 1)
- "Road" 224 (f. 1)
- PP plate IV (f. 1)

The third Rubáiyát with ornamentation, though only on the first two pages
in white vine like Horace's Odys. The script is condensed Roman with tall
ascenders (pp. 1-4, 8). The rest of the poem is in a small rounder Roman like
Gunlaug (f. 14). See "Road" 231-37.

16. The Story of the Volsungs
1874
Volsunga Saga: The Story of the
Volsungs and Niblungs (1870)
ILLUS:
- WMG ms. J 578a ff. 1-2
- Vellum
- 8 x 7.3 cm.

WM's smallest manuscript. He wrote to CFM about getting "small thin
vellum... if I were to do a tiny book as I have a mind to do" (Letters 1: 219).
The four pages are trial sheets in which lines are repeated after mistakes,
especially on f. 1. The script is similar to Ynglinga and the related
manuscripts (# 9, 10, and 11).

Trial pages
ILLUS:
- Vellum
- 8 x 7.3 cm.

Various other trial sheets of the opening pages and some other pages,
variously numbered, of the same size as # 16. Some of the script is identical
with # 16. Other pages experiment with italic script. Six pages are various
trials for the opening of The Story of the Volsungs.

II. SECOND ROMAN SCRIPT: This script is Morris's version of humanistic book script (known as "littera humanistica textualis, littera antiques, or littera antica.
See Brown Western 130). It is a small upright Roman with minuscule a and e.

TITLE, DATE, & PUBLICATION CALLIGRAPHIC MS. & ILLUSTRATION FEATURES
1. The Story of the Round World [Ynglinga]
1874-75
PML ms. MA 4011, ff. 4-4v
Vellum
ILLUS: "Road" 249
This fragment was preserved by SCC with a page from the Virgil with the
Writing Samples B on its verso and other pages. The writing is an upright
Roman with minuscule a and e. The ascender on the s is kinked half-way over
the next letter. The link on the g is a straight line connecting the bowl to the
closed loop.

2. Virgil, Aeneid
1874-75
English private collection, bought for
$1,320,000 (US) from the sale of the Doheny
Library on 19 May, 1889 (lot 2370)
370 pp.
Vellum
35 x 22.3 cm.
ILLUS:
- Described in Anna Cox Brinton's A Pre-
Raphaelite-Aeneid (Los Angeles: Doheny
Memorial Library, 1934)
- Vornack XI (p. 46)
- Nash 309 (opening of book 8)
- Needham LIV # 63 (p. 68), LIVe (p. 44)
- "Road" 291 (pp. 62-63)
- PP plate VIII (p. 63)
This written by Moriss wrote out 177 pp. of Virgil's text in Latin. The remaining 200 pp.
and the gilding were completed by Gaily Hewitt who claimed the script was
based on a fifteenth-century ms. of St. Jerome (BL ms. Harley 45309), but it
seems closer to such ms. as Augustine's Commentary on the Psalms written
by Rodolfo Brancusio in 1478 for Ferdinand of Aragon, King of Naples (BL
ms. Add. 14779, acquired 1843). Louise Powell added borders to the
openings of the two books. The paintings, designed by EB-J, were painted
by CFM, except for the opening page, first painted by WM and over-painted
in part by Murray, leaving untouched the head of Aeneas. WM also added
drastic flourishes in various styles, often with acanthus leaves. The text is in a small
Roman minuscule, with the selons on u, v, and y, almost joining the verticales.
The descenders of p and q finish with a pronounced diagonal slash. Sold to
CFM.
APPENDIX B:
The Old Norse Translations of William Morris and Related Materials

The title of each translation by William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon is followed by the date of publication, the name of the original saga or text, and the edition used, if known, based on evidence in the text, letters, or the Catalogue of Morris's library (with lot numbers from the Catalogue).


Völunga Saga: The Story of the Völunga andNiblungÍs, with Certain Songs from the Elder Edda (1870) [Völunga saga i Fornealdar sögur Nordrindans ed. C.C. Rafn, 1829, 1: 113-234; lot 841]. Trans. William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon.

"A Prologue to Völsunga Saga" (xii-xiii, preceding chapter 1; calligraphic version in A Book of Verses, 1870, 17-18). [see note 25].

Songs from the Elder Edda (Norman formvæti ... Semundar Edda hið fríða ... of Sophus Bugge, 1867; lot 246; Morris's library also contained Semundar Edda hið fríða, ed. Svend Gruntvig, 1868; lot 1000; and the edition in Icelandic and Latin, Edda Semundar hið fríða, 3 vols., 1873-1874; lot 289).

Original Compositions Published by William Morris Based on Icelandic Materials:


Icelandic Compositions by Morris Published after His Death:

"Balder's Dream" (from the Elder Edda: Baldr drömmur or Vegumstavla; published in Works 7: xxv-xxiv with title by May Morris; Morris translated all 14 stanzas, titling it "Lay of the Way-Weaver" in a draft). The Early Literature of the North–Iceland (Lecture delivered by Morris at Kelmscott House on 9 Oct. 1887. Published in LeMire 179-98). The Lay of Thrym" (from the Elder Edda prófylsma; see Völsunga Saga, "Songs from the Elder Edda" above; published in Works 7: xxv-xxxi; Morris translated all 31 stanzas). The Prophecy of the Vale" (Elder Edda: Vatakusp; see Völsunga Saga, "Songs from the Elder Edda" above; Morris's version uses the ms. Codex Regius reading interpolated with the two pages of the Haukðbók ms. according to the text established in the 1860s. Morris translates the whole text in 71 stanzas. Published in WMAWS 1: 543-63). [Sonnet for Gretir] "Gretir, didst thou live utterly for nought" (first published in Works 7: xix). The Story of Egil, Son of Skallgrim (Egils saga skallgrímssonar; Egils saga sive Egilii Sagaakglirimi via, ed. Guðmundur Magnússon, 1899; lot 894; Morris translated only chapters 1-40; first published in WMAWS 1: 564-630).

Whita 99

The Story of Kormak, the Son of Ogmun (Probable edition: Kormáks Sagur, ed. Borgeir Guðmundsson, 1832; lot 850; published 1970). The Wooing of Swanhild (Völsunga saga in Formaðar sögur Nordrlanda, ed. C.C. Rafn, 1829, vol. 1; lot 841; this incomplete tale for The Earthly Paradise was very likely written late in 1869 when Morris was working on "The Lovers of Gudrun" and his translation of the Völsunga saga, especially chapters 41-42 on which it is based. It may also owe something to Thorpe's Northern Mythology which includes the Swanhild episode in a brief account in the summary of the Völsunga narratives (1: 91-108); Morris's manuscript is BL ms. Add. 45308, containing two drafts, the earliest on paper watermarked E Towgood 1868, the fair copy on unwatermarked paper; published in LeMire "Variorum" 292-349.

Unpublished Compositions


Laugr Saga (Laxdæla-saga sive Historia, ed. Gunnlaug Oddsson 1826; lot 899; BL ms. Add. 45317 ff. 29-44; unpublished). Niblungsæl (Morris's library contained two of the controversial texts of Karl Lachmann, Niblungen Night and the Klage, 1867; and Only the unprinted hand copy of the Klage is known). Niccoliæ (Morris's library contained two of the controversial texts of Karl Lachmann, Niblungen Night and the Klage, 1867; and Only the unprinted hand copy of the Klage is known). Nice there are several stories are published in WMAWS 1: 473-74 (Avventura 1, stanzas 13-14; Avventura 2, stanzas 1; the cantos are designated Avventurae or "adventure"). Morris translated part way through Adventure 4 (BL ms. Add. 45318, ff. 2-8, 9-16). Morris also translated into prose the sixteenth Adventure, on the slaying of Sigfritted: William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, ms. J. 147, 16 pages; three stanzas published). The Story of the Man of Weapon-Firth (Vignþyringa saga, ed. Gunnlaugur Forsdóttir, 1848, 2 vols.; lot 1002. Ms. in Cheltenham Art Gallery: Emery Walker Library; unpublished). The Tale of Hulda (Huldufa Íafar-snorromanar in Formaðar sögur Nordrlanda vol. 3, 1831; lot 842. Ms. in private collection of Bernard H. Breslauer; unpublished).

The Tale of Norn-Queen (Vornagæs Dætr in Formaðar sögur Nordrlanda, ed. C.C. Rafn, 1829, vol. 1; lot 841; BL ms. Add. 45317, ff. 19-28; unpublished).

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Fig. 1
The Ring given to Venus.

His finger glittered
This fitful brightness crept
Then he softly smiled the meaning, only
Alas! he found the meaning was his own
But some should not shall not he found the meaning

Fig. 2

Ah what a night to what a moon!
Ah what a crimson black with snow,
And happy is the happy one,
What theme his heart is to ground!
In who indeed alone could bear
The wondrous theme the wondrous fear

Fig. 3

And on the white sail she could now behold
The dimmest line with the edge gleam,
And Marcus Erling's sign not otherwise
The green gold flecked tree of Paradise,
Gould the meeting was so she drew near
Greeted with smiling shouts and admiration,
And gorged joyfully and that day
When all the world fell asleep, that lay
Not far ahead; yet of our joyful heart
A word, aromorous part the Delphin-tenant.

Fig. 4
P. VIRGILII MARONIS

LISA WILSON: “A FRIEND OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI”

Diane D’Amico

All biographies of Christina Rossetti include some brief mention of Lisa Wilson, and most depict her as a close friend of Rossetti’s during the last years of the poet’s life. For example, Rossetti’s first biographer, MacKenzie Bell, singles out Wilson as one of those friends whom a dying Rossetti valued highly: “Christina Rossetti was also very grateful for the frequent presence during the same period [in her last illness] of Miss Lisa Wilson, the ‘fior-di-lisa’ of her lovely poem with that title” (170-71). In The Life of Christina Rossetti, published in 1930, Mary Sandars, who had the opportunity to interview Wilson, describes her as Rossetti’s “most intimate friend” (254). And Jan Marsh, author of the most recent biography of the poet, asserts that “in personal terms, the most important admirer, who became Christina’s close friend and companion, was Lisa Wilson” (338). However, despite the repeated appearance of Wilson’s name in connection with Rossetti, very little is known of her life. Thus far, scholars have been unable to provide even as much as a date of death or an exact date of birth. Furthermore, the signs of this friendship, such as Rossetti’s poem “To My Fior-di-Lisa” and Wilson’s own volume of poems Verses, a book dedicated to Rossetti, have been considered if at all only slightly. Certainly if this friendship was as biographers have suggested such an important relationship in the life of one of the nineteenth century’s major poets, then Lisa Wilson deserves more of our attention. The purpose of this essay is twofold: first, to offer a clearer image of the woman who has so far been merely a shadowy presence in Rossetti scholarship, and second, to consider how a fuller examination of this friendship adds to our understanding of the last years of Rossetti’s life.

When I began my research on Lisa Wilson, I thought that finding dates of birth and death would be easy. Sandars tells us that Lisa was twenty years younger than Rossetti, who was born in December of 1830 (254). Thus, I concluded that Lisa was born in or around 1850, and since Wilson was alive when Sandars was working on her 1930 biography, I imagined that, given the normal life span of women at that time, she must have died not long after the publication of this book. However, I could find no trace of a Lisa Wilson in birth records from 1849 to 1854. Nor could I find her…

Fig. 11