



Citation for published version:

Harvey, C, Press, J & Maclean, M 2011, 'William Morris, cultural leadership, and the dynamics of taste', *Business History Review*, vol. 85, no. 2, pp. 245-271. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007680511000377>

DOI:

[10.1017/S0007680511000377](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007680511000377)

Publication date:

2011

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication](#)

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Cultural Leadership and the Dynamics of Taste: William Morris and the Decorative Arts in Victorian Britain and Beyond

By

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Harvey, C., Press, J. & Maclean, M. (2011). William Morris, cultural leadership and the dynamics of taste, *Business History Review*, 85(2): 245-271.

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Cultural Leadership and the Dynamics of Taste: William Morris and the Decorative Arts in Victorian Britain and Beyond

This article focuses on the social processes that inform cultural production, asking how tastes are formed, transmitted, embedded and reproduced across generations. These questions are explored through a study of William Morris, his working methods and products, and their impact on the decorative arts in Victorian Britain and beyond. We demonstrate how Morris, through the exercise of cultural leadership, gave physical expression to the ideals and sentiments of Romanticism, and how this in turn gave rise to a community of taste reaching across class boundaries and generations. Morrisian products and designs, through the agency of a variety of actors, became institutionally embedded, emblematic of refinement and good taste. An original process model of taste formation is presented and deployed to explore the economic and social dynamics at work in the Morris case and more generally.

Introduction

This article explores four important questions at the juncture between cultural and business history. The first concerns the cultural dynamics of taste formation: how do fundamental movements in society – ideological, social and cultural – manifest themselves in the production

and consumption of goods and services with distinctive qualities and attributes? The second concerns the mechanisms through which culturally significant goods and services become fashionable: how do producers, consumers and critics interact to inspire cultural movements and the establishment of communities of taste? The third concerns the generalization of tastes: how do tastes spread beyond a small circle of leading edge consumers to gain acceptance across a broad swathe of society? The fourth concerns the ways in which tastes become socially embedded to endure over long periods: how are tastes transmitted across generations, becoming classical, ingrained in the national consciousness, and elevated to iconic status?

Straightforward answers to these questions are not to be found in the existing literature. This is not for any lack of interest or academic endeavour. Ever since Kant formulated his views on aesthetics in the *Critique of Judgement* (1790), postulating that taste is private yet universal, both subjective and objective, there has been intense debate amongst philosophers, sociologists and consumer researchers regarding matters of taste, fashion and style.¹ Enduring debates have focused on the meaning and definition of what constitutes good taste; the relationships between status, tastes and social classes;² the importance within highly stratified societies of status symbols, conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure;³ the significance of *Zeitgeist* to fashion and the remorseless quest for novelty; and the symbolic reductionism implicit in the mass production of *kitsch*.⁴ More recently, these themes have been amplified and challenged in relation to debates concerning mass consumption and post-industrial society. In particular, the top down or trickle down model of taste formation has been challenged, as street culture has been observed to defy conventional class boundaries, giving rise to more egalitarian views of mass fashion and the pursuit of pleasure.⁵ Likewise, a more fine-grained appreciation of fashionableness within distinct communities of taste, cutting across class boundaries, has gained credence relative to notions of upper class domination and cultural leadership.⁶

In all this, empirically well-founded historical studies of taste formation are few and far between despite a recent spate of interest in the history of consumers and consumption.⁷ This lacuna is regrettable: it is history, and in particular business history, in focusing on the production side of the on-going dialogue between consumers and producers, which might help in unravelling some of the deeper mysteries of consumer research. This is especially true with respect to the study of continuous rather than discontinuous phenomena. We are attuned in post-industrial society to think of change as ubiquitous and all pervasive; deflecting attention from the power of cultural reproduction to lend stability and distinctiveness to nations and communities. In many spheres of cultural endeavour – including cooking, clothing, architecture, the decorative arts, gardening, music and religious worship – tastes are bounded within communities, and fashion constrained by adherence to culturally embedded principles and historical preferences.⁸ It is far from being the case, even in the most open societies, that everything is “up for grabs” and subject to the exigencies of the moment. Taste formation, in this light, might best be thought of as clustered and paradigmatic within overlapping communities of taste. Historical analysis, in embracing both continuity and change, is of particular value in explaining how such communities are formed and sustained across generations, serving to link the past with the present.

In this article, we contribute to the literature on taste formation and transmission through a theoretically informed historical study of William Morris and the decorative arts in Victorian Britain and beyond, building upon earlier research by Harvey and Press.⁹ The business launched by Morris in 1861 was a powerhouse for the production of original designs and decorative art products, most importantly stained glass, furniture, printed and woven fabrics, embroidery, carpets, wallpapers, tapestries, and decorative schemes for large houses and public buildings.¹⁰ It was a long-lived enterprise (trading until 1940) that had a profound influence within the

decorative arts, extending down to the present. Morris inspired the Arts and Crafts Movement, and through his writings and example as craftsman-designer he helped lay the intellectual foundations for design education in Britain and beyond.¹¹ Successive generations of designers have recognized his genius and selectively assimilated his practices within their own. Museums and universities have kept his memory alive, and in doing so have elevated Morris's designs and products to classic status. Likewise, in applying Morris & Co. designs to all manner of products from greetings cards and book jackets to soft coverings and wall hangings, design companies have made Morrisian designs recognizable across the world; identified by their flowing lines and naturalistic inspiration as the quintessence of Englishness.

The article divides into three main parts. In the following section, we build upon the ideas of Simmel, Veblen, Bourdieu and others to develop an original model of taste formation.¹² The model is suggestive rather than definitive. It establishes a conceptual framework for the historical analysis presented in part two: the subsequent four sections, which address in turn the research questions posed earlier with specific reference to the Morris case. Our intention is not to detail the rise to prominence of the Morris business, this having been done elsewhere,¹³ but rather to explore the interplay between the firm and wider movements within society, economic, social and cultural. The main findings and implications of our analysis are drawn together in part three, the discussion following the empirical sections. Our objectives throughout are twofold. First, we aim by engaging with theory to shed fresh light on the success of Morris & Co. as a culturally significant creative enterprise. It is demonstrated that Morris, through the exercise of cultural leadership, gave physical expression to the ideals and sentiments of Romanticism, and that in turn this gave rise to a community of taste reaching across class boundaries, nations and generations.¹⁴ Second, we aim by confronting theory with the realities of business history to expose its strengths and limitations; in turn suggesting theoretical refinements and avenues for future research. We

suggest in particular that the Bourdieusian theory of tastes is limited by its attachment to the hierarchical concept of taste transmission, and introduce two new theoretical constructs – those of *lesser emblems of distinction* and *sentimentally evocative goods* – to demonstrate how communities of taste can extend across class boundaries and across generations.

Cultural Theory and the Dynamics of Taste

The cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu has had particular influence on the theory and practices of taste formation. In his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, published in French in 1979, and in later works, Bourdieu argues that tastes, the manifest cultural preferences of individuals, groups and social classes, cannot be understood in isolation, independent of class relations and social hierarchies.¹⁵ In his view, societies are divided both by class (into strata) and field (into competitive arenas). The precise social location of individuals and families within the matrix of society is determined by the amounts and types of capital they possess.¹⁶ Economic capital is the most important differentiator since conventional wealth can ultimately be converted into other forms of capital – cultural, social and symbolic. Cultural capital, embracing knowledge of the arts, music, literature and other forms of social distinction, is acquired both through education and informal assimilation, and is more readily accessible to children from the upper and upper-middle classes.¹⁷ Likewise, the offspring of the well-to-do have access through family and friends to social capital, relationships and reciprocal obligations that are often crucial to professional and social advancement.¹⁸ In all fields, legitimacy, the acceptance of domination by the subordinated, is signified by possession of symbolic capital, in the form of desirable possessions, privileged pursuits, honours and titles.¹⁹

In Bourdieu's world, in which capital is deployed to reinforce social distinctions, social

processes are driven by the struggle waged implicitly between the classes.²⁰ This struggle is concealed by the fact that much human behaviour is subconscious, the product of what Bourdieu calls “habitus”: the ingrained dispositions that lead actors to make choices that reproduce existing social structures and status distinctions. Habitus equips individuals with a guidance system, with a sense of how to act and respond in society, orientating their actions and inclinations according to what is appropriate in the present circumstances. It serves as a binding force between various fractions within a class, leading to common though not orchestrated action on the basis of categories of “perception and appreciation” that are themselves produced by an observable social condition.²¹ The preservation of social order, of the continued acceptance of domination by the subordinated, does not require members of the ruling elite to think alike or act alike. It is sufficient that there are homologies between fields that lead dominant actors to share similar dispositions across domains.²²

Culture and taste are central to Bourdieu’s understanding of habitus, domination and the exercise of power. Cultural practices are essentially reflective of underlying class distinctions, serving as subtle yet powerful forms of social distinction. Lifestyles give practical expression to the symbolic dimension of class identity.²³ Tastes stem not from internally generated aesthetic preferences, but from the conditioning effect of habitus and the availability or otherwise of economic and cultural capital.²⁴ Each social class or fraction of a class has its own habitus and correlative set of cultural practices. This leads Bourdieu to conclude that relative “distance from necessity” is the main determinant of habitus and the formation of tastes and preferences.²⁵ Those in the uppermost strata of society, free from material constraints, develop an aesthetic disposition characterized by “the stylization of life”, the primacy of form over function and manner over matter.²⁶ In contrast, the working classes are seen to privilege substance over form. By way of a myriad of cultural practices, the dominant distance themselves from the subordinated, the

exercise of taste thereby serving to reinforce the right to rule.

Bourdieu was not the first cultural theorist to observe that tastes and shifts in tastes are instrumental in social competition. Simmel, Packard and Veblen had defined luxury goods and high fashion as status symbols that conferred distinction upon their owners, acquainting good taste with membership of the upper classes.²⁷ In this conception, those lower down the social scale pursue emulative strategies for the acquisition of symbolic capital and social advancement, causing tastes to “trickle down” from the upper to the lower reaches of society. Veblen offers the most extreme version of the theory, holding that accepted standards of good taste are set for each class by the class immediately above, making the super-wealthy at the apex of society the ultimate arbiters of good taste. Social domination extends beyond tastes in material goods to encompass lifestyles and etiquette. This is because good taste is contingent not only on the acquisition of things, but also upon having the knowledge and time to appreciate or consume them properly. In other words, conspicuous leisure is the other side of the coin to conspicuous consumption, and by virtue of its wealth the leisure class is able to stay ahead by continuously reinventing what constitutes good taste. Within hierarchical social structures based on wealth, taste formation is an exclusively top-down process that condemns the lower orders perennially to be out of fashion. This chimes with Simmel’s conclusion that “the fashions of the upper stratum of society are never identical with those of the lower, in fact, they are abandoned by the former as soon as the latter prepare to appropriate them.”²⁸

Bourdieu may have built on theoretical foundations laid by others, but his analysis transcends earlier accounts by demonstrating how tastes are formed, embedded and expressed through the operation of habitus and social competition. A further important theoretical innovation, which is central to our purpose, arises from his application of the concept of

homology to identify interactions between the fields of production (the economic world) and consumption (the social world). Each field is depicted as having a bearing on the other such that “the tastes actually realized depend on the state of the system of goods offered; every change in the system of goods induces a change in tastes ... [and] conversely, every change in tastes resulting from a transformation in the conditions of existence and of the corresponding dispositions will tend to induce ... a transformation in the field of production, by favouring the success ... of the producers best able to [meet] the needs corresponding to the new disposition.”²⁹ In this way, Bourdieu transcends two naïve arguments – either that products are supplied in response to sovereign tastes or that tastes are a function of production – to account for “the quasi-miraculous correspondence prevailing at every moment between the products offered by a field of production and the field of socially produced tastes”.³⁰

In Figure 1, we present a process model of taste formation that builds upon and extends Bourdieu’s analysis as presented most cogently in *Distinction* and *The Rules of Art*.³¹ Each of the four processes identified involves a series of interactions between the fields of production and consumption, referred to by Bourdieu as functional and structural homologies. *Objectification* defines the translation of ideas into artefacts – new products in tune with the spirit of the times. The proposition is that consumers become open to fresh possibilities through the impact of broader changes in society, and that producers respond to these changes by conceiving products that match their ideals and aspirations. *Legitimization* stems from acceptance on the part of the cultural elite that a new class of goods satisfies prevailing standards of good taste. This follows from the interplay between producers seeking to create a market and leading edge consumers with the cultural authority needed to form a community of a taste.³² *Transmission* involves the progressive widening of a community of taste while preserving status distinctions between consumers. This is achieved through the production of what we refer to here as *lesser emblems of*

distinction, imitations or derivatives,³³ copies of copies³⁴ that are eagerly purchased by consumers lacking the purchasing power to acquire more original, distinctive items. In the final process, *institutionalization*, the cultural elite elevates products to classic status, the embodiment of good taste, while simultaneously consumers cherish them as part of their cultural heritage, kept alive through the purchase of *sentimentally evocative goods*. It is through the on-going dialogue between the cultural elite and consumers that tastes become embedded and thereby assume historical and cultural significance.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

Morris, Romanticism and Taste Formation (Objectification)

All cultural products – in fields as diverse as poetry, literature, religion, music, architecture, and the fine and decorative arts – are expressive of thoughts, values and aesthetic sensibilities.

Cultural production requires objectification, the translation of the abstract into the particular, and it follows that any account of the cultural dynamics of taste must begin with an appreciation of the intellectual and social milieu of the producer.³⁵ In this regard, William Morris's personal history serves to make the point. He was born into a well-off upper-middle-class family, and from an early stage in life had the opportunity to accumulate cultural capital, both through formal education and habitus. He read prodigiously as a child, as a teenager at Marlborough, and later at Exeter College, Oxford. Morris was steeped in literature, factual and fictional, which one way or another questioned the dominant values, tastes and cultural practices of his own age, often elevating those of earlier times, especially medieval Britain. His love of authors as diverse as Scott, Carlyle, Wordsworth, Kingsley and Ruskin is symptomatic of his identification with struggle and contestation within the world of ideas – hence the common perception of Morris as a

man waging war against his age.³⁶

Objectification, as the primary process of taste formation, might be conceived as having three interrelated strands. The first of these is a profoundly critical and generalized attitude to presently dominant tastes. In this sense, Morris & Co. emerged from the cultural milieu of late Romanticism and the multifarious critics, authors and creative artists whose ideas animated the era. The essence of the Victorian age, in socio-economic terms, was a product of industrialization and its impact on ordinary people. In the literary and philosophical world, the influence of the Romantic Movement was still predominant, its preoccupation with emotion a reaction to the rationality of the preceding Enlightenment era, whilst its concern with human happiness and quality of life was motivated by a wide-ranging critique of nineteenth-century industrial society.³⁷ Industrialization, whatever its benefits as a generator of wealth, was seen to depend on mechanization and mass-production. Its all too evident by-products were filth and squalor; quite at odds with Romanticism's love of nature and quest for beauty. One consequence of this disharmony was the rehabilitation of medieval art, which previous generations had come to regard as primitive and even barbaric. To many, its mysticism and spirituality were now seen as artistically more profound than anything that more cerebral ages – especially the eighteenth century – could offer.³⁸ This change in aesthetic perception was homologous to developments taking place in other spheres. Intellectual movements are rarely monolithic and, more typically, consist of affiliations between actors within more or less distantly related fields. The Gothic Revival in architecture, for example, was supported by fellow travellers in proximate fields such as the fine and decorative arts and in somewhat more distantly related fields like theology and literature. Morris's personal journey from would-be priest to apprentice architect, aspiring painter and poet, before fixing on a career in the decorative arts, was thus linked by a common thread, itself woven into the fabric of contemporary intellectual discourse.

The second strand within the process of objectification, allied closely with the first, is the formation of specialist groups and associations dedicated to the exploration and definition of fresh creative principles and practices. The essential thrust within late Romanticism was to look to the past, back to the medieval age in particular, to discern superior models within literature, fine art, ecclesiology, architecture and the decorative arts. Three groups – amongst the most influential of the age – had an enduring impact on the aesthetic approach taken by Morris and his associates towards the decorative arts: the Ecclesiological Society (1839), based in Cambridge, whose object was to promote the study of ecclesiological architecture; the Oxford Society for the Study of Gothic Architecture (1839) which aimed at replicating in Britain the architectural triumphs of the Middle Ages; and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (1848), a group of heterodox painters led by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, who insisted on truthful rendition, accurate observation, vivid colouring and painting direct from nature.³⁹ It is through these groups and the leading figures within them – Gothic Revival architects like George Edmund Street and influential critics like John Ruskin – that Morris acquired his deep understanding of architectural and decorative art practices; precisely the cultural capital on which Morris & Co. was founded.

The third strand in the process of objectification is subject matter. For Morris and his collaborators, the medieval world served as treasure trove and source of inspiration, drawing routinely on their knowledge of theology, literature, history and myth as subjects for works of fine or decorative art. Arthurian legend proved an enduring source of artistic themes for Morris and his closest friend and principal designer, Edward Burne-Jones, who as Oxford undergraduates read aloud Sir Thomas Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur*, Bulwer Lytton's popular tales of *King Arthur* and Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott*. Scenes from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and fairytales like

Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast and *Sleeping Beauty* likewise formed the subject matter for designs, alongside more staple material such as scenes from the Bible and epic poems like the German classic the *Nibelungenlied*.⁴⁰ The other partners in Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., founded in 1861 and renamed Morris & Co. in 1875 when Morris became sole owner, were equally well versed in poetry, history, theology, medieval painting and the decorative arts. Rossetti and Ford Madox Brown were leading Pre-Raphaelites and Burne-Jones, as their junior, had learned to paint under Rossetti's tutelage. The budding architect Philip Webb had trained under Street, who became an important early patron of the firm.⁴¹ Peter Marshall, an engineer and gifted amateur painter, and the mathematician Charles Faulkner shared the conviction of their more illustrious compatriots that the decorative arts had become debased and stood in need of an aesthetic revolution.

The formation of Morris & Co. was essentially a creative response to opportunities presented by the engagement of the partners with each of the three strands of the process of objectification. There were, of course, more proximate factors at work. Morris, by means of his private wealth, had in 1858 commissioned Webb to build an ideal marital home for him and his wife Janey at Upton in Kent. Red House required furnishing of the right design, construction and aesthetic sensibility to harmonize with Webb's design, but none was available to satisfy Morris, so he and his friends undertook the work themselves. The experience is generally credited as giving rise to the idea of forming Morris & Co. as a new force in the decorative arts.⁴² However, the prospectus drawn up to launch the firm confirms that the ultimate reason for forming the business was the desire to objectify the thoughts and feelings of its founders. It boldly claimed that the partners "having been for many years deeply attached to the study of the Decorative Arts" but unable to "obtain or get produced work of a genuine and beautiful character" had determined to supply the market with a wide range of decorative art products: mural decoration, carving,

stained glass, metal work, furniture, embroidery and jewellery. They reasoned that the time had come for “Artists of reputation” to enter the field, serving to complement the achievements of architects who recognized the potential of the decorative arts to enrich life.⁴³ Their aim was to win custom by deriding the efforts of other decorative artists as “crude and fragmentary”; an appropriately subversive market entry strategy designed to curry favour with Gothic Revival architects like Scott, Butterfield and Street. These men had gained in power and influence consequent upon the dramatic increase in church building to cater for the rapidly growing population. Their quest for historical and symbolical accuracy meant that churches had become more elaborate and costly, requiring a wide range of decorative work, including wall-painting, stained glass, carving in wood and stone, brass and iron work, church plate and embroidery.⁴⁴

This development had its counterpart in the domestic arena. Sustained economic growth went hand-in-hand with urbanization and the rise of the middle classes – professional, industrial and administrative. Rising living standards in turn created new markets and new possibilities for the formation of specialist fields of economic activity.⁴⁵ The Victorian upper and upper-middle classes attached enormous importance to the symbols and trappings of prosperity. Houses and the decorative arts were an important concern and a focal point for conspicuous consumption.⁴⁶ Even amongst those of relatively modest means, the maintenance of a respectable household in the third quarter of the nineteenth century required expenditure on a broad range of items, including furniture, wall coverings, carpets and rugs, paintings and musical instruments. However, while much of the demand for original decorative artwork was metropolitan or centred on the major provincial cities, it is noteworthy that close on 2,000 country houses were built or completely rebuilt between 1835 and 1914. Until mid-century, members of the old landed classes built most, but this proportion declined sharply as the century progressed, and the patronage of “new money” became more important.⁴⁷

Morris & Co. was not the only firm to respond to the opportunities presented by market growth and changing tastes. In the early years, for example, when most commissions came through like-minded architects, stained glass was the firm's staple product. Rossetti, Madox Brown and Burne-Jones had already designed biblical figures and scenes for leading makers like Powell & Sons of Whitefriars, the firm which, under guidance from architectural historian Charles Winston, had learned how to manufacture coloured glass near equal to the best medieval examples. Powell & Sons and other competitors like Lavers & Barraud and Clayton & Bell, perhaps six firms in all, were in tune with the standards and artistic requirements of the Gothic Revival.⁴⁸ Morris & Co., at its inception, did not have a unique value proposition nor was it the first in the field; it was in fact part-and-parcel of a wider response within the field of production to significant moves in the field of consumption. Its immediate trading advantage stemmed from the depth of the cultural, social and symbolic capital possessed by the partners. Romanticism, combined with a deep familiarity with ecclesiology, medieval architecture, history, myths and legends, infused the look, feel and subject matter of their work. Artistic substance and a distinctive (pre-Raphaelite) style set Morris & Co. apart from its rivals, confirming Morris's belief that "beauty is a marketable quality."⁴⁹

The Establishment of a Morrisian Community of Taste (Legitimization)

The Morris case presents a rare opportunity to analyse the processes through which culturally significant goods become accepted as expressive of good taste within a section of the ruling class, forming the kernel of a new community of taste. By reconstructing the social networks through which the Morris business extended its influence between the 1860s and 1890s, it is possible to open up a window on the habitus and processes of taste legitimization of the upper and upper-

middle classes of Victorian Britain. In this regard, it is fortunate that a plethora of primary sources exists, which, albeit fragmentary, yield close-to-life insights into the exercise of cultural leadership in Victorian high society.

There is no doubt that Morris, as a private individual, preferred to spend his recreational hours with friends from the same social milieu – artists, writers and intellectuals rich in cultural capital, including social critics like John Ruskin. But Morris’s social interactions were far from being confined to this circle. Like other cultural actors he needed wealthy patrons to become established and build his reputation. From its creation in 1861, the firm’s commercial success was predicated upon the formation of an influential network of clients and champions.⁵⁰ In this, Rossetti was the prime mover, using his extensive personal network to recommend the Morris business as the rising force in the decorative arts. It was Rossetti, for example, who secured the commission to redecorate the Armoury and Tapestry Room at St James’s Palace in 1866.⁵¹ The Commissioner of Works at that time was William Cowper. He and his wife, Georgiana, were close friends of Ruskin, who introduced them to Rossetti in 1865. Georgiana’s *Memorials* of her husband include an account of an early meeting with Rossetti. When she asked Rossetti if he could suggest any improvements to her home, he replied that he would “begin by burning everything you have got”. Morris & Co. was duly employed to redecorate their Curzon Street house, and Georgiana became a long-standing champion for the firm. Writing in 1890, she observed that “nearly all people confess that they owe a deep debt to the firm, for having saved them from trampling roses underfoot, and sitting on shepherdesses, or birds and butterflies, from vulgar ornaments and other atrocities in taste, and for having their homes homely and beautiful”.⁵²

Following Rossetti’s example, the other partners in Morris & Co. – especially Morris and

Burne-Jones – became adept proselytizers, moving confidently in high society in London and at the country retreats of wealthy landowners, industrialists and financiers. They were accomplished relationship builders, confirming Erickson’s observation that cultural variety and social network variety are potentially valuable business resources.⁵³ A typical example of network formation stems from the firm’s dealings with George Howard, later ninth Earl of Carlisle. Howard, and his wife, Rosalind, first visited the firm’s workshops in 1866 and became regular customers for the next 20 years, furnishing their homes at Castle Howard and Naworth Castle in Cumbria. Their London house, 1 Palace Green, was built by Philip Webb between 1868 and 1872, and was decorated throughout with Morris wallpapers and fabrics. It served as a showcase for Morris & Co. One of the Howards’ first guests at their new home was HRH Princess Louise, who had married Howard’s cousin, the Marquis of Lorne. She was so taken with the wallpapers that she personally visited the firm’s showrooms to select papers for her rooms at Kensington Palace.⁵⁴

The Howards’ close friendship with Percy and Madeleine Wyndham further extended Morris’s sphere of influence. Percy Wyndham was the younger son of George Wyndham, first Baron Leconfield. He and his wife were members of the intellectual and aesthetically minded aristocratic set known as the Souls.⁵⁵ Their admiration for 1 Palace Green led them to draw up ambitious plans for their country house, Clouds, in Wiltshire. Work started in 1876, though it was nine years before the house was ready for occupation. It was an important commission for Morris & Co. As Girouard observes, Clouds set the style for country house life: “political entertaining combined with artistic discrimination. The style, sensibility and relative informality with which the two were pursued made Clouds one of the most famous country houses of its era.” Morris fabrics were used throughout the house as curtains, chair covers, tablecloths and screens. Two large hand-woven carpets were specially designed. That for the drawing room, renowned as the *Clouds* carpet, featured an arabesque floral design on a blue ground with a grey border and was

the largest carpet Morris & Co. ever manufactured.⁵⁶

It is possible through close scrutiny of surviving diaries, memorials, social reports and other sources to trace further the Morris client network stemming from the Howards. This is not necessary for present purposes. What matters is that the Howards were just one node within a complex web of social interaction, and this web was not confined to the aristocracy but included elite individuals from many walks of life. Morris clients included the iron and steel magnate Sir Isaac Lowthian Bell (Rounton Grange in Yorkshire), the illustrator Myles Birket Foster (The Hill in Surrey), the financier Edward Charles Baring (Membland Hall in Devon), and the shipping magnate Frederick Leyland (Speke Hall in Liverpool).⁵⁷ In the majority of cases down to 1890, Morris himself took charge of major decorative schemes, working closely with collaborators like Webb as architect, Burne-Jones as figure designer, and William De Morgan as tile maker. Many of the products used – fabrics, wallpapers, carpets, tapestries and stained glass – were manufactured in Morris & Co.’s own workshops. The firm proactively marketed on-site consultations with Morris, its principal designer, as a unique and desirable feature of the business. It was a service greatly valued by clients: Walter Bagehot, the lawyer and constitutionalist, remarking in 1875 that “the great man himself, William Morris, is composing [my] drawing room, as he would an ode”.⁵⁸

In seizing the moment and exercising cultural leadership, Morris and his associates were able through social networking to establish their products as exemplars of legitimate good taste amongst the more intellectual, artistically minded sections of the upper classes. The firm was, to use Bourdieu’s terminology, instrumental in orchestrating the market.⁵⁹ Morris products never became ubiquitous, universally accepted or appreciated; but for leading edge consumers within the ruling class they spoke of distinction and were read as symbolic of high status and refined

good taste. It is only through the activities of market makers, trendsetters, that decorative art products can be consecrated as entirely legitimate, whose possession is seen as a true mark of distinction, what Bourdieu calls “the production of belief.”⁶⁰ The key thematic of the story told by Morris was that his products were defined by “the luxury of taste” not “the luxury of costliness.” This was achieved through the application of correct principles of design, the subject matter inspiring his designs (Nature and Myth), use of the best materials, the alignment of product form and function and the use of appropriate craft methods in manufacture. His products in consequence were said to be beautiful, hard-wearing, and pleasing to the mind and the eye. The attributes and implicit values that helped build reputation and brand identity were those of integrity, boldness, originality, naturalness and lack of pretension. Morris offered a package of satisfactions, real and perceived, appealing to a group of connoisseurs, a nascent community of taste, and was crucial to his success in the marketplace.⁶¹

Morris & Co., in cultivating the rich and powerful, can be seen to have traded cultural capital (in which it was rich) for social capital (prospective clients) and economic capital (commissions). From the client perspective, identification with cultural leaders like Morris offered a number of powerful yet subtle advantages. Within the Morrisian community of taste, appreciation of the decorative arts was a signifier of belonging; as Bourdieu remarks, “taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier.”⁶² It was a neutral topic of conversation, shared by men and women, industrialists and bankers, landowners and city dwellers. When, for example, Walter Bagehot visited the Earl of Carnarvon at his country house, Highclere in Berkshire, he noted “they are doing a heap of improvements, and among others have gone into Morrisianism ... They are much amused here at *my* knowing anything about it.”⁶³ This snippet, unimportant in itself, is revealing once it is known that Highclere was a pioneering venue for weekend house-parties, which became a distinctive feature of upper-class life in the late Victorian period.⁶⁴ Conversation

about art, architecture and literature, as expressions of common cultural dispositions, served as a mechanism for elite cohesion, reinforcing its legitimacy and separation from the lower orders.⁶⁵ It did not matter whether members actually liked what they saw; what mattered was whether they knew about what they saw.⁶⁶ As Calhoun and Wacquant assert, it is knowledge that determines all forms of judgement and “buttresses the hierarchies of the social world.”⁶⁷ In the same way, the selection and purchase of Morris products was a mark of distinction, involving the exchange of economic capital for socially necessary symbolic capital, consistent with Bourdieu’s depiction of the intricacies of capital exchange.⁶⁸

The case confirms the two-way nature of the process of legitimization in elite taste formation. In developing its business in the secular market for decorative art products, Morris & Co. needed to extend its range of furnishings and decorative repertoire to secure the support and patronage of the upper classes. In doing so, it traded heavily on its distinctive styling, original designs, and use of best quality materials, consistent with the principles of design and manufacture that animated the business. Equally, however, being a patron of the firm helped legitimize the social position of the elite. Identification with the firm sent out the message that spending on a large scale was about more than ostentation and conspicuous consumption: money, if spent well, discerningly, might enable creativity and the production of works of decorative art of intrinsic and enduring value. Purchasing from Morris became a proclamation of distinction and an assertion of good taste.

Extending the Community of Taste (Transmission)

By 1875, when Morris became sole owner of Morris & Co., he was already a leading authority in the decorative arts. He produced some of his finest flat-pattern designs during the late 1870s and

early 1880s, becoming one of the world's most admired designers of hand-woven carpets and high-warp tapestries. From this strong position Morris reached out to extend the Morrisian community of taste beyond the upper class to encompass a broader swathe of society. He showcased an expanded range of products at a fashionable shop in Oxford Street from 1877, opening a branch in Manchester in 1883. Agents were appointed in Boston in 1878 and New York in 1883, and others followed in Canada, France, Germany and Australia.⁶⁹ His product range was progressively widened and deepened. From a base of stained glass, hand-painted tiles, furniture, and wallpapers in the 1860s he added block printed fabrics, woven fabrics, handmade carpets and machine-made carpets in the 1870s, and tapestries in the early 1880s. In 1881, he began to manufacture directly on a larger scale at Merton Abbey in Surrey, in premises described as idyllic by many visitors.⁷⁰ The choice within each product range was expanded at the same time. In 1868, there were six Morris designs for wallpaper and just one for fabric, increasing to 25 for wallpaper and 29 for fabric in 1880, and 52 for wallpaper and 62 for fabric in 1894.⁷¹ Comparable financial data are difficult to glean, but on the evidence available we compute sales of £3,000 and net profit of £200 in 1868 rising to sales of £140,000 and net profit of £9,750 in 1894.⁷² The business we know to have been financially robust after 1875 despite fluctuations in stained glass sales, the expanded range of products helping dampen cyclical variations.

At the heart of the growth of Morris & Co. after 1875 was the pursuit of a dual commercial strategy, with important consequences for taste formation outside the confines of Britain's economic and social elite. On the one hand, Morris continued to supply elite clients with exclusive goods and services at the juncture of the fine and decorative arts. On the other, he actively sought to promote sales of less exclusive products, *lesser emblems of distinction* – wallpapers, printed fabrics, less elaborate woven fabrics, serially-produced furniture, painted tiles, machine-made carpets, linoleum and embroidery sets – to aspiring members of the middle

classes. These were families headed by salaried professionals, company executives, public servants and the owners of smaller enterprises.⁷³ Market segmentation along these lines made financial and reputational sense. In expanding the reach of the business, at home and abroad, he could extend production runs for standard items, increasing cash flow while containing costs. At the same time, no compromise was required with respect to product or service quality and therefore Morris's reputation never came under threat. He resisted all inducements to mass production, even though he believed it could have made him "a positively rich man."⁷⁴

This did not mean that Morris was commercially passive. The middle classes were growing and by investing in tasteful home decoration, albeit on a much lesser scale than the wealthy, its members might legitimize and consolidate their hard-won social position. Morris took advantage by writing evocative brochures describing his products, methods of manufacture and principles of design.⁷⁵ The firm continued to emphasize the "luxury of taste" rather than the "luxury of costliness." It followed that to own a little Morris was better than to own no Morris at all. The sought-after qualities of originality, beautiful design and colouring, hand manufacture and the use of natural, high-quality materials attached themselves to all Morris products whatever the cost. Hence the enduring attraction of Morris wallpapers and fabrics. At the bottom end of the printed fabric range designs like Brother Rabbit and Iris could be purchased for as little as £0.07 per yard, while at the other end of the spectrum silk fabrics like Oak and St James sold at £2.25 per yard, beyond the pockets of all but the wealthiest customers.⁷⁶ Yet Morris was forever keen to extol the virtues of lower-priced goods like wallpapers and simple printed fabrics. The ways in which these could be combined with simple furniture to create a harmonious decorative scheme was a theme to which Morris turned time and time again. He sought to educate rather than simply promote his wares to inspire customer confidence and loyalty. The following extract from his brochure for the Boston Foreign Fair of 1883 is illustrative:

“In the Decorative Arts, nothing is finally successful which does not satisfy the mind as well as the eye. A pattern may have beautiful parts and be good in certain relations; but, unless it be suitable for the purpose assigned, it will not be a decoration. Unfitness is so far a want of naturalness; and with that defect, ornamentation can never satisfy the craving which is part of nature.”⁷⁷

The educational nature of Morris’s brochures and displays at exhibitions, in conveying the impression of disinterestedness, of altruistic rather than selfish motives, made them all the more potent as a marketing device. In a variety of ways, the growing reputation of Morris within the decorative arts resembled the spreading of a cult. Morris certainly had some of the qualities of a prophet. He was admired across a wide section of society for his literary works, especially *The Earthly Paradise*, reprinted five times between 1868 and 1872 alone. He was an educator and interpreter of complex social ideas, as his later writings on socialism confirm.⁷⁸ In the decorative arts, his views on design and craftsmanship were the subject of public lectures. The first, “The Decorative Arts”, given before the Trades Guild of Learning in 1877, was reprinted in the *Architect* and as a pamphlet with a print run of 2,000 copies in 1878. Others, such as “Making the Best of It” (c.1879), were collected and published as a book in 1882 under the title *Hopes and Fears for Art*.⁷⁹

Morris’s admirers were quick in spreading further his beliefs and artistic principles. Numerous writers took up the theme of excellence in interior design, frequently citing Morris as a model to follow. Longman published Sir Charles Eastlake’s *Hints on Household Taste* in 1868: it became a long-running best-seller on both sides of the Atlantic. Rhoda and Agnes Garrett’s *Suggestions for Home Decoration in Painting, Woodwork and Furniture* followed in 1876. Both

books offered advice along Morrisian lines and were targeted at “the cultivated middle class, able to enjoy leisure, refinement and luxury in moderation.”⁸⁰ The Garretts emphasized simplicity and the avoidance of cheap imitations, as did Lucy Faulkner Orrinsmith, who castigated the solid comfort of the early Victorian period as “the very headquarters of commonplace, with its strict symmetry of ornament and its pretentious uselessness.”⁸¹ The trend was away from ostentation and display in favour of “art furnishing”, which sought to make rooms less oppressive by having less and lighter furniture, lighter colours and an air of casualness in the choice of patterns and objects.⁸² The theme was taken up by the likes of Robert Edis in *The Decoration and Furnishing of Town Houses* (1881) and Moncure Conway in *Travels in South Kensington* (1882). It was Conway who first noted that possession of something from Morris & Co. was *de rigueur* for every “artistic” middle-class household in London.⁸³ Articles about Morris & Co. in the *Art Journal*, the *Studio*, the *Spectator*, the *Architectural Review* and other fashionable publications, often featuring photographs by photographer Bedford Lemere, reinforced the notion of what constituted decorative art at its best.⁸⁴

The habitus of the Victorian middle classes was very different from that of the elite due to the limited funds available to foray in the decorative arts. Morris’s elevation of taste over costliness as the mark of refinement struck a chord with increasing numbers of people who believed that by educating themselves in the decorative arts, and investing in cultural capital, they could pursue cultural practices that would otherwise have been out of reach; confirming the argument made by Trigg that “lifestyles can vary horizontally, cutting across the social hierarchy.”⁸⁵ The wealthy continued to patronize Morris & Co. because it continued to supply exclusive goods at the top of the market, unavailable to the vast majority of the population and a continuing source of distinction. Those from aspirant middle classes, meanwhile, could nonetheless identify with the firm and its ideals in pursuing a lifestyle that gave practical and

symbolic expression to the exercise of discernment.

Embeddedness and Cultural Reproduction (Institutionalization)

For Morris to have had a pronounced influence on taste, within and beyond his own lifetime, required the operation of the fourth process of taste formation, that of *institutionalization*. When any cultural entity – custom, practice, object or legend – becomes institutionalized, it becomes embedded within the social structure of a community or nation and recognized as an enduring feature of the social order.⁸⁶ In the case of Morris, one mark of his status is that he remains institutionally significant to many organizations and communities within and beyond Britain,⁸⁷ a cultural reference point for present and future generations.

The elevation of Morris to the status of cultural icon began in the 1880s when his ideas were taken up by a broad cross-section of architects, designers and craftsmen. These were the agents behind the numerous loosely associated groups and societies that collectively became known as the Arts and Crafts movement. Amongst the most important were the Century Guild, the Art Workers' Guild, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, and the Guild of Handicraft. Each, in different ways, acknowledged Morris as a source of inspiration, propagating selectively his educational beliefs and working methods.⁸⁸ One of the staunchest advocates of Morrisian principles was the architect and designer W.R. Lethaby, who became Head of the London Central School of Arts and Crafts in 1894, infusing the curriculum with Morris's beliefs and working methods, and in turn influencing the thinking of future generations of designers.⁸⁹ Lethaby's influence on design education spread throughout Britain to mainland Europe where the Central School provided "if not the model, certainly the inspiration of much continental teaching and training in design and the crafts."⁹⁰

This process was not one that Morris sought to control. He was neither founder nor moving spirit of any of the organizations formed to promote the arts and crafts, and aspects of his own practice – serial manufacture, sub-contracting and the use of machines – were not aligned with the principles of craft manufacture, and attracted criticism from some quarters.⁹¹ What was crucial was the agency of cultural actors like Lethaby for whom he satisfied a continuing need. Each of these actors was in one way or another involved in codifying and simplifying, deriving “historical categories of artistic perception”,⁹² with respect to Morris himself or the movements he is seen to have represented. At the extreme, the institutionalized Morris can be reduced to a series of simple equations of the type “Morris = Greatest Ever Flat Pattern Designer” or “Morris = Reinventor of Natural Dyeing Methods”. Such equations do little justice to historical fact. Numerous other actors and their achievements are quickly lost to history, eradicated from the collective memory, only to be recalled in specialist texts as characters of substance. This is structuration in action within the cultural field,⁹³ through which a natural order emerges, with its own mythology kept fresh by cultural authorities such as museum curators, designers and architects, media arts gurus and historians.⁹⁴ Morris thus found his place in history, as the inspiration and leading figure of the Arts and Crafts Movement; an essential reference point in any conversation about the decorative arts in Victorian Britain: “Morris = Arts and Crafts.”⁹⁵

Through the processes of cultural reproduction, the Morrisian community of taste has reached across generations. Biographers and historians of art and design have revered his memory since his death in 1896.⁹⁶ Television and radio broadcasters have joined in more recently.⁹⁷ Others in the heritage industry have projected Morris as a cultural icon, notably the keepers of Morris collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum and elsewhere.⁹⁸ There is a William Morris Society for the true *cognoscenti*.⁹⁹ Meanwhile, at the commercial level, it is remarkable that many

of Morris's best-loved designs for wallpapers and fabrics have remained in near continuous production.¹⁰⁰ After his death in 1896, the business was taken over by his junior partners (from 1890) and commercial managers, Frank and Robert Smith, continuing under their management, and from 1905 that of Henry Marillier, without any "deviation whatsoever in the traditions and methods of manufacture ... as in William Morris's lifetime."¹⁰¹ However, with the loss of creative force so implied, without fresh designs from Morris or Burne-Jones, at a time when tastes in the decorative arts had moved on, the business went into gentle decline, and was liquidated in 1940. The commercial rights to Morris's original designs passed in due course to Sanderson & Co., which has maintained production of his wallpapers and fabrics. The designs are now used regularly not only for their original purpose, but as images for the decoration of scarves, ties, cushion covers, mugs, bags, diaries and all manner of paraphernalia – the *sentimentally evocative goods* found in museum shops and other cultural venues.¹⁰² These products, however derivative, serve symbolically to make a direct connection in the minds of purchasers between themselves and William Morris. Thus, in keeping his designs in the public eye, educators, cultural professionals and businessmen have together maintained widespread appreciation of the essential character of Morrisian design.¹⁰³

Discussion and Conclusion

The Morris case, when viewed through the lens of the process model of taste formation presented in Figure 1, suggests answers, albeit provisional, given the limitations of a single case study, to the four questions posed at the beginning of this article. First, we asked how fundamental movements in society manifest themselves in the production and consumption of goods with distinctive qualities and attributes. We propose on the basis of the evidence presented that the *objectification* of fresh ideas and perspectives works from the general to the particular. In





movements like Romanticism, negative critiques of the dominant order may give rise to intense exploration in numerous homologous spheres of specific creative possibilities and the exploitation of newly discovered or re-discovered cultural resources. Secondly, we asked how producers, consumers and critics interact to inspire cultural movements and establish communities of taste. The evidence suggests that the establishment of a new community of taste requires a vanguard of elite consumers to make common cause with innovative producers with the capabilities needed to produce original products attuned to their cultural dispositions. *Legitimization*, the stamp of approval of a product as expressive of good taste by elite consumers, is characterized by symbolic exchange: members of the elite acquiring a fresh source of distinction, and producers the advantages of patronage. Thirdly, we asked how tastes spread beyond a small circle of leading edge consumers to gain acceptance across a broad swathe of society. We hold that within the field of consumption, social movements progressively shape the dispositions of consumers across society. Tastes are *transmitted* and new communities of taste enlarged when consumers lacking the purchasing power of those in the vanguard become aware of new styles and creative possibilities through the agency of opinion formers, and producers respond through the supply of *lesser emblems of distinction*: products with some of the essential qualities of the new class of goods, available at a relatively modest price, but lacking the prestige of original works. Finally, we asked how tastes are transmitted across generations and elevated to iconic status. The evidence presented suggests that tastes may become *institutionalized*, structurally embedded, through the agency of a variety of elite cultural actors in pursuit of their own agendas. Cultural reproduction results from the consecration of products and designs as emblematic of enduring good taste and the regular repetition of simplified narratives of their origin. The commercial exploitation of classical models in the production of *sentimentally evocative goods* serves to personalize the ties between past and present.

This analysis has interesting implications both for our understanding of William Morris as a historically significant cultural actor and for the theorization of taste. With regard to the former, it is fair to say that the greater part of Morris scholarship, beginning with Mackail in 1899, is focused on the individual.¹⁰⁴ Context and connections are detailed and acknowledged as formative to some degree, but the thrust is towards explaining Morris's life and works in relation to his personal interests, abilities and relationships. From this perspective, the quality and quantity of Morris's creative outputs is most commonly explained in terms of his working methods and personal genius.¹⁰⁵ Through his command of the design process and his selection of materials and methods, he is seen to have created a unique range of products that defined an entire decorative art style; thus the Morrisian community of taste could not have existed without Morris, and without his energy and business acumen Morris & Co. could never have left such an enduring legacy. The perspective of this article is somewhat different, providing the foundations for a potentially richer and more nuanced understanding of the place of Morris and Morris & Co. in design history. The emphasis here is on process, and Morris is positioned as one of many actors, admittedly a very talented one, in a complex creative drama. We might reasonably speculate that without Morris the play would have gone on, requiring different actors to play different roles, but with the content, when viewed in the round, little altered. In stained glass, for example, it is not difficult to see that Burne-Jones, Madox Brown and Rossetti would have continued designing for competitors had Morris & Co. not appeared on the scene. Commissions for the decoration of large houses and public buildings likewise are likely to have been awarded to companies which, like Morris & Co., were in tune with the spirit of the times. We would not wish to carry this argument too far, given the originality and distinctive quality of Morris designs and products; but it remains the case that Morris, like other leading lights within the creative industries, was expressive as well as formative of his age.

At the theoretical level, this article has sought to extend our understanding of taste formation through the presentation and application of an original process model, based on the work of established authorities, but codifying and extending this through the introduction of two new constructs: *lesser emblems of distinction* and *sentimentally evocative goods*. One strength of the model, in specifying the nature of interactions between the fields of consumption and production, is to demonstrate that creativity is not the product of abstraction, but rather of engagement – critical and constructive – with the animating ideas of the time. Equally, however, the Morris case is helpful in exposing the limitations of theory. In particular, the top-down, class-based representation of taste formation championed by Simmel, Veblen and Bourdieu, while superficially fitting the facts, arguably does not stand up to closer scrutiny. It is true that Morris's products initially found favour with upper and upper-middle class consumers, and that ownership signified distinction, but they cannot be portrayed as instruments of class division. The Morrisian community of taste, at first very small, was never pre-eminent amongst the upper classes. It grew both by including more wealthy clients and by expanding to include members of the middling classes, who typically purchased lesser emblems of distinction. Emulation and trickle down were not the mechanisms at work. Romanticism impacted directly to shape tastes within certain sections of the middle class, just as it impacted on certain sections of the upper and upper-middle classes.¹⁰⁶ The practical value of Morris's market segmentation strategy was that he could simultaneously attract consumers from across the social classes without compromising the quality or authenticity of his products. In other words, members of the Morrisian community of taste were united by common aesthetic preferences, bound together not as leaders and followers but as equals in their appreciation of the designs and products of Morris & Co. From this perspective, taste formation may be viewed as a force for social cohesion rather than one of social domination.

Figure 1

Cultural Homologies and the Four Processes of Taste Formation

PROCESS	CULTURAL HOMOLOGIES		
	<i>Field of Production</i>		<i>Field of Consumption</i>
Objectification	Translation of abstract ideas into cultural artefacts		Formation of cultural dispositions through homologous movements in society
Legitimization	Production, marketing and endorsement of a new genre of cultural products		Establishment through symbolic appropriation of a leading edge community of taste
Transmission	Range of products extended to include lesser emblems of distinction		Community of taste extended across different sections of society
Institutionalization	Original models exploited in the production of sentimentally evocative goods		Community of taste renewed across generations through cultural reproduction

Notes

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² Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford, 1994); Douglas B. Holt, "Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?" *Journal of Consumer Research* 25 (1998): 1-25.

³ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (London, 1970[1899]).

⁴ Jukka Gronow, *The Sociology of Taste* (London, 1997), 31-48.

⁵ Heinz-Dieter Mayer, "Taste Formation in Pluralistic Societies: The Role of Rhetorics and Institutions," *International Sociology* 15 (2000): 33-56.

⁶ Albert M. Muniz and Thomas C. O'Guinn, "Brand Community," *Journal of Consumer Research* 27 (2001): 412-432.

⁷ Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and John H. Plumb, *The Birth of Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England* (London, 1982); Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford, 1991); Maxine Berg, *A Nation of Shoppers: How Georgian Britain Discovered the Delights of Luxury* (Oxford, 2005); John Brewer and Frank Trentmann eds, *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges* (Oxford, 2006).

⁸ Frank Trentmann ed., *The Making of the Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World* (Oxford, 2006), 1-27; Frank Trentmann, "The Modern Genealogy of the Consumer: Meanings, Identities and Political Synapses," in *Consuming Cultures*, ed. Brewer and Trentmann, 19-69.

⁹ Charles Harvey and Jon Press, "The Marketing of Art," *Business History* 28 (1986): 36-54; Charles Harvey and Jon Press, *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian Britain* (Manchester, 1991); Charles Harvey and Jon Press, "John Ruskin and the Ethical Foundations of

Morris & Company,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 14 (1995): 181-194; Charles Harvey and Jon Press, *Art, Enterprise and Ethics: Essays on the Life and Work of William Morris* (London, 1996).

¹⁰ Charlotte Gere and Michael Whiteway, *Nineteenth Century Design: From Pugin to Mackintosh* (London, 1993); Kathleen A. Lochnan, Douglas E. Schoenherr and Carole Silver, eds, *The Earthly Paradise* (Toronto, 1993); Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London, 1994); Victorian & Albert Museum, *William Morris, 1834-1896* (London, 1996).

¹¹ Gillian Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of Its Sources, Ideals and Influence on Design Theory* (Cambridge, MA, 1980); Peter Stansky, *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s and the Arts and Crafts* (Princeton, NJ, 1985); Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London, 1991).

¹² Kurt Wolff ed., *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York, 1950); Veblen, *Leisure Class*; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London, 1984).

¹³ Harvey and Press, *William Morris*.

¹⁴ On the relationship of Romanticism to consumption see Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford, 1987); Morris B. Holbrook, “Romanticism and Sentimentality in Consumer Behavior: A Literary Approach to the Joys and Sorrows of Consumption,” *Research in Consumer Behavior* 5 (1991), 105-80; “Romanticism, Introspection and the Roots of Experiential Consumption: Morris the Epicurean” in *Consumption and Marketing: Macro Dimensions*, ed. Russell W. Belk, Nikhilesh Dholakia and Alladi Venkatesh (Cincinnati, OH, 1995), 20-82.

¹⁵ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 97-256; David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago, 1997), 117-188.

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (Oxford, 1996), 261-339; Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Oxford,

1996), 47-112.

¹⁷ Bonnie H. Erickson, "What is Good Taste Good For?," *Canadian Review of Anthropology and Sociology* 28 (1991): 256.

¹⁸ Margaret M. Bubolz, "Family as Source, User and Builder of Social Capital," *Journal of Socio-Economics* 30 (2001): 129-131.

¹⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art And Literature* (Oxford, 1993), 74-141.

²⁰ Douglas E. Allen and Paul F. Anderson, "Consumption and Social Stratification: Bourdieu's Distinction," *Advances in Consumer Research* 21 (1994): 70-74.

²¹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 171.

²² *Ibid.*, 232-244.

²³ David Chaney, *Lifestyles* (London, 1996), 56-70.

²⁴ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 1-8, 257-396.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 53-96.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁷ Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*; Vance Packard, *The Status Seekers: An Exploration of Class Behaviour in America* (London, 1960); Veblen, *Leisure Class*.

²⁸ George Simmel, "Fashion," *International Quarterly* 10 (1904): 137.

²⁹ Brian S. Turner and June Edmunds, "The Distaste of Taste: Bourdieu, Cultural Capital and the Australian Postwar Elite," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 2 (2002): 231.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 232.

³¹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 226-256; Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, 141-173.

³² Bourdieu, *Cultural Production*, 259-266.

³³ *Ibid.*, 318-323.

³⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris, 1969, 2nd edition 1972), 7.

³⁵ Grant McCracken, "Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Goods," *Journal of Consumer Research* 13 (1986): 71-84; Robert Batchelor, "On the Movement of Porcelains: Rethinking the Birth of Consumer Society as Interactions of Exchange Networks, 1600-1750" in *Consuming Cultures*, ed. Brewer and Trentmann, 95-121.

³⁶ Peter Faulkner, *Against the Age: An Introduction to William Morris* (London, 1980).

³⁷ Campbell, *Romantic Ethic*, 173-201.

³⁸ Christopher Wood, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (London, 2001), 9-23.

³⁹ Charles L. Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival* (London, 1868); George W. Addlestone and Frederick Etchells, *The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship* (London, 1948); Basil F.L. Clarke, *Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century: A Study of the Gothic Revival in England* (London, 1939); Wood, *Pre-Raphaelites*.

⁴⁰ Maurice Cranston, *The Romantic Movement* (London, 1994), 48-76 & 138-152. Sir Thomas Mallory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* was written in 1469 and translated into English from French by William Caxton in 1485. The dramatic scenes and episodic nature of the narrative lent itself naturally to depiction in pictures.

⁴¹ Sheila Kirk, *Philip Webb: Pioneer of Arts and Crafts Architecture* (London, 2005).

⁴² Jan Marsh, *William Morris and Red House: A Collaboration between Architect and Owner* (London, 2005).

⁴³ Harvey and Press, *William Morris*, 38-42.

⁴⁴ The Church of England spent more than £25 million between 1840 and 1874. *Number of Churches built or restored since 1840* (UK Parliament. House of Commons Papers, *Return showing the Number of Churches (including Cathedrals) in every Diocese in England, which had been built or restored at a cost exceeding £500 since the year 1840*. 1876 LVIII, 553-658; F. Warre Cornish, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century* (2 vols., London, 1910), volume I,

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⁴⁵ In all, the number of residential properties in England and Wales almost doubled between 1851 and 1901, from 3,432,000 to 6,710,000. Brian Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1971), 6, 239; Christopher G. Powell, *An Economic History of the British Building Industry, 1815-1979* (London, 1980); Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-75* (London, 1971); F. Michael L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London, 1988), 166-196; Roderick Floud, *The People and the British Economy, 1830-1914* (Oxford, 1997), 59-61.

⁴⁶ Richards, *Commodity Culture*, 17-72.

⁴⁷ We estimate that by the 1870s there were between 4,000 and 5,000 country houses associated with large estates: Richard G. Wilson and Alan L. Mackley, "How Much did the English Country House Cost to Build, 1660-1880?," *Economic History Review* LII (1999): 436-468; Richard G. Wilson and Alan L. Mackley, *Creating Paradise: The Building of the English Country House, 1160-1880* (London, 2000); Thompson, *Respectable Society*, 152-163; Jill Franklin, *The Gentleman's Country House and its Plan, 1835-1914* (London, 1981), 1, 24-38.

⁴⁸ Jim Cheshire, *Stained Glass and the Victorian Gothic Revival* (Manchester, 2005).

⁴⁹ This statement was made when giving evidence before the British Royal Commission on Technical Instruction which reported in 1884. In answer to a question on the commercial

importance of design, Morris replied that "... beauty is a marketable quality, and ... the better the work is all round, both as a work of art and in its technique, the more likely it is to find favour with the public." Parliamentary Papers, c3981, 1884 XXXI: *Second Report of the Royal Commissioners on Technical Instruction*, Q1580.

⁵⁰ On family and social networking and its importance in American business history, see Pamela Walker Laird, *Pull: Networking and Success since Benjamin Franklin* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), 44-48 and 81-85.

⁵¹ United Kingdom, Public Record Office, WORK 19/129; James Edgar Sheppard, *Memorials of St. James's Palace* (London, 1894), 126, 370; Charles Mitchell, "William Morris at St. James's Palace," *Architectural Review* 42 (1947): 37-39; John Y. Le Bourgeois, "Morris & Company at St. James's Palace: A Sequel." *Journal of the William Morris Society* III (1974): 8.

⁵² Georgiana Mount-Temple, *Memorials* [of William Francis Cowper-Temple, Baron Mount-Temple] (London, 1890), 64-65.

⁵³ Erickson, "What is Good Taste Good For?": 255-278.

⁵⁴ Castle Howard Archives, Yorkshire, J23/102/12, Diary of Rosalind Howard; William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, London, Box 15a/15b; Richard William Lethaby, *Philip Webb and his Work* (London, 1935), 88-89; May Morris, *William Morris: Artist, Designer, Socialist* (Oxford, 1936), 57; Linda Parry, *William Morris Textiles* (London, 1983), 137; Victoria Surtees, *The Artist and the Autocrat: George and Rosalind Howard, Earl and Countess of Carlisle* (Wilton, 1988), 89; Caroline Dakers, *Clouds: The Biography of a House* (New Haven, CT, 1993), 43-44.

⁵⁵ Jane Abdy and Christine Gere, *The Souls* (London, 1984), 82-101.

⁵⁶ Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (New Haven, CT, 1979), 80-81; Dakers, *Clouds*, 63-64.

⁵⁷ William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, London, Box 15a/15b; Lethaby, *Philip Webb*, 93-

95; Morris, *William Morris*, 58-59; D. Hopkinson, "A Passion for Building: The Barings at Membland," *Country Life* 29 (1982): 1736-1740; Parry, *William Morris Textiles*, 137-138; Jan Reynolds, *Birket Foster* (London, 1984), 84-96; Richard and Hilary Myers, *William Morris Tiles: Tile Designs of Morris and his Fellow-Workers* (Shepton Beauchamp, England, 1996), 27-32.

⁵⁸ Mrs Russell Barrington, *Life of Walter Bagehot* (London, 1914), 412.

⁵⁹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 230-232.

⁶⁰ Bourdieu, *Cultural Production*, 74-111; Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, 166-173.

⁶¹ On social identity and consumption, see Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford, 1987). On emotional satisfactions, see Morris B. Holbrook and Elizabeth C. Hirschman, "The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings and Fun," *Journal of Consumer Research* 9 (1982): 132-140.

⁶² Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 6.

⁶³ Norman St. John Stevas, ed., *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot* (London, 1986), Vol. XIII, *Letters*, 640, Walter Bagehot to Eliza Bagehot, 20 Nov. 1872. For an original discussion of consuming as play, see Douglas B. Holt, "How Consumers Consume: A Typology of Consumption Practices," *Journal of Consumer Research* 22 (1995): 1-16.

⁶⁴ Sir Arthur H. Hardinge, *The Life of Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 1831-1890 Volume II* (London, 1925), 323-324.

⁶⁵ Paul J. DiMaggio, "Classification in Art," *American Sociological Review* 52 (1987): 443-446.

⁶⁶ Erickson, "What is Good Taste Good For?": 275-276.

⁶⁷ Craig Calhoun and Loïc Wacquant, "Social Science with a Conscience: Remembering Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002)," *Thesis Eleven* 70 (2002): 7.

⁶⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge, England, 1990), 208.

⁶⁹ Harvey and Press, *William Morris*, 95-124.

⁷⁰ Emma Lazarus, “A Day in Surrey with William Morris,” *Century Magazine* 32 (1886): 390-394; Henry Demarest Lloyd, “A Day with William Morris,” in *Mazzini and Other Essays*, ed. Henry Demarest Lloyd (New York, 1910), 42-70.

⁷¹ Morris & Co., *Chintzes, Silks, Tapestries* (London, 1912); Morris & Co., *Wallpapers* (London, 1912); Parry, *Textiles*; Charles C. Oman and Jean Hamilton, *Wallpapers: A History of the Illustrated Catalogue of the Victoria & Albert Museum* (London, 1982).

⁷² Estimates based on data from minute book (1861-75) of Morris Marshall Faulkner & Co., Hammersmith & Fulham Archives Department; William Morris death duty papers, UK Public Record Office file IR59/73.

⁷³ Michael Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain* (Boston, MA, 1988).

⁷⁴ Norman Kelvin, *The Collected Letters of William Morris Volume II: 1881-1884* (Princeton, NJ, 1987), 229.

⁷⁵ Morris & Co. company brochure (1882), Victoria & Albert Museum.

⁷⁶ Morris & Co., *Chintzes, Silks, Tapestries*; Morris & Co., *Wallpapers*; Parry, *Textiles*; Oman and Hamilton, *Wallpapers*.

⁷⁷ George Wardle, *The Morris Exhibit at the Foreign Fair* (Boston, MA, 1883), 20-21; Harvey and Press, *Art, Enterprise and Ethics*, 132.

⁷⁸ Edward P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London, 1977).

⁷⁹ William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art* (London, 1882). The volume has been reprinted on numerous occasions. It contains five essays: “The lesser arts”, “The art of the people”, “The beauty of life”, “Making the best of it”, and “The prospects of architecture in civilization”. Each contributes to his philosophy of the decorative arts.

⁸⁰ Rhoda and Agnes Garrett, *Suggestions for Home Decoration in Painting, Woodwork and Furniture* (London, 1876), 7-8.

⁸¹ Lucy F. Orrinsmith, *The Drawing Room* (London, 1877), 1.

⁸² Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society, 1750-1980* (London, 1986), 111-112.

⁸³ Moncure Conway, *Travels in South Kensington* (London, 1882), 199-210.

⁸⁴ Charles Harvey and Jon Press, "The Ionides Family and 1 Holland Park," *Journal of the Decorative Arts Society* 18 (1994): 2-14. Lemere's photographs can be found in London in the collections of the National Monuments Record and the Victoria & Albert Museum. References to the Morris business were not confined to treatises on interior design, nor to British publications. George du Maurier and Linley Sambourne satirised Morris interiors in *Punch*, but were themselves clients of the firm. The 'Morris look' was entering into contemporary novels; one of the earliest was a sentimental American novel of 1872, Annie Hall Thomas's *Maud Mahon*, in which one of the characters advised a friend to "make your walls artistic without the aid of pictures" by turning to "Morris Papers". Faulkner, *Against the Age*, 73. Enthusiastic endorsements also appeared in more serious American works like Harriet Prescott Spofford's *Art Decoration Applied to Furniture* (New York, 1877), 147.

⁸⁵ Andrew B. Trigg, "Veblen, Bourdieu, and Conspicuous Consumption," *Journal of Economic Issues* 35 (2001): 113.

⁸⁶ Paul J. DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth Century Boston, Part 1: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," *Media, Culture and Society* 4 (1982): 33-50; Paul J. DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth Century Boston, Part 2: The Classification and Framing of American Art," *Media, Culture and Society* 4 (1982): 303-322.

⁸⁷ Wendy Kaplan and Alan Crawford, *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Europe & America: Design for the Modern World, 1880-1920* (London, 2004).

⁸⁸ Naylor, *Arts and Crafts Movement*; Stansky, *Redesigning the World*; Cumming and Kaplan, *Arts and Crafts Movement*.

⁸⁹ Stuart MacDonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* (London, 1970), 292-293; Godfrey Rubens, *William Richard Lethaby: His Life and Work, 1857-1931* (London, 1986), 173-198.

⁹⁰ Ray Watkinson, *William Morris as Designer* (London, 1967), 75.

⁹¹ Members of the Art Workers' Guild in particular were opposed to the use of factories and mass production: Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London, 2009).

⁹² Bourdieu, "On the Family": 285-312.

⁹³ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge, 1984), 16-28; Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983): 47-60.

⁹⁴ DiMaggio, "Classification in Art".

⁹⁵ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* revised ed. (London, 2005), 12-57; Pamela Todd and Chris Tubbs, *William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Home* (London, 2005).

⁹⁶ Morris scholarship begins with John William Mackail, *Life of William Morris* volumes I & II (London, 1899). Numerous general studies and hundreds of specialist studies covering aspects of Morris's life and work have followed. A landmark biography is Fiona MacCarthy's, *William Morris: A Life for our Time* (London, 1994).

⁹⁷ For example, Navid Akhtar, "William Morris and the Muslims", broadcast on BBC Radio 4, 08/10/2009.

⁹⁸ The centenary of Morris's death in 1996 was celebrated by a major exhibition in London at the Victoria & Albert Museum. This was preceded in 1993 by a large touring exhibition of Morris work in Canada organized by the Ontario Gallery of Art. Lavish catalogues were produced to mark both events: Victoria & Albert Museum, *William Morris*; Lochnan, Schoenherr and Silver eds, *Earthly Paradise*.

⁹⁹ The William Morris Society, founded in 1955, is headquartered at Morris's former London home, Kelmscott House in Hammersmith. The Society has local groups across Britain and affiliated Societies in the USA and Canada. *The Journal of the William Morris Society*, dedicated to Morris and related scholarship, was founded in 1981.

¹⁰⁰ Arthur Sanderson & Sons took over from Jeffery & Co. the block printing of Morris wallpapers in 1927. When Morris & Co. entered liquidation in 1940, Sanderson's purchased the printing blocks and sample books for wallpapers and fabrics for £400. In 1965 the Morris & Co. range was re-launched and in 1985 Morris & Co. once more assumed its own identity. See www.william-morris.co.uk/history (accessed 07/26/2009).

¹⁰¹ Morris & Co., *Brief Sketch of the Morris Movement* (London, 1911): 59.

¹⁰² The Victoria and Albert Museum shop carries 46 items in its William Morris decorated range, including garden tools, a watering can and deckchair: see www.vadashop.com (accessed 07/26/2009). The Metropolitan Museum of Art New York store carries 17 William Morris items including a back pack, umbrella and complete edition Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*: see www.store.metmuseum.org (accessed 07/26/2009).

¹⁰³ David Chaney, *Lifestyles* (London, 1996): 155-157.

¹⁰⁴ Mackail, *Life of William Morris*.

¹⁰⁵ For example, Lucia van der Post and Linda Parry, *William Morris and Morris & Co.* (London, 2003).

¹⁰⁶ Colin Campbell, "Conspicuous Confusion? A Critique of Veblen's Theory of Conspicuous Consumption," *Sociological Theory* 13 (1995): 37-47.