


the Labor of Art." On the following two days over a dozen papers will be presented; judging from their titles, the following should be of direct interest to Morris Society members: 1) "Ruskin's Doctrine of Work and the Nature of Building" by Michael Brooks of West Chester University, 2) "Women's Hands and Handiwork in the Victorian Imagination" by Elisabeth G. Gitter of John Jay College, CUNY, and 3) "Workers Against War: Trade Unions and the Peace Movement in the Late Victorian Era" by Claire Hirshfield of Pennsylvania State University.

In Toronto, on April 9, 8 p.m., at University College, Room 179, Andrew Tomick of York University will lecture on "William Morris's Hands: Does William Morris Have Any Influence in Arts and Crafts Today?"

The Cooper-Hewitt Museum has announced a tour for Saturday, May 3, 9 AM to 4 PM, that might be of interest to Society members in the New York City area. It is titled "Gustav Stickley's Craftsman Farms." Stickley's journal, The Craftsman, was perhaps as influential as his designs; its first issue, in 1901, had several articles on William Morris, and in that issue Stickley promised "to promote and to extend the principles established by Morris, in both the artistic and socialistic sense." The tour to the Stickley farms costs \$70; one should contact the Cooper-Hewitt Programs Office (212-860-6868) for further information. What follows is the brochure description of this particular tour:

Gustav Stickley, a major force in the American Arts and Crafts movement at the turn of the century, is best known for his craftsman homes and mission-style furniture. Like other designers of his time, Stickley sought to create a utopian environment in which to work. Craftsman Farms in Parsippany, New Jersey, was conceived of as such an environment, and became Stickley's own home. A tour of the main house will introduce the visitor to his style of construction and design. Following lunch at the Bretton Woods Inn, which was built in 1894 as a replica of the Ford Mansion in Morristown, there will be a visit to the Parker House, a privately-owned residence designed by Stickley, the interior of which is still in its original condition.

#### B. SOME IMPRESSIONS OF ICELAND, FROM FLORENCE BOOS

 I am a student of William Morris, a nineteenth-century British poet, designer, and pioneer of British socialism, who also helped translate Icelandic sagas, wrote poetry on Norse themes, and visited Iceland twice, in 1871 and 1873. To gain some knowledge of Iceland and its language, I've spent the fall as a Fulbright lecturer in American literature at the University of Iceland, and enrolled with my husband Bill in the university's full-time introduction to Icelandic (fifteen-weekly class-hours), which is conducted largely in Icelandic. Icelandic has preserved most of its medieval inflexions, but changes have occurred in the pronunciation--there is lots of elision, for example--and these make it still harder to learn.

The university's very existence is a brave act for this country of 240,000 inhabitants (Luxembourg has none for its 350,000). Unfortunately, the current government beggars its public employees, and much university teaching is actually done by an underclass of stundakennarar (section-teachers). A high-school teacher will earn about \$7,000 a year (in a country whose cost of living is higher than that of the U. S.), and a

university lecturer about \$9,000. A Cambridge graduate stundakennari who teaches phonetics in the English Department makes ends meet with 43 weekly class hours of laboratory and conversation, and consults on the side as well. It is not uncommon to meet a married couple who hold between them four jobs.

An English Department per se hardly exists. It is a subdivision of the Faculty of Arts, and located in a residential house. There is one professor (in the British sense of this word), one dosent (reader), two lektorar (tenured lecturers), and several hard-working stundakennarar; and student advisement is informal and ad hoc. The department teaches courses in Old English (not as hard for Icelanders as for anglophones), Medieval English, History of the Language, Grammar, and several surveys in British Literature. My Icelandic students of American literature were eager and diligent, and responded with quiet enthusiasm to works by Native American, black, and women writers. Of the novels we read, they liked best Alice Walker's The Color Purple. Driven by the pay-differential, many students say with fatalistic shrugs that they will become secretaries rather than teachers; I urge them to consider graduate school in the U. S., where they can support themselves rather better for a few years as teaching assistants, and learn as well.

A token women's strike in 1975 and a symbolic commemoration of it this past fall have not improved the lot of academic women. One of 83 professors is a woman, 9 of 83 dosentar, and 13 of 59 lektorar. One of the nine dosents teaches two courses on women and literature, and a section teacher offers one in women's history. A recent strike by Flugleidir stewardesses was outlawed by Parliament on Women's Day itself, and the woman forseti (president, an honorific office in Iceland) was constrained to sign the bill. The Reykjavik battered women's clinic, founded in 1983, reports that 1,000 women (of a local population of about 100,000) seek shelter there each year.

The weather is surprisingly 'English' (wet, not cold, with light snow and ice, not the foot-high snow we are used to in Iowa). Winter temperatures are often in fact above freezing. The name "Iceland" derives from the island's vast central joklar (glaciers), but "Windland" might be more appropriate. Arctic air masses usually yield to warm ocean-borne currents, but major gales sometimes arise from the clash of the two. In early November we experienced a "stormur," a strong gale which lasted many hours, and gusted up to 90 miles an hour. En route from my class, I was blown twice into a tree, and saw the contents of my shoulder bag scatter at high speed to the winds--glasses, books, teaching notes, student papers. In an open field I saw several others struggle desperately to reach the next building; one, a woman in a red coat, was knocked to the ground and flailed for some time before she could stagger away. One can only respect the stoic farmers and shepherders who faced such winds.


The latitude (66° N.) and oblique light affect the sky in many striking ways. November brought a subtle array of rose, turquoise, and lavender skies, and a bright moon is often prominent in the daytime sky. On "Skammadegi," ("shortest day," December 21st), the sun rose shortly before noon, and set soon after three. An understandable response to the gloom is the very elaborate Icelandic celebration of "jolin," ("Christmas," a two-day holiday), which involves much caroling and bell-ringing, placement of small flames on the graves of relatives, great arrays of traditional foods, and convivial drinking of jolaglogg and brennevin.

Iceland is a nominally Lutheran country, but according to one rather notorious poll, more Icelanders believe in alfar than in their official

Lutheran God. Alfar are not our "elves," but dignified, larger-than-life beings who inhabit stones or other natural objects, and who are endowed with assorted magical powers.

Even if one lives here only a short while and learns only a modicum of its complex language, one cannot fail to sense how massive were Iceland's problems of survival, much less 'cultural survival.' For centuries, there was no wood with which to build or burn, and much of the tiny population (perhaps 50,000 when Morris visited the island in 1871 and 1873) huddled in turf dwellings and burned cow- and sheep-manure. Only in the 20th century did mechanized fish freezing provide a cash industry for what had been an island of shepherders and farmers (the latter confined to the arable one percent of its landsurface). At the outdoor museum "Arbaer" ("river-farm"), now surrounded by the suburbs of Reykjavik, one can visit a turf hovel, semi-sunk beneath the surface, in which one must crawl from one room to the other on one's hands and knees. In such conditions, the population's fierce pride in its traditional literacy becomes moving and appropriate.

### C. PAPERS AT THE WILLIAM MORRIS SESSION AT NEMLA

 The 1986 Northeast Modern Language Association meetings were hosted this year by Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey in New Brunswick. This was the fourth consecutive year that a session on William Morris appeared on the program, and it was voted to have yet another session next year, this one on William Morris and his Icelandic interests. Anyone interested in giving a 15-20 minute presentation on this topic--the convention will be in Boston--should send an abstract to the newly-elected secretary of the session, Carolyn Collette, English Department, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Mass., 01075. Professor Collette will then confer with the session's chairperson, Yvette Grimes (I do not at this time have her address).

Elisa K. Campbell of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, chaired the 1986 session, on Friday, April 4; here are summaries of the four papers presented then:

1) In "William Morris as a Translator of Scandinavian Ballads," Karl O.E. Anderson of Clark University discussed these lesser-known proofs of Morris's admiration for Scandinavian literature; Anderson concisely fulfilled his four-fold aim "to show (1) that Morris translated not only the four Danish and two Icelandic ballads he published in Poems by the Way, but at least two other Danish and also two Swedish folk songs--the Swedish ballad translations being Morris's only extant work with Swedish material; (2) that external and internal evidence indicates that, contrary to previous assumptions and contrary to his usual procedure in the saga renderings, Morris very likely prepared the ballad translations without help; (3) that his English renderings, in their faithfulness to the originals in matter and form, reflect a deep appreciation and understanding of the spirit of the Scandinavian ballads; and (4) that Morris's demonstrated first-hand knowledge of the Scandinavian languages can be used to rebut the frequent criticism that his translations of Norse literature are stilted and artificial and thus show that he did not understand the spirit and tone of the originals, a criticism grounded on the assumption that he merely reworked translations prepared by others in order to give them an archaic, romantic tone."

2) In "Morris's Oxford Friendships," Florence Boos of the University of Iowa began by surveying what we know--and via what sources (mainly Mackail, May Morris, and Georgiana Burne-Jones)--of Morris's early life, the interpretation of which is "more than usually relevant to an understanding of