

The tile decoration by Morris & Co. for Queens' College, Cambridge

The inspiration of illuminated manuscripts

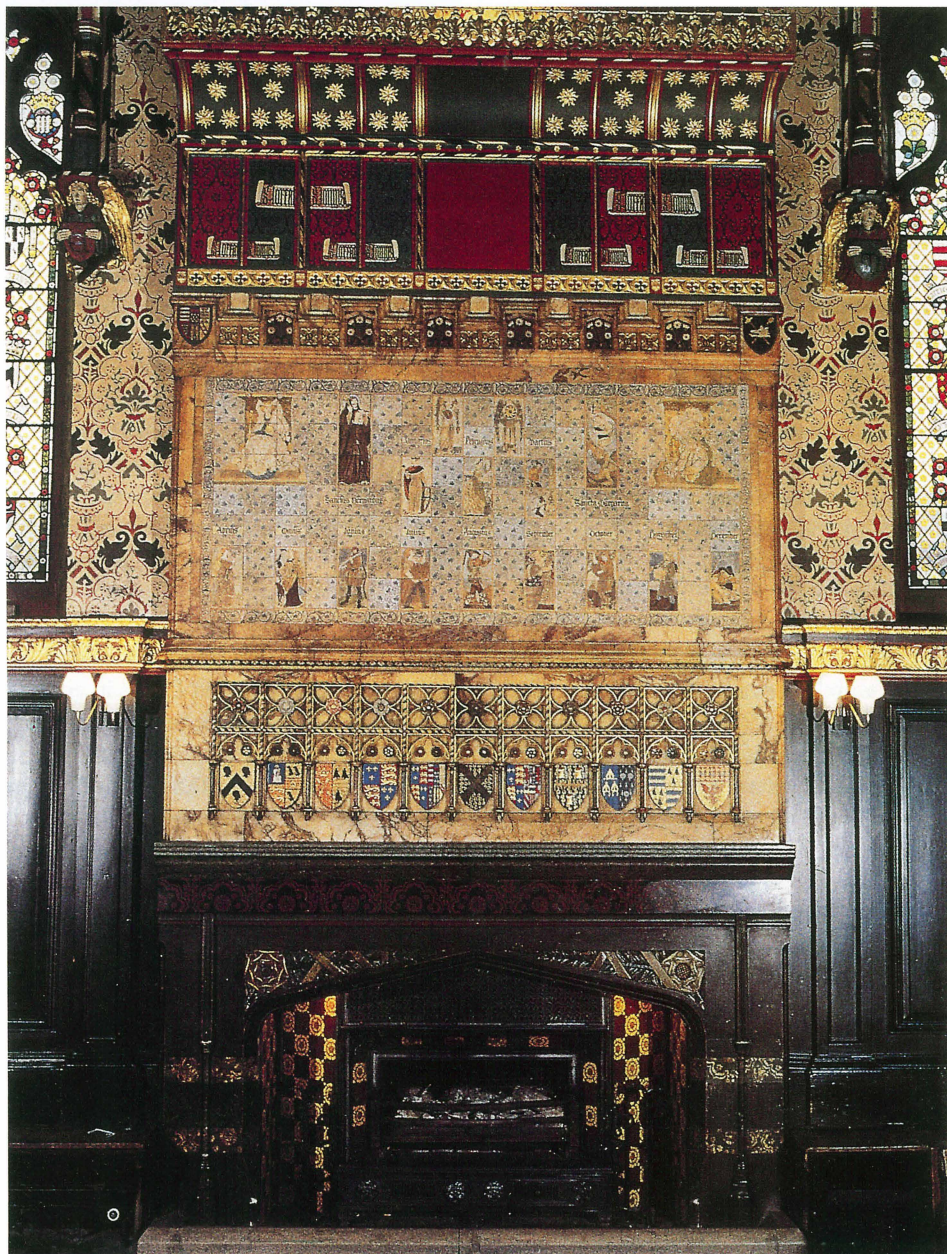
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In the 1860s, Morris & Company executed an elaborate chimney decoration of tiles, which included a series of the labours of the months, for the Hall of Queens' College, Cambridge. It should be stated at the outset that William Morris himself must have been responsible for this programme of decoration, which was then designed by different members of the company. Various attempts have been made to examine the sources of the cycle, and it has been proposed that Morris was inspired by medieval Books of Hours,¹ but hitherto no specific manuscript sources have been identified.

In a sketchbook by Morris (British Library, Add. MS 45305, fols. 6r-7v), notes from the early 1860s are to be found that relate to calendars in Books of Hours of the fifteenth century in that very library (Fig. 9). These notes have not previously been connected with the Queens' College cycle, but it is hard to resist seeing them as one of the major sources for Morris's programme for the labours of the months.

In the following text, the tile panel of the chimney decoration in the Queens' College Hall will be described. In this context Richard and Hilary Myers' extensive work on tiles by Morris and Company is to be mentioned. Myers' book states all further cycles, designs, preparing studies and drawings as well as archival sources connected with this decoration. The possible sources for the cycle which were named so far in the literature on this subject will be examined and, finally, the notes in the British Library sketchbook will be described and their programme be compared with the Cambridge cycle.

It seems reasonable to assume that Morris and Company received the commission for the decoration of the Hall of Queens' College, Cambridge, through the architect C. F. Bodley, who worked on the restoration of the college chapel from 1858-62, and on the Hall from 1861. It



1 Chimneypiece in the Hall, Queens' College, Cambridge, with tile panels representing the Labours of the Months, the college's founding queens and tutelary saints, and the Angels of the Night and Day, designed by William Morris (1834-96), Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), and Ford Madox Brown (1821-93) for Morris and Company, 1862-63

was not Morris and Company's first collaboration with Bodley. They designed stained-glass windows for the churches of All Saints in Selsey, St Michael and All Angels in Brighton, and St Martin's-on-

the-Hill in Scarborough, all by Bodley, and all dating from 1861/62.³

Morris and Company worked on the decoration of the Hall on two occasions. They executed the chimney tiles around



2 Tile panel showing the labours of the months, after the series in Queens' College, Cambridge, by Morris and Company, 1862-63. Coloured enamels on Dutch tin-glazed earthenware blanks, 25 x 77 cm. Photo courtesy of Phillips Auctioneers

1862-63, and then around 1875 the ceiling paintings were finished after Morris's designs by a local craftsman. These painted decorations were inspired by ornaments on ceilings and screens in medieval churches in East Anglia. Thomas Wardle, the company's manager, was executing drawings after these sources in 1862-63 and 1865/66.⁴ The tile panels representing Margaret of Anjou (the wife of Henry VI) and Elizabeth Woodville (the wife of Edward IV), the two queens who gave the college its name, were inserted at the time of the later campaign.⁵

These two dates for the project are confirmed by entries in Ford Madox Brown's account book, where the designs for *Lady with a hawk*, *Cutting down trees*, *Sowing*, and *Sheep shearing* are mentioned under the year 1862, while the designs for the two queens occur later on, under the year 1873.⁶ Bodley himself was perhaps responsible for the stencilled mural decoration and for the architecture of the ceiling.

The tile panel is framed by a rich alabaster surround, which is surmounted by a coved wooden top that was possibly added by Bodley during the second phase of decoration around 1875.⁷ Furthermore, an alabaster panel, designed and painted by Philip Webb, is positioned between the chimney and the tile panel. It is enriched by eleven heraldic shields that are framed by small columns and gothicising ornaments. An alabaster frame encloses the tile panel by Morris and his co-workers, the upper part of it being decorated with a crenellated border, quatrefoils and floral motifs, which resemble

those of Morris's Daisy pattern wallpaper design of 1862-64. In connection with the following analysis, it is worth underlining the fact that the source for this floral motif, which appears for the first time around 1860 in an embroidery for Morris's Red House, is to be found in miniatures in an illuminated manuscript of Froissart in the British Library, Harley MSS 4379-4380.⁸ Another embroidery, of c. 1857 (Kelmescott Manor), which is perhaps based on the same source, shows trees and birds together with lettered scrolls with the motto 'If I can', in emulation of the one employed by Jan van Eyck.⁹

The tile decoration of the chimney encompasses figures of the two patronesses and the two patron saints of the college (Margaret and Bernard), the angels of day and night and the labours of the months. This programme echoes the response of members of the college to the passing year, which is evoked by day and night as well as by the changing seasons, represented by the cycle of the months, and under the spiritual guidance and protection of the royal patronesses and the patron saints of the college. The combination of the secular and the sacred is comparable to the decoration of calendars in Books of Hours, where representations of the labours of the months and of the signs of the zodiac accompany the tables with the liturgical feasts and the saints' days.

The entire panel is composed of smaller square tiles, numbering seven vertically and seventeen horizontally. The representations of the labours of the months and of the angels are made up of two

tiles, the saints of three tiles, all arranged vertically, while the queens are composed of nine tiles in a three by three arrangement. The intervening spaces are filled by tiles decorated with a swan design in blue. The tiles of this design, which appear for the first time around 1863-64, are divided by a linear grid into squares, in which a stylized swan alternates with a diagonally-placed twig.¹⁰ The tile panel is framed by a border with a foliate pattern in blue.

The upper part of the panel contains the queens, flanked by the patron saints of the college, and, in the centre, between the saints, are the two angels. The designs for the latter were executed by Morris, and were subsequently also used for stained-glass windows.¹¹ The angel of night stands on gently undulating waves. He cradles a disc adorned with the crescent moon, while his head is slightly bowed, as if in sleep. The angel of day, in contrast, is shown frontally, floating with peacock wings over troubled water, which is shown as a pattern of stylised linear folds. He stares straight ahead, and holds a disc with the sun in front of his breast.

A possible inspiration for the use of these circular forms is to be found in miniatures in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century illuminated bibles, in which the beginning of the book of Genesis is introduced by a sequence of miniatures representing the creation. The different scenes show God the Father with the various episodes of the creation within a sphere representing the universe.¹²

The combination of the circular motif with angels recurs in Burne-Jones's body-



3 Tile panel showing the Labours of the Months, after the series in Queens' College, Cambridge, by Morris and Company, 1862-63. Coloured enamels on Dutch tin-glazed earthenware blanks, 25 x 77 cm. Photo courtesy of Phillips Auctioneers

colour paintings of *The Seven Days of Creation*, of 1876, in the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard. The most important precedent for this iconography, in which seven angels stand for the seven days of creation, occurs in the western narthex cupola of S Marco in Venice, dating from 1220-75.¹³

Ford Madox Brown's account book documents the fact that he executed the design for the two queens in 1873.¹⁴

Margaret of Anjou is shown at the upper left of the tile panel, while Elizabeth Woodville is shown on the right-hand side. Both are seated under canopies, and equipped with crowns, sceptres, and orbs. Their bodies are turned outwards, but their heads are turned inwards, as if to look at one another. Brown conveys the fact that they belong to distinct historical periods by means of differences in dress and headgear.¹⁵

Beside of the queens are the figures of St Bernard and St Margaret. The former, to a design by Burne-Jones, is shown against a backdrop of lilies, wearing his brown monastic habit, holding a book in his left hand and resting with his right on a long staff.¹⁶ The latter, to a design by Rossetti, seems to be emerging from the body of the dragon who swallowed her, and is holding a cross, which is one of her attributes.¹⁷ She is standing before a rose trellis.

Lower down come the representations of the labours of the months with their lettered scrolls. *January*, *February*, and *March* are shown directly below the angels, while the nine remaining months form the bottom row of the design. The work of various different artists from Morris's circle, not all of them are securely attributed to particular individuals.

January, designed either by Burne-Jones or by Morris, is personified by Janus, the Roman god of beginnings and guardian of doors and gateways (Fig. 4).¹⁸ One of his two heads is turned towards the old year and is characterized as an old bearded king, while the other, which looks to the future, shows a young king in profile. In his right hand Janus holds his traditional attribute, a key, while his left hand is shown resting on a wheel. The key signifies the end of the previous year, while the wheel might possibly hint at the wheel of Fortune, since what the coming year will bring remains unknown. It might also be a substitute for another traditional attribute of Janus, a serpent eating its own tail to symbolize eternity. No specific source for the design has been identified.

February, designed by Burne-Jones, shows a young woman in a mob cap dressed in a flower-patterned rococo gown, standing warming herself at the kitchen fire (see Fig. 2).¹⁹ She is accompanied by a black cat and reads a Valentine's card.

March, designed by Ford Madox Brown, shows a man, who is cutting down branches of a tree, sitting on a sturdy bough (see Fig. 5).²⁰ He holds a pruning knife in his raised right hand, and keeps his balance with his left. A white owl sits in a hole lower down the trunk.

April, designed by William Morris, is personified by a young woman with long blonde hair crowned by a wreath of leaves (see Fig. 5).²¹ She is shown in profile, walking in a meadow carpeted with spring flowers. Her richly ornamented dress is gathered up in her left hand,

while in her right she holds up a branch.

Ford Madox Brown designed the representation of *May*, showing a lady at falconry (Fig. 2).²² She wears a medieval-style dress, is turned slightly to her right, and is standing on a flowered lawn. A falcon perches on her gauntleted right hand, while her left gathers up her long dress and holds the leash of the grey hunting dog at her side. Her head is raised as if her gaze is to be understood as following the bird flying above.

June, after a design by Morris, is represented by a scene of mowing.²³ A man who is turned to his right has stopped mowing to sharpen his scythe. He balances it on his left shoulder, holds it steady with his left hand and holds the flint in his right.

For *July* a scene of reaping is portrayed, which was either designed by Morris or by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (Fig. 3).²⁴ A man turned in profile to his left is shown standing in front of a cornfield. In his right hand he holds a sickle and embraces a freshly cut sheaf of corn, while simultaneously taking a gulp from the bottle in his other hand, which he raises to his lips.

August shows a scene of threshing, designed by Rossetti (Fig. 3). It consists of a man turned to his left, wearing a green apron that is bound around the waist.²⁵ Both hands are raised to bring the flail down onto the corn.

September, with a scene of vintaging by Rossetti, depicts a young woman in a flowery dress, standing in front of vine branches and emptying a basket full of grapes into a large barrel (Fig. 3).²⁶

The subject for *October*, attributed to Burne-Jones, is the feeding of pigs (Fig.

3).²⁷ A woman is shown shaking acorns from an oak tree to feed two black pigs and one white one and to collect at the same time some acorns in her red cloak, which she holds with her left hand in front of her.

November follows with a depiction of sowing, designed by Ford Madox Brown (Fig. 3).²⁸ A young man wearing a smock strides across a field, scattering seeds from his basket.

The last panel shows the killing of a pig in a cobbled courtyard; its design is attributed either to Ford Madox Brown or to Rossetti (Fig. 3).²⁹ A man with a pointed hat, a doublet, neck frill and a fur-lined coat kneels on the ground, squeezing the pig between his thighs and holding its head down with his left hand while cutting its throat.

The scenes are set in a variety of different historical periods. While *January*, *April*, *May*, *August* and *November* show figures wearing medieval costume, the personifications of *March*, *June*, *July*, *October* and *December*, with their neck frills and pointed hats, are more plausibly located in the Tudor or Stuart periods, while those representing *February* and *September*, with their flowery dresses and laced bodices, seem to date from around the middle of the eighteenth century. It is not clear why the artists rejected chronological consistency in favour of variety.

The depictions of the months for Queens' College Hall were repeated in other contexts: a further cycle, which was in the possession of Morris and Company until 1934, consists of the same scenes with the exception of *June*, which shows a man shearing a sheep, after a design by Ford Madox Brown.³⁰ These panels differ from those in Cambridge by virtue of the addition of a zodiac cycle, designed by Philip Webb.³¹ The small rectangular pictorial fields containing the signs of the zodiac are located in the upper right or left corners of the panels in black outline drawing. Only the signs for May and October are omitted. March and November alike show the sign of Aries, the ram.³²

A third series of the labours of the months was produced for the house of Lord and Lady White in Unthank Road, Norwich. It follows, in its inclusion of the mowing man, the cycle for Queens' College but with the addition of Webb's signs of the zodiac.³³ For Cavendish Rectory in Suffolk the company repeated the tile panels with the scenes of reaping and threshing, adding a new scene of ploughing, the design of which is generally



4 Tile panel depicting Janus by either Edward Burne-Jones or William Morris. Detail of Fig. 2

attributed either to Morris or Burne-Jones.³⁴

The depiction of the labours of the months has a long history,³⁵ and it has not thus far proved possible to point to actual models for the tile panels produced by Morris and company for Queens' College. The idea that Morris may have looked at illuminations has been mooted, but, as mentioned above, no specific sources have been identified.

Besides miniatures, a seventeenth century almanac, and the mosaic pavement of Aosta cathedral, which dates from the twelfth century, have been proposed as Morris's models. It has been argued that Morris might have seen the mosaic pavement in Didron's *Annales Archéologiques*, where the text is headed by an engraved illustration of the floor (Fig. 7).³⁶ Some of the scenes do indeed correspond with those found in Morris's series. The depictions of the labours of the months in Aosta consist of circular medallions framing a central roundel with the personification of Annus, holding discs with the sun and the moon. These motifs relate to Morris's angels of day and night in Queens' College. In addition, the

spandrels at Aosta show personifications of the four rivers of paradise.

In accordance with Morris's cycle, January is depicted with a Janus-head, but standing between two buildings. Other scenes which correspond are those for February (warming), March (cutting trees), April (Figure with a leafy branch), May (hunting), June (mowing), July (reaping, binding sheaves), August (threshing), September (vintaging) and December (killing a pig).

In Aosta, Sowing is shown in October, whereas Morris chose the subject for November. The only real difference is between Morris's October and November in Aosta, with a scene of pig feeding in the former and collecting branches in the latter.

A further possible source of inspiration could have been a series of terracotta roundels by Luca della Robbia of about 1450-60, perhaps produced for the *studiotto* of Piero di Cosimo de' Medici in the Palazzo Medici in Florence.³⁷ The cycle was acquired in 1861 by the Victoria and Albert Museum and sketches of some of the roundels are preserved in an early sketchbook by Burne-Jones.³⁸

There are a number of differences between these roundels and Morris's series. The roundels are framed by a leaf border, and the signs of the zodiac and the hours are inserted in an inner frame. The combination of labours of the months and hours of the day recalls the Queens' College panel, in which, however, the latter are reduced to the angels of day and night. The labours depicted are felling trees (January), grafting fruit trees (February), cutting trees (March), binding trees on a trellis (April), mowing (May), reaping and binding sheaves (June), threshing (July), ploughing (August), vintaging (September), sowing (October), gathering in olives (November) and digging (December), showing in the background pigs under a tree presumably eating acorns. So only the scenes representing March and September correspond, although scenes of mowing, reaping, threshing and sowing are to be found in both cycles, albeit in different months.

No doubt this sequence of scenes, which differs from that employed north of the alps, was determined by the Italian climate, and is already found in Lucius Junius Columella's *De Re Rustica*.³⁹ Morris owned a manuscript of that text, but probably only bought it later.⁴⁰

Another potential source are the repre-

sentations of the months on the portals of the great French gothic cathedrals, such as Chartres, Paris or Amiens.⁴¹ In the archivolts of the Ascension portal of the Kings' portal at Chartres (Fig. 8), there is a cycle of the labours of the months and signs of the zodiac which corresponds with the scenes of Morris's series from January to July.⁴² While at Chartres August is represented by the binding of sheaves, in Queens' threshing is shown. Both series correspond again for September with scenes of vintaging, but they differ from each other for the remaining three months of the year. In Queens', October is represented by the feeding of pigs, whereas Chartres has fruit-picking. At Chartres, the slaughter of pigs is represented in November and December shows a couple feasting. Morris's tile series ends with the killing of a pig, while November is a scene of sowing.

In Amiens a cycle of the labours of the months adorns the lower part of the facade. The scenes for January, February, March, June, and July correspond to a large extent with the cycles in Chartres and Cambridge. In April and May men in a landscape are depicted. As in Cambridge, August consists of a scene of threshing, while in September fruit-picking is shown. By contrast, in October a winepress is shown. The representations for November (sowing) and December (killing of pigs) also resemble the cycle at Queen's.

Another parallel is provided by the representations of the signs of the zodiac and the labours of the months on the door-jamb of the portal of the Virgin on the west facade of Nôtre-Dame in Paris of about 1210-20. January is a man eating, February a man warming himself by a fire; for March pruning of the vine is shown, while in April a peasant is standing in a field. May is represented by a huntsman on horseback, and is followed by a series of agricultural scenes: a peasant carrying a sheaf of corn on his shoulder for June, the sharpening of the scythe for July – this episode represents June in the series at Queens' – the reaping of corn for August and sowing for October. In September the winepress is shown, while for November the feeding of pigs was chosen, followed by the killing of pigs in December.

This short survey clearly demonstrates the close parallels between the chimney tile panel in Cambridge and the portal cycles on the French cathedrals. On a journey through northern France in 1854



5 Tile panel depicting April, designed by William Morris (1834-96). Detail of Fig. 2

during the long vacation Morris visited the cathedrals of Amiens, Beauvais, Chartres, and Rouen, as well as Paris. In 1855 he made his second trip to France, accompanied by Edward Burne-Jones and William Fulford. On that occasion he went to Abbeville, Amiens, Beauvais, Chartres, Rouen, and Paris.⁴³ Already at this early date he expressed anger and a deep concern for the lamentable state of Nôtre-Dame.⁴⁴ Morris calculated that they visited nine cathedrals in all, and more than twenty-four churches.⁴⁵ In October 1859 Morris travelled to France once more, this time in the company of Webb and Faulkner, 'to buy old manuscripts and armour and ironwork and enamel'.⁴⁶ It may therefore reasonably be assumed that Morris knew these cycles, but no information exists concerning the intensity of his scrutiny of them. On the other hand, he would have been able to refresh his memory with the help of pictures and written accounts.⁴⁷

In San Marco in Venice, there is a cycle of the labours of the months in the archivolts of the middle portal of the west facade. Morris presumably knew this cycle through Ruskin's description of it in *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) (Fig. 10).⁴⁸ Ruskin compares the series with those on

Lucca cathedral and the Pisa baptistry.⁴⁹ He also relates the Venetian cycle to northern examples in illuminated manuscripts, regrettably without going into much detail. In the form of tables, similar to Morris's notes in London, he lists various different cycles. His examples are mostly taken from French manuscripts of the late thirteenth century, but also include one French and one English manuscript of the early fourteenth century, as well as a Flemish Book of Hours of the fifteenth century.

In his discussion of the Venetian cycle, Ruskin considers whether the iconography of individual scenes is commonplace or rare, and also whether it is more usual north or south of the Alps. He also explains the reasons behind the choice of certain motifs, such as the depiction of a warrior for March in Italian cycles.⁵⁰

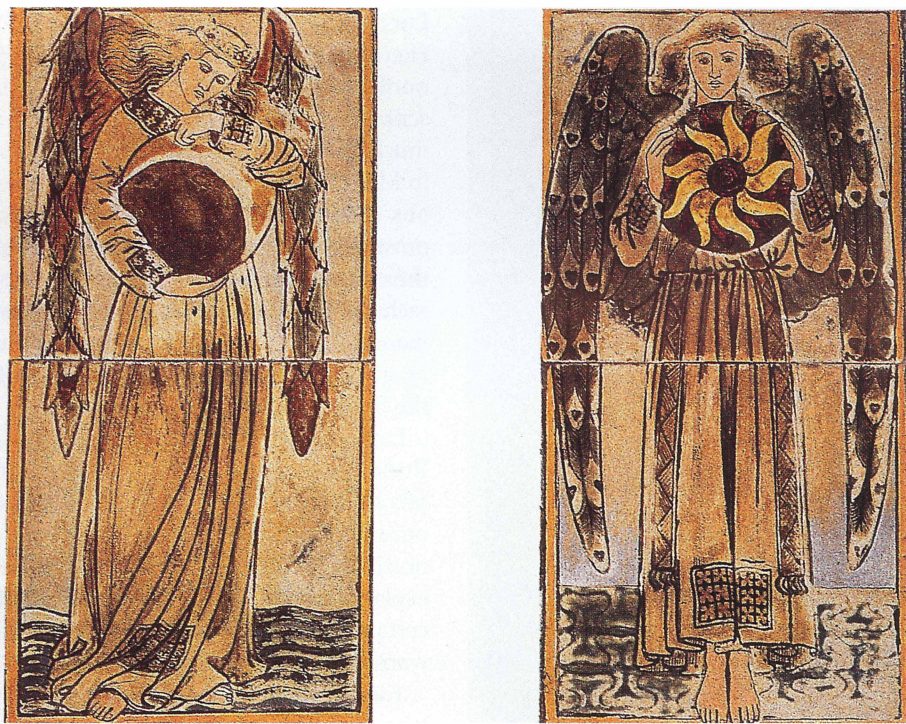
Tile panels with complete cycles of the labours of the months seem to have been produced comparatively rarely. There are cycles dating from around 1600 which show personifications of the months in landscapes, but they were not used by Morris as sources.

Morris may perhaps have drawn inspiration from one or more of the aforementioned cycles, but the principal influence on his programme can probably be found in a number of calendar miniatures from different Books of Hours in the British Library. Notes concerning such calendar pictures are preserved under the heading 'Books for Calendars' in one of Morris's notebooks, which is now Add. MS 45305, also in the British Library.⁵²

Hitherto this notebook has been dated a little later, in the years 1865-67, because it comprises early drafts of the prologue as well as a list naming possible subjects for illustrations of the story of Cupid and Psyche for *The Earthly Paradise*. Recently, in the light of new considerations concerning the chronology of Morris's work on *The Earthly Paradise*, and following the observation of an 1859 watermark on the paper, a revised dating of around 1860 has been proposed.⁵⁴

Morris did not use this research on the labours of the months for any other decorative project, and it does not seem to have found its way into the introductory verses for the respective months in *The Earthly Paradise* or into other early poems by him.

Morris arranged his observations concerning the Books of Hours he looked at in the British Library in tables, putting the inventory number of each manuscript at



6 Angels of Night and Day designed by William Morris (1834-96). Coloured enamels on Dutch tin-glazed earthenware blanks, Queens' College Cambridge

the top and the names of the months in the left margin. The precise reasons for his particular choice of manuscripts remain to be established; however, it seems that Morris's decision not to look at the artistic highlights of the collection, but instead at examples of middling quality, is linked to his preference for cycles of the labours of the months predominantly showing peasant or bourgeois scenes, as opposed to mixed cycles, which combine scenes from the life of the aristocracy and of the peasantry, the classic example being the *Très Riches Heures of the Duc de Berry*, now in the Musée Condé at Chantilly.⁵⁵

The notebook contains on fol. 6r and fol. 6v the subjects of the labours of the months from January to June in calendar miniatures in various Books of Hours (Harley MSS 5049, 2917, 2915, 2934 and 2438).⁵⁶ Most of these Books of Hours date from the fifteenth century: Harley MSS 2915 and 2934 were dated by Morris into the first quarter, about 1420, while he dated Harley MS 5049 at the end of the century, 1490.⁵⁷ Morris assumed that Harley MS 2438 was produced around 1280.⁵⁸ The list in Morris's notebook shows for January representations of a 'man feasting', sitting in front of a fire, eating and drinking.⁵⁹ In Harley MS 2915 this representation is combined with the Janus-motif, in the form of a man with a Janus head feasting. A man warming himself at an stove is the typical scene for

February. Only Harley MS 2438 shows a 'lady with a candle' in front of a prie-dieu.⁶⁰

For March Morris notes 'man pruning'.⁶¹ April shows a less consistent choice of subject. While in Harley MSS 5049 and 2438 April is represented, respectively, by a man picking flowers or dancing, thereby alluding to love, Harley MS 2934 shows a falconer on horseback, Harley MSS 2917 and 2915 a man carrying a tree trunk on his shoulder. In May falconers are shown, with the exception of Harley MS 5049, which repeats the April subject of Harley MSS 2917 and 2915, and of Harley MS 2934, which shows a man holding flowing branches. In June Morris notes a man mowing. Only Harley MSS 2917 and 2438 represent a man carrying a sheep or an ox over his shoulder.

In the same arrangement on fol. 6v there follow Morris's notes concerning the labours of the months from July to December. In July, uniformly, the reaping of corn is shown, while in August either scenes of threshing (Harley MSS 5049, 2915, 2934), sowing (Harley MS 2917), or reaping (Harley MS 2438) are represented.⁶² September gives either a scene of vintaging (Harley MSS 2934, 2438) or of the winepress (Harley MSS 5049, 2917, 2915). October is, with the exception of Harley MSS 2917, represented by men sowing.⁶³ November shows men either shaking acorns from trees to feed pigs (Harley MSS 5049, 2915, 2934),

or slaughtering pigs (Harley MSS 2917, 2438). For December, Morris notes representations of slaughtering pigs (Harley MSS 5049, 2915, 2934) and baking (Harley MSS 2438 and 2917, noted by Morris under November).

Morris looked at these calendars not only for their representations of the labours of the months but also to assess the artistic merits of individual miniatures or of the books as a whole.⁶⁴ Morris described Harley MS 5049 as 'fair' and MS Harley 2917 as 'fair very good'. Both are comparatively simply executed, with rather loose, stylized draughtsmanship and flat application of colour. Morris regarded Harley MS 2915 as 'all good good book'. The figures of the small carefully painted scenes in this Book of Hours are depicted in grisaille with coloured flesh-tones, while the landscapes are coloured yellow and green. He compared the richly decorated Harley MS 2934 with the Bedford Hours (British Library, Add. MS 18850): 'like Bedford elaborate'.⁶⁵ The Hours of John, Duke of Bedford, brother of the English king Henry V, were probably illuminated by the so-called Bedford Master and his workshop in the early fifteenth century in Paris. For Harley MS 2917, there is a note concerning a representation of David. This seems to relate to the miniature on fol. 93r. Only MS 2438 lacks a commentary, Morris merely giving information on the date, although the figures of this manuscript show expressive, slightly grimacing faces and move in an almost dancing way.

Fol. 7r and 7v of Morris's notebook contain another table with notes on representations of the labours of the months in Books of Hours from the collection of the British Library. Fol. 7r is filled with notes on the months of January to July, fol. 7v on August to December.

Fol. 7r bears notes relating to MSS 2716.A, 2719.B, Harley 2935 and Harley MSS 2936 and 5762.⁶⁶ The last two manuscripts are described only in general terms. Concerning Harley MS 5762, the calendar of which simply consists of the signs of the zodiac, Morris noted: 'No occupations good signs very good book say 1430' and relating to Harley MS 2936 we find the entry 'beautiful pictures both to each month', referring to the fact that this calendar includes two representations of the labours of the months and the signs of the zodiac for each month.⁶⁷ For Harley MS 2935 entries are made for April and May only. Concerning April of Harley MS 2935 Morris noted 'girl making

garland', which he thought 'very good'. The picture for May was probably specifically mentioned because its subject 'lady & gentl. walk' appeared here for the first time. Under June and July general notes concerning the date and quality of the manuscript are inserted: '1460 a good rough book', presumably on account of the simplified stylized depiction of the landscapes.⁶⁸

Only for MSS 2716.A, 2719.B Morris gave complete statements of the representations of monthly labours, that largely follow the scenes that Morris already observed on fol. 6 in the other calendars he looked at.⁶⁹ Because of its quality he emphasized the miniature for April in MS 2716.A, which shows a 'Lady making a garland' and which he described as 'good'.

Fol. 7v contains notes concerning the artistic quality and the dating of the two manuscripts. Morris regarded MS 2716.A as 'a good book but rough zodiac' and gave a date of c. 1480. Concerning MS 2719 B, which he dated also around 1480, he praised the 'very good landscapes – all these are pictures'.

On fol. 7v the labours of the months of MSS 2716.A and 2719.B are listed.

Morris looked at other calendars in Books of Hours, too, but he stopped to put in notes, probably because no new subjects appeared, which deviated from the ones he had already seen. He looked at Add. MS 21909, which lacks calendar miniatures and which he characterized as 'small book very good – c. 1470'. Add. MS 4836 he praised because of its 'lovely calendar full of saints' and he remarked on the April picture: 'good'.⁷⁰

The miniatures in the calendar of Harley MS 2924 were fittingly described as 'rough but amusing'. Morris noted its novel choice of subject for April: 'lady & gentl: in close of flowers'. The calendar miniatures of Harley MS 2863 he praised as 'very elaborate good'.⁷¹ Harley MS 2863 has a calendar featuring the names of saints, highlighted in gold, and the depiction of the *Arma Christi* in the margins.

On fol. 99v of the London notebook one finds another table, but Morris only wrote down the inventory number of MS Harley 2936, for which notes are taken down on fol. 7r.

The entries in Morris's notebook allow us to put together the following list for the labours of the months in the manuscripts Morris looked at: January – eating and warming in front of a fire, Janus; February – warming at a fire; March –



7 Illustration of the mosaic pavement of Aosta cathedral, twelfth century, from Didron, *Annales Archéologiques*, vol. XVII, Paris, 1857

cutting trees; April – men with flowers or carrying a tree trunk over their shoulders; May – falconry; June – mowing; July – reaping; August – threshing; September – vintaging or the winepress; October – sowing; November – shaking down acorns to feed pigs or slaughtering of pigs; December – baking, slaughtering a pig.

When the cycles of the labours of the months in the British Library's Books of Hours and the series at Queens' College are compared, the correspondence is extremely striking. Only the representation of Janus holding his key and a wheel is, at least in this context, unusual. Other deviations in the Queens' College series as opposed to the manuscript calendars occur only in October and November,

where the scenes are exchanged, showing shaking down of acorns in October, and sowing in November.

Evaluating the relationship between Morris's notes concerning the subjects of the labours in calendars of illuminated Books of Hours and the tile series of Morris and Company, it is not only to be emphasized that they are very close in time to each other, but also that Morris's notes relate exclusively to the labours and that he did not make any notes for the other miniatures in the books – with the one exception in Harley MS 2917 relating to a representation of David. For the first manuscripts he looked at he carefully listed each subject, even when it appeared repeatedly, so it is obvious that in the case of the later examples, his concern to



8 *The Ascension*, Portal of the Kings, Chartres Cathedral

take meticulous notes diminished and he wrote down only those subjects which had not yet been used. This proceeding makes it obvious that he wished to establish a survey of subjects, which was to be employed for the depiction of the labours of the months, and that he consulted the Books of Hours as patterns with a precisely defined aim.

As Morris used illuminated manuscripts as patterns in other contexts, as already mentioned, it would be surprising if he disregarded this opportunity concerning a theme which expressly demands the consultation of the material of illuminated manuscripts.

¹ Duncan Robinson and Stephen Wildman, *Morris & Company in Cambridge*, exh. cat., Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 1980, nos. 38-41, pp. 27-28.

² Richard and Hilary Myers, *William Morris Tiles. The Tile Designs of Morris and his Fellow-Workers*, Shepton

Beauchamp, Somerset, 1996, pp. 62-67, pls. 25-29.

³ Martin Harrison, 'Church Decoration and Stained Glass', in Linda Parry (ed.), *William Morris*, exh. cat., Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996, pp. 107-108; A. Charles Sewter, *The Stained Glass of William Morris and his Circle*, New Haven and London, 1974, figs. 28-53, 54-63, 64-77, and 1975, pp. 171-73, 32-33, 168.

⁴ Wardle's drawings after these church ornaments are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Parry, op. cit., nos. H. 18-20.

⁵ For the history of the decoration, see Myers, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

⁶ Ford Madox Ford, *Ford Madox Brown. A Record of his Life and Work*, London, 1896, pp. 445, 447, Supplement C; Myers 1996, op. cit., p. 135, Appendix B.

⁷ Robinson and Wildman, op. cit., p. 27.

⁸ A. R. Duffy, *Morris Embroideries. The Prototypes*, Society of Antiquaries, London, 1985, pp. 11, 41 note 31, pl. III.

⁹ The source for this motto must be Jan van Eyck's *Portrait of a man in a turban* of 1433, which was acquired by the National Gallery in 1851, and is inscribed 'Als ich can' in Greek letters.

¹⁰ For the dating of the swan design, see Myers, op. cit., p. 67. The design is attributed to Morris or Webb, *ibid.*, p. 68.

¹¹ In *All Saints*, Cambridge (1866), see Myers, op. cit., p. 145, note 164.

¹² There are comparable miniatures in manuscripts from Morris's own collection, which were not acquired, however, until the 1890s; for which, see the sale catalogue of

Morris's library, Sotheby's, London, 5-10 December 1898, lots 86, 88 and 169.

¹³ These scenes bear a resemblance to miniatures like those in the damaged *Cotton Genesis* (British Library, Cotton Otho MS B. IV), which was produced around 500 in Alexandria.

¹⁴ See Myers, op. cit., p. 66, note d.

¹⁵ It seems reasonable to assume that Ford Madox Brown employed the same source books for the historical details he had previously used for his painting *Geoffrey Chaucer reading the 'Legend of Custance' to Edward III and his court* of 1851 and 1867-68 in the Tate Gallery, London. Treuherz and Strong identified these source books as the following works: George Craik and James MacFarlane's *The Pictorial History of England* of 1837, J. Saunders's *Cabinet Pictures of English Life* of 1845, C.A. Stothard's *The Monumental Effigies of Great Britain* of 1811-33, and Joseph Strutt's *Complete View of the Dress and Habits of the People of England* of 1796-99, Julian Treuherz, 'The Pre-Raphaelites and Mediaeval Illuminated Manuscripts', in Leslie Parris (ed.), *Pre-Raphaelite Papers*, London, 1984, pp. 154-55; Roy Strong, *And when did you last see your father? The Victorian Painter and British History*, London, 1978, pp. 58-59.

¹⁶ Myers, op. cit., p. 66, note c, list in the Archives of Queens' College.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, notes c and h.

¹⁸ The following notes concerning the attribution of the individual months are based on the information collected in Myers, op. cit., p. 66. Robinson and Wildman, op. cit., p. 28, attributed *January* to Burne-Jones. In Myers, op. cit., p. 66, note a, b, on the contrary, doubts are expressed concerning this attribution, and it is argued that Morris was the designer of the tile because, unlike *February*, *January* is not listed in Burne-Jones's commission book. The attribution to Morris is supported by the entries in the hand-written list in the Archives of Queens' College, *ibid.*, note c.

¹⁹ See Burne-Jones's commission book and the list in the Archives of Queens' College, *ibid.*, notes b and c. For a preparatory drawing in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Inv. no. 1546, see Robinson and Wildman, op. cit., cat. no. 38.

²⁰ Myers, op. cit., p. 66, notes c, d, e.

²¹ *Ibid.*, note c, f.

²² *Ibid.*, note c, d.

²³ *Ibid.*, note c, f.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, note c, g.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, note c. See also Virginia Surtees, *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882). A Catalogue Raisonné*, Oxford, 1971, vol. I, p. 88, no. 154, and vol. II, pl. 212.

²⁶ Myers, op. cit., p. 66, note c.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, doubts by Robinson and Wildman, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁸ Myers, op. cit., p. 66, note c, d, e.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, note c and i. A drawing in the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge, Inv. no. PD.16-1979, Robinson and Wildman, op. cit., cat. no. 39, attributed to Ford Madox Brown.

³⁰ Myers, op. cit., p. 63-64, pl. 27c, p. 145, note 153, and p. 66, note d and e.

³¹ *Ibid.*, note j.

³² Aquarius (January) is a man with Morris's features wearing a smock and carrying two pails on a wooden shoulder-strap. Pisces (February) is a large fish which is about to swallow a small one. March is a ram with aggressively tilted head, April a snorting bull. June is a crab, July a lion in a cage. For August Webb chose to portray Virgo as a young woman reading a book at a tall desk. Libra's scales (September) contain a purse full of money and a standing angel. In November a ram is shown turning his head attentively. In December an ibex (capricorn) walks away to the left.

³³ See Myers, pp. 64-65, for this cycle, and also for repetitions of single scenes from the cycle. The White series has a depiction of Adam and Eve for Gemini and a scorpion for October. To represent Sagittarius Webb chose a centaur with a bow, probably in emulation of the corresponding sign of the zodiac in the calendars of medieval Books of Hours.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 145, note 154. For the ploughing scene, see Myers, op. cit., p. 66, note g. The scenes were also used for a window for Onecote Vicarage, Staffordshire, *ibid.*

³⁵ See Paul Brandt, *Schaffende Arbeit und Bildende Kunst im Altertum und Mittelalter*, Leipzig, 1927; Raimond van Marle, *Iconographie de l'Art Profane au Moyen-Age et à la Renaissance et la Décoration des Demeures. La Vie Quotidienne*, The Hague, 1931; James Carson Webster, *The Labours of the Months in antique and mediaeval art to the end of the twelfth century*, Princeton, 1938.

³⁶ Robinson and Wildman, op. cit., p. 28, and Adolphe-Napoléon Didron (ed.), *Annales Archéologiques*, vol. XVII, Paris, 1857, pp. 265-70.

³⁷ John Pope-Hennessy, *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, London, 1964, vol. I, pp. 104-12, nos. 82-93.

³⁸ Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. no. E.4-1955, fol. 78.

³⁹ Pope-Hennessy, op. cit., p. 108.

⁴⁰ Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, MS 139: Coluella, *De re rustica*, 185 fols., 27 x 19 cm, written by Henrietus Roffinus de Murialdo, dated 10 September 1469. Eighteenth-century red morocco binding with the arms of Sandri, followers of the Caretto family, who were the Dukes of Savona and Millesimo near Naples. From the Hamilton collection, 1882 Inv. No. 184; Hamilton Sale 1889, lot 50; Butler collection.

⁴¹ For further discussion of the theme, see Brandt, op.cit.

⁴² In Chartres the first six months of the year are represented as follows: Janus (January), warming (February), pruning the vine (March), a nobleman with blossoming trees (April), hawking (May), mowing (June), reaping (July).

⁴³ See J.W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, New York, 1995 (1st ed. London, 1899), vol. I, p. 48, 71-77.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴⁵ In a letter to Price of 10 August 1855, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 73.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴⁷ Although the labours of the months at Chartres are not illustrated in Georges Louis Adams, *Recueil de sculptures gothiques*, 2 vols., Paris, 1856, detailed descriptions are to be found in Abbé Marcel Joseph Bulteau, *Description de la cathédrale de Chartres*, Chartres, 1850, pp. 54-56. Other cathedral guides like A.P.M. Gilbert, *Description Historique de l'Église Cathédrale de Notre-Dame de Chartres*, Chartres, 1824, p. 25, and the *Histoire et Description de l'Église Cathédrale de Chartres*, Chartres, 1860, pp. 14-15, give accounts of the labours of the months, which are unreliable in various ways. English publications before 1860 like George Whittington's *An historical survey of the ecclesiastical antiquities of France...*, London, 1809-11, or R. Garland, W.G. Coleman and S. Hart, *Chartres cathedral*, London, 1836, Charles Wild, *Chartres Cathédral* [sic], London, 1836, or Thomas H. King and George T. Hill, *The Study Book of Mediaeval Architecture and Art: being a series of working drawings of the principal monuments of the middle ages*, London, 1858, and W.E. Nesfield, *Specimens of medieval architecture from sketches made in France and Italy*, London, 1862, do not seem to contain depictions of the labours of the months. See also Jan van der Meulen, Rüdiger Hoyer, Deborah Cole, *Chartres. Sources and Literary Interpretations. A critical bibliography*, Boston 1989, nos. 2281, 501, 503, 519, 522, pp. 624, 178-80, 186-87. Books on other cathedrals, such as Louis Douchet's studies of Reims (1861) and Amiens (1862), were published in the years Morris was working on the tile series. Pictures of the labours of the months on French cathedrals are equally absent from books such as Paul Lacroix, *Les Arts au Moyen-Age*, Paris, 1869, or Séroux d'Agincourt, *History of Art by its Monuments*, London, 1847, which were later acquired by Morris, and feature in the sale catalogue of his library, Sotheby's, London, 5-10 December 1898, lots 613 and 1117.

⁴⁸ Arnold Whittick (ed.), *Ruskin's Venice*, London, 1976, pp. 170-72.

⁴⁹ In Venice, January is a man carrying a tree trunk over his shoulder, February a man warming himself at a fire, March a warrior, April a man carrying a sheep on his shoulders, May a man to whom two ladies present a wreath of flowers, while June shows reaping, July mowing, August a man seated, September vintaging, October a man digging, November a bird-catcher, and December the killing of a pig. John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. II, *The Sea Stories*, Library Edition vol. X, E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds.), London, 1904, chap. VII, section LII, pp. 317-21.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

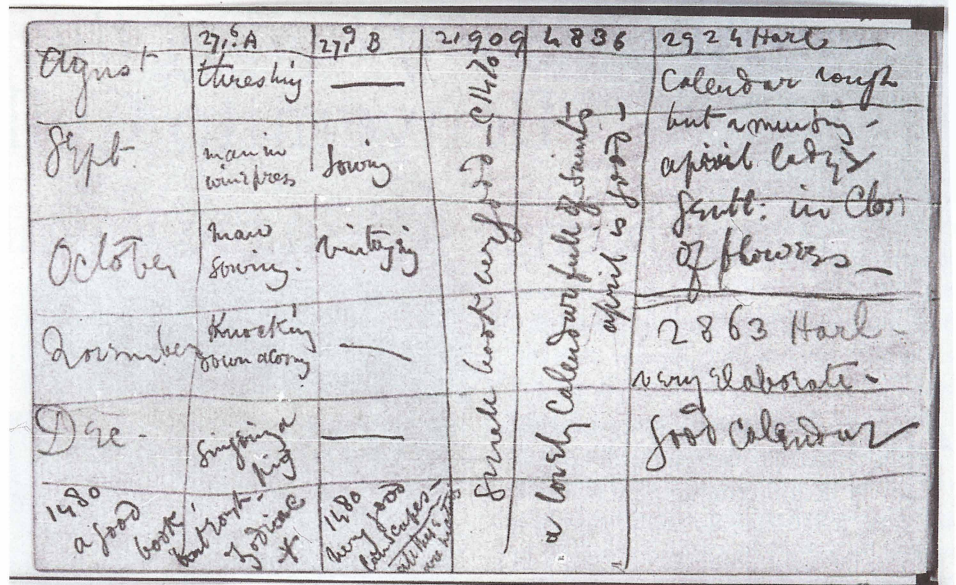
⁵¹ For further information, see Rosemarie Franz, *Der Kachelofen. Entstehung und kunstgeschichtliche Entwicklung vom Mittelalter bis zum Ausgang des Klassizismus*, Graz, 1969. Franz shows a series of the months after designs by Georg Vest of c. 1600, op. cit., pp. 124-25, pls. 401-404, 409-10. The occupations of the figures or the scenes in the background are still in part related to the labours of the months.

⁵² Barbara Rosenbaum and Richard Pearson, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts, vol. IV, 1800-1900, Part 3 Landor-Patmore*, London, 1993, MoW 1779.5, pp. 739-40.

⁵³ *The British Museum Quarterly*, vol. XIV, 1940, p. 9. The ideas for the illustrations are on fol. 120v.

⁵⁴ Rosenbaum and Pearson, op. cit., pp. 480, 740.

⁵⁵ It is not clear whether Morris already knew of this now famous manuscript while he was preparing his tile series. The *Très Riches Heures* were acquired in 1855 by



9 British Library Add. ms 45303, fol. 7v. Autograph notes by William Morris. Reproduced courtesy of the British Library

	ST. MARK'S	MS. French. Late 15th Century.	MS. French. Late 16th Century.	MS. French. Late 18th Century.	MS. French. Early 14th Century.	MS. English. Early 14th Century.	MS. Flemish. 15th Century.
JANUARY	Carrying wood.	Janus feasting.	Janus feasting.	Drinking and stirring fire.	Warming feet.	Janus feasting.	Feasting.
FEBRUARY	Warming feet.	Warming feet.	Warming feet.	Pruning.	Bearing candles.	Warming feet.	Warming hands.
MARCH	Going to war.	Pruning.	Pruning.	Striking with axe.	Pruning.	Carrying candles.	Reaping.
APRIL	Carrying sheep.	Gathering flowers.	Gathering flowers.	Gathering flowers.	Gathering flowers.	Pruning.	Gathering flowers.
MAY	Crowned with flowers.	Riding (f.).	Riding (f.).	Playing on violin.	Riding (f.).	Riding (f.).	Riding, with lady on pillion.
JUNE	Reaping.	Mowing.	Mowing.	Gathering large red flowers.	Carrying (fagots?)	Carrying fagots.	Sheep-shearing.
JULY	Mowing.	Reaping.	Reaping.	Mowing.	Mowing.	Mowing.	Mowing.
AUGUST	Asleep.	Threshing.	Gathering grapes.	Reaping.	Reaping.	Reaping.	Reaping.
SEPTEMBER	Carrying grapes.	Sowing.	Sowing.	Drinking wine.	Threshing.	Threshing.	Sowing.
OCTOBER	Digging.	Gathering grapes.	Beating oak.	Sowing.	Sowing.	Sowing.	Beating oak.
NOVEMBER	Catching birds.	Beating oak.	Killing swine.	Killing swine.	Killing swine.	Killing swine.	Pressing (grapes?)
DECEMBER	Killing swine.	Killing swine.	Baking.	Killing oxen.	Baking.	Baking.	Killing swine.

10 From John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. II: *The Sea Stories*, Library Edition vol. X, E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds.), London, 1904, p. 322

the Duc d'Aumale, but did not reach a wider audience until 1884, thanks to Léopold Delisle's essay, 'Les livres d'Heures du Duc de Berry' (*Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. XXIX, pp. 97-110, 281-92, 391-405). Previously, the manuscript had been mentioned in Gustav Waagen, *Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britain*, London, 1857, pp. 248-59. There is no greater certainty in the case of the cycle of the months in the eagle-tower of the Castello del Buon Consiglio, Trent, from before 1407. Here, as in the *Très Riches Heures*, scenes from courtly and peasant life alternate in a landscape. Morris never visited this part of Italy, so he could not know the mural paintings directly. The earliest publications featuring the cycle seem to date from the end of the nineteenth century, as pointed out by Steffi Roettgen, *Wandmalerei der Frührenaissance in Italien 1400-1470*, Munich, 1996, pp. 28-31 and p. 447.

⁵⁶ For which, see *Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, London, 1808, vols. I-IV.

⁵⁷ Harley MSS 2917 and 5049 follow the use of Rome; MS Harley 2915, which was illuminated possibly in the Netherlands, follows the use of Sarum.

⁵⁸ For the dating of MS Harley 2438 to the 13th century, see *Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts*, op.cit., vol. II, p. 692.

⁵⁹ British Library, MS Add. 45305, fol. 6r.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.* The only exception is MS Harley 2915, which shows a man digging the earth around a small tree. Interestingly, Morris did not record this subject in his notebook.

⁶² In MS Harley 2917 a man sowing is represented in September, because there is no labour for August. As a consequence, in Morris's table for this manuscript the labours of the months are put forward by one month, so that Morris had to note for December 'Nothing'.

⁶³ MS Harley 2917 shows the burning of a pig and, therefore, would be more fitting for December or November.

⁶⁴ 'Good' was Morris's description of May, June, and November in MS Harley 2915, of May, June, September (the figure of the man), and November in MS Harley 2934, and of April, May, and June in MS 2716A; for which, see British Library, MS Add. 45305, fol.6r, 6v, 7r.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Morris must have been referring to MS Add. 18850, because MS Add. 42131, another Book of Hours illuminated for John, Duke of Bedford, in England, was not acquired by the British Museum until 1929 and was previously at Ludworth Castle.

⁶⁶ It is not clear which manuscripts Morris meant by MSS 271^o.A, 271^o.B. I want to thank Janet M. Backhouse for her kind assistance over these manuscripts.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 7r. Probably illuminated in the middle of the sixteenth century.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Divergences from the cycles noted earlier are represented by the scene of digging for March, the stag hunt for May, and sowing for September in MS 2719B.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 7v. Morris's note mentioned representations of saints in the margins of the calendar.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*