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## ‘Hand & Soul’: The Fin de Siècle Sociopoetics of Way & Williams and the Auvergne Press

*Craig Saper*

The sociopoetics of books extends reading beyond interpreting the ephemeral voices of writers to include reading books as an intermedia expression of the entire publishing package: design, printing, production processes, distribution and other issues usually seen as ancillary to literary value. Sociopoetics begins with contributing to the literary and cultural history of important publishing teams and presses. It then builds on that research to study the goals and outputs of specific presses’ modern aesthetic sensibilities in relation to the impact of, resistance to and use of corporate networks and media technologies.<sup>1</sup> The co-publication, with William Morris’s Kelmscott Press, of Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *Hand & Soul* (1895) by the fin de siècle US press Way & Williams<sup>2</sup> raises a number of key sociopoetic issues: how Way & Williams related to international, especially Anglo-American, networks and influences; the way it related to

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the industrialization of publishing in the nineteenth century; and the way its publications and processes related to the cultural scene in Chicago. This chapter will consider these aspects of the work of Way & Williams, and the Auvergne Press which succeeded it, in order to suggest a lineage for the sociopoetic goals and processes of small press publishing and publishers today and to build appropriate theoretical frames to appreciate expanded definitions of literature and literary production, as well as how to read a book. These claims will strike some as ambitious, but the argument here is that literary studies mistakenly strayed from reading texts wholistically by pursuing an absurd decontextualized reading practice that sought meaning only in the writer's intention; that notion was debunked at least 50 years ago, but lives on, like a ghost, in our literary studies that still consider texts as if not published or distributed, and as if they do not always involve teams beyond a singular writer. It is no mistake or coincidence that so many in the modernist and contemporary writing scene (have) also work(ed) as small press publishers because they see that activity as crucial to an intermedial notion of literary production. This modernist and contemporary lineage emerged mostly in the 1890s, and one example that illuminates the importance of the publisher's creative vision is Way & Williams.

Way & Williams, named for its publishers Washington Irving Way and Chauncey Lawrence Williams, operated in the fin de siècle as an early modernist press influenced by (and influencing) the aesthetics of William Morris and Frank Lloyd Wright.<sup>3</sup> It operated between 1895 and 1898, and after that Williams went on to found the Auvergne Press with a new partner, W.H. Winslow. Both Way & Williams and Auvergne serve here as a useful example of how small press publishers' decisions have an authorial impact on aesthetic and literary value, and it fits neatly next to other research on modernist small press publishers in relation to larger mainstream publishing.<sup>4</sup> In this case, the work of the company, including the entire infrastructure of publishing, functions as a poetics, aesthetics and as literary meaning in itself, or what I have called *sociopoetics*, which is not ancillary to the writer's contributions. The press's first offices were in Chicago's Monadnock Building, the largest commercial office building at the time and one of the earliest examples of an unornamented modern facade; most of the building's six thousand tenants were major corporations and companies, including Rand McNally, the map and textbook publisher. Way & Williams positioned themselves, literally, in the midst of the effort to establish Chicago as the modern commercial and cultural

centre of the United States. At this time, in publishing, New York had surpassed Boston and Philadelphia, and Chicago was not yet on the literary map.

Chauncey Williams had inherited a fortune, at the age of 21, from the family business in agricultural machinery, and had promptly left Madison, Wisconsin, to tour Europe. He returned to River Forest, Illinois, a then semi-rural suburb of Chicago, and hired Frank Lloyd Wright to build a house—an early example of Wright's Prairie style—and as he worked alongside Wright, helping to move boulders up from the nearby river, Williams developed his aesthetic sensibility and became an early or proto-modernist. Both Williams and Wright adopted Morris's oft repeated slogan that one should have 'nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful', and all of them advocated for a hand-crafted modernism as opposed to the mass-produced machine-made commercialism that so defined Chicago's culture in particular during the last decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Williams' inheritance financed the press, but his sociopoetic sensibility was the motivation.

### THE ANGLO-AMERICAN NEXUS

Way and Williams toured England in 1895, and during this visited William Morris's studio and the Kelmscott Press.<sup>6</sup> Both politically and aesthetically, William Morris resisted the commercial publishing model of inexpensive, mass-produced and pirated books that dominated the major New York publishers of the time, such as Harper & Brothers or Scribners. Harper & Brothers, for example, had built its wealth and dominance on publishing English authors, such as Charles Dickens and the Brontës, without having to legally pay any royalties to them. Using such a model, compounded by the breadth of their distribution networks and their ability to print thousands of copies, the big presses could easily drive small presses under. Instead of collaborating with such a model, Morris favoured returning to an earlier artisanal production process with a politics that depended on valuing labour in the publishing production process. Morris objected to both the way the publishing industry stole their profits from creative workers and the way the singular financial profit goal of the system reduced useful and rewarding craft to mere toil.<sup>7</sup> During the 1895 trip, Way and Williams, seeking to promote this notion of useful labour through beautiful craft, convinced Morris to co-publish Rossetti's *Hand & Soul*, the only Kelmscott Press book ever distributed by an American publisher.<sup>8</sup>

No one has yet located any specific evidence of why Morris chose two new and inexperienced publishers from Chicago over large and established New York publishers to publish his only book for North American readers. One can only infer that it had to do with Way's and Williams' willingness to truly collaborate and champion Kelmscott Press's aesthetic, social and poetic project. They worked with Morris as he designed the book, printed two versions and bound the books with gold type on the bindings. The designs are typical of Morris, with woodcut floral borders and decorative initial letters, and both titles and shoulder notes are printed in a reddish orange (Figs. 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3).

Although certainly having Morris publish an American edition is an important event in the history of publishing and in Morris's biography, it is not mentioned in even a recent, and otherwise thorough, intellectual biography of William Morris and his work.<sup>9</sup> The Arts and Crafts movement originated in the mid- and late nineteenth century in Britain, with



Fig. 2.1 Title page, *Hand & Soul*, designed and printed by William Morris (Chicago: Way & Williams, 1895)

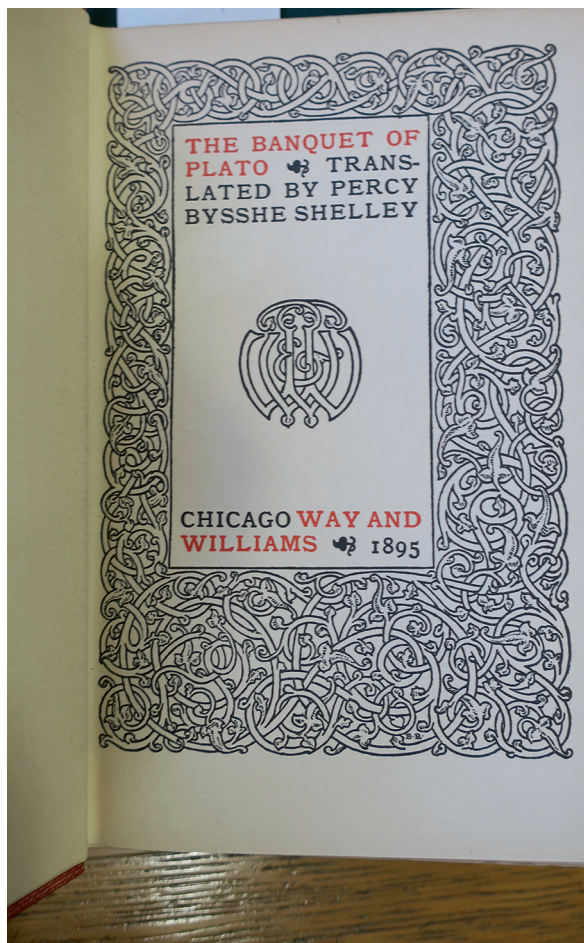
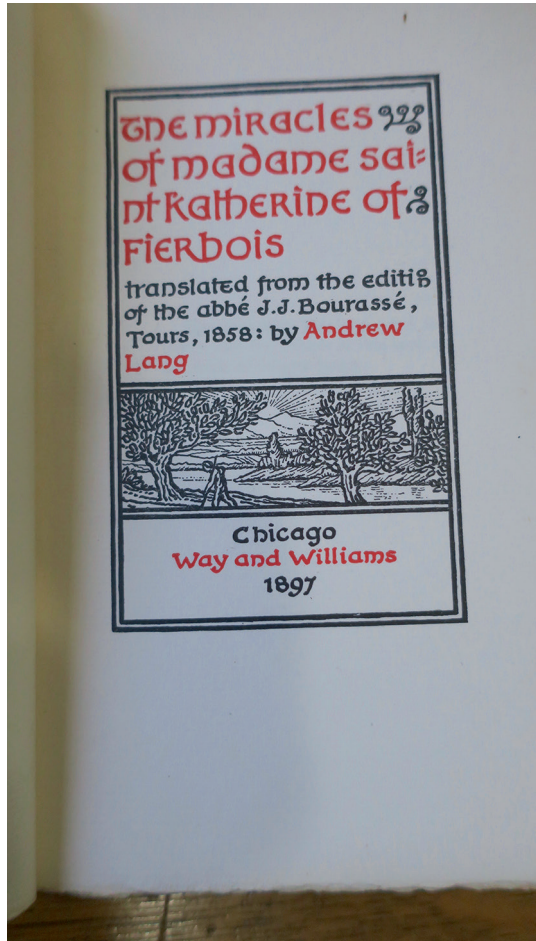


Fig. 2.2 Title page from 1895

Morris and others, as a response to the industrialization of traditional finely hand-crafted objects, including wallpaper, ceramic pottery, furniture, stained glass and especially books.<sup>10</sup> It spread to the United States in part through publishers like Way & Williams. It also attracted architects, most notably Frank Lloyd Wright, who had a complicated perspective on the Arts and Crafts movement and a sometimes vexed relationship with



Fig. 2.3 Title page  
from 1897



Morris's followers in Chicago over Wright's support for machines as an integral part of craftsmanship rather than being diametrically opposed to it.<sup>11</sup> While on that same trip to England, seeking the finely produced Arts and Crafts modernism of well-made objects, Way and Williams secured the rights to publish a number of other British authors, such as Percy Bysshe Shelley and Andrew Lang. An American edition of Lang's translation of a French book on the 'miracles of Madame Saint Katherine of Fierbois'<sup>12</sup> would add prestige to their list as Lang was at the height of his

career as a literary critic. (Lang famously championed Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson and Henry James—although Lang and James later had a falling out over Lang's criticism of the 'new realists'.)<sup>13</sup> Lang was also a translator, and adapter, of classical stories and mythologies (he co-edited new translations of Homer's *Odyssey* in 1879 and *Illiad* in 1884) and European fairy tales (having a bestseller with the *Blue Fairy Book* in 1889). His introductions to his fairy tales drew on his own anthropological scholarship in which he praised religious spirituality, occultism and ritualized myth. He had a cult-like following in England, was thought of as a bridge, through his literary journalism, between the reading public and the intellectual élite, and he was published widely in the United States, mostly through Scribner's and in magazines. He was part of the same literary circles as the American poet James Russell Lowell and the philosopher William James, and an admirer of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's paintings. Lang sought out connections to Americans and America. He joked that he 'wished' that the United States would 'annex this island' which he saw as declining,<sup>14</sup> and he asked his wife to emigrate to America upon his death so that at least one of them could make it out of the old country.<sup>15</sup> He also often mocked America's crass cultural scene and commercialism, and bitterly complained about Scribner's publishers not paying him enough or promoting his books enough ('I'd expect a few cents of profit from transatlantic coffers. But nay, ... I'm only bought here').<sup>16</sup> He worried about the quality of bindings and covers for his American publications, and had little respect for the reading public in the States, who 'when spoken to about "Literature," is said to reply: "Literature? sure we took it senior year. It had a green cover"'.<sup>17</sup> Way & Williams seemed to reside in that seemingly impossible overlap between Lang's disdain and hope. Due to Lang's shared optimism about the innovative forward looking atmosphere in Chicago, and Way & Williams' dedication to aesthetic quality, Lang, in his early 50s, must have found hope in the idea of producing beautiful books on spiritual topics for an American audience that he wanted to reach. Way and Williams recognized Lang's mix of asceticism and winking irony as a good fit for their press.

Way & Williams collaborated on the publication of more than 16 books with British publishers and printers, including at least 10 books co-published with The Bodley Head.<sup>18</sup> John Lane, a co-founder with Elkin Mathews of The Bodley Head, often co-published cutting-edge, and sometimes controversial, books with American publishers. Lane, the uncle of Allen Lane, one of the founders of Penguin Books, sought a smaller



audience than the mainstream publishers. The press runs were usually small and often printed in Britain, as, for example, for *Vesper-tilia and Other Verses* by Rosamund Marriott Watson, publishing with the pseudonym Graham R. Tomson for two of the poems, which The Bodley Head and Way & Williams co-published in an edition of 500–650 copies and had printed by T. and A. Constable, printers to Her Majesty, at the Edinburgh University Press in 1895, with the cover by Robert Anning Bell, the English architect, book designer and illustrator.<sup>19</sup> The scandalous decadent poet, Charles Dalmon, who later became an art director on a series of films in the 1920s, had a collection of drinking songs and poems co-published with the two publishers.<sup>20</sup> Dalmon had contributed to *The Yellow Book* literary journal; The Bodley Head had established its reputation by publishing *The Yellow Book*, which drew its name from the practice in Paris for scandalous risqué materials to be wrapped in yellow paper. The magazine, edited by the American Henry Harland, had a large and lasting influence in America, and was a favourite of Oscar Wilde—a fact that drew unwanted attention to the magazine after Wilde's arrest. So, by the time Way and Williams had started working with Lane and Elkins, in the last couple of years of the journal's publication, the Anglo-American nexus among decadent aesthetes and an emerging modernism were already established. In the American imagination, the UK, especially England, remained the literary nexus of the world, and the Chicago publishers sought to both build prestige and modify that aesthetics as their own modern midwestern style.

### CHICAGO MODERNISM AND THE PUBLISHER'S ART

Armed with Morris's aesthetic, and set in the context of the dominance by New York publishers of the cultural scene, Way and Williams formed their aesthetic vision that recognized the art of publishing and publishers as artists in the context of the industrialization of mainstream publishing. The press sought to become an international forum for authors, artists and designers all interested in producing the whole book as a literary object. Other publishers in Chicago's literary renaissance trying to produce books as literary art included Stone and Kimball (1893–7), Herbert S. Stone & Co. (1896–1906) and The Blue Sky Press (1899–1906). Chauncey Williams co-directed Auvergne, as mentioned above, with William Winslow, overlapping his work with Way & Williams. These presses represented an alternative to what had become mainstream publishing. Until

the middle of the nineteenth century, the roles of printer, book-binder, publisher and bookseller were often, if not universally, combined. The maker-publisher's shops were, in some cases, gathering spots for cultural leaders. However, even in the eighteenth century, as James Raven meticulously details, the process of specialization was already underway, with house styles and publishers that 'expertly practiced what we would now call product branding', but book publishing and distribution were enormously enhanced by 'an increasing sophisticated network of turnpikes and mail routes' in the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> More particularly, with the introduction of steam-powered rotary presses in 1843, publishers could produce more pages in a day than a hand-press publisher could in a year, and as a consequence could appeal to a mass audience with inexpensive books and magazines. In conjunction with other emerging technologies like telegraphy, these changes expanded the reach of corporate publishers internationally to large mass audiences. In addition, the increasing mechanization and industrialization of many other industries in the mid-1800s also marked a change in the way that writers, artists and critics thought about publishing. The publisher had already begun to appear as the logistical organizer of a production and distribution process. They began using standardized forms and styles. No longer were publisher-booksellers looked on as cultural figures equal to authors; no longer would a publisher's work be considered in determining the literary value and cultural prestige of a book. Over the next hundred years up to the first half of the twentieth century, publishers evolved into modern businessmen (as it was men who ran these corporate entities). Scott Casper summarizes the consequences of the emergence of this eventual sea-change in publishing in the nineteenth century and continuing throughout the twentieth century:

these decades witnessed the ascendancy of what we call the 'industrial book': the manufactured, bound product of a publisher, and the quintessential product of the industrialization of both the printing and papermaking trades...books themselves played a disproportionately significant role in justifying and embedding a market culture in the lives, homes, and ideas of Americans.... Book publishers created and became aware of themselves as participants in a trade: a system of communication, competition, cooperation, and distribution.<sup>22</sup>

In this historical context, it is not surprising that both Way and Williams were founding members of The Caxton Club, a literary salon specifically

for publishers and potential patrons of the literary culture of the 1890s.<sup>23</sup> Caxton is most famous for the first edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1476), an early example of publishing in English, and a work written in a living language rather than in the Latin of officialdom. The name of the Caxton Club made direct reference to the publisher's art as an alternative to the mainstream official culture of the time: an art that had moved from the centre of cultural exchange, with publishers as celebrities, up until the 1840s, to the outer edge of cultural experimentation. The small press publishers in the 1890s sought to re-establish publishing as an aesthetic practice at the centre of the arts and culture of their time. The working methods of these small press publishers influenced modernist aesthetics in ways that have not always been fully recognized. Fine press publishing depended on the same international networks as commercial newspapers and magazines, but, instead of becoming business enterprises, the small presses adopted an artisanal aesthetic sensibility opposed to industrialization, standardization and cheap quality. These small presses began to focus on crafting high-quality production as expressions of a 'soulfulness', or unalienated labour, opposed to efficient mass production and the resulting reduction of humanity to a one-dimensional labour resource (Fig. 2.4).

Following their collaboration with Morris, Way and Williams did not simply move on to another aesthetic, but took over the Arts and Crafts style, and later a bit of the Art Nouveau style, as part of a Chicago or prairie modernism associated with Frank Lloyd Wright in the 1890s. For example, Frank Hazenplug's cover for Elia W. Peattie's suggestive and sardonic book, *Pippins and Cheese: Being the Relation of How a Number of Persons Ate a Number of Dinners at Various Times and Places*, had a playful cover design with a repeating pattern of leaves with apples—red apples on the front cover, that with time have aged to a brownish colour, and yellow apples on the back cover. The repeating green leaves and vine-like branches make the realism of the 'pippins' seem almost like an abstract design. Hazenplug was mostly known for designing for the Chicago publisher, Stone & Kimball, who he had worked for since a few years before doing covers for Way & Williams. He went on to work for important publishers including hundreds of covers for Fleming Revell (1900–1911) and many for Rand McNally, and John Lane (1913–1920). Hazenplug's signet, which you can see on the lower-end of the spine of *Pippins and Cheese*, was a stylized FH with the F incorporated into the H with a small line protruding off of the first of the H's upright lines. No reading of *Pippins and Cheese* would be complete without acknowledging F. Hazenplug's mark.



Fig. 2.4 Hazenplug's cover, *Pippins and Cheese* by Elia W. Peattie (Way & Williams, 1897)

Fig. 2.5 Hazenplug's identifying designer's colophon



There was, and is today, an entire, usually overlooked, text waiting to be read. It was a text not just about book history, but about literary and aesthetic meaning and value (Fig. 2.5).

Significantly, Rossetti's *Hand & Soul* hints that an artist needs to connect hand and soul, rather than a commercial or ego-driven motivation, to produce artworks, and Way & Williams saw their own project in similar terms; as producing an aesthetic object that transcends the mass

production business models that one might associate with modern systems of publishing. It is precisely those first works that they published, including *Hand & Soul*, that express their 'soulful' aesthetic aims as publishers. A reproduction of simply the words on the page, without the handmade quality or the explicit awe-inspiring intention of the book's package, is only a pale shadow of the book's expanded literary meaning. Way and Williams intended for soulfulness, expressed through the hands of the publishers, to be embodied in the book as a type of secular religious relic. They did not intend the two—package and words—to be read separately, the former by book historians and the latter by literary scholars. They meant the design, distribution and entire package to find itself intertwined with the words on the page. They sought to create books in which words and package were unalienated from each other. Soulfulness connected to handmade arts and artisanal crafts sought to first eliminate the division of labour and specialization found in industrialization, second to 'dissolve the distinction between physical and mental labour',<sup>24</sup> and third to create a model of life unalienated from work. These publishers sought to create books that had inherent value much like the analogous situation of an artist seeking to create something that transcends its mere exchange value. The working practices they sought to cultivate saw people as collaborators rather than competitors, and saw their connection to nature and natural settings as part of the process. That Wright and Williams, and both their families, hauled boulders up from the river to become part of the entrance to Williams's house was not just shockingly new, it represented the ideology of these collaborators.

In October 1898, the same year that Wright worked with Williams and Winslow on designing two Auvergne Press books, they were all initial members of the Chicago Society of Arts and Craft at Hull House. A few years later after the turn of the century, Frank Lloyd Wright spoke at a Hull House Chicago Arts and Craft Society meeting on the topic of 'Art and the Machine' (6 March 1901) and concluded that 'art was needed to give a soul to the machine'.<sup>25</sup> It was that secular and politically progressive notion of 'soul' that Way & Williams had brought to the cultural scene of Chicago. Hull House was founded in 1889 by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr. Starr went to England twice, in 1897 and in 1899, to refine her bookbinding skills. The core group called themselves 'a community of university women', and sought what they called a 'just beauty' and 'saw arts and crafts as part of a program of civic improvement, social uplift, and industrial reorganization; it proposed to confront the social conditions,

including machine technology, that affected the production of art',<sup>26</sup> including an emphasis on books, and to provide a 'settlement house' community centre to provide health care and child care and to promote cultural practices from immigrants' former home countries. Hull House became the centre of the Arts and Crafts movement in Chicago, and taught classes dedicated to making beautiful objects and books.<sup>27</sup> The ethos of the 'residents' of middle-class women seeking to help the poor and immigrant groups was to cultivate an emerging 'New Woman' feminism. Addams famously explained 'the three Rs' of the settlement house movement: 'residence, research, and reform'.<sup>28</sup> Way, Winslow and Williams were publishing women centrally involved in these movements. For example, in this context, Way & Williams published Madeline Yale Wynne, who was one of the founding members of the Chicago Arts and Craft Society and became the 'most notable woman silversmith' in the United States,<sup>29</sup> and she mentored many women students at Hull House workshops and classes. For her Way & Williams book, *The Little Room and Other Stories*, Wynne also designed the cover with a peacock, the frontispiece illustration with the peacock imagery repeated illustrating a scene from one of the stories, and endpapers. It was a popular book and, like others published by Way & Williams, Wynne's ghost story had strong female central characters, and as a book-as-object seemed to convey the souls of the makers beyond the voice of a singular writer.

For example, in 1895 Way & Williams published a volume by the renowned Chicago hostess and supporter of Hull House and close friend of Jane Addams, Lydia Avery Coonley. Coonley's poem in that book was lifted and slightly modified by Frank Lloyd Wright for an unattributed inscription in gold capitalized letters on the back balcony of the Unitarian Meeting House in Madison, Wisconsin: 'IF YOU HAVE A LOAF OF BREAD BREAK THE LOAF IN TWO AND GIVE HALF FOR SOME FLOWERS OF THE NARCISSUS FOR THY BREAD FEEDS THE BODY, BUT THE FLOWERS FEED THE SOUL.' In Wright's autobiography he quotes it again, with new modifications, to make an argument about architectural pattern which 'may be taken much further along than physical need alone would dictate',<sup>30</sup> and that transcendence of physical need, or commercial efficiency, is precisely what Way and Williams sought to reproduce, and what makes new reproductions of their books so difficult. For the Coonley book project, Way & Williams hired a highly respected designer with an odd and apt name, Selwyn Image, who was the co-founder of the Century Guild and illustrator for Bodley Head



publishers in London. In this way, the practices and aims of the firm were made possible through the networks and skills developed in the mainstream, but used for different ends: the one for commercial capitalism and the other for a 'soulful' encounter with materiality, whether with paper, ink or stone, or with human collaborators.

After Way amicably left the press in 1897, Williams continued to publish under the same name for another year before closing the business, and, in that last year, Williams shifted the focus of the press away from publishing British authors and designers. The press had already published many Midwestern US regional writers and designers, with a prominence of women authors such as Elia Peattie, Mary Judah, Kate Cleary, Madelene Yale Wynne, Mary Adams, Florence Snow, Catherine Brooks Yale, Alice Meynell, Kate Chopin, Catherine Brooks Yale and Emily Phillips.<sup>31</sup> Madelene Yale Wynne's book's title, *The Little Room*, became the name of one of the most important literary clubs in Chicago a few years later, and it was there that the *Poetry* magazine editor and founder, Harriet Monroe, built her literary networks. Williams was in the 1890s an important figure in what was called the 'Mauve decade' of baroque cultural decadence and refinement. He had started a press famous for quality editions of European works, and in three years the press had published five dozen books. Way & Williams's influence on the cultural scene was international; the press worked with Morris and Lang in England, some of their writers achieved more success posthumously, such as Kate Chopin, and some were increasingly well-known and respected at the time, such as Frank Lloyd Wright.

Eventually, now working with William Winslow, and under the name Auvergne Press, Williams moved the literal printing press from his attic to Winslow's new Frank Lloyd Wright-designed garage print shop studio adjacent to Williams's own Wright-designed house. Wright produced two books with Auvergne: first a new edition of Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes* (in 1896) and then *The House Beautiful* (in the winter of 1896–1897). Later Wright would discuss the production process of *The House Beautiful*: 'So we printed it' after 'working evenings and Sundays, and finally had it bound with a square green board cover. I went out and gathered seed pods and deduced from them a certain ornament with which I embellished the volume, and bound some photographs which I myself made of the weeds in the beginning of the book, with a little cover and a quotation in gold letters from Shakespeare.'<sup>32</sup> There were only 90 copies of the hand-printed book produced, most of which were given to friends and relatives. These were not made for profit, but in honour of an emerging

aesthetic. Wright cherished, read and collected the small press books from Way & Williams, and participated in the production of the Way & Williams published *The New Unity*, a magazine edited by Wright's uncle, a Unitarian minister, who promoted a socially progressive agenda of international peace, racial justice, better education, women's rights and uprisings in support of those rights, economic reforms and poverty relief, anti-corruption in government, humane treatment of animals, and nearly every progressive cause in America, all linked to a religious concern with the commonweal. These were the driving forces for the young Wright's vision, and one key to his developing prairie style of American modernist architecture. The prairie style eliminated basements and attics, bringing the servants on to the same hierarchal level literally if not economically as their employers. The free flowing from room to room and the large windows and terraces also meant to change the hierarchy of each room and the relation to the wildness of the outside natural world. Through the stress on the beauty of unornamented simple lines and the sumptuousness of the materials and the play of light as an absence of architectural obstacles, Wright sought to change the architecture and literal frame of houses and by doing so hoped too to change the inhabitant's frame of mind, to make it modern and aware of its construction rather than hiding that structure. Wright is now synonymous with American architectural modernism based on a natural rural connection to the prairie landscape, but in the 1890s he quickly grew to appreciate the prairie *as a style* from the Way & Williams books; eventually he had one of the most extensive collections of their books. He was influenced by these Midwestern writers—especially women writers publishing with Way & Williams. Instead of framing Wright's achievement as born from the natural landscape, or from some kindergarten blocks, it makes sense to see him, and his world-view, as part of an emerging modernist, feminist and socialist scene in the Chicago metro region in the late 1890s with Williams as the key hinge figure in these activities. As is well known, the ultra-conservative theorist and novelist, Ayn Rand, supposedly modelled her lead character in *The Fountainhead*, Howard Roark, on Wright. Roark is the novel's amoral, if idealistic, architect and is Rand's model for the antinomian creative genius and libertarian Übermensch. The cultural mythology of Wright constructed in part through Rand's novel sees him as a man railing against the establishment, against the urban setting of Chicago, against the sophisticated internationalist aesthetic, against the utopian social good and especially the 'threat' of socialism's concern with the commonweal. Wright later

reinforced the myth himself and this chapter is not offering an *apology* for Wright, not excusing his mistakes. As one biographer notes, he was ‘a braggart, a liar, and financially devious; his autobiography is intentionally misleading’.<sup>33</sup> Rather, this chapter sets Wright’s modernism in a different lineage, that of Hull House feminism, Morris’s Arts and Crafts style and the publishing practices of Williams, Winslow and Way.

### PUBLISHERS AS HINGE FIGURES IN MODERNISM

Small pressruns and personal investments in and passions about the publications, as well as the interest among such presses in serving an aesthetic vision, analogous to a religious encounter rather than a commercial market, pushed against the corporate media model. The organization, functioning and aesthetics of each of these small presses expressed an implicit resistance to the large corporate media empires’ unquenchable need for increasing profits, larger markets and scaled-up efficiencies. Those large-scale efficiencies led the big businesses to introduce austerity measures that necessitated a lack of care for labour, materials and aesthetic concerns alike.

However, despite this resistance, the populist mass-produced pulp newspapers and magazines with their wide, sometimes global, reach created the context for vanguard publishers not only in terms of personnel but also in terms of their move from the craft-based vision of the Arts and Crafts movement to a modernism whose relations to the mainstream were more complex and more ambiguous. A small but visible indication of this development can be seen in Way & Williams printer’s device, signet or colophon, which changed with each year until it resembled a squiggly modernist line (Fig. 2.7) instead of the more ornate Gothic designs of their initial Arts and Crafts colophon (Fig. 2.6). The style of the earlier design has the characteristic Arts and Crafts style with the two Ws intertwined with an ampersand in the middle. The later design has a fluid line

**Fig. 2.6** A Way & Williams 1895 colophon



**Fig. 2.7** A Way &  
Williams 1898 colophon



with the abstracted ampersand now appearing as two circles and stems to the left, the two Ws appearing above and below each other with small periods floating next to each W. The allusions in the earlier colophon instantly placed Way & Williams in a particular context and aesthetic when readers opened the books to the title page. The later colophon style of Way & Williams moved towards an Art Nouveau style. The two styles shared the same resistance to corporate industrialization and an advocacy of a celebration of natural forms, but the Art Nouveau style replaced the Gothic lines with curving and undulating organic flourishes.<sup>34</sup> The subtle aesthetic evolution introduced the modernist style that did not look back to the Gothic or supposedly any precedent except natural forms and, in that sense, was truly modern. The new artistic style introduced affect and eroticism as a reaction against the rectilinear efficiency model. The vine tendrils, flowers, feathers and seedpods in the books from the Chicago publishers' designs, including in Wright's Auvergne books with Williams and Winslow, expressed this modern style.

Although never an author, designer or critic, Williams was what Liesl Olson has called, in discussing another Chicago publisher, a 'hinge figure'—'in the middle of things: an editor, ... a dreamer with a pragmatic economic sense'.<sup>35</sup> Olson explains that the hinge figure is about connecting a global with the local Chicago scene as well as about connecting visual design and the publishing process to literary value. In her work, Olson describes the influence of later Chicago-based hinge figures, such as Harriet Monroe, who 'worked behind the scenes'<sup>36</sup> and who 'will never be remembered' as writers; these non-writers created the city's literary renaissance which led to its existence as a centre for literary modernism in the middle of the twentieth century. Monroe, for example, helped the then unknown poet Ezra Pound design the visual layout of his poem, 'In a Station of the Metro', and therefore created part of its literary meaning.<sup>37</sup>

Olson's archival work illustrates that Monroe 'decided how this poem was printed on the page'. As Olson argues: 'These facts are key to its meaning.' Later editors 'completely standardized spacing among title, words, and punctuation',<sup>38</sup> and this standardization completely missed a now recognized aspect of Pound's poetry, the importance of layout and design for poetic meaning in modernist poetry. If, in fact, Harriet Monroe's behind-the-scenes work, until now effaced, impacted Pound's earlier poem, then it also suggests the importance of the hinge figure and the publisher's role in literary meaning and aesthetic value. Monroe served as a guiding force in the formation of modernist poetry not as a writer but as a publisher.<sup>39</sup> In the same way, even before Monroe's work with Pound, Way and Williams were key hinge figures in Chicago.

Way and Williams acted as hinges between the processes of production and the effects of the words on the page in very specific ways. A 'recognition of reflexivity' and an 'attention to the artifices of narrative', as Caroline Levine explains, in modernist realist writers such as Henry James or Oscar Wilde (or slightly earlier Walter Pater) shifted 'the pleasurable aim of the exercise of reading' and 'the most interesting moments in the story' from mere plots to aesthetic plans.<sup>40</sup> Working during the same period as these modernist realist writers, and sharing their goals, Way and Williams as well as William Morris shifted the 'pleasurable aim of the exercise of reading' to the entire package of a book's publication. Williams's works were fine-art publications, but also home-made—as mentioned above, the printing press was at one point in Williams's attic and was later in Winslow's Wright-designed garage print studio. Some of the terminology in use generally among late nineteenth-century printers and publishers, such as calling the 'hand-press' simply the 'machine' or describing the necessity of 'make ready' (by testing a print project with extra paper to allow for adjustments like reducing blocks that might be too high or bringing up those too low to create an even uniform printing), seem to prefigure modernism's concern with 'the problem of poetic expression ... in the age of mechanical reproduction'.<sup>41</sup> In a much more direct way, Williams influenced his young protégé, Bob Brown (known to Williams as Robert Carlton Brown), who later in the late 1920s founded Roving Eye Press among the expatriate avant-garde in France and published other books while working closely with Nancy Cunard's Hours Press, Caresse and Harry Crosby's Black Sun Press and Kathleen Tankersley Young's Modern Editions publications. Brown called Williams his 'cultural father' in the first years of the twentieth century, establishing a lineage from the

emerging modernists to the later expatriate avant-garde publishers in the 1920s.<sup>42</sup>

What can the history of Way & Williams and Auvergne tell us about both later modernist experiments and about the possibilities for small press publishing in the early twenty-first century? As this chapter has described, small press publishers, including Way & Williams, resisted politically, aesthetically and in spirit the commercial publishing model of inexpensive, mass-produced and mostly pirated books that dominated the major publishers of the time. For example, as discussed above, Harper & Brothers had built a publishing empire through pirating works by English authors, and even when Charles Dickens toured the United States he was unable to get any royalties from Harper & Brothers. Using a business model not too dissimilar to the online aggregation of, or linking to, uncompensated writers on social media and news platforms, Harpers compounded their dominance of the book market through the breadth of their distribution networks and through their ability to print thousands of copies. The result, not unlike large online retail chains like Amazon.com today, was that the commercial publishers easily drove small presses into bankruptcy and closure. Resisting that soulless business model, the small presses favoured returning to an earlier artisanal production process with a politics that depended on valuing labour and exalting the publishing production process as if an almost religious ritual. William Morris and Way & Williams offer a model of production as a resistance to the neoliberalization of markets above all else. Just as the industrialization of book publishing in the middle of the nineteenth century led to a rapid shift towards mass production, national distribution networks and corporate control of literary output, our current century has seen the rapid rise of literary production controlled by on-demand mass production, international distribution networks and the corporate control of bookselling and publishing. Then, as now, this created an eventual opening for finely crafted books by small press publishers. They reached smaller audiences, but audiences that recognized the publisher's imprint rather than thinking of Amazon, or large publishing houses, as merely invisible conduits of literary meaning and logistical, rather than aesthetic, finesse. Within the uber-efficient and soulless marketplace, these small press publishers did not have a winning plan as business enterprises, as Way & Williams lasted only a few years, and Auvergne even fewer, but the books still hold the imprint and signs of the publishers' labouring hands for other ends: sociopoetic, aesthetic and soulful. Perhaps we are once again looking to those publishers for a new



American prairie socialism that includes in design an unalienated emotional connectedness to each other, our work and our surroundings—weeds, seedpods and all.

## NOTES

1. For a more detailed and extended explication of sociopoetics see Craig Saper. 2001. *Networked Art*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 11–15, 36–43, 90, 149–65.
2. The publishing company's name was usually printed with the ampersand, but sometimes with the 'and', including in a couple of the examples and illustrations in this chapter. In the various colophons, they always used the ampersand. The ampersand appears, to give a few examples, in the title pages of Madeline Yale Wynne. 1895. *The Little Room and Other Stories*, with frontispiece, tailpieces, and binding designed by Madeline Yale Wynne. Chicago: Way & Williams. Florence L. Snow. 1896. *The Lamp of Gold*, with cover and title page designed by Edmund Henry Garrett. Chicago: Way & Williams. Opie Read. 1897. *Bolanyo*. Chicago: Way & Williams. The ampersand also appears on the spine of Kate M. Cleary. 1897. *Like A Gallant Lady*, with illustrations and cover designed by William Henry Bradley. Chicago: Way & Williams. I use an 'and' when talking about the two people, Way and Williams, and an ampersand when talking about the press as a publishing company.
3. The research in this chapter uses papers from the Newberry Library, Chicago, Way, W. Irving (Washington Irving), 1853–1931: W. Irving Way papers, 1885–1931 (Case Wing Z 4623.W357). The Newberry Library, Chicago, also holds most of the Way & Williams publications. W. Irving Way. 1968. W. Irving Way, 1853–1931, An Autobiographical Fragment. First published posthumously in the February 1968 issue of *Hoja Volante*, the newsletter of Zamorano Club. 'The Zamorano Club is Southern California's oldest organization of bibliophiles and manuscript collectors.' H. Buxton Forman. 1897. *The Books of William Morris, Described With Some Account of His Doings in Literature and in The Allied Crafts*. Chicago: Way & Williams. Likely a pirated copy of the edition published by Frank Hollings, London, 1897.
4. Much of the work on marketing modernism focuses on a later period from 1917 through 1939, but this chapter argues that similar social and cultural dynamics were at play much earlier, in the late 1890s. For work on the relation between modernist small press publishing and mainstream publishing, see: Catherine Turner. 2003. *Marketing Modernism Between the Two World Wars*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press; Kevin

- J. Dettmar and Stephen Watt. eds. 1996. *Marketing Modernisms: Self-Promotion, Canonization, and Rereading*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press; Robert Jensen. 1994. *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. Molly Hite. 2004. Making Room for the Woman of Genius: Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Robins and 'Modernism's Other' as Mother. In *Marketing the Author: Authorial Personae, Narrative Selves and Self-Fashioning, 1880–1930*, ed. M. Demoor, 207–233. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Edward Bishop. 2004. Perpetuating Joyce, In *Marketing the Author*, ed. M. Demoor, 184–206.
5. William Morris. 1999. *The Beauty of Life* [1880]. In *William Morris on Art and Socialism*, ed. Norman Kelvin. Minneola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 53. Delivered before the Birmingham Society of Arts and the Birmingham School of Design during the distribution of prizes by the Morris held at the Town Hall, Birmingham 19 February 1880. For a discussion of Morris's 'languages for design' see Christopher Crouch. 1999. *Modernism in Art, Design and Architecture*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 29–35. For an extended examination of the relationship between Morris's Arts and Crafts aesthetic and socialist politics see Peter Stansky. 1985. *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s, and the Arts and Crafts*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
  6. Joe W. Kraus. 1976. *The Publishing Activities of Way & Williams, 1895–98. The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*. 70/2. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Bibliographical Society of America: 225.
  7. William Morris. 1893. *Useful Work Versus Useless Toil*. London: Hammersmith Socialist Society.
  8. Dante Gabriel Rossetti. 1895. *Hand & Soul*. Reprinted from the *Germ*. Hammersmith, UK: William Morris's Kelmscott Press. Chicago: Way & Williams. Kraus. 1984. *A History of Way & Williams, With a Bibliography of Their Publications: 1895–1898*. Philadelphia: George S. MacManus Co.
  9. Paul Thompson. 1991. *The Work of William Morris*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
  10. William Morris. 1996. *Arts and Crafts Essays*, ed. Peter Faulkner. Bristol, UK: Thoemmes Press.
  11. Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftman Ideal in America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.
  12. Andrew Lang, translator. 1897. *The Miracles of Madame Saint Katherine of Fierbos*. Translated from the edition of the Abbé J.J. Bourassé, Tours, 1858. Chicago: Way & Williams.

13. Andrew Lang. 1989. *Friends over the ocean: Andrew Lang's American correspondence, 1881–1912*, ed. Marysa Demoor. Gent: Rijksuniversiteit Gent, 6.
14. Ibid., 63.
15. Ibid., 16.
16. Ibid., 119.
17. Andrew Lang. 1904. At the Sign of the Ship. *Longman's Magazine*, July: 266 as quoted in Marysa Demoor. 1989. Introduction. *Friends over the ocean: Andrew Lang's American correspondence, 1881–1912*, ed. Marysa Demoor. Gent: Rijksuniversiteit Gent, 6.
18. The Bodley Head books sometimes listed one of the founders' names, John Lane or Elkin Mathews. Way & Williams and The Bodley Head co-published books not cited elsewhere in this chapter. The list includes the following books: Frank Mathew. 1896. *The Wood of The Brambles*. Roden Noel. 1896. *My Sea & Other Poems*, with an introduction by Stanley Addleshaw. Thomas Stoddart. 1895. *The Death-Wake or Lunacy: A Necromaunt in Three Chimeras*, with an introduction by Andrew Lang. Percy Hemingway. 1896. *The Happy Wanderer & Other Verse*. Printed on hand-made paper by Chiswick Press, London. Robert Bridges. 1896. *Ode For The Bicentenary Commemoration of Henry Purcell, With Other Poems, and a Preface on the Musical Setting of Poetry*. Printed by R. Folkard & Son. Printed on laid Abbey Mills Greenfield paper, with a Crown [symbol] 'Abbey Mills, Greenfield' watermark. Alice Meynell. 1896. *The Colour of Life and Other Essays on Things Seen and Heard*. H. D. Traill. 1896. *From Cairo To The Soudan Frontier*. John Todhunter. 1896. *Three Irish Bardic Tales. Being Metrical Versions of The Three Tales known as The Three Sorrows of Story-Telling*. Laurence Housman. 1896. *Green Arras*.
19. Rosamund Marriott Watson. 1895. *Vesper-tilia and Other Verses*. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head and Chicago: Way & Williams. Front cover by R. Anning Bell.
20. Charles William Dalmon. 1895. *Song Favours*. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head. Chicago: Way & Williams. Printed by R. Folkard and Son, Bloomsbury.
21. James Raven. 2014. *Publishing Business in Eighteenth-Century England*. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 223 and 229.
22. Scott E. Casper, et al. Eds. 2007. Introduction. *A History of the Book in America: Volume 3: The Industrial Book, 1840–1880*. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 4.
23. Kraus. The Publishing Activities of Way & Williams, Chicago, 1895–98, 222.
24. David McLellan, 1969. Marx's View of the Unalienated Society. *The Review of Politics* 31: 4 (October), 459–65, 462.

25. Mary Ann Stankiewicz. 1989. Art at Hull House, 1889–1901: Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr. *Woman's Art Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring-Summer): 35–39, 37. Gillian Naylor. 1971/1980. *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of Its Sources, Ideals, and Influence on Design Theory*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 172–5.
26. Boris, *Art and Labor*, 45–6.
27. Ibid.
28. Louise C. Wade. 1967. The Heritage from Chicago's Early Settlement Houses. *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908–1984)*. 60: 4 (Winter): 411–41, 414. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40190170>
29. Boris. *Art and Labor*, 118.
30. Frank Lloyd Wright. 1943. *An Autobiography*. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 347.
31. Florence L. Snow. 1896. *The Lamp of Gold*. Chicago: Way & Williams; F. Emily Phillips. 1897. *The Knight's Tale*. Chicago: Way & Williams; Kate M. Cleary. 1897. *Like a Gallant Lady*. Chicago: Way & Williams; Madelene [sic] Yale Wynne. 1895. *The Little Room and Other Stories*. Chicago: Way & Williams; Elia W. Peattie. 1896. *A Mountain Woman*. Chicago: Way & Williams; Catharine Brooks Yale. 1895. *Nim and Cum: The Wonder-Head Stories*. Chicago: Way & Williams; Lydia Avery Coonley. 1895. *Under the Pines, and Other Verses*. Chicago: Way & Williams. Kate Chopin. 1897. *A Night in Acadie*. Chicago: Way & Williams; Plato. 1895. *The Banquet of Plato*. Translated by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Chicago: Way & Williams.
32. Frank Lloyd Wright. 1955. Oak Park Work. Talk to Taliesin Fellows. 23 October 1955 [unpublished transcript]. Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives: Taliesin Fellowship talk transcripts, 1948–1956. Avery Drawings & Archives Collections, Columbia University Libraries. Box 4, Folder 4, Reel #145. no page numbers.
33. Edward H. Madden. 1995. Transcendental Influences on Louis H. Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. 31:2 (Spring), 314.
34. Klaus-Jürgen Sembach. 1991. *Art nouveau: Utopia: reconciling the irreconcilable*. Köln: B. Taschen.
35. Liesl Olson. 2018. *Chicago Renaissance: Literature and Art in the Midwest Metropolis*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 50.
36. Ibid., 54.
37. Ezra Pound. 1913. In a Station of the Metro. *Poetry* April. Discussed by Olson, 65–72. The standard practice to cite the poet in an endnote but not include the editor responsible for the crucial layout and design is precisely the established scholarly practice that this chapter pushes against.
38. Ibid., 67.
39. Ibid., 50–67.

40. Caroline Levine. 2003. *The Serious Pleasures of Suspense: Victorian Realism and Narrative Doubt*. Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 198.
41. Jerome J. McGann. 1989. *Towards a Literature of Knowledge*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 71.
42. Craig Saper. 2016. *The Amazing Adventures of Bob Brown: A Real-Life Zelig Who Wrote His Way Through the Twentieth Century*. New York: Fordham University Press.