

## AFTERWORD

### Peacock-feathered wings

For two glorious months, I thought I had made an impressive discovery, albeit not in relation to David Parr but his employer's former associate, Charles Eamer Kempe, which was good enough for me.

I was certain that I had found two sources which had inspired Kempe to give his angels peacock-feathered wings and incorporated them in my 'January' story.

Then, a couple of days before Tamsin, Head Trustee, and I were due to meet, I discovered I had got it wrong. I should have been devastated but, oddly, my error revealed something of great significance to the David Parr House.

What happened?

I had gone back to Adrian Barlow's books on Kempe – the author is to be admired for his diligent research, for his honest, warts and all, portrayal of Kempe in his 2018 biography, and his 2019 'Espying Heaven: The stained glass of Charles Eamer Kempe and his artists' for containing an abundance of coloured illustrations. (I work with a stained-glass specialist who showed me reference books in her collection to prove that it's rarely the case and how high Barlow had set the bar in terms of production values).

Barlow's 2019 publication is thematic, so I had turned to the chapter on 'Angels' to see if the author had discovered where Kempe had got the inspiration to give his angels peacock-feathered wings. The thread begins early in Kempe's career, when he and Frederick Leach (David Parr's employer) had an informal business association. The opposing page, the last page of the preceding chapter, carries a photo of two stained-glass angels from a window at the Church of Saint John the Baptist, Tuebrook, Liverpool. They are shown wearing white copes, edged with wide, bejewelled, gold borders, which are trimmed with lines of pearls. Rising above their halos are peacock feathers, with more fanning down from high above their shoulders.

The clerestory window was dated 1869, three years before Kempe and Leach worked at Castle Howard, where they *might* have been invited to view Gossaert's 'Adoration of the Magi', and three years before the publication of J. A. Crowe's and G. B. Cavalcaselle's 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of their 'The Early Flemish Painters: Notices of their Lives and Works'. As per my story, this edition includes a long section on Hans Memling's triptych 'The Last Judgement', which is accompanied by a simple linear illustration showing St. Michael with wings of cascading peacock feathers.



Jan Gossaert *Adoration of the Magi*  
National Gallery, London

In his 2019 book, Adrian Barlow credits Frederick Leach and his apprentice Alfred Tombleson as being the probable designers of Kempe's Tuebrook angels, which he reasserts in the text accompanying the illustration, then concedes 'It is possible that the angels in vestments were both designed and made by Leach...'

In other words, Barlow strongly believes this to be the case, but, in the absence of proof, he could only present his conclusion as supposition. Otherwise, he was more likely to have erred on caution and omitted his helpful observations from his publication, rather than undermine the academic value of his findings.

When I showed the relevant page in Barlow's publication to Tamsin, she confirmed that Frederick Leach was considered a fine draughtsman.

According to Barlow, Tombleson had applied in writing to become Leach's apprentice on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1867, making it unlikely that Leach awarded a prestigious commission to his apprentice of just over a year. However, it is evident that the figure of an angel, clad in armour and adorned with peacock-feathered wings, in the same window had been executed by a different hand, suggesting Leach had given Tombleson a share in his good fortune.

Why hadn't Barlow credited Kempe with designing his assigned window in the church at Tuebrook?

In 1869, Kempe was at the early stages of setting himself up in business, specialising in ecclesiastical decorative schemes and furnishings. Not only did he lack the ability to draw, at the point at which George Frederick Bodley had given him the Tuebrook commission, Kempe had yet to set up a workshop. Consequently, he had turned to Leach, a skilled draughtsman who could realise any schemes for stained-glass windows, because his Cambridge workshop was equipped with a kiln.

Morris & Co. had been engaged by Bodley to provide the prestigious East window and other windows in the nave. Nevertheless, Kempe's lesser commission attracted more work.

What does this mean?

If Frederick Leach (David Parr's employer) had given Charles Eamer Kempe his signature look - peacock-feathered wings - in the field of stained-glass window design this is significant. Or, as I put it to Tamsin, '...this is big'.

Kempe's studio undertook around two hundred commissions. Of these, a few were overseas, the rest were in the UK. Given that peacock feathers are such a distinctive feature of his stained-glass window design, which continued as one draughtsman resigned and another was promoted, what was their genesis?

I continued with my research, encountering a succession of twists and turns.

For several weeks, I pursued the possibility that Leach's inspiration might have come from a medieval painting or an illuminated manuscript and, with William Morris's love of all things medieval in mind, I identified several examples of medieval Flemish and German paintings featuring angels adorned with peacock-feathered wings. However, even in the case of William Morris (Kempe's mentor), who was well travelled in Belgium, Northern France and parts of Germany, I couldn't say with any certainty that either he or Kempe had seen any of them as most of the paintings had either been kept hidden away for the purpose of religious devotion, changed hands, whereupon they were taken to distant lands, or been put into safe keeping so they might escape Napoleon, who would have taken them for the Louvre or sold them to fund more campaigns.

My favourite tale is of Hans Memling's 'The Last Judgement', as told in far more detail in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Crowe's and Cavalcaselle's book on Flemish painters. The painting was intended for a client in Italy and put on a ship that was captured by a privateer, who took it to Poland where it can be seen in the National Museum in Gdańsk.

Another astonishing example is Jan van Eyck's 'Annunciation'. The painting went from a monastery in Dijon, France, to Paris, Brussels, the Hague, the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, lastly to the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. I'm left with the sneaky suspicion that this may just be its condensed history. Regardless, it highlights what I was up against for each example I came across.



Jan van Eyck's *Annunciation*  
National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

Once all leads had been exhausted, I realised that I had ignored my new golden rule: the answer is often much, *much* closer than one thinks.

I picked up my research again where I had left off at the Church of Saint John the Baptist, Tuebrook, Liverpool.

When Leach (I'm going to stick my neck out and say he designed the Tuebrook window) had hit on adding peacock feathers in the small, awkwardly shaped apertures above the heads of his angels, it was inspired. They added an attractive design element, which Kempe went onto thoroughly exploit. Then again, it could be argued that, as Kempe had commissioned Leach and Tombleson to visit several churches in the autumn of 1868, those which boasted fine examples of medieval stained-glass, to sketch their best features, he held the rights to their output so he might employ them in his designs.

Let it not be forgotten that William Morris had advised Kempe which churches he should visit to learn about stained-glass window design. In turn, Kempe had sent Leach off on the same path, thereby directing his attention to artworks either created by or influenced by medieval Flemish artists. Thereby, Leach's tour

allows us to make a reasonable assumption as to which church gave him the idea to include peacock feathers in his design.

The Lady Chapel at the Church of St. John the Baptist in Cirencester boasts a series of seraphim, each with six wings, which are dotted with peacock feather eyes. (They recall the Archangel Gabriel's wings in Jan van Eyck's painting 'Annunciation', dated 1434 – 1436, albeit without the rainbow colours). Whereas the 'eye' of an actual peacock feather has a triangular-shaped piece missing from its dark centre, the pale inner line of the rachis - the stalk of the feather - continues up into the solid dark centre of the Lady Chapel seraphim's peacock 'eyes'. It is a stylistic interpretation but, nevertheless, effective.

St. Mary's Church in Fairford boasts the UK's only complete set of medieval windows, having been removed before Cromwell's men reached the town. A small, shield-bearing angel, along the top tier of apertures of one of the windows, has a pair of wings which arc above its head. These, in turn, have dark dots marking the tips of individual feathers and yellow staining, suggesting fronds. Allowing for the age of the glass and the harsh treatment it has suffered, one might, nevertheless, suppose they represent peacock feathers.

According to Barlow, Kempe based himself in the West Midlands in order to conduct his tour. Whilst he doesn't state that Kempe visited St. Laurence's Church in Ludlow, it's thirty-three miles from Great Malvern Priory, which he and Leach are known to have visited. Two images in the Ludlow windows are more compelling than those of Fairford and Cirencester as having given Leach the idea to introduce peacock feathers.

The Archangel Michael is shown holding his scales and is positioned in the top tier of panels in the South-East, 'Ten Commandments', window. His wings shield his back and are curved slightly to guard his arms, thereby, his pinions, which arch above his shoulders then sweep downwards, beguiling the viewer with tiers of peacock feather 'eyes'.

The second image is of the Archangel Gabriel. He is kneeling bent on one knee and pointing to the words on a length of parchment. He has his wings folded back and his pinions are arched well above the height of his head. Being side-on to the viewer and, given his wings occupy a generous proportion of the panel, the peacock feathers, which fall in layers, are a distinct decorative feature.

Barlow mentions in his books that Kempe continued to send successive draughtsmen off to sketch in churches as part of their training. Therefore, I suspect that the Ludlow and Fairford stained-glass, as well as Gossaert's influence, contributed to Kempe's other signature look: copes made from rich fabrics, edged with cabochons between rows of pearls, and held fast with large, bejewelled morses.

Having worked out what I believe to be a more accurate course of events, what was I to do with my 'January' story. Consulting Tamsin, she reminded me that it was a piece of fiction, therefore it still had value, especially as the once highly esteemed Gossaert painting and its influence on those fortunate enough to have seen it has not been fully explored.

## **Redressing the balance**

I visited Wightwick Manor (National Trust) in August 2019. The Arts and Crafts property was full of wonderful surprises. When I walked inside, the first thing that caught my attention was a set of impressive stained-glass panels produced by Charles Eamer Kempe's workshop for his home 'Old Place'.

Dotted around the house are examples of his workers' mastery of the silver-staining technique and delightful draughtsmanship. Talking to the Head Curator, she reminded me that Lady Mander, its former occupant, set-up The Kempe Trust.

Having researched Morris and Kempe back to back – Morris the socialist and Kempe the self-aggrandising artistic director – I struggled to empathise with Kempe. Hence, my 'January' story was written from the

perspective of Morris and Parr. However, I am being sincere when I say that the work produced by Kempe's studio was, almost without exception, exquisite, ambitious and awe-inspiring.

Kempe must have possessed many redeeming qualities as he was popular and well-connected. He even invited William and Jane Morris to visit him at 'Old Place'.

## **The Royal Academy's Winter Exhibition**

Before I relate how Gossaert's 'Adoration of the Magi' is connected to William Morris and David Parr, herewith links to two paintings completed in the same decade that the two men visited the Royal Academy in my story.

'A Private View at the Royal Academy' painted in 1881 by William Powell Frith shows how paintings were hung in its galleries, the favoured subject matters at the time and gives an indication as to the fashions worn by visitors in 1885.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Private\\_View\\_at\\_the\\_Royal\\_Academy,\\_1881](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Private_View_at_the_Royal_Academy,_1881)

My story takes place after the Winter Exhibition's private view, therefore, one would not expect to see the eminent late Victorians shown in Frith's painting, as intriguing as it is to see Oscar Wilde, Ellen Terry, John Irving, Lillie Langtry, Sir Frederick Leighton, Sir John Coleridge and others crowded into one gallery.

The ladies are depicted with bustles or skirts that finish in a train and the men with top hats and frock coats.

In stark contrast, although she is not shown in the painting, William Morris's wife, Jane, eschewed the crinoline. Similarly, in an article about their friend Rosalind Howard, the future Countess of Carlisle, was described in 'The Studio' magazine as: '...she 'unbecrinolined and radical in outlook'.

It wasn't just ladies with a connection to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood who were influencing a move towards change. The artist Walter Crane, who was given commissions by the Howards and William Morris, was, according to wiki, '...also a Vice President of the Healthy and Artistic Dress Union, a movement begun in 1890, whose aim was to promote loose-fitting clothing, in opposition to 'stiffness, tightness and weight'. They produced numerous pamphlets setting out their cause, including one entitled 'How to Dress Without a Corset', which Crane illustrated...'.  
(I know wiki has its detractors. As a beneficiary, I strongly believe it does more good than harm.)

It is interesting to compare Frith's 'A Private View at the Royal Academy' painted in 1881 with the sober 'A Private View of the Old Masters Exhibition, Royal Academy, 1888' by Henry Jamyn Brooks (1889), which was heavily influenced by Frith's painting.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Private\\_View\\_of\\_the\\_Old\\_Masters\\_Exhibition,\\_Royal\\_Academy,\\_1888\\_by\\_Henry\\_Jamyn\\_Brooks.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Private_View_of_the_Old_Masters_Exhibition,_Royal_Academy,_1888_by_Henry_Jamyn_Brooks.jpg)

You will notice two figures on the right-hand side who look remarkably like William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. All the people who posed for the painting have been identified from a key posted by the National Portrait Gallery – see the following link:

<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw211723/Key-to-Private-View-of-the-Old-Masters-Exhibition-Royal-Academy-1888>

## **Jan Gossaert's 'Adoration of the Magi' and scrolls**

**(Gossaert was also known as Jan Mabuse)**

When I saw David Parr's beguiling frieze - the one he painted in his living room, using a palette of soft apricots and yellows, complemented with muted, Windsor greens, against a burnished plaster pink background - I was desperate to know what had inspired Parr to paint the scrolls, so they undulated and curved into 's' bends.

Why did this have to be established?

To my mind, it was the measure of Parr as an artist.

He had painted the walls at All Saint's Church, Jesus Lane, Cambridge and at the Church of Saint John the Baptist, Tuebrook, Liverpool according to the architect George Frederick Bodley's designs. The architect had incorporated a parchment style scroll as a device to break up two horizontal sections of conflicting patterns. Bodley's scrolls were straight, therefore, they lacked dynamism and neither added depth nor interest, which again begged the question: where did Parr get the idea to adopt a different approach for his scrolls?

On 5<sup>th</sup> January 2018, twelve months before I visited the David Parr House, The Times printed a feature written by its chief art critic, Rachel Campbell-Johnston, entitled, 'They're adorable! Visit an art gallery this Epiphany', with the strapline 'Celebrate the legacy of the end of the Christmas season by viewing a sumptuous Adoration scene'. Campbell-Johnston's text was illustrated with pictures. The largest by far was 'The Adoration of the Magi' by Jan Gossaert. I kept the article in the hope that it might inspire a story. Over time, the second page became lost and the first page folded in half, ensuring my focus was directed to the top left-hand side of the painting, more specifically to the angel clothed in green carrying a scroll on which the words '... in excelsis deo...' can be read, and the angel in white with trailing strands of pink ribbon, which twisted and curved, and double-backed.

Looking at the angels whilst musing on David Parr's frieze, it occurred to me that David Parr must have seen Gossaert's 'The Adoration of the Magi' and became convinced that the painting provided the inspiration for the faux scrolls of parchment in his design.

My initial research suggested my certainty had been ridiculous. There are scrolls and banderoles in numerous Flemish paintings.

As it turned out, William Morris can be linked to Gossaert's painting. To put it in modern terms, when applying the 'six degrees of separation' rule, there was only one degree of separation between him and the person who inherited the painting.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Carlisle bought the 'The Adoration of the Magi' and hung it in a locked room at Castle Howard. It was restored in 1884 by William Morrill. The National Gallery's technical notes state that Morrill thinned the panel and applied the cradle. For a painting of its age it is in exceedingly good condition, with only some woodworm treatment in one corner and minimal touching up having been applied. In other words, the glorious gem-coloured paints are as true today as when they had left Gossaert's paintbrush.

Following Morrill's restoration, rather than being taken back to Castle Howard, it was displayed at Naworth Castle.

In 1911, it was sold by the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Carlisle's widow, Rosalind Howard, to the National Gallery, where George Howard had served as a Trustee for over three decades.

George Howard, (who succeeded to 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Carlisle in 1889), William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones were good friends and Morris and Burne-Jones had been guests at Naworth Castle in 1874.

I contacted Dr Christopher Ridgway, Curator at Castle Howard, who emailed back that '... the painting was displayed at the Royal Academy in 1885 (no.230), and that would have meant it was widely on view to the public in the capital. A very likely occasion for Parr to have seen it...'

I followed up Dr Ridgway's response by contacting Andrew Potter, Librarian at the Royal Academy of Arts, Burlington House, who confirmed the painting had been included in the Winter Exhibition (Old Masters and Deceased Masters of the British School), which ran for ten weeks from January 5<sup>th</sup> 1885 to 14<sup>th</sup> March 1885. He also provided a link to the RA's Annual Report, which mentions that 'The exhibition attracted 31,775 visitors' and 'The Adoration of the Magi' '...was certainly the great feature of the exhibition'.

Whilst, to my knowledge, there is no record of David Parr having attended the exhibition, it is worth remembering that William Morris had admired all things medieval, from illuminated manuscripts to architecture, from paintings to furnishings and needlework to literature. Therefore, Morris was sure to have encouraged his acquaintances and associates to seize the rare opportunity to view it.

If I couldn't prove conclusively that David Parr had seen the painting, could I find evidence that William Morris had seen the painting?

Morris and Edward Burne-Jones met at University. Even though George Howard had also studied at Oxford, he first met Burne-Jones in 1865, becoming his patron and friend.

In the 1870s, the private chapel at Castle Howard was completely remodelled whilst still in his uncle's possession. Edward Burne-Jones designed the stained-glass windows, William Morris advised on the decoration and Charles Eamer Kempe designed the murals. Yet, according to Dr Ridgway, neither Morris nor Burne-Jones ever visited. Therefore, Morris couldn't have seen Gossaert's 'The Adoration of the Magi' prior to 1885, when it was still located there.

And, as stated previously, the only record of the two friends visiting Naworth Castle was in 1874, eleven years before the painting was moved to the Howard's preferred residence.

As for 1885, when the painting was loaned to the Royal Academy for the Winter Exhibition, according J. W. Mackail, William Morris's first biographer, Morris dedicated himself to his 'Socialist' political activities, travelling up and down the country giving speeches and, upon returning home to Hammersmith, he gave speeches in one of his out-buildings.

More specifically, Mackail states that Morris was in Hammersmith on 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of January that year, therefore, one might suppose he was also in London on 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>. Morris might have visited his workers at Merton Abbey to monitor progress on his commissions or, as suggested by Mackail's entry for 1853, the workaholic might have taken a day out to indulge his passion for medieval art:

'...William Morris studied the painted manuscripts displayed in the Bodleian. Of these, a splendid Apocalypse of the thirteenth century became his ideal book. Forty years later he went to Oxford to spend a day in studying it...'

There is every chance William Morris went to the Royal Academy sometime during the ten weeks that Gossaert's 'The Adoration of the Magi' was on display to the public, the Epiphany being the most appropriate day.

Otherwise, the only other time the painting was put on public display was at 'The Art Treasures of Great Britain' exhibition in Manchester from 5<sup>th</sup> May to 17 October 1857, when Morris was twenty-three years of age.

According to Mackail's biography, Canon Dixon stated, '...to the pictures in the Manchester Exhibition he (Morris) seemed to pay little attention but studied a collection of carved ivories minutely.'

(Morris had been taken by his family to the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace (1851) but had sat down and refused to look at anything).

The exhibition attracted 1.3 million visitors in the 142 days it was open. Illustrations documenting the historic event show large crowds gathered around popular exhibits. What's more, given the wealth of paintings on display, the merits of Gossaert's masterpiece might have become lost.

Regardless, Morris, being so passionate about all things medieval, above all Flemish art, would surely have seized what he then knew to be a rare opportunity to see Gossaert's painting. Alternatively, knowing Morris as well as he did, George Howard would surely have arranged for him to view the painting so he might fully appreciate it.

As for David Parr, where was he on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> January 1885 or any of the ten weeks the exhibition was open to the public? His 'commitments' diary is in the David Parr House collection, and might point to the answer. If he was working on a commission in London, then there is every chance he saw the painting. Evidence suggests Parr didn't simply execute other people's designs but engaged with his work intellectually, therefore it would have interested him where Morris had got his inspiration and how the great craftsman had re-interpreted it for the Victorian setting.

According to 'A Catalogue of the Original Designs by Morris and Company in the Collection of the William Morris Society' by David Rogers under section (e) 1 Holland Park (1880 -1888), extensive structural changes were made to the interior and William Morris was responsible for the 'decorative and furnishing scheme'.

Two features in 'The Building News' dated 1883 and 1884 show illustrations of Walter Crane's 'Aesop's Fables' designs for his plaster frieze panels and ceiling in the dining room. Walter Crane commented in his autobiography that Alexander Ionides - who was a friend of William Morris - gave out commissions because he liked to have the bustle of people in the house. This confirms that the decorative schemes for the house were well under way by 1885.

David Roger's doesn't mention which firms Morris engaged to carry out the work. Frederick Leach was his preferred sub-contractor. If Leach had been commissioned to undertake the work and had assigned David Parr to the job, then the date fits and Parr was in London during the Royal Academy's Winter Exhibition of 1885.

### **Why is Jan Gossaert's 'Adoration of the Magi' painting important?**

The level of detail is astounding. Moreover, the artist possessed a high degree of skill, therefore, he could tackle fur as well as perspective, clouds as well as faces, wrought metal as well as the weave of differing material.

Within it, one can see what aspects of medieval art, if not the painting itself, influenced William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, Ford Madox Brown and Charles Eamer Kempe when creating designs for stained-glass windows.

Aside from the many details they adopted, they learnt what it was about the composition and the application of colour that made Flemish medieval painting so appealing. Upon closer study, they came to understand that artists, like Gossaert, had applied just as much detail to the background as to the subject of the painting. In other words, one rarely sees a single square inch, which hasn't been decorated. Gossaert put as much effort into painting every brick in his brickwork and every block of stone in his masonry, as the sumptuous detail of the garments worn by the magi. In respect of the former, the artist seemed to delight in showing areas which have suffered damage, thereby, each brick has character.

Likewise, in the stained-glass produced by the workshops of Morris and Kempe, one would be hard pushed to find an area much greater than a couple of inches to which detail or a treatment hasn't been applied. It is never flat in appearance or uniform.

In turn, David Parr applied different patterns to the walls and ceiling in his living room, ensuring the eye has much to feast on.



I had done some interesting research, but had I answered my question:

What had inspired David Parr to paint his parallel scrolls the way he had, so they undulated and curved into 's' bends?

The answer or what I strongly believe is a contributing factor came by chance.

I knew that William Morris had sub-contracted Frederick Leach to execute his designs for the chapel ceiling at Jesus College, Cambridge but, as the work was carried out before David Parr was in Leach's employ, it hadn't occurred to me that it might have a bearing on my research.

When my other leads dried up, I searched the internet for images of Jesus College Chapel. The ceiling was divided into squared panelling. This made sense, as the panels could be painted in a studio for ease and then installed. Unlike the central panels, which either have a sacred monogram, a heraldic shield or a heraldic emblem and are arranged in an alternating pattern, each of the outer panels carried a depiction of a tree or an angel (I read somewhere that one can see Morris's hand in their appearance). Each angel is shown clasping a section of one continuous scroll. Furthermore, the parchment undulates and bends as it continues along three sides of the nave. Morris would go on to design similar treatments for his tapestries and stained-glass windows, but this early commissioned work would surely have had the greatest impact on David Parr, a young man embarking on his career, if nothing else, for the impressive length of the parchment scroll.

All Saints Church, Jesus Lane, was built opposite Jesus College and, just as William Morris had connections with both buildings, so did Frederick Leach and both men had business connections with George Frederick Bodley. Therefore, it stands to reason that David Parr would have crossed the road at some point and viewed Morris's ceiling out of professional interest.

Since making the above connection, I learnt from Anna Norman's 'The David Parr House: Life and art in a worker's home' that William Morris's design for the window reveals at Swan House, Embankment, London, featured weaving foliage and scrolls.

David Parr didn't employ the inspiration he had absorbed at the start of his career in his own home for another three decades.

That Parr had been influenced by Morris's designs doesn't make less of Parr's frieze or his achievement. If imitation is the highest form of flattery, then Parr had a highly developed sense of what was worth imitating. Furthermore, I haven't ruled out the possibility that he had improved on Morris's Swan House design. Parr had a good feel for colour and what elements make a design work.

### **William Morris's inspiration, Cloths of Honour and a Rule**

If to understand David Parr's house one must look to William Morris, then where did William Morris get his inspiration?

Morris went abroad for the first time in 1854, journeying through Belgium and Northern France. J. W. Mackail, his first biographer, notes, 'This was of profound interest; it introduced him to the paintings of Jan van Eyck and Hans Memling, who remained to him ever after absolute and unapproached masters of painting.'

Morris visited Ghent again in the autumn of 1856 with his then employer, the architect George Edmund Street, and in 1859 whilst on honeymoon. Some years later, he holidayed in Bruges with his family and, as Ghent is only a short distance away by train, one might suppose he took his daughters to see van Eyck's altarpiece.

It was on his return from the 1856 trip that Morris took on van Eyck's motto: 'Als ik kan', which Morris translated as 'Si je puis', thus changing the meaning from 'As I can' to 'If I can'.

Regardless, it stands to reason that William Morris committed every detail of van Eyck's Ghent Altarpiece (completed in 1432), both front and back, to memory, made sketches or even bought some illustrations.

Both sides of the three panels are divided into smaller sections. Van Eyck's depictions of the Cumaean Sibyl and Erythraean Sibyl include parchment banderoles, which arch across from one side of their heads to the other, twisting and curling, drawing in the viewer's gaze. As previously stated, Morris went on to use the device in his textiles and his stained-glass windows, for example, in his 'Orchard' tapestry and in the East window of Brampton Church, which was consecrated in 1878.

(There are also numerous examples of Charles Eamer Kempe's draughtsmen including scrolls and banderoles in commissions for ecclesiastical stained-glass windows. It is evident which ones had really studied medieval windows, the ones who applied them with great effect. Moreover, with a playfulness and inventiveness.)

To understand David Parr's designs, one needs to look to William Morris and, to understand William Morris, one needs to look to medieval Flemish paintings and illustrated manuscripts... but, does this rule work?

Applying it, one finds the root influence for two other designs David Parr created for his house. Both the pattern he used in the dining room, which he used again in an upstairs bedroom, and the pattern below the dado rail in his entrance hall closely resemble those detailed in the cloths of honour the medieval artists painted behind the Virgin Mary. The designs have a distinctive diagonal snaking pattern, from which shoots and foliage extend, these might be realistic in appearance or highly stylised.

A good example of the stylised pattern features in the 'Ince Hall Madonna'. This painting is believed to be a copy of a van Eyck. Van Eyck often painted the same rich fabric for his angels' and bishops' copes, thereby much of the pattern disappears into the folds. A stunning example is shown in the detail of the cope worn by the Archangel Gabriel in his 'Annunciation'.

Christie's auctioned a beautiful example attributed to 'Circle of Dieric Bouts' titled 'The Virgin and Child before a gold brocaded cloth of honor' (American spelling) in New York on 28th January 2015. Here's hoping the web page, which came up in my search, hasn't been removed.

Lastly, it often features in Memling's work, although the pattern repeat isn't always evident,: 'Virgin and Child with Saints Catherine of Alexandria and Barbara', 'The Virgin and Child with an Angel', the National Gallery's 'Virgin and Child', the central panel of the 'St. John Altarpiece', and the 'Mystic Marriage of St Catherine'.