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## Poesis and Sympathy: Community Through Craftsmanship

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Poesis and Sympathy:  
Community Through Craftsmanship

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in English

by

Braden Dodds Taylor  
University of Arkansas at Monticello  
Bachelor of Arts in English, 2021

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University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## Abstract

A community is no more than a mass of individuals that is held together by the objects that connect them. The independent spaces occupied by a craftsman or consumer become dependent on their counterparts. These connected environments create the ecosystem of the community. Objects originating from the craftsmen of the community allow for sympathy to flourish. When these objects are created by well-educated craftsmen of the community, they originate with natural understanding, further extending their reach. While nonnatural things such as plastic items have an intrinsic connection to modern life, they do not encourage folk to connect with others in the living environment. These natural connections among the community are what allow for a well rooted society to flourish and for all people to feel included and heard, forming a better union. Developing ideas primarily from Victorian thinkers John Ruskin and William Morris, a deeper understanding what how a community connects and relates is possible.

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## Dedication

Dedicated to Lula Virginia Montgomery Ross

## Epigraph

Cain was a tiller of the soil. ...

Cain brought from the fruit of the soil an offering to the Lord. ...

He did not regard Cain and his offering.

Genesis 4 : 3-6

Labour is blossoming or dancing where

The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,

Nor beauty born out of its own despair,

Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.

O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,

Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,

How can we know the dancer from the dance?

“Among School Children”

W.B. Yeats

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## Introduction to Document

Volume one of *Modern Painters* by John Ruskin was published in 1843 marking the true beginning of the polymath's literary career. In 1860 William Morris and his wife Jane would move into Red House where his ideas on art and craft would flourish signifying the beginning of his career. These two Victorian men stood at the forefront of a rapidly changing society. Their ideas and opinions on multiple topics such as art, history, and political thought attempted to shape the world they lived in. In our modern world their writings are overshadowed by other great literary figures of the time such as Charles Dickens and Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Nevertheless, under closer examination, their ideas on the laborer, education, craft, and community peek from the grimy Victorian landscape as pillars of critical thought that should not be neglected and must be utilized in the modern world. With a better understanding of their ideas, it may become easier to find sources of value and sympathy within modernity. The educated laborer develops a craft that is beneficial to the community. The community that values things that were created by laborers finds sympathy for the way things work together. The base of a good community is the craft of the laboring people. In order to cultivate such communities, laborers should be well educated and championed by all.

Both of these men were born rich at a time when monetary wealth allowed for an easy life and ensured that neither of them would have to contribute to society for a wage that would allow them to survive. However, these men were different from their wealthy contemporaries because they were concerned with the poor laborers of their society. Ruskin and Morris both saw the laboring men and women and hoped for a better outcome for them. They each took their own approach to the task of trying to better the world around them. John Ruskin was a writer and an academic who eventually became an educator working at established universities, free night schools, and through volunteer work. He would spend much of his life trying to educate the

laboring class. William Morris attempted to better others through his writings and art and as a matter of course became a socialist. His artisanship showed laborers that craft had value and his writings connected him with the general public. They both executed their missions through various methods. John Ruskin primarily through teaching, writing essays, and writing letters that would be published in mass for the laborers to read and inform them of ways to better themselves. While these letters would get attention, they would do little to impact the lives of most laborers of the period. William Morris enacted his mission by practicing his craft, authoring essays, and writing fictional works that would transfer the reader to a new world where those fictional people would have a better life. John Ruskin's and William Morris's ideas were powerful but were not sufficiently utilized during their time period. This project seeks to excavate and reexamine these ideas to determine if they can still be influential and useful in the modern world.

John Ruskin was a leader by example. Ruskin's ability to engage his audience in a way they could understand helped him interact with an audience typically untapped. People who were busy working for a living but desired something more. Folk who had the skill to do more than factory work but did not have the means or understanding to explore this route on their own. He occupied his time by uplifting the laborers and educating them in areas that might have seemed out of their field and made them think and engage with their craft differently. William Morris was a leader through practice. Morris shone in his ability to create and labor through art inspiring others and showing that through education a better craft was possible. There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these individual approaches. For Ruskin, the advantage was showing the reader a better way to accomplish a task. For Morris, the advantage was proving through his labor and craft that people would find value in good work. The disadvantage for both men was

that most laborers of the time could not afford to practice a new craft or attend school to better themselves. Laborers lacked the financial means and did not have the time to reevaluate their lives. What I hope to accomplish through my research is to understand and clarify how the teaching of laborers, the improvement of their craft, and the prosperity of the entire community are all deeply entwined.

John Ruskin and William Morris pair well through their ability to build off one another. Ruskin is more directly connected to the forms education takes within institutional settings. From academic work such as his tenure as the first Slade Professor of Fine Art at the University of Oxford to untraditional education such as his time with the Working Men's College in London or volunteer work with young girls at Winnington Hall, Ruskin practiced his ideas on education and worked out his theories regarding how education can better the individual. Ruskin's views on what good education is and how to educate someone well give the modern scholar a place to begin when developing ways to better engage with laboring people. Through reevaluating Ruskin's ideas, a way to better educate laborers and champion their work becomes possible. Morris is the connection to labor and craft. His work as an artist that created not only fabrics, but also stained glass, hand-crafted furniture, and books, connects him to the laborer in a way others of the time could not. Morris created art through his labor and attempted to show laborers that their work was art. Through connecting laborers to Morris and his views on craft it is possible to develop an understanding of how labor is craft and how all those in the community benefit from it. Together, with Ruskin as the educator that will guide and Morris as the laborer that will demonstrate craftsmanship, their ideas create a community that understands value in the laborer and what they craft. The community becomes a body of people who find value in all things in their society.

Neither Ruskin nor Morris lived to see any major changes in the way laborers were educated or treated. While they would be excited to see that free education is available to most who seek it, and they also would be happy to know laborers' rights have progressed; they would not be impressed with the educated, treated, and used of laboring people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Regardless of Ruskin's or Morris's progressive ideas and determination to help the laboring class the influence of their ideas fell short. However, although their ideas did not carry the during the Victorian era, my hope is that can still help point toward a more progressive age.

In the modern period laborers are seen as uneducated and not worth teaching because their occupations do not require formal education. Laborers are still treated as replaceable cogs that can quickly be replaced when broken, and laborers are still only used as machines that perform repetitive tasks essential for modern life. Laborers are part of a much larger system. A community built by laborers and upheld by their "repetitive" tasks. Laborers are far more than cogs in the machine. They are the driving force of a community. Being well educated in their craft is essential to all people in the community. Their skills are essential because without their technical abilities the essential would go undone. Education is for all people regardless of how they work in their community. The greater public must understand that educating traditional laborers is critical to their lives.

The modern community is just a place where people live. No longer is it a place where people unite and work together to create a space that is beneficial to all those who live in it. Individuals are alienated from one another and the disconnected desired outcomes of individual mindset lead to a diminished grouping of persons. The ideal community has been sought after for generations. From More's *Utopia* to the "idealistic" sitcom of the 1960's it is obvious we as a people want a better more perfect place to live. A community is where people are gathered in a

unison that seeks to uphold all members. Ruskin and Morris were never able to experience their envisioned utopias. They envisioned laborers to have a room of their own to explore their ideas and better their own lives. The modern community can benefit from their visions and from these visions a better and more empowered society may emerge.

Having a clear definition for many of the keywords in my research is critical to understanding the contours of my project. I have provided the meanings of laborer, education, craft, community, value, and sympathy as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*. I have chosen these words because they directly impact our perceptions of how laborers work, the way they think, what they make, where they live their purpose, and how they interact. Each of these words build on one another. Once these keywords are established, I want to reimagine them in a way that might be better understood by those outside of academia. By giving a new way to perceive labor, education, craft, community, value, and sympathy my hope is to provide better ways of understanding our current situation as well as project new possibilities for the future.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) defines a laborer as, “a person who performs physical labor, usually as a means of employment; a manual worker, esp. one carrying out unskilled work,” while a worker is “a creator, a cause, a source.” This distinct difference between someone who labors with their body, seen as unskilled, versus someone who creates, and produces things of value, is part of what I seek to address. A laborer is only as unskilled as their community allows them to be. A laborer is a sculpture of the community around them. The value of a laborer is addressed by the community’s willingness to uplift them and better them beyond the perceived unskilled practice. I define the laborer as the crafter of community.

As defined by the *OED*’s fourth entry education is, “the systematic instruction, teaching, or training in various academic and non-academic subjects given to or received by a child,

typically at a school.” While this definition does address non-academic ideas it is focused on school and scholastic values. I seek for education to be in all places and given by all people, not just in the classroom or schoolhouse. And to those who see education as mindless trivia; I hope to clearly show how education is more than this. It is the passing of skills and understanding to those who do not know but seek understanding. All people, especially laborers, can teach and learn from one another. Through education, laborers are morphed into crafters. By allowing education to grow in modern society the community will develop with it. By my definition education is the guidance of those seeking knowledge.

The second entry for craft in the *OED* states “skillfulness, ability; prowess or ingenuity in doing something; skill, knowledge, or mastery in a particular field.” Craft combines labor and education in a unison. The educated laborer has skill and mastery over their art form. The laborers are shifted from unskilled to master. They now have purpose in their community and can help educate others and grow their community. A community that is dedicated to championing craft will champion all members regardless of social standing and through this promote education and progress. By my definition Craft is the binder for education and labor that helps create the community.

Entry 1.b in the *OED* defines community as “the body of people common or equal rights in rank as distinguished from the privileged classes; the common; the commonality.” While this definition would work for a strong view of the laborer in an enlightened community, clearly besides this entry stands “*Obsolete*.” The *OED* is correct that the community as it was is obsolete, but this does not make it unattainable. A community is a safe haven for the collective and a place where people work together to create a space that has value. A community should be gathered around things that matter. By valuing all members of the community, society grows.

Through my research, I hope to bridge Ruskin's and Morris's ideas on labor together and connect them with my ideas on community. A community is only as worthy as the people who are dwelling in it and as a modern collective, we have lost sight of what we must collect around. A community should champion its members regardless of class or occupation. By my definition, a community is best developed as an organic whole; a body.

It is not until entry 5.a. that value is defined without mention of equivalence or monetary regard in the *OED*. Entry 5.a of the *OED* defines value as "worth or worthiness (of persons) in respect of rank or personal qualities." Value is more than this. Value is where the community finds productivity, growth, meaning, and hope. The modern laborer, education, craft, and the community do not lack value, rather the modern period strives to ensure the individual lacks value in labor, education, and craft and the community lacks value to the individual. Value is something that progresses life. Through a better understanding of value, the modern world can see and understand the worth and progress the laborer gives, how education affects everyone, and why the community is critical. Value for my purposes is anything that develops the individual's ability so that the community can grow.

As defined by the *OED* Sympathy is "A (real or supposed) affinity between certain things, by virtue of which they are similarly or correspondingly affected by the same influence, affect or influence one another (esp. in some occult way), or attract or tend towards each other." The laboring people of our communities are those who unite others around them in a common function to create the community. The things that laborers create and do in our community are what cause a sympathetic connection between all things in the community. Better educating the laboring class and championing their craft creates sympathy in all parts of the community. I

define sympathy as the unseen connection between all things and people in the community that develops individuals in a commune of people.

From these definitions, a clear understanding of what I am trying to research can be found. Labor and education combine to create craft. Craft consists of the skills and abilities that laborers offer to their communities. From these abilities and skills laborers can educate others around them. Community and value combine to create sympathy. Sympathy is our relationship with those in the community, the crafts of others in the community, and how the community works together to create something better. Ruskin and Morris sought a perfect world, and during their lifetimes it was not possible. From their ideas the modern world can look to see what tools were innovative and incorporate those ideas into a better today. The modern world does not have to be perfect, but it should be practical. Educating all parts of the community and then using those skills to better those in the community is possible.

John Ruskin and William Morris were both prominent during their time period and affected how many people thought about labor during and after the Victorian period. Sadly, their ideas were never truly incorporated into mass industrial working environments and did little to actually change how laborers are viewed. Their ideas were very progressive for their time period and should not be disregarded as out of date. Through my research, I hope to explore how to better incorporate their ideas into our modern world. Their ideas on labor, education, community, and craft may be Victorian in origin but they are critical and dynamic and if applied to our modern world and if done properly there could be progressive change to not only the laborers' lives but to all aspects of our society. Craft and sympathy are possible when utilizing their ideas. I seek to build off Ruskin's and Morris's ideas and develop scholarship that is progressive and can better the world around me.



I hope to bridge the ideas between labor, education, and community. This will not be easy. I will have to address many different issues such as what is labor, education, and community, the value of labor, education, and community, the purpose of labor, education, and community, how our communities treat labor, education, and community, how communities are better when connected in education, and many other topics. Thankfully John Ruskin and William Morris have already developed ideas that help show a clear understanding of what labor is, how labor affects the world, how education is important for everyone, how to better educate those who need it most, how to build a community around what matters, and what has true value. Their ideas can be reexamined and the tools that seem useful can be utilized to form a better modern world. From their ideas, I can bridge progressive Victorian thought with modern ideas to understand how to value the laborer, their education, and the community.

What I see as most important is how the modern world can develop to create a society where everyone is not only educated but where people seek out education and where education is available to those who want it. A place where the laborer is not viewed as a cog driving production, but rather a skilled craftsman developing infrastructure. A place where the community is not just a space shared by individuals, but a grouping of people who each hold individual ideas that create a union of masses. From all of these ideas, I hope that value can be found. Value in the laborer who crafts for their community. Value in the education that guides laborers to a better life. Value in the community that is a body of individuals who want better for themselves and those around them. Value in these ideas creates sympathy. The sympathy that connects all those in the community to something real and living – the laborers' craft.

Where I see a lacking of research on the ideas of both Ruskin and Morris is through better educating the laborer, finding value in the community, and exploring the sympathetic

connection between these ideas. Our modern society cannot have a community that is committed to championing education if we do not first understand how it is possible. Ruskin and Morris both thought that a community should uphold itself and to do this there must be good efforts to develop all members. Finding the value of all parts of the community is essential and by finding value sympathy is formed. Progression is welcomed in the modern world. Now is the perfect time to develop scholarship in the laboring class's function and to do this the tools of Ruskin and Morris must be re-examined. A well-developed community that values the laborer and the craft they produce can create a polis of sympathy, craftsmanship, and community.

My work is divided into six parts. An introduction that briefly introduces the need to better understand the labor craftsmen do and how that affects the community. A section introducing John Ruskin and William Morris, their ideas on labor, education, craft, and community, and what I aim to accomplish through my research. A dictionary of terms that anyone might use and develop a better understanding of key terms regarding the community. A section breaking down what a laborer is and the need for them to better understand the work they are providing, how they affect the community, and how folk in the community may champion them. A section looking at how objects are binding forces in the community and how they sympathetically connect all folk together and allow for function to be possible. A deep look at things that break communities apart how this alienation does not allow for rooting to take place in a community. This section will also introduce a new figure, Simone Weil, to bring more modern ideas and a feminine view point. And, a section on other forms of craft that affect the community in critical ways. While on the surface craft is woodwork or paint on board, in reality it is anything that is created to better others and connect them.

This topic is ambitious. To cover the ideas of two influential figures who each have large body of works on wildly varying topics in such a short amount of time is challenging, but not impossible. More importantly, this research is critical. Our modern world must think of how to not only better the laborer, but how to better the community. By developing the laborers' craft and encouraging their education the community will prosper. Having a better-developed community that can function within itself will better the lives of those who live in it. John Ruskin and William Morris had ideas regarding the laborer, education, and the community that for their time was revolutionary, and it is time for these ideas to be reevaluated and incorporated into our modern world. Having a better understanding of these two literary figures' ideas and developing new research regarding bettering the laborer, education, craft, and community will benefit not only myself, but also all those who seek to build a community around the pillars of work, craft, sympathy, and community.

## Introduction to John Ruskin and William Morris

I will use many of John Ruskin and William Morris works to further develop my ideas regarding the betterment of the working class throughout my research. Each figure gives in-depth views on exactly what he saw best for the laborer, education, community, and craft. From them, I will develop how to find value and form sympathy. Works from Ruskin that will prove beneficial are *Unto this Last*, *Munera Pulveris*, *Sesame and Lilies*, *Fors Clavigera*, and *Time and Tide*. Each of these texts gives great insight into how Ruskin thought about the laborer, what he meant by education, and how he reached communities through writing. Works from Morris that will be useful are *News From Nowhere*, *A Dream of John Ball*, *Chants for Socialists*, and *Signs of Change*. These works and the occasional short essays clearly lay out what Morris wanted to see the laborer accomplish and how a community can support itself. Using these primary documents and the research from these modern scholars, and from others that I find as I continue to expand my understanding of the scope of my thesis research, I will develop my understanding of how Ruskin and Morris saw the laborer, education, craft, and community during their Victorian setting and then develop how these ideas are still useful now. I will develop my understanding of the laborer, education, craft, community, value, and sympathy so that anyone who seeks to build a better community can do so with good, well-developed, ideas that are consumable to anyone outside of academia.

John Ruskin (1819-1900) the Victorian art and social critic had many passions and developed expertise in many areas over the course of his life. His obsession with fields such as geology, mineralogy, and environmentalism are things one might not expect to see in a figure who had such a hold on the art world of his day. Ruskin's first masterpiece, *Modern Painters* published in 1843 while Ruskin was only twenty-four years old, is what truly established him as

a writer. Ruskin's obsession with art inspired many further explorations, one of the most critical being his study of the architecture of Venice and the artistic ability of the masons who worked there. This research prompted Ruskin to take by far one of the most important paths of his career. Ruskin would turn his attention to the working class. His passion for the working class both of the medieval period and consequently during his own time would allow Ruskin to form new ideas about the treatment and betterment of workers. The social reforms Ruskin established and championed have the potential to affect all walks of society from average workers to global political figures well into the twenty-first century if only we have ears to hear.

Ruskin believed that the working class of his period were capable of much more than factory work that required little to no education. Ruskin felt that the skills of the working people when advanced through education were capable of productive work of real artistic quality. Ruskin saw that the work they were doing was what allowed the world to function and championed their abilities, acting as a voice that sought opportunities to educate them in their skills. Though Ruskin during his time was not able to elevate the working class to the level he thought they were deserving, his literary and critical work on their behalf survives and gives great insight into the workings of the working class people regardless of time or location. Ruskin's ideas on the betterment and education of all people regardless of class or ability are extremely valuable to the modern world because they emphasize the importance of workers' humanity. From his ideas it is possible to form a better understanding of how the work the laboring class performs affects all members of society.

Another eminent Victorian William Morris (1834-1896), artist and social thinker, similarly offered a new way to look at arts and crafts. He was a student of Ruskin, though not in the literal sense. There is no evidence they ever met even though they lived and worked during

the same period and within the same country. Morris was a student of Ruskin's writings and ideas. Morris was so devout in his adherence to Ruskin's ideas that while studying at Oxford he would read Ruskin to his peers. From his obsession with Ruskin's views he developed unique ideas on art, labor, and nature. Morris thought all people should be educated in skills that would better themselves and their lifestyle. He understood that the laboring people of his communities were valuable to the betterment of all people around them. Drawing upon Ruskin's deep feeling that nature is vital and an undeniable truth, Morris developed his own ideas on how nature affects humanity. Morris felt that all people can better themselves by developing a closer relationship with nature.

From the eventual ownership of a crafting company, Morris & Co, to the foundation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, his time as editor for *Commonweal*, and his final occupation as owner of The Kelmscott Press, Morris championed the idea that folks were worth more than machines. Morris desired a socialist world in which all people were able to work the occupations they wanted and all people would be able to live happily without fear of having to struggle to survive. While his ideas on socialism, the treatment of laborers, or the importance of nature in the lives of all did little to change the world he lived in, his thoughts live on. It is easy to see Morris as no more than an artist while observing the beauty of his wallpapers or sitting in a well-worn Morris Chair, but it should not be ignored that his ideas are essential to a better understanding and treatment of laboring people in the twenty-first century.

Both of these men's ideas on the betterment of the working class and the labor they offer all members of their community are critical to developing a more collected future. Where these men agree a clear idea on how to champion craftsmen is found and where they disagree room for new ideas is established. The twenty-first century is far more advanced and technical than

Ruskin or Morris could have ever imagined. The room for mechanical development in both of their worlds was minimal at most. In the present, technical machines allow for major advances in craftsmanship and community development. Artificial intelligence may advance aspects of our own historical moment far past what was thought possible ten years ago. Virtual realities allow for exploration of spaces not directly inhibited. While Ruskin and Morris might not have ever imagined a world so disconnected from manual labor this does not mean their ideas have lost value or purpose. Their views are still critical to forming ways to better connect folk no matter the medium.

Ruskin and Morris both agreed that labor has a connecting quality. From the fruits of labor people are able to live better lives, especially when that labor is well regarded by those who consume it. They both were able to express this in their writing. Ruskin did so through his attention to the craftsmanship of the masons who built cathedrals where so many people collect to worship. Morris expressed his ideas on the quality of labor partially through the Society of the Protection of Ancient Buildings. Morris understood that in trying to restore or by destroying any of the medieval buildings, especially churches, culture would be lost and a connection to the labor of the past. Ruskin shows how labor connects all members of the community even when many are unaware of the work that bonds the group together. Morris demonstrates that the objects the community engages with cognitively resonate and help build dwelling space. Indeed, Ruskin in his essay “The Nature of Gothic” and Morris in “Manifesto of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings on its Foundation in 1877” show that crafters engage with most community members even when those members are unaware of their reliance on craft.

In Ruskin’s three-volume masterpiece *The Stones of Venice* the treatise titled “The Nature of Gothic” dives into the medieval masons’ purpose in crafting the cathedrals of the city.

Through this chapter Ruskin asks his readers to understand that the mason was the one crafting the gathering places where people would come and worship. These places were more than mere buildings. They were rather works of art created by artisans for those in the community to come into and worship God. These craftsmen created places of gathering out of “the love of natural objects for their own sake, and the effort to represent them frankly, unconstrained by artistical laws” (Ruskin 181). The result was places of gathering where meaning was formed by those who found safety and purpose in the walls created by crafters. These medieval masons were able to work freely, creating beautiful works of art from their own understanding.

Understanding academic concepts is not superfluous to laborers. Ruskin and Morris both desire for a world of better-educated folk. Ruskin in the Preface to *Unto This Last* lays out his ideas on how a better future is possible and the first point is clear, “[f]irst – that there should be training schools for youth established, at Government cost, and under Government discipline, over the whole country; that every child born in the country should, at the parent’s wish, be permitted ... imperatively be taught with the best skill of teaching that the country could produce” (Ruskin xvii). For the time period this idea of education for all at the government’s expense was incredibly progressive. Ruskin might not have been the first, but he saw the need and potential that would come from education the working folk of his community; especially at a young age. Morris has a view of education that is unlike that seen in the modern period, “I claim is liberal education; opportunity, that is, to have my share of whatever knowledge there is in the world according to my capacity or bent of mind ... I claim to be taught, if I can be taught, more than one craft to exercise for the benefit of the community” (Morris 24). While different from Ruskin’s idea Morris shares similar thoughts. Education is a key to better others. Morris does not desire the typical education that might be found in most modern American high schools. Morris



seeks an education that allows the learners to explore what they find interesting and betters them personally. From this personal education in multiple fields the community is better.

A better understanding of knowledge outside of their fields will only help better the art and craft and better life for those who engage in the crafted object, but starting this education can be difficult. Whether starting as a child as Ruskin would want or starting as an adult as Morris might assume having a clear place to start is not just helpful, it is critical. I have prepared a dictionary for crafters of the community who wish to better connect with others but might not have the foundation to begin. Or, maybe, they have the foundation but do not have the framing to begin their work. The words are chosen because of their importance and relation to the community and aspects of the workers. Their definitions have been developed with progression in mind. This phenomenological dictionary is to better form an understanding of the situations that occur in communities that are difficult to explain. When these objects lack artistic resonance, the community is affected. The community stops engaging with the objects and they begin to lose meaning. The craft becomes disconnected from its purpose and meaning is lost. An effort to keep laborers ignorant and belittle their artistic ability hinders the community because it breaks down the sympathetic connection being created.

The same can be true in contemporary society. Different members of the community create differently. All members create something, but some create with value in mind. Ruskin puts all workers into three classes, “Men are universally divided, as respects their artistical qualifications, into three great classes; a right, a left, and a centre. On the right side are the men of facts, on the left the men of design, in the centre the men of both” (Ruskin 183). Men of facts are those who follow the laws of nature without question. Men of design follow the laws of nature to create images that are pleasing to the eye. Men of both are those who have an

understanding of how to represent nature through creation. Nature can be interpreted in many ways here, but Ruskin is addressing value. The craftsmen who understand how to incorporate beauty, practicality, and truth to create value in their art are then able to offer this to the people who use their products. By creating the cathedral medieval craftsmen were creating spaces of gathering. They respected the natural need to gather around well-crafted objects such as a good image of nature in a non-natural space see above the rest. They have the ability to see beyond a standard view. What Ruskin is showing in “The Nature of Gothic” is that through labor the whole community is impacted by the expression of art.

Nevertheless, those people in the cathedral do not dwell on the idea that the laborer was the one who built the structure they are worshiping in. Similarly, in contemporary life labor often is taken for granted and there is a disconnection from the spaces folk dwell in. Morris looks more closely at what comes from such buildings and what is lost when they are underappreciated or even destroyed. This destruction might not even be literally tearing down the buildings, because for Morris even trying to repair such historic buildings was a form of destruction and belittlement to the ancient artisans from times long past. Morris understood that the craftsmanship of these laborers from centuries before was particular. Not only had these skills and ways of working craftsmanship been lost and if disturbed would never be visible to man again, they also serve as examples of quality that are lost in modern construction and craft.

The craftsmen of these ancient buildings, often churches or cathedrals, played an essential role in the religious aspect and the communal environment. These craftsmen were quite literally creating the sacred space for the worshipers, and they shared a deep connection to the worship that was taking place there. When trying to alter this craftsmanship with modern ideas that might make the space more appealing to the eye, Morris asks his audience to “consider

whether it be possible to Restore those buildings, the living spirit of which, it cannot be too often repeated, was an inseparable part of that religion” (Morris 111). Morris fully asserts that the craft, and thus the craftsmanship, of laborers is deeply connected to the sacred acts taking place within the walls of the church. When considering the sacred space one should also reflect upon and try to sympathize with the craftsman that helped form the literal dwelling place of God. The craft is what allows the building to stand and behold the congregation.

These religious gathering places served not only as a place of worship but also as a place to gather for important events. Laura Varnam touches on this in her book *The Church as Sacred Space in Middle English Literature and Culture*: “[Church] spaces were constructed in stone, art, language, and embodied performance in order to glorify God and provide a place for worship, but they were also used to edify communities, negotiate social tensions, and debate theological issues” (Varnam 3). These structures allowed for connection to flourish between members of the community, and without the skill of the builders the unity of the community might be lost. While these buildings served as important gathering places for the folk of the community, it was not the perfection of their architecture that brought these people together. It was the space crafted by others who were like the attendees that made all people feel seen and equal. These varied and imperfect spaces crafted by hand allowed for originality. Each and every church was different from the next. Every town had something special in its gathering place that allowed for unity to emerge and thrive. Morris’s concern with the “restoration” of these buildings was critical of the attempts to beautify the space: “the partly perished work of the ancient craftsman has been made neat and smooth by the trickery hand of some unoriginal and thoughtless hack of to-day” (Morris 111). In attempting to smooth the rough stone of the craftsman, something primary is

lost. Not the outer facade that looks old, but rather the essence of a lost art and the touch of the craftsman is lost.

Morris wants to connect with the craftsmen of a past time not to show they are more capable in their skill, but rather to show that they participated in forms of labor that cannot be recreated. Morris is well aware that there are many talented craftsmen living around him and they too have skills that would be unmimicable by others. The purpose for championing of the craftsmanship of the past masters is to call attention to how we should “treat our ancient building [as] monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying” (Morris 111). In destroying these artistic masterpieces, something more is lost than just the building. The way people gathered and founded understanding from this gathering place is affected.

In the contemporary world the places where people dwell and the spaces where they connect seem to be out of touch. For Ruskin and Morris the solution to this issue was easy: allow laborers to create meaningful objects through their craftsmanship that encourage a community to connect with one another and their space. Both men were deeply concerned with the consequences of interacting with and consuming mass-manufactured things with little purpose and less value. They resisted manufactured goods not necessarily because these things were dangerous or posed some kind of health side effects, but rather because these things did not allow the community members to connect with one another. They are not created for the purpose of adding value to the community. When these things are made by craftsmen in the community with true craftsmanship and purpose such crafted objects benefit others, they can become objects that allow people to root into their environments.

Living among crafted objects folk are better able to live their lives in a more intimate connection with all that is around them. The craftsmanship of the laborer is essential to the betterment of a community and all those who live there. Without their skills and abilities things would not get done, and the objects that allow people to live a meaningful life would go unproduced. These objects are what hold the community together<sup>i</sup>. They can be held and felt and allow for members of the community to ground themselves in a gathering which is meaningful and tangible. Laborers of the community serve a far greater purpose than just making things or fixing things; they allow for sympathy to develop.

## Phenomenological Dictionary of Keywords

The *Oxford English Dictionary* might provide the technical definitions and history of the English language, but it does not hold absolute authority over the language of English-speaking peoples. While the *Oxford English Dictionary* excels in academic prowess it flounders in direct connection with nonacademic audiences. What I aim to include here is a dictionary of terms addressing community folk and laborers in expressions they are familiar with so that they might better understand the ideas that build their dwelling space. This dictionary is important because it is an attempt to meet people where they are. By reaching folk where they are and helping them progress their understanding, their individual and community development becomes possible.

### Community

Arts and crafts are far more than the schoolhouse and day camp associations they tend to have for most people. The typical understanding of arts and crafts only scratches the surface. Most people see art as the beauty attributed to the painting in the room and craft as the utilitarian asset the object has to the individual. For most people arts and crafts are only for pleasure of the eye and for comfort of the hand. In truth arts and crafts hold understanding and use. Art is the ability to create beauty and craft is the skill to apply learned technics and develop tangible objects that manifest value. People who create through their labor give communities objects to build around. Through the labor of working people, communities inhabited in this way become more than a resting ground; they become a place of dwelling. By championing these laboring people who craft objects that allow for dwelling spaces to gather meaning, a better community is made possible.

Art is intangible. Art is not the vase on the shelf or the painting on the wall; art is the ability to understand and connect with raw materials that allow for creation. While art is typically

associated with oils on canvas or polished marble, it can be far more. Art is the cableman understanding exactly where to cut lines, the locksmith's feeling of satisfaction at a falling tumbler, or the line cook knowing precisely when to flip the egg. Art is the sympathy between the person and the object that allows for a harmonious connection to all things around it. The sympathetic connection between the laborer and the object is grounding. One's ability to be artistic is essential to holding the community together.

Craft is tangible. Craft is more than just a tangible object; it is the creation of something that has value and provides meaning to those who use it. By creating objects crafters are enlivening the dwelling places for all those who live in the community. These crafted objects are what allow those dwelling in the communal space to form meaning. The sympathy that connects the community members with objects also connects folk to the person who created the object. When this connection is made, labor gains purpose in the community. Regardless if craft goes unseen, buildings are erected, fence posts set, and hinges are placed, all creating necessary things of value. While at times these objects are large such as a skyscraper, they can also be small such as a jewelry box. The crafter's understanding of artistry allows for objects to come to fruition and create value for those who use them and form spaces for rooting.

Craft connects the community by helping those who dwell there to develop an attachment to objects that allow for meaning to flourish. Through these objects all members of the community are able to connect with one another without having to directly share the same space. By connecting and drawing understanding from the objects created by the craftsman, members of the community are able to develop ideas as to why those laborers in the community are critical to their lives. Craft connects the community by creating spaces for individuals to gather. Through

this gathering the mass of individuals forms a body of people who are then able to form a better society.

In the modern period many objects used by those dwelling in the community lack purpose. While the vase still holds flowers and the shovel still moves Earth, they have no relationship to the laborer dwelling in the community. Objects that are created in mass by individuals in distant lands with no understanding of where they go cannot develop the community or allow the laborer to sympathize with the population creating the community. Because the community is grounded in objects that do not originate from those around them, they have lost touch with what the laborers can provide. The need to outsource labor disconnects the laborer from the community so the community does not realize the object's value. A community that is not honed into the intrinsic value of its labor cannot formulate meaning from the objects. The sympathy between objects is lost.

Objects created by those dwelling in the community are what allow for communal development. To understand how objects affect communities and those who dwell there, first it must be understood what meaningful objects and nonmeaningful objects are and how they are different. Not all objects bring substance to the lives of those who live in the community. While many objects bring different meanings to different people, the objects that truly bring meaning are things that develop value. Meaningful objects convey value and bring substance to the lives of all members of the community. Nonmeaningful objects hinder the development of our communities because they are not made with purpose in mind by those laboring people who also dwell in the community. Objects that are created outside of the community but are crafted with meaning and value can provide substance for the community, but the need for the craft in the community cannot be overlooked. Folk who not only interact with one another but work with



one another is what creates communities that function optimally. Some objects typically are created somewhere else that allow for function in the community. Microprocessors, vehicles, or bed mattresses are essential to a modern community but they are not the base. The base is the local craftsmen who work together to create a community centered around objects that provide usefulness and value to the folk who use the objects.

Meaning cannot be found alone. Meaning must be formed by individuals together, the community. The meaning of the craft done by a laborer is not dependent on the crafter alone, rather it is dependent on the consumer to enjoy the object created. A community that is consuming objects created by a crafter forms meaning not only from those objects, but also from the crafter's relationship to the object. These objects could be many things that all allow for value to flourish. The cutting board used to make family dinners, the porch swing where conversations are had, even the book that tells stories or times past or things to come. Folk gather around things that bring them and those they are around meaning. The object only has to provide that meaning, it does not matter the medium. Biblical scripture has gathered communities for centuries. The objects are the connection that allows for folk to form bonds. The laborer derives meaning from the things created and the consumers using the products. Without the community making use of the objects, the objects crafted and the work performed would have no value. The community forms its reality from the objects created by labor.

### Ecosystem

Each part of the community that allows for function has its own space and working abilities. The ecosystem is more than just the place where individuals dwell. The ecosystem is all of the objects that allow the folk to function properly and interact with one another in meaningful ways. The ecosystem is made of smaller environments. In the ecosystem of the country village,

the blacksmith's forge is the space for the creation of hardened objects is possible. The baker's bakery is the only place where bread can be produced at high rates. The carpenter's woodshop is the only place where woodworking is possible. The creation of these objects would be impossible anywhere else in the community because other places lack functionality. All of these microenvironments with their own unique functionalities are what allow for the larger ecosystem to function.

The community as a whole is social, even the buildings people pass by form the ecosystem of social relations. To uphold community people must help develop it. By living and developing their own sense of craftsmanship they further develop the ecosystem in which they dwell. A community is made of spaces that are houses for objects. All of these objects allow for folk to interact with their spaces and environments differently. Each object affords a different level of support upholding the space above and below. The objects *ob – ject*. They stand out in their space and create the framework of connection that allows other objects to also be upheld. The ripples they create in the spaces they inhabit are not able to be seen typically but they ensure the assemblage of and function of the space they are housed in. These seen and unseen objects are what allow for a space to become a place. This force originates through each person's ability for craftsmanship and holds the whole of the community together with the objects that are produced. These unseen forces – the enchantment of the objects – have an impact on all aspects of the community.

From these working environments the objects move to void spaces inhabited by humans. When these objects enter the new spaces and the people begin to interact with them the void space becomes an environment of habitation. Here the objects enchant and the folk root in the space. Once this environment is made throughout the ecosystem the community is created. All of

these small environments united through the enchantment of labor and objects create the ecosystem as a whole.

### Connection

Humans have an innate need to connect with their surroundings. Their desire to feel connected with the Earth, other humans, and their space can prove difficult to accomplish. Going outside can only provide so much to an individual who is lost in their environment, polite interactions only bear so much for those who lack association, and objects can do little more than furnish space when someone is dissociated with their surroundings. This lack of connection is circumvented by the human quality of touch. The ability to feel and relate with objects and other people furthers the human experience. From touch connection is possible in many aspects of life.

Labor lives in the abstract. There is no one labor that can be held and inspected. The labor provided by the farmer is incomparable to the labor provided by the medical doctor which is also different than the labor provided by the office clerk. All of these people and their roles prove essential to the function of a modern society but they do not all ensure others find grounding. The farmer's labor is only physical in the fruits of their crop, the doctor's labor only manifests in the touch of a patient, the clerk's actions are only apparent in the filing of documents. All these forms of labor allow the user to touch and connect with their surroundings, but only one form of labor provides a physical connection at all points of development and use. Craftsmanship is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "The exercise of a manual art, craft, or trade; the expertise, skill, or artistry required for this" (*OED Online*).

Labor is more than the creation of objects that make life more meaningful. Labor is not just the expression of human function; it is something that reaches into all humans and unlocks a reality bigger than the individual. Labor is the desire to connect with multiple outlets at once and

manifest ideas and thoughts that are not tangible. The carpenter is not just woodworking, the blacksmith is not just metalworking, the baker is not just making food; they are all perfecting their craft by creating objects that allow for deep connections to be possible in spaces that are void without their ability to create. Humans do not labor for themselves alone, but also for the others who surround them in an effort to create a functional society. This deeper sensation of working with one's hands to craft objects that draw together the folk in a space is an attempt to create a community.

Sara Ahmed in her essay "Happy Objects" looks at how objects affect humans and how these objects interact with the lives of others and allow them to orient their lives. They are looking at what allows these objects to make the lives of people happy and what comes with this phenomenon. They open their essay with a realization the reader must make, "happiness also turns us toward objects. We turn toward objects at the very point of "making." To be made happy by this or that is to recognize that happiness starts from somewhere other than the subject who may use the word to describe a situation" (Ahmed 29). This is particular to the issue that I am trying to address throughout this piece. The use of the word "making" and addressing that "happiness starts from somewhere" is exactly what I want to develop an understanding around. The things in the community that allow for the folk to live meaningful lives have a starting point and that point is not somewhere but rather someone. These "happy" objects typically do not exist in the world unless created by someone who has the skills and understanding to create. Once the object has been created it can help hold together the space they dwell in. These objects must be crafted by someone who has an understanding of what these objects will do in the community.

It is from craftsmanship that people have objects they can use to root around. These objects allow for connection between spaces. Objects allow for ripples in the space to vibrate and

reflect off one another. The use of the word object over the use of the word thing is for this very reason. While both terms relate to the same idea object allows for a better and clearer understanding of what things do. These products of craftsmanship are not just masses taking up space. They protrude in their environments and allow for people to root around them. The vibrations the objects put off resonate and affect other objects. A community begins to form from objects because the objects then allow for the creation of other products that make life meaningful.

No thing can emerge around which we can gather without objects first being crafted. Where the carpenter makes the first cut, the blacksmith the first hit, the leather workers first stitch, this is the origin of the object that will allow for the community to root into their environment. Once these objects are crafted and enter into the hands of the people residing there “happiness” begins to take effect, “Happiness thus puts us into intimate contact with things” (Ahmed 31). Ahmed furthers this idea by addressing that humans want to keep the things they like close and reject the things we dislike, “To have our likes means certain things are gathered around us ... Those things we do not like we move away from ... the things we do not wish to have, touch, taste, hear, feel, see, those things we do not want to keep within reach” (Ahmed 32). These things humans do not like, things they want to keep away from themselves create tension in the community. While each person has their own personal likes and dislikes the things that create the tension between members are often also the things that pull the community apart, things unnatural.

#### Natural and Unnatural

Unnatural objects are those that do not allow folk to develop personally or that prevent the community from flourishing. An unnatural object might lack value, or lack naturalism as

defined by Ruskin and Morris. The creation and introduction of unnatural objects into the communities is the formation of alienation. These valueless objects veil individuals from community needs.

Ruskin touches on the idea of what value is and how his audience might better understand it, “The value of a thing, therefore, is independent of opinion, and of quantity. Think what you will of it, gain how much you may of it, the value of the thing itself is neither greater nor less. For ever it avails not; no estimate can raise, no distain repress, the power which it holds from the Maker of things and men” (Ruskin 119). This is very straightforward. An object is created with a set understanding and meaning and that understanding or meaning cannot be changed no matter how much one might try. Unnatural objects are those that have no clear understanding or meaning. When they are produced they will not obviously better people or help further the betterment of something else. Through the introduction of unnatural objects people can lose trust in meaningful objects. Folk are overwhelmed by the mass of things they have and so many of them do not benefit their lives. When the items do serve a clear purpose folk are caught up trying to better understand what it does for them. They are veiled from the truth that naturalism brings into their lives. When people clearly understand what an object does and what purpose it brings to their lives they are able to incorporate it into their environment effectively.

Ruskin provides a literal definition of “naturalism” in *Nature of Gothic*, “NATURALISM; that is to say, the love of natural objects for their own sake, and the effort to represent them frankly, unconstrained by artistical laws” (Ruskin 181). Ruskin’s idea is fairly clear. Naturalism for him is a true representation of nature without the added beauties humans think nature needs. When an artist paints a tree and adds flowers or takes away branches for the sake of aesthetics naturalism is lost. Morris on the other hand does not give a literal definition of what naturalism is

to him. To find a clear understanding of what naturalism most likely meant to him his letters must be shifted through. In his letter “Under the Elm-Tree; or, Thoughts in the Country-Side” Morris says

[N]ature in the present, seem to be bent on pleasing you and making all things delightful to your senses; even the burning dusty road has a look of luxury as you lie on the strip of roadside green, and listen to the blackbirds singing, surely for your benefit, and, I was going to say, as if they were paid to do it, but I was wrong, for as it is they seem to be doing their best. (Morris 508)

This is less clear, but perhaps more useful. For Morris, humans look to nature for truth and a connection to reality that folk can take pleasure in. The hot dusty road is something people do not realize they have pleasure in until it is in front of them and they are living through it.

For Ruskin also, Naturalism is a form truth takes. A truth that cannot be objective and must be shown how it is without softening the message. Naturalism for the two of them is truth, and when using this definition to better understand the natural objects that craftsmen create that might then go on to benefit the community they need not be literally stone or wood, although this would not hurt, they need to be in touch with a truth that folk can come to and ground themselves in. Ruskin sees naturalism as a fact that cannot be altered. Naturalism is the truth that anything holds and is able to represent clearly without alteration. Morris sees naturalism as a beauty that happens regardless of need. These two differences have commonalities. Ruskin and Morris see the beauty in the natural, the love of the natural, the idea that this naturalism is innate.

### Value of a Well Educated Laborer

Laborers are those who unite their communities together in ways unseen. While some labor with their bodies and others labor with their minds, those who create meaningful objects for their community are those I seek to better understand. Laborers are those who craft and create objects that allow for all members of the community to form meaning. When a community is able to center itself around the labor taking place there and the production of their laboring ability, they thrive.

To experience being a laborer is to experience the ongoing birth of objects. Being a laborer ensures a life dedicated to creating objects that allow others to develop. Whether it is the creation of an office building that will allow the community to connect and further their ideas or the raising of crops that will allow the community to thrive, to be a laborer ensures creation. The experience of the laborer is of the utmost importance to the community. Without the laborer's willingness to work and create harmony would be distributed in the community and sympathy would be unable to take hold. By creating spaces and objects the laborer is the one making value for those who use the objects and gather understanding.

In *News From Nowhere* when Morris's fictional character walks into a tobacco store, he is presented with a new concept in his new reality, a moneyless society. When the narrator tries to pay for his tobacco, the young child does not accept the exchange. Furthermore, when the narrator realizes he does not have a pipe to smoke from the young child brings him a pipe. Morris describes this pipe as a true work of art; "carved out of some hard wood very elaborately, and mounted in gold sprinkled with little gems. It was, in short, as pretty and gay a toy as I had ever seen" (Morris 40). This craftsmanship represented in the object is unmatched. This work of art is something that a crafter would be proud to make and in a world where there is no money to



share or worry over loss of payment, laborers can create as they see fit. The products rise above a price and become intrinsic to the community and must be expressed. The narrator remarks about what is to happen if such a grand artwork is lost, and the child calls back “don’t trouble about losing it. What will it matter if you do? Somebody is sure to find it, and he will use it” for this object is needed by all and wanted by all, especially because it is well made (Morris 40). The pipe has enduring value to all members of the community, not just the temporary owner.

What holds the community together is work done by laboring people. This occult concept touches all parts of the populace. When laborers understand their skills, they develop an artistic ability. When they apply this ability to their work, they create a craft that allows them to produce objects of quality. These objects are what the other individuals in the community interact with. The interaction might go unnoticed but as Heidegger explains “even when we relate ourselves to those [objects] that are not in our immediate reach, we are staying with the [objects] themselves” (Heidegger 154). This ensures that interaction between people and objects happens. Through the use of objects, community members give meaning to the laborer's crafted dwelling places. A community without objects crafted with meaning is just a place to eat and rest. When the objects the laborers create are interacted with meaning is derived and a dwelling space is formed. Through these dwelling spaces a more fulfilling life is made possible. The laborer's craft and artistic ability allow for value to be formed in the community through the objects that reside in the intertwined mass of individuals. From this connection of laborers, users, and objects all parts of the community sympathize with one another.

Sympathy is inherently occult. The interactions taking place between members of a community are not always overt. While the shop owner sells fruit to a buyer, the fruit was harvested somewhere and sent to the store somehow. These unseen forces are what connect the

average fruit purchaser with others in the community. The relation happening between individuals becomes intrinsic through the things they create and interact with. From these intrinsic connections something greater than individualism emerges. A community is formed that is reliant on sympathetic connections to the labor of others. From this labor a community can gather and create places that have meaning. From this meaningful labor the people are truly united in harmony around a central concept, labor.

Development in the community is dependent on sympathy. This sympathy is the connection formed by the effect of objects produced by the labor and the individual's willingness to connect with these objects. The community cannot become a thriving landscape for all members if all people do not champion laborers' artistic abilities. When the art of labor is not progressing, there is distress to the whole community. Without progression of the laborer's artistic ability members of the community will not be exposed to objects that allow them to create a dwelling space. The community will not be able to advance its quality of life. When there is harmony between all members of the community the dwelling space is able to advance.

Communities must understand that labor is more than the moving of muscles. Labor is the creation of community. Through the formation of objects and dwelling spaces, a community is formed intrinsically from labor. The ability for these objects to be made well and a place's ability to gather individuals together and construct ideas is dependent on the education of all involved.

This is not merely an attempt to romanticize a Socialist world where money is not real; rather this example serves to show that good work by artisan laborers is desirable to those in the community. Crafters want to share their work with those in their communities in an effort to develop their dwelling place and connect with all members. The pipe the young child gives away

freely is not just a pipe; it is the physical manifestation of labor and the artistic ability of a craftsman performing a craft. Laborers do not need money to ensure they craft; they craft because they have the ability and want to express their craft. Those in the community have the possibility to benefit from their work if they choose to get objects from the crafters. Labor is the same in the present reality. Laborers work not merely for pay but more so because they have the need to create. John Ruskin's statement "THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE" rings true and adds to Morris's authority (Ruskin 156). Crafters live their lives forming their wealth through crafted objects that the community consumes.

A laborer who is executing an artist's performance is advancing abilities past just labor and entering the field of craft. Craft is not just creating things, but rather the creating of an object that has value and provides purpose. From this creation of an object the community starts to form. By promoting a better education that enhances labor, all those who interact with the crafted objects will begin to benefit from the object's superior craftsmanship. The labor is affected by education and the object is being affected by artistic understanding. Promoting and allowing mechanics to have a better understanding of their language and mathematics to form a more cohesive idea of what an engine is extends their artistic ability. Their craft flourishes. The crafter is now able to work with and create objects that have added value. Through better education and improved craft the community continues its development.

Education and labor are directly linked to art and craft. Art is labor that is influenced by education, and craft is labor that has artistic value. When laborers are educated the things they produce are no longer the products of mindless toil, but they become rather the products of productive work. When products of a laborer's work are viewed as art, they become crafted. People do not just craft because the folk in the community will use the product. Crafters like

artists, must express their ability regardless of the consumer. The consumer benefits from this well-educated craft because it is not only meaningful but useful. William Morris in his essay “How We Live and How We Might Live” takes on education through craft benefiting the community directly stating, “if I can be taught, more than on craft to exercise for the benefit of the community” (Morris 24). Morris gives further insight into the laborer's need to express work regardless of pay and how this educated craft affects the community in his masterpiece *News From Nowhere*. While the text is set in a fictional twenty-first-century United Kingdom, the values that Morris is expressing are representative of all laborers regardless of time period or universe; they are intrinsic.

While the community is a body, it is made of individuals. What allows for individuals to connect and truly form a community is labor. Labor sits at the cusp of being and nothing. Before there is an object there is an idea, a need for this item that must be created by someone. This is where the laborer comes into play. The laborer creates beauty and assets from their craft and from this creativity the community develops. Their ability to practice their art and develop their craft is directly linked to the community's willingness to develop their education and value their work. In the modern period laborers are viewed in a class of their own. This is not a reality. Labor is all tasks that serve to better the masses. All people are laborers in some compacity whether it be the carpenter, the plumber, or the sales associate, all people in the community serve a role that betters the others around them. Without the laborer's ability to create objects of value for others who reside in the community, the dwelling space would not be formed. Without the community members using these objects, they would have difficulty developing meaning in their space and the laborers would have no purpose for creating. They are dependent on the other in many ways.

### Creation of a Modern Community Through the Use of Objects

Through the act of creating a chain of events is set in motion. For Ruskin and Morris these events are the cultivation of life. From Ruskin's views on labor and Morris's views on craft a better understanding of the role craftsmanship plays in the community can be formed. The ability to create meaningful objects that allow for happiness to take root in the community is of the utmost importance for all members. This craftsmanship holds the key for all people to be. The ability to create useful objects can extend to anyone. Not only does the blacksmith create, or the carpenter create, but the writer creates, the hacker creates. All of these skills allow for the intangible to inform reality through craftsmanship. It is from this ability that objects are able to be formed and the community is able to emerge.

Objects do more than just allow for tasks to be completed. Objects allow for meaningful connections between individuals. Without the objects connection would still be possible. Couples would be able to connect with one another without the use of hammer and nails, but these objects make it far easier. The hammer and nails allow for the creation of the home where relationships are able to flourish and family to take root. Folk are able to form connections from the results of the objects. It is not the objects themselves that push the folk closer together, rather they allow for the folk to form something they did not have before. Objects allow for the continued rooting in space. Before there is the community there is only space. It is not until individuals fill this space and bring objects they connect with does this space begin to form something resembling a community. The objects allow for rooting between the folk and in turn the space. This relationship between people and objects creates the community and it is entirely dependent on the object, thus dependent on craftsmanship and those who craft. Objects are impossible without the creators.

These objects made with purpose do much more than just provide usefulness to the user or allow the crafter to express their ability and emotion. These objects allow the crafters and users to form an understanding of their space. Without these purposeful objects development would be difficult. When objects originate with purpose the community is able to use them and grow. It is when objects have no meaning, or are created with the purpose of creating monetary value that members of the community are unable to connect with one another and root into their space. Without the objects for users to find grounding and orient themselves around space would be in constant flux. Folk would have nothing to root around. It is not until the objects are created with purpose that the community begins to flourish.

What these objects allow people to do and the craftsmanship of laborers enable folk to accomplish is connection. Ultimately the wooden table the family gathers around is not going to change the lives of the family overtly, the stone-wear cup is not going to generate great revelations for the drinker, but what is possible is the connection between the people in the situation and connection between the folk of the community that are using the products that the craftsman made. This connection is oftentimes not overt or powerful, it is small in nature and resonates outwards towards other objects allowing for connection that then bounces vibrations towards another object that affects other objects and so on. The folk of the community feel this through their daily lives and interactions with others.

The spaces in which people dwell affect them. The objects they interact with are important to them on an individual level. The combination of the dwelling space, the objects in the space, and the individual dwelling there all create potential for betterment. The table or cup might not change who they are but these meaningful objects allow for the potential of

betterment. When this is clearly seen and understood the community is able to better utilize their objects and build an ecosystem around this.

It is the small connections that ultimately build the community into greater groupings of people. Large community events bring folk together but they only last for short bursts of time, multiple community organizations function for long periods of time but they only gather so many in one grouping. What the community needs to connect are the small efforts that happen daily between people who are unaware of the connections overtly but partaken in the actions regardless. The craftsmanship that allows for tasks that cause vibrations to resonate. Filing office paperwork, call-centers resolving issues from around the world, and tightening the bolts on the suspension bridge are all skills that create function and allow participation in a broader community.

Each individual adds something to the community that someone else cannot. It is the collection of skills that allow for any job to be done in a functional manner. This idea on a larger scale is each person doing their job so that someone else might do theirs. Paperwork must be filed so that the job can be approved. The call-center must function so that issues on the computers storing the paperwork can complete its task. The suspension bridge must be maintained so that the call-center employee can make it to the office building. Each of these people performing their craft to the best of their ability allow for function within the ecosystem. When all parties are well aware of the others abilities and tasks the function becomes easier. Everyone sees the place of the other and can champion their abilities. All folk see the community on the different levels it needs to function.

Morris is deeply connected to the idea of a community that is possible in the modern world. His views on the world can be seen as farfetched on the surface, but they have grounding

in relevant ideas and are still relevant today. In his essay “How We Live and How We Might Live” he claims “[the] word art leads me to my last claim, which is that the material surroundings of my life should be pleasant, generous, and beautiful” (Morris 29). The blacksmith's hammer allow for the carpenters to saw beams to create the baker's home. All things in the world that Morris envisions have a place and purpose that allows for a life that is worth living. Objects lead to the creation of something bigger than one person. All people have their place in the community that functions under the idea that labor and objects enchant the space.

The romanticization of the medieval community in the nineteenth century and the idealization of the commune on social media platforms in the twenty-first century speak a truth unseen. Folk seek togetherness. Whether it be the village mindset or communal desires the want for small, natural, and simple living resonates with many. People want to be connected with others who are able to create objects for them that better their lives in a useful way. Before the introduction of unnatural objects into communities workers were in control of what they produced. Morris addresses this concept in his essay “How We Live and How We Might Live.” In this essay Morris touches on the ideas of production, who is in control of production, and what comes from production. In the modern period objects are the means of monetary gain and no longer are they useful objects of craftsmanship. Morris claims if the workers are to go back the ideas of production before monetization

“workers will have all that he produces, and not be fleeced at all: and remember that he produces collectively, and therefore he will do effectively what work is required of him according to his capacity, and of the produce of that work he will have what he needs; because, you see, he cannot *use* more than he needs – he can only waste.” (Morris 21)



Craftsmen are able to work in their small communities to create what they need and what the others around them need to function. There is no need to create for a waste of money, only the need to create so that all members might benefit.

The inability to connect with others alienates people from their surroundings. When they are unable to find comfort in their home, workplace, or community the effects are felt in multiple aspects of their life and the lives of others. A community is no more than a series of spaces, connections of individuals, and a network of objects. The fabric of the community is only as strong as the fibers that make up the greater whole. By allowing each part to find its place allows for roots to grow, which help hold the community together. Alienation is what the core of any community is trying to avoid. Wanting to have all members feel seen and understood is the goal that a group of people would want for all their members so that the community can grow. Allowing for people of the community to express their abilities through craftsmanship would be a medium for connection that would offset alienation. Craftsmanship can transcend boundaries. Through the ability to create objects of value that others can use will allow for rooting between folk.

However, the fibers of the fabric that stand out are what give the community something to reflect on. While having a body of folk who have shared views is critical to a well-functioning network having some people who see a need to move away from ideas and develop new forms of thought are important for development. These people who wish to be on the outside of the community give people a place to see how their craftsmanship affects others. These “loose fibers” are what Ruskin and Morris both thought were so critical in craftsmanship, uniqueness. These folk who see a different view and look to break away from the community give reason to

look deep at what others might need. They allow for the unison to continue and what they produce and allow others to do is view reality for what it is.

However, when communities are allowed to develop around things that hinder rooting problems emerge. When folk in the community understand what it is they need to function they become aware of the things that diminish their ability to root. Unnatural things that alienate them from others in the community who create meaningful objects, objects that could have added value to their lives. For people to root into their environment objects must be meaningful to those who use them and interact with them. The crafter who creates must have meaning while creating and the user must have understanding and purpose while using. When this viewpoint is practiced folk have the ability to root and the craftsmen have been able to express their ability to create tangible objects. The craftsmanship of the object becomes clear and spaces where the object is useful are found. The alienation begins to lift and the enchantment of the space becomes clearer.

### Enchantment of Objects Through Naturalism

Humans long for natural objects and materials in their space and seek out the natural in everyday life. The wandering ivy in the cubical office, the hardwood dining table, the leather purse on the shoulder; they all bring naturalism into spaces where it is lost. These natural objects and materials allow people to associate with their surroundings and develop relationships with others. These objects are binding forces for a community. They allow the natural to root in a void space and encourage human association with each other. The space is enchanted through natural sensation.

When attempting to gather natural objects in the space folk dwell they are not bringing literal Earth into their space. They are attempting to surround themselves with objects that resonate with naturalism. The hardwood table or the stone-ware bowl have the natural materials but they are only secondhand naturalism. From the crafter the natural is given a second life. Folk are able to experience the natural and use the objects that allow them to connect without having to depend on the rocks or plants to literally connect them to the Earth. This second chance that the craftsman gives to natural is the enchanting quality that makes their ability so powerful. From the hands comes the enchantment, the ability to make and form, pass to others, and develop are what make the craftsman essential to the folk both individually and collectively.

The phenomenon of the better community centered around labor of handicraftsmen is not just found in the ideas of Ruskin and Morris, rather these ideas can be seen in practice. The natural wooden object created by a crafter is of better quality and is able to resonate better than the pressure-board object that mimics the former. This is not just because the pressure-board is factory-made by pressing glue and sawdust together, but more importantly because the wooden object is natural and holds intrinsic value. The wood is solid and can withstand structural faults

unlike the pressure board that crumbles when under distress. A crafted object is created by someone with purpose and when used intrinsic value is found. Through the touch of a natural object one is often, however briefly, able to root themselves in their world and into a wider web of relations.

Nature is more than wood or stone to the unsuspecting user of an object. Nature is familiar and allows them to sense something common in a space that lacks familiarity. The unnatural objects, plastics for example, do not resonate in the person the same way natural materials would. Poorly produced things set back the possibilities of well-constructed objects. The familiar is taken away and the unknown is able to step-in. When craftsmen are able to step away from the need to produce things that would only give them monetary gain and focus on creating things that allow them to develop functionality and create roots in their communities naturalism is able to flourish. The creation of objects with meaning and value take the place of unnatural objects whose only purpose was to drive production.

William Morris addresses this need to work with purpose and the life that comes from working in *News From Nowhere*,

The art or work-pleasure ... from a kind of instinct amongst people ... to do the best they could with the work in hand – to make it excellent of its kind; and when that had gone on for a little, a craving for beauty seemed to awaken in the men's minds, and they began rudely and awkwardly to ornament the wears which they made; and when they had one set to work at that, it soon began to grow. (Morris 150)

When the fictional folk of Morris's new reality have the opportunity to work for pleasure they are able to express themselves in ways unimaginable before. The work was able to express

oneself and allow others to find pleasure through the objects being made and provide to the community.

This unexplainable need to create taps into our primal urges. In numbers there is safety but also there are objects that allow for survival. Tools that allowed for cultivation and hunting held the first people together. These nomadic people would move from space to space; their tools would come with them. When they were able to settle into spaces and create ecosystems the folk would work together to create materials that would form other objects. This system would develop into the simple communities that would begin to resemble what modern humans would call towns. This need to create and work with our hands seems simple. Why would the modern human need to create when it can be done for them? Because humans must create. This phenomenon is clear throughout time. Their curiosity and desire to form something – a community – has led to the greatest creations of all time.

The work and the creation of an object are what allow people to express their wants and needs in a tangible way. The physicalness of the crafted object is what sets it apart from other forms of art or expression. This expression allows objects to enchant its surroundings and makes rooting in the community possible. These objects are no longer simple tools that make functional life easier, rather they are sacred objects that folk build their lives around. Without the axe, land cultivation is not possible, without the spade agriculture is not possible, without the hammer *home* is not possible. These objects are what have enchanted the human experience. When coupled with the crafter who is able to use them and express their full ability, the community is possible.

Objects are what allow folk to help form an understanding of their environment. Without the objects the space loses connection with the individual and the person inhabiting the space is

unable to root themselves into the space through the use of objects. Each object has its own purpose that is set at its creation. While people are dependent on objects, objects hold their own value. They hold a certain intrinsic value. This value stems from the enchantment of the craftsman. When creating the objects the craftsman extends the qualities expected of the object. When made with purpose the object retains the unspoken intention for folk to make sense of the objects they must use them. The bowl may hold keys, fruit, or stew but the intrinsic value remains clear; the bowl gathers and holds. The table allows for food to be eaten at, cards to be dealt, and conversations had but ultimately it allows for people to connect. These values of objects cannot be taken away from them when broken down into their essence; use them in any way but the enchantment remains the same.

Better grasping these concepts requires a comprehension of intrinsic value. While art, craft, and sympathy stand alone in their meanings, intrinsic value is made of a pair. Intrinsic meaning – most basically – natural, and value meaning worth; the definition reduces to a thing's natural worth. Labor is natural; all people labor in some form. The worth of labor is the price that someone is willing to assign to it. Some are willing to put a greater price on the cost of labor than others, but the price must be paid. That price is typically dependent on the skill and understanding that the laborer has of the task. The natural worth of labor is in part reliant on the time paid to craft something and the laborer's artistic ability. Ruskin addresses the need for the cost of a laborer's wages to be a set standard, “as *all* labour ought to be, paid by an invariable standard” (Ruskin 20). This is because the labor done poorly at a cheaper rate affects the laborer who has value and ability. Keeping the rate fixed forces the lesser equipped laborers to adjust their ability and allows for the laborers full of craftsmanship to continue their craft. The natural worth of a craftsman skill is nonadjustable. From this set value on the laborer's skills the

community is directly affected. A community dedicated to championing all members gives more worth to the laborer because all its members can feel the impact of a more developed skill.

Intrinsic value is the sympathetic bond allowing for a well-developed community.

While the connection seems superficial when a laborer builds a house or a laborer builds a bookshelf, labor goes much deeper. Labor is the art of expressing ability in a learned skill that crafts objects which allow the community to function. A laborer does not just make a house but rather at least potentially creates a dwelling place that connects those who reside there with one another. The crafted bookshelf is no longer a collection of wood held together by nails, it is a gathering space that forms the mass of books into a library. From what the laborer produces daily life becomes richer. Through the ability and skill of laboring people endless outlets for production and connection are possible. As the modern world takes this for granted the community as a whole suffers.

All members of the community are intrinsically connected to labor. The vitality of the community rests with the ability of the laborer. When labor is not valued by those in the community all the individuals who dwell in the grouping of people suffer. The way to value the art and craft is to allow laborers to expand their understanding of their labor ability through education. By allowing education to connect with all fields, even those that do not seem to need it, all parts in the community are enhanced. When farmers expand their understanding of the genus of a plant, they are able to engage with their community more. Keeping labor separate from education results in keeping the community as a whole oppressed. The community that champions the education of the laborer will thrive through the art and craft.

Most all forms of labor provide betterment to the community. The office assistant ensures tasks are on time and the emergency worker keeps the community safe, but manual labor is set

apart from the others by its ability to sympathize. Those who are practicing manual labor are the ones who connect their community with the objects they need to function. This sympathy between object, user, and creator is the key to why a community developed around objects and craftsmanship functions so well. While the office assistant or emergency worker ensures the functioning of the community on an abstract level the craftsmanship ensures the function on the concrete level. The objects the folk hold and interact with are directly connected to the handyman. Without the use of craftsman ability the community and those who live in it would be unable to connect. This lack of sympathy throws the ecosystem into disarray and does not allow for folk to better themselves or others.

The community full of craftsmen who each can benefit the community fit the role of a provider. The way handymen are used in the modern period does not allow them to fulfill their role to the fullness of their ability. Craftsmen are degraded to creating “decorative pieces” that sit and do not call for function. They lose the role of producers of functionality and as they lose their purpose the community loses a provider. A good handicraftsman does not just produce domestic objects, but rather creates natural objects that allow for folk to root into their environment. They provide useful objects that allow the user to feel their surroundings and be connected to natural materials. These meaningful objects allow folk of the community to connect with handicraftsmen and appreciate the work done.

Through handicrafts individuals are able to create and express their emotions that connect them back to the natural. John Ruskin in *Nature of Gothic* touches on the human need to express themselves addressing it as, “sacredness of expression” (Ruskin 105). The desire to express oneself is deeply rooted in who we are. Ruskin’s sacred expression touches on the divine aspect of creation. By physically crafting objects people express their ability to enchant their space and



others. This is a spiritual sensation for Ruskin. Through the creation of objects folk are able to divine concepts untouched by man. The phenomenon of creation allows the human to understand further. To create from natural resources something envisioned within themselves individuals are breaking through the abstract and giving craftsmanship something concrete to work with. These tangible objects are sacred to the crafter and enchanting to the community. They allow for touch to flourish and space to become an enchanted place in which to dwell. The barren room is awakened by the natural object and this object calls for gathering. The space is formed solely by the ability to gather and grow, which is dependent on the objects. Human ecology is dependent on objects allowing them to gather and thrive.

The craftsmen do not just create the objects that allow the community to root into the ecosystem, they are an example of what Ruskin would call good men. These crafters are not just good to their families or the community they live in they are folk who rise above the rest of the community and provide guidance. “We need examples of people who ... have resolved to seek – not greater wealth, but simpler pleasure; not higher fortune, but deeper felicity; making the first possessions, self-possession; and honouring themselves in the harmless pride and calm pursuits of peace (Ruskin 170). Craftsmen when they work well lead the community to something greater, allow for peace to flourish, and members of the community to be able to ground and root themselves in their spaces as they desire. This can be expanded to include all those who better the community through their *craft*. Creating meaning within the community results in a formed body of people who might not share the same ideas but view the same goal. While the community might not always be in mind the objects allow for others to develop when they use them. It is this unity that helps folk to root and the community to develop. Folk together create objects that make their lives better and do tasks that make the lives of those they are around

better. When all people in the community are able to work together to create a functioning environment the tasks become worth the labor

### Critique on Objects that Alienate Community Members

Twentieth-century philosopher Simone Weil's views on modern labor, especially that of factories and mechanical work are important to consider for a multitude of reasons most important of which are: her ideas are at minimum thirty years younger than that of Ruskin or Morris and prove a more modern view, she served as a laborer in the literal idea unlike Ruskin or Morris who both labored as a means of pleasure, and she is a woman. This last fact is critical because not all laborers or craftsmen are men, many laborers today are female, and having input from this group is critical.

In his essay "Uprootedness and Alienation in Simone Weil," Miklos Vetö looks at one of Weil's key ideas about the role the laborer plays in the community and how that role should be viewed by others.

A new form of education and a humanization of the condition of industrial labour should enable the worker to understand his rôle in the manufacturing of a tin, a sewing machine or a needle. He has to know that however insignificant is his rôle in the manufacturing of an article, he contributes through it to the fulfilment of human needs. (Vetö 392)

While here Vetö addresses the worker as "insignificant" the idea still stands; the work is critical. The work being done by the craftsmen who create for the betterment of others have purpose in the communities and the objects they create have obvious value to all members of the ecosystem. This education and understanding comes from the community using the objects and feeling the connection between the craftsman, the objects, and themselves. This is not something that can be taught, it must be developed through experiences in the environment.

Weil's idea of "uprootedness" looks at how a community that loses connection with its past and is not in connection with the folk that dwell together cannot function well. In her book

*The Need for Roots*, Weil breaks down many concepts that break apart the community but most clearly, “uprootedness is “equivalent to isolation: isolation in time from the historical values of the past, and isolation in space from the multiple communities which need man and which are needed by man” (Vetö 390). The need to connect with the past is also clear in both Ruskin’s and Morris’s ideas. Ruskin desired to connect folk through the craftsmanship and artistic qualities of laborers of a bygone era. The medieval mason has a certain understanding of connection that many modern builders have lost. Morris saw the same thing in ancient builds and overtly fought to protect them. This was large part due to the beauty and skill that was crafted and might be lost, but also because of the unifying qualities the builds had to a community that is lost with modern buildings.

Weil would look at the history that connects folk of the community to the buildings. When folk do not have well-established places to gather and unify their ideas, whether it be religious or communal, they are lost and become isolated. To be isolated is to be unintegrated into any space. It is the built world that allows or complicates such integration. What is built gathers folk together and allows for ideas to flourish. The definition of integrate is, “Made up, as a whole, of separate (integrant) parts, composite; belonging to such a whole; complete, entire, perfect” (*OED*). All parts of a community, the folk, the places, and the objects add benefit to the other parts creating a unified mass. A community is a mass of individuals. To be uprooted is to be separated from the mass.

From this we can build what rooting is. Isolation is, “The action of isolating; the fact or condition of being isolated or standing alone; separation from other things or persons; solitariness” (*OED*). This is the exact opposite of what community is. While all members might not share the same ideas or beliefs all members of a community do connect through the use of

meaningful objects. From these objects webs are created between the users of the object who are able to root from contact with the item and connection with the craftsman who made this rooting possible. All the members of the community who are “crafting” form a better unison of people. It is not just manual labor that Weil looked at with so much interest. It is also the teacher in the third-grade classroom that allows students to explore concepts unfamiliar. The editor who ensures information is being provided in the best possible way, even the coder who makes sure the website functions properly so that folk can buy their needed tools. The craftsmanship of folk in the community is essential to members of the communities ability to root and find understanding within the space they dwell.

When folk are able to root from the use of meaningful objects that are crafted by working folk who provide value to their communities is when they are able to function better. It is when they use objects that do not allow for rooting issues arise. Objects that do not connect them to their past or prevent them from connecting with others are what Weil warns of. Many modern objects are needed for development might not be created with the idea of rooting in mind, but these items still allow for development. The carbon fiber handle on the tool, the polyester seatbelt, the rubber sleeve over the electrical wires, all of these unnatural objects that might not seem to allow for rooting do so because of their practical functions. It is things created that do not provide betterment or do not adapt to add value to the community that cause alienation.

The plastic cup is created and its value cannot be changed. This plastic cup holds the value assigned to it at creation, exactly. This cup will have difficulty finding more or less value than the other plastic cup created next to it because they are all created with the same machines that press out the same thing without individual flaws. For Ruskin and Morris the imperfections are what made objects meaningful. Each detail set each object apart from another and allow for

value to be formed. Now take for example a cup created by a glassblower. It serves the same purpose to hold liquid and this cannot be taken away from it. What must be examined to further the value of each of these cups is the craftsmanship. The plastic cup is stamped out in mass by a machine, packaged and set to the storefront where it is put on the shelf by the stocker, possibly the first human to come into contact with the cup.

Objects with unnatural origins that are of unnatural materials take away the most from communities. While objects made of unnatural materials allow for cheaper and quicker production they do not allow for communities to flourish. They take away the need for an individual to produce and thus the communities abilities to grow. The plastic cups take away the glass blower's usefulness in the community, the pressure board bookshelf takes away the carpenter's value in a community, the mass-market t-shirts prevent the seamsters from having purpose in the community. All of the shortcuts made by the “usefulness” of unnatural objects prevent folk from finding their value in their community and growing roots that hold spaces and individuals together.

The way connection is formed in the twenty-first century is not wrong. The leaving of many of these natural connections for virtual ones is not necessarily bad. The couple meeting on the online dating app rather than the small-town bar is not bad. The parent's connection with the child over the video game is not bad. The adolescence listening to music via streaming service instead of the live show is not bad. All of these modern outlets for connection do not diminish the community as a whole nor do they hurt the individual. What they are allowing for that should be considered is the lack of physical connection that the crafted objects enable. The created objects is able to allow the physical to manifest in places where it might be typically left out in a

virtual setting and this small allowance for physical connection is critical. These things that do not connect with true craftsmanship disconnect folk.

When this disconnection is observed it is difficult to reason with, but Sara Ahmed's understanding of the killjoy figure allows for a clearer understanding to be found. Ahmed addresses the "feminist killjoy" asking the reader to consider, "Does the feminist kill other people's joy by pointing out moments of sexism? Or does she expose the bad feelings that get hidden, displaced, or negated under public signs of joy?" (Ahmed 38-39). I would like to expand on this killjoy figure in regard to the natural and unnatural of the modern world. Ahmed asks the reader to think about what is causing the joy in relation to the situation at hand in relation to how others see the same situation. Is the "killjoy" disrupting the situation just because of their stance or are they forcing others to look at the situation in real-time and see the reality of what is being said? The "killjoy" "refuses to share an orientation toward certain things as being good because she does not find the objects that promise happiness to be quite so promising" (Ahmed 39). I want to apply this to another figure that has become apparent in the modern world, the anti-plastic person.

The anti-plastic people seem to be the butt of the joke, or they take away from others' good times when they bring up any one of the many issues that are caused by the use of plastic things. Trash islands in the ocean, plastic bags in landfills, and even microplastics in human blood, they all ring the same when they are brought up so often and tend to bring down the mood when discussed. But what is being disrupted here? Is the anti-plastic person beside the "feminist killjoy" by just pointing out moments in time where the use of some things or language is not so good? Or does the anti-plastic person along with any killjoy figure address major questions that

have unforeseeable impacts on their lives and the lives of others? What is being taken away when the single-use plastics are used instead of the glass cup? The ability to root.

The anti-plastic person allows those they are kill-joying to reflect on what might be better. While the killjoy might seem out of place when they bring up any of the ideas they find to be important and need to inform others of, they are creating space for thought. The anti-plastic person makes those using unnatural products to consider what is natural and what comes from using products grounded in naturalism. For Ruskin and Morris naturalism is a truth that is present regardless of whether people are aware of it and are willing to orient themselves with it. By using products created by someone who has a passion for these crafts and developed craftsmanship in that skill something is happening. A connection between the produced, user, and object is formed. Folk have a way to not just align themselves in one way, but to build a connection to others and root into their space. The killjoy reminds others about the possibility. By using products that allow for a truth to speak through them and connection with others who create these products the community is bettered. These “happy objects” that resonate an intrinsic value build the community into what it can be when functioning the best. The killjoy reminds folk to think about what they are losing when they are using things that lack craftsmanship. Folk are not just losing the better quality objects, they are losing a connection that drives community growth.

It is that craftsmanship that allows members of the community to connect with others and allows for rooting to take place in the ecosystem. Whether it be handicrafts, office work, or writing, all skills developed with meaningful intent that have a grounding in craftsmanship will better others. John Ruskin and William Morris each took different paths down this road and were able to benefit others. Ruskin the artist and philosopher grounded himself in artistic



understanding and crafted his ability of writing to help teach others. Morris the craftsman and writer developed his skills in woodworking, tapestry weaving, and bookbinding to share with this community that well-developed skills in the artist's ability can better others. All people are trying to speak through their skills and abilities. Some people have a clearer understanding and are able to show their craftsmanship better, but this does not diminish the others attempts. All craftsmanship that truly represents the natural world it is trying to compliment allows for rooting to flourish and better others.

### The Craft and Labor of Writing

A key part of what labor offers communities is ultimately a form of connection. Through labor objects allow for rooting to take place and for members of the community to better understand one another in ways impossible without the object. But how far can the term labor be stretched? John Ruskin and William Morris would certainly argue that labor is any action that creates an object or anything that improves the space it is dwelling in. There are certain qualifiers they might add on such as naturalism or betterment to the user, but labor ultimately must add something to the community that was not there before. The creation of the building that allows for gathering to take place, the wooden table that allows the family to eat together, the stained glass lampshade that illuminates the room are all examples of craftsmanship and creation that Ruskin and Morris would both obviously be able to see the benefit from.

What else can qualify as labor? As mentioned earlier in this work many skills such as the office attendant, medical doctor, or even grocery store stocker all serve a critical purpose in the community and without their abilities folk would be in trouble. These forms of labor Ruskin and Morris, and possibly even many modern people might not think of these as labor. Their skills, or maybe even craftsmanship, of their daily tasks take a certain amount of time and thought to develop. The craftsmanship they provide to the community allows for function to continue even if it might not be overtly tangible. From their actions tangibility is created. The office files make their way into the right place and allow for function to continue in the working environment, the doctor is able to make the right decision and diagnose the patient correctly allowing them to recover, the items on the pallet are placed on the shelf ensuring the community has the need resources to last another week. Although not overt all of these skills have a result that impacts the community in a way that allow for function to be possible.

Morris was certainly a craftsman. His skills in tapestries and furniture making have stood the test of time, but well before he formed these skills he was a writer and thinker. Ruskin too was only ever an artist and writer. Both of these men would be far more remembered for their writing skills than for their crafting abilities. But what is writing in terms of craftsmanship and labor? How does this skill affect others in the community and allow for a better-rooted life? The act of writing is no more than allowing the abstract to become concrete. When taking the ideas one has and putting them on the page with the pen or typing them on the computer enables the ideas to have tangibility, much like the building, table, or bowl. These writings allow for others to form an understanding of their space and their relationship to that space. Ruskin and Morris were both doing this through their writings and came to understandings from others' writings.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was a literary icon to both Ruskin and Morris. A young Ruskin met Wordsworth and this would impact his life deeply. Ruskin already had a deep affection for his poetry and meeting the figure only deepened this affection. Morris on the other hand never had the opportunity to meet Wordsworth. His poetry would nevertheless impact him greatly and influence his own writings. Wordsworth's views on the beauty and need for nature in everyone's lives undoubtedly influenced both Ruskin's and Morris's ideas on the human nature of craftsmanship and the ability to connect to an essential natural world that is all around us. Wordsworth's writings, while not a typical craft associated with labor or craftsmanship, are examples of how literary works affect the work in a tangible way. In his writings Wordsworth calls for a connection to nature as essential to the lives of those living in the community. In Book Thirteen of his masterpiece "The Prelude," Wordsworth calls attention to the work folk do and how they might return to that beauty.

Blessed with true happiness if we may be  
 United helpers forward of a day  
 Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work –  
 Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe –  
 Of their redemption, surely yet to come.  
 Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak  
 A lasting inspiration, sanctified  
 By reason and by truth; what we have loved  
 Others will love, and we may teach them how:  
 Instruct them how the mind of man becomes  
 A thousand times more beautiful than the earth  
 On which he dwells, above this frame of things  
 (Which, 'mid all revolutions in the hopes  
 And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)  
 In beauty exalted, as it is itself  
 Of substance and of fabric more divine.

*Book 13, 386-452*

People of the community rooted in nature are “Of substance and of fabric more divine”  
 (Wordsworth 407). From his writings people are able to find an understanding of what they  
 might get out of the world and possibly how they might find that answer. Writing is a craft just  
 the same as a blacksmith or an office attendant. The role the writer plays is a connecting force  
 that is unseen but clearly felt. This “fabric more divine” that Wordsworth reminds his audience of

connects all people. All folk need something that connects them to one another and writings can be one of those connecting objects.

These objects that connect folk to one another can expand past just crafted items or meaningful books. These objects can be the folk that people interact with everyday. The binding fabric that Wordsworth touches on is all the parts of the community. The objects and the folk who interact with them. People connect others through their actions and their words. The blacksmith creates objects with actions and the poet with their minds and both connect people to one another. Folk naturally connect and desire to be around others. This is a part of the naturalism that Ruskin and Morris both wanted. It is primal for people to congregate and dwell together creating a space that gives them meaning from their actions that form value.

In his poem “The Old Cumberland Beggar” Wordsworth describes and expands on what the local beggar brought to the towns they might wander through and how their interactions with the community and the individuals of the community affect all parties. The Old Beggar is far more than a nuisance to the community, he is a reminder of a larger picture and a binder to all those who interact with him. Wordsworth touches on the connection the beggar has “While from door to door, / This old Man creeps, the villagers in him / Behold a record which together binds / Past deeds and offices of charity” (Wordsworth 280). The Old Beggar to Wordsworth is the connection the community needs to stay grounded in its actions. The Old Beggar is a way of keeping the folk connected through something they might not understand at first, but after further examination it is clear the role. The Old Beggar is not an object the folk can hold to find a connection, but he is a binding force. Wordsworth remarks “That we have all of us one human heart” (Wordsworth 281). Where the Old Beggar was able to make people come together to give food and alms and connect to one another without having to be there in person they all share the

human connection. Folk gather to help this man who wanders from village to village through the beauty of nature. It is from his life and constant motion the folk are able to connect in something.

The poem “The Tables Turned” Wordsworth touches on the objects (books) and the teacher (nature). Wordsworth here is examining the desire to learn and develop a better understanding of nature, but how can one do this without going into the wild and forming this themselves? From books there is much to learn and explore but for nature the reality can be found, “Books! ‘tis a dull and endless strife: / Come, hear the woodland Linnet, / How sweet his music! on my life, / There’s more of wisdom in it.” (Wordsworth 300). While the object allows for a greater understanding to be found the reality of it can be seen in nature by any person. In nature truth is possible. While the object allow for connection being in nature and allowing for this submersion in the outside reality allow for person development. This is true also when applied to the objects themselves. When the objects are crafted with the ideals of naturalism they allow for this connection to happen. They connect the user with nature and allow them to see what is possible unlike objects that do not reflect nature. These unnatural objects do not allow for understanding, “Let Nature be your Teacher” (Wordsworth 300). Wordsworth furthers how nature is the best possible teacher, “One impulse from a vernal wood / May teach you more of man, / Of moral evil and of good, / Than all the sages can” (Wordsworth 300). Overtly Wordsworth tells his readers nature holds all the answers and the sages can only teach so much. Looking deeper the audience can see that while man objects hold great understanding it is only those that have naturalism in their craftsmanship that allows for a true understanding. Nature is the ultimate teacher to Wordsworth. Through using objects that allow for nature to connect the user to bettering their understanding of the object and the world around them.

Through the flourishing community a better world can be envisioned. When folk cannot connect with their objects and understand the time and resources that went into its creation they cannot take pleasure in the sacredness of it. The things they hold sacred shift from natural to unnatural. They no longer take pleasure in the natural world around them and seek out the valueless things they think will benefit their lives. It is from objects that originate with purpose in mind and resonate with intrinsic value that people are able to root into their environments and live better lives.

It is others who are able to execute their craftsmanship and provide something to their communities that allow for rooting between people and spaces. Ruskin and Morris both tried desperately to demonstrate this to the people of the Victorian period but their rally calls fell on deaf ears. Ruskin's and Morris's words were unable to fully impact their world, but their ideas and visions for a better tomorrow still resonate well into the modern world. Their views on the craftsman and other laborers who make life possible for others are timelier than ever. In the present world many laborers and craftsmen are still seen as cogs stamping out things that make life "better" for consumers who are desperate for the next line of products. While in some circumstances this might be the case it is not for all situations. In many cases those people who make life possible for the rest are well aware of their importance and are desperate to connect with their communities so that they might connect them with the object they need to better their lives and the lives of others around them.

The purpose of this project, this craft, this object, is to create something similar to the texts of that of Ruskin and Morris. Texts are objects that are deeply valuable to communities and give folk something they can gather around even when they are not sharing a space directly. All those who read the Bhagavad Gita are able to orient themselves around something, all those who

read Plato's Republic have something to connect through, all those who read Ruskin and Morris can understand common themes. Texts are a keep craft that produce something valuable and gives purpose to those who read them. From this project, rather crafted object, an understanding of what craftsmanship is capable of and how crafted objects rooted in naturalism and value can affect the folk who dwell in the community.

Craftsmanship, in all of its aspects, is what allows for a life to be possible. Every person in the community who is doing their job, crafting their art, is what allows for rooting. All of the objects created by every person connect one to another and from this web of crafted objects the folk of the community can root into their space and live a better life. It is only when the craftsmen and the folk of the community start to consume things that are not created with craftsmanship and do not reflect naturalism does the community begin to disconnect. Folk are alienated from their space and are unable to find any kind of hold in their environment. When this is taking place the community cannot flourish. To combat this all members must understand the role they play in their community, the blacksmith, the office attendant, the doctor, and the writer all have an active role that allow for the other positions to function properly.

A community centered around craftsmanship and rooting is possible. It is not easy to obtain and the process will not happen quickly. Morris's utopia *News From Nowhere* struggled greatly to get to the craftsman's paradise that it is. But it is through the work of the collective that they were able to arrive at their end goal. Allowing education to flourish, artistic ability to develop, craftsmanship to thrive, and encouraging allow folk to work at their best potential will undoubtedly further them to what Ruskin and Morris saw possible. A world where the object people were connecting with had purpose and were created by people who had the want to create and the craftsmanship to create well. From this craftsmanship a community is able to function



properly. Each person is rooted into their space and each space functions to create the ecosystem.

When communities champion the craft and education of its members a better world is made possible.

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<sup>i</sup> Object as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is “a material thing that can be seen and touched” (*OED*). This is an important distinction that must be regarded when looking at the definition of Thing, “A meeting, or the matter or business considered by it, and derived senses” (*OED*). The purpose of using the word object when referring to the items made by craftsmen is to align with the true meaning of the word as defined. Craftsmen are creating things that can be felt and used by those who need the items. Also, the use of the word object is to avoid the more modern colloquial view of the word thing. In the modern period thing has moved from its literal definition to mean items without regard. Things do not hold great value to those who use them, things do not change the course of someone’s life typically, things do not allow people to find an understanding. Things stand still in time. Objects create points of connection that allow members of the community to connect with one another.