Victorian Poetry

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1859, which he read with "intense interest" (*Memoir* I:443). Later on, as he was writing "The Holy Grail," he would ask Darwin explicitly if "your theory of Evolution does not make against Christianity"—to which Darwin gave the (no doubt unsatisfactory) reply, "No, certainly not" (II:57).

12 Edward Engelberg, "The Beast Image in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*," *ELH* 22.4 (1955): 292.

13 Virginia Richter, *Literature After Darwin: Human Beasts in Western Fiction 1859–1939* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 7–8.

14 It is worth noting, after having described this instance of "natural selection," that the first animal Darwin uses to draw an example of natural selection in *On the Origin of Species* is the wolf.

15 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 1968): p. 256.

16 Tennyson invokes and foregrounds meat not only here, but in the story of the "wolf-like men" and, more darkly, in the precise moment when Leodogran "[sits] at meat" contemplating the mystery of Arthur's birth (CA.246).

17 See also Vivien in "Merlin and Vivien," who seems quite comfortable—enabled, even—flickering between humanity and snakelike animality as she writhes beneath Merlin's feet.

18 In another register, the attention to measurement resonates with the "big game" narratives that dominated men's periodicals during Tennyson's time—"documents of civilization" which, as the historian Harriet Ritvo has noted, were consistent in presenting a "precise anatomical and ballistic analysis of how the kill was accomplished" in order to glorify the hunter and objectify the hunted (Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* [Cambridge, MA.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987], p. 265).

19 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 422.

20 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1874), p. 74.

21 The message bears a resemblance to an equally problematic proclamation spoken by the Third Witch in *Macbeth*: "Thou shalt be king hereafter!" (I.3.50).

22 James Eli Adams, "Harlots and Base Interpreters: Scandal and Slander in 'Idylls of the King,' *Victorian Poetry* 30.3/4 (1992): 421–439.

23 Jerome H. Buckley, *Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p. 177.

24 For an overview of the Metaphysical Society's history and purpose, see Alan Willard Brown, *The Metaphysical Society: Victorian Minds in Crisis, 1869–1880* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1947).

25 Henry Sidgwick, "Verification of Beliefs," *Essays on Ethics and Method* (Oxford; New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), p. 9.

26 An important verb for Tennyson, which he also deploys—fully attuned to its multivalency—in the last lines of *In Memoriam* before the "Epilogue": "Until we close with all we loved / And all we flow from, soul in soul" (CXXXI:11–12).

Unprintable Lyrics: The Unpublished Poems of William Morris

FLORENCE S. BOOS

Almost all the poetic works of William Morris were published in his lifetime, with the exception of forty-two personal lyrics he drafted in the late 1860s and 1870s. The tone of several of these poems resembles that of the "idle singer['s]" wistful monthly lyrics in the *Earthly Paradise*, and others are grieving, personal, introspective, and as "unmediated" in their emotional nuances as anything he ever wrote. Almost all of these lyrics were apparently drafted between the publication of Morris's *Life and Death of Jason* in 1867 and the appearance of his *Earthly Paradise* in 1868–1870, and four of them did find their way into periodicals in 1869–1870. He reproduced eleven more in his 1870 hand-illuminated copy of *A Book of Verse*, and several in the 1891 *Poems by the Way*, along with some but not all of those he had copied out in *A Book of Verse*. The rest, however, were left unpublished at his death, and in what follows I will suggest some reasons for this omission.

In volume twenty-four of the *Collected Works* (1910–1915), his daughter May Morris reprinted without comment a selection of these poems, among them the four he had published in periodicals, and she added three more in her 1936 *Artist, Writer, Socialist*, a sequence of publication which obscured their unity.[1] She also took one of the verses in Eddic meter to Dame Bertha Phillpott, an authority in Old Norse,[2] but put it aside when she understood it was not a translation, but a 'nordic' expression of Morris's grief in sublimated form.

Students of Morris's life and work have long known about the affair conducted by Morris's wife Jane Morris and Dante Rossetti between 1868 or 1869 until as late as 1874, as recorded in contemporary letters William Bell Scott sent to his partner Alice Boyd as well as Jane Morris's and Dante Rossetti's extensive correspondence made available in 1964, and more recently in carefully annotated scholarly editions.[3] These document the lovers' frequent long visits (among many other things), and the obligatory social contacts with Rossetti occasioned by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company weekly gatherings. Except for the poems just mentioned, Morris absorbed the implications of his wife's affair with his erstwhile friend in stoic silence, whereas Rossetti freely transposed his experiences into the

Fig. 1. William Morris in 1874, photograph by Frederick Hollyer.

Fig. 2. The Morris and Burne-Jones Families in 1874, photograph by Frederick Hollyer.

sonnets of "The House of Life," protected by the fiction that these honored the memory of his dead wife Elizabeth Siddal.

A gender-reversed parallel to this dispiriting period in Morris's personal life emerged in May 1868, when Georgiana Burne-Jones discovered the first of Edward Burne-Jones's many extramarital liaisons.[4] Morris had made many lifelong friends at Oxford, but the closest by proximity in interests and temperament was Ned Jones, and their two families had shared countless meals and travels together. Mutual awareness of intertwined betrayals must have cast a shadow over their long-standing goodwill, in ways that may have found expression on 25 May 1869, when Morris wrote Burne-Jones that "I am afraid I was crabby last night, but I didn't mean to be, so pray forgive me—we seem to quarrel in speech now sometimes, and sometimes I think you find it hard to stand me . . . but again forgive me for I can't on any terms do without you. / Yours / W. Morris" (MacCarthy, p. 215).

The more than twenty-year time lapse between the *Collected Works* (1910–1915) and *Artist, Writer, Socialist* (1936) may have smoothed the path for the now-elderly May Morris to (re)print several more of these poetic responses to her parents' estrangement as an act of loyalty to her father's memory. Proprieties had

become less rigid, Jane Morris had died in 1914, and May may well have wished to memorialize her father's magnanimous response to the affair as a mark of his ability to "think bigly and kindly."[5]

Recent critics, editors, and biographers, among them Philip Henderson, Jack Lindsay, Norman Kelvin, John LeBourgeois, and Fiona MacCarthy, have suggested that Morris transferred his affection to Georgiana Burne-Jones, Aglaia Coronio (a member of the London Ionides family), or even Emma Morris Oldham, his older sister.[6] Jack Lindsay, for example, asserted that "Summer Night['s]" celebration of requited love "cannot record any experience he ever had with Janey."[7] All the concrete evidence we have, however, suggests that Morris's principal preoccupation during this period was to find some purpose for living despite the quiet humiliation of his wife's rejection, not to compensate for it with affairs of his own.

Morris was well aware of Burne-Jones's philandering, and there is considerable evidence that he and Georgiana Burne-Jones became close friends during this period, perhaps even soul-mates. As many have observed, he presented his carefully illuminated *A Book of Verse* to her in person in 1870. It should also be noted, however, that Jane Morris copied a number of its poems into a special notebook of her own in preparation for their likely publication. If the beautifully crafted love poems of *A Book of Verse* were an unusual gift for a mere friend, it seems likewise improbable that Morris would have asked his wife to help prepare for publication love poems addressed to another.

And here, in Jane Morris's notebook, may lie a tale. "Alone, Unhappy By the Fire I Sat," one of its most poignant poems, is preceded by three carefully excised pages. Only four persons would have had access to this notebook before its deposit in the British Library after May Morris's death—May, her father, Jane, and Morris's executor Sidney Cockerell, a meticulous preservationist who was unlikely to have bowdlerized Morris's notebooks and manuscript poems. The excision of these pages seems yet another lost trace of the emotions of the period.

Despite the obscurity of their referents or proximate sources, or perhaps because of them, Morris's personal poems in this period reflected a desire to experiment with a wide range of forms—sonnets; ballads; dialogues; lyrics of varying line- and stanza-lengths; idiosyncratic visual patterns—careful indentations, for example, which were flattened out in publication; and an intermingling of poetic and dramatic fragments derived from mythic or historical settings. The range of these experiments is more impressive when one considers that during this period Morris worked at his "day-job" at the Firm and completed and published the twenty-five verse-tales of *The Earthly Paradise*. Some of his personal poems

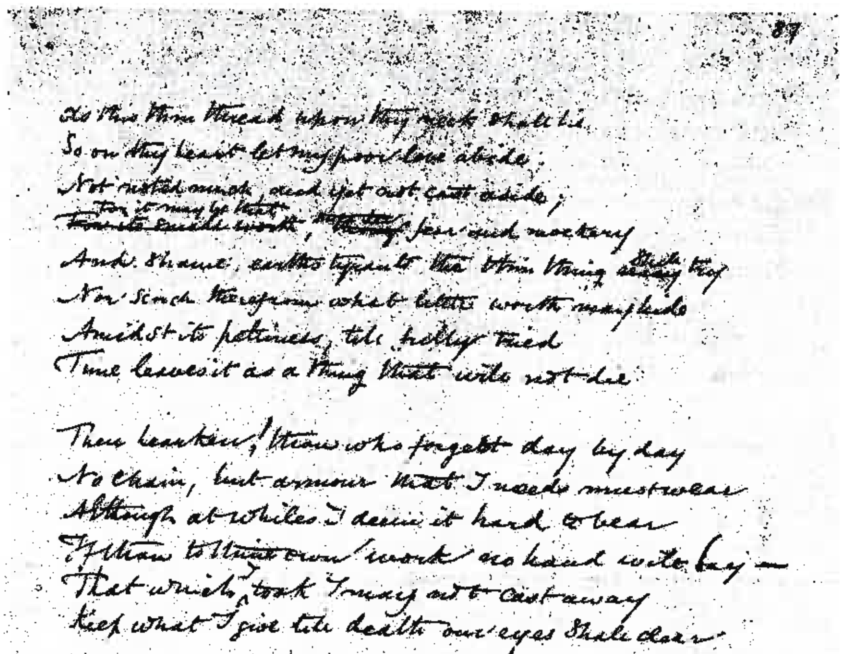


Fig. 3. "As this Thin Thread," autograph, B. L. MS. 45,298A, f. 87.

were subsumed into the latter's vast framework, and I will argue below that the poignant introspection in Morris's unused *Earthly Paradise* tale "The Story of Orpheus and Eurydice" transmuted into myth the emotions and experiences of this period.

Six of the unpublished poems were sonnets, and all of these seem to have been written by 1869, a period which postdated Rossetti's composition of seventeen "House of Life" sonnets by 1867.[8] All of Morris's sonnets were essentially Petrarchan—another effort to put medieval forms to contemporary use—but none of them found a place in "A Book of Verse" or *Poems by the Way*.[9] In one of them—"As This Thin Thread"—the gift of a metaphorical necklace—or "little thread"—is outwardly accepted but inwardly rejected.

As this thin thread upon thy neck shall lie
So on thy heart let my poor love abide,
Not noted much and yet not cast aside
Since it may be that fear and mockery

And shame, earth's tyrants, the thin thing shall try
Nor burn away what little worth may hide
Within its pettiness, till fully tried
Time leaves it as a thing that will not die.

Then hearken! Thou, who forgest day by day
No chain for me, but arms I needs must wear,
Although at whiles I deem them hard to bear,
If thou to thine own work no hand will lay –
—That which I too I may not cast away,
Keep what I give till death our eyes shall clear.[10]

The thread's fragility clearly reflected its susceptibility to "fear," "mockery" and "shame," but its "chain" (presumably of gold or silver) was a "thing that [would] not die." In the sestet's transmutation of the delicate chain into heavy armor, the poet seems to accept both on behalf of the chain's wearer and his own a burden "hard to bear," and he only pleads with her to "[k]eep what I give till death our eyes shall clear." Three drafts and a fair autograph copy of this poem remain, but it does not appear in Jane Morris's notebook of fair-copied poems.[11]

The sonnet "Near but Far Away" also remained unpublished, even in "A Book of Verse":

She wavered, stopped, and turned; methought her eyes,
The deep grey windows of her heart were wet,
Methought they softened with a new regret
To note in mine unspoken miseries,
And as a prayer from out my heart did rise
And struggled on my lips in shame's strong net,
She stayed me and cried Brother! Our lips met
Her dear hands drew me into Paradise—

Sweet seemed that kiss till thence her feet were gone
Sweet seemed the word she spake, while it might be
As wordless music—But truth fell on me
And kiss and word I knew, and left alone
Face to face seemed I to a wall of stone
While at my back there beat a boundless sea.
May 11th. (B. L. Add. Ms. 45,298A, f. 90)[12]

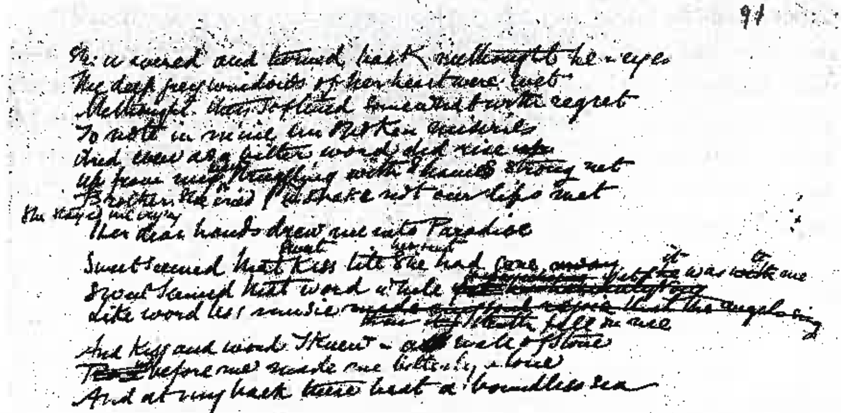


Fig. 4. "Near but Far Away," autograph, B. L. MS. 45,298A, f. 90.

At least one reader of this poem has argued that the unnamed exclaimer of the word "Brother!" was Morris's sister Emma, then a clergyman's wife in northern England. A more plausible source might have been an expression of sororal sympathy by Georgiana Burne-Jones. Whoever the poem's intended referent may have been, Jane Morris fair-copied it in her personal folio, but it was *not* among those presented to Georgiana in "A Book of Verse." Fortunately it is not necessary to hold a fixed opinion on the occasion of each sonnet in order to interpret their general patterns.

At their best, Rossetti's image-laden sonnets were plangently universal ("A sonnet is a moment's monument"). Morris, by contrast, addressed his few sonnets directly and intimately to a single recipient and expressed loneliness or estrangement in simple, if courtly, speech.[13] Perhaps he originally intended them to form a sequence which would culminate in a hoped-for return of love, and as such hopes faded turned to other stanza forms which permitted a wider range and greater spontaneity of expression.[14] After he decided on the form of *The Earthly Paradise*'s monthly lyrics—three seven-line stanzas for greater fullness and balance—he never again returned to the sonnet, with the exception of two drafts for introductory poems to his 1869 translation of the Icelandic saga "Grettir the Strong."[15]

In April 1869 Morris published in *Good Words* his poem "Hapless Love," a dramatic dialogue in tetrameter couplets which was not reprinted until May Morris inserted it in volume 24 of the *Collected Works*. As the poem opens, "Hic" [this one] inquires solicitously why his neighbor seems disconsolate. The poem centers on the

responses of "Ille" [that one], who replies that "no beguilers have I known / But Love and Death; and Love is gone" (ll. 15–16). When "Hic" suggests that "coming days / May bring another, good to praise" (ll. 19–20), the grieving "Ille" stubbornly refuses consolation, for "never will I love again, / For loving is but joyful pain / If all be at its very best" (ll. 21–23). "Ille" then relates his history; he had courted a passing maiden who had initially seemed pleased with his advances, until a "fair knight well appareled" (l. 51) overwhelmed her with his flattery—

"O beautiful, among the crowd
Of queens thou art the queen of all!
. . . .
Thou shalt be queen indeed;
For many a man this day shall bleed
Because of me, and leave me king
Ere noontide fall to evening" (ll. 54–55, 59–62),

and the lovers departed forthwith, "nor took they . . . any heed of me" (67).

When "Ille" later encountered the distraught maiden grieving over her now dead would-be king, he watched in dismay as

. . . she [did]rise and look around,
And took his drawn sword from the ground
And on its bitter point she fell—
No more, no more, O friend, to tell! (ll. 111–114),

and he yearns once again to see her as she once was: "O Love, come from the shadowy shore. . . . Come back, if but to mock me, sweet!" (ll. 117–120). When "Hic" rebukes him as a "fool! what love of thine was this, / Who never gave thee any kiss, / Nor would have wept if thou hadst died?" (ll. 126–128), "Ille" defends himself in turn:

Art thou a God? Nay, if thou wert,
Wouldst thou belike know of my hurt,
And what might sting and what might heal?
The world goes by 'twixt woe and weal
And heeds me not; I sit apart
Amid old memories. To my heart
My love and sorrow must I press.
It knoweth its own bitterness. (ll. 136–143)[16]

There lay the knight who would be king
Dead slain before the evening,
And ever my love cried out and said,
"O sweet, in one hour art thou dead
And I am but a maiden still!
The gods this day have had their will
Of thee and me; whom all these years
They kept apart; that now with tears
And blood and bitter misery
Our parting and our death might be."

Then did she rise and look around,
And took his drawn sword from the ground
And on its bitter point she fell—
No more, no more, O friend, to tell!
No more about my life, O friend!
One course it shall have to the end.

O Love, come from the shadowy shore,
And by my homestead as before,
Go by with sunlight on thy feet!
Come back, if but to mock me, sweet!

HIC.

O fool! what love of thine was this,
Who never gave thee any kiss,
Nor would have wept if thou hadst died?
Go now, behold the world is wide.
Soon shalt thou find some dainty maid
To sit with in thy chestnut shade,
To rear fair children up for thee,
As those few days pass silently,
Uncounted, that may yet remain
'Twixt thee and that last certain pain.

ILLE.

Art thou a God? Nay, if thou wert,
Wouldst thou belike know of my hurt,
And what might sting and what might heal?
The world goes by 'twixt woe and weal
And heeds me not; I sit apart
Amid old memories. To my heart
My love and sorrow must I press;
It knoweth its own bitterness.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

Fig. 5. "Hapless Love," *Good Words*, April 1869.

A similar triangle appears in "Alone Unhappy by the Fire I Sat"—fair-copied by Jane. Two of its personae are not hard to identify: a dubious male "friend," and a woman who leaves Morris's home in his company. The copy in Jane's notebook directly followed the three-page excision mentioned earlier,[17] and as we have it, begins:

> Alone, unhappy by the fire I sat
> And ponder'd o'er the changing of the days
> And of the death of this good hope and that
> That time agone our hearts to heaven would raise.
> But now lie buried 'neath the stony ways
> Where change and folly lead our wearied feet
> Till face to face this verse and sorrow meet. (ll. 1–7)[18]

The speaker strives to hope that we may yet, "ere we die . . . grow glad again" (l. 9) and "of the long days make a little thing" (l. 14). But his attempts fail, for

> . . . no image of felicity
> From out such twice changed days my heart could gain
> For still on pain I thought, and still on pain
> . . . .
> But grief meseems is like eternity. . . . (ll. 10–12, 15)

Subsequent lines make it clear that "[t]wice changed days" is an allusion to shared sorrow, for his thoughts return to

> . . . that changed home
> And in my ears there rang some piteous tale
> And all my heart for very pain did fail
> To think of thine; I cannot bridge the span
> 'Twixt what may be and thy sad weary face.
>
> Ah do you lift your eye-brow in disdain
> Because I dare to pity or come nigh
> To your great sorrow. . . . rather I
> *On you my helper in the darkness cry*
> For you alone unchanged now seem to be
> A real thing left of the days sweet to me. (ll. 24–34, emphasis mine)

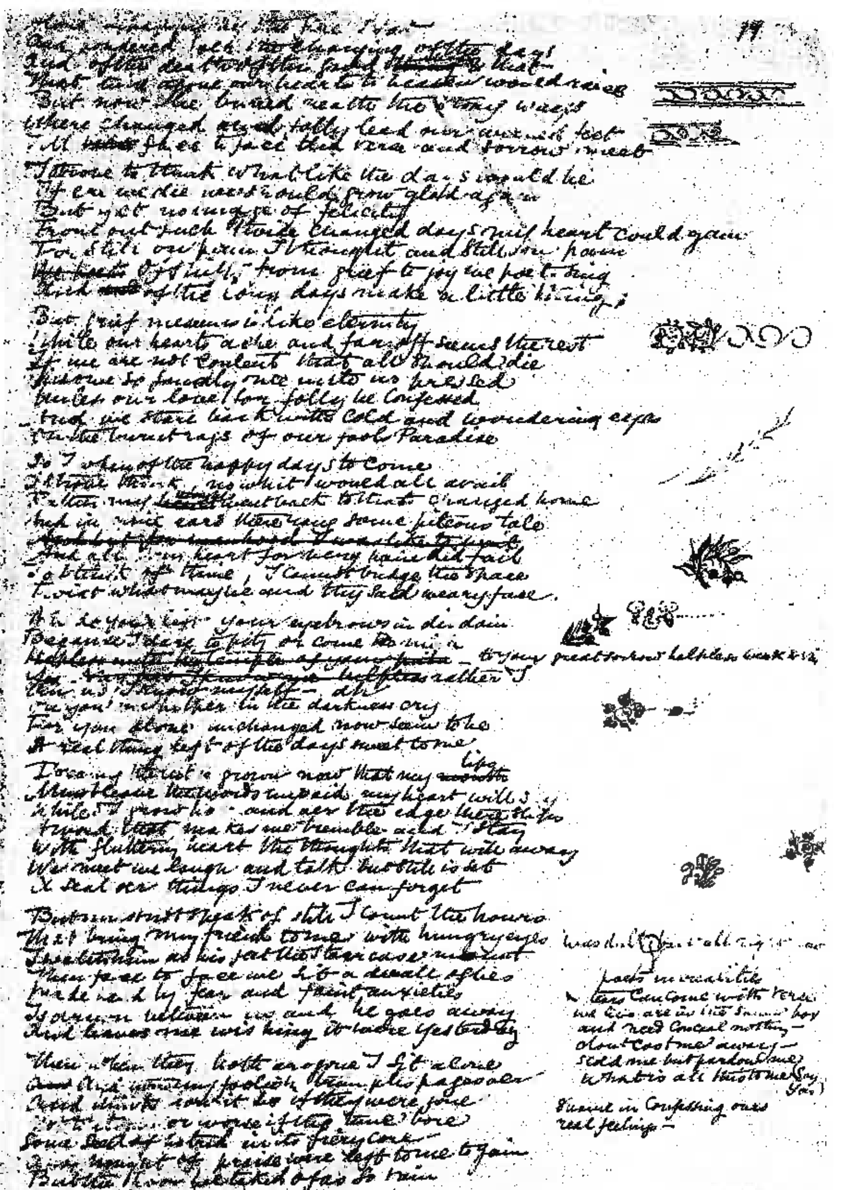


Fig. 6. "Alone, Unhappy by the Fire I Sat," B. L. MS. 45,298B, f.27. Jane Morris copyist.

Kenneth Goodwin has plausibly conjectured that Morris's gratitude to a "helper in the darkness" who "alone unchanged now seems to be / A real thing left of the days sweet to me" is a tribute to his fellow sufferer Georgiana Burne-Jones, trapped like him in a social world of polite lies, in which each is forced to witness actions which he or she cannot prevent. In Morris's case, the agent of betrayal is an erstwhile "friend," protected by "a wall of lies":

We meet, we laugh and talk but still is set
A seal o'er things I never can forget.

But must not speak of; still I count the hours
That bring my friend to me with hungry eyes
I watch him as his feet the staircase mount[19]
Then face to face we sit[;] a wall of lies
Made hard by fear and faint anxieties
Is drawn between us, and he goes away
And leaves me wishing it were yesterday

Then when they both are gone I sit alone
And turning foolish sleepless pages oer
And think how it would be if they were gone
Not to return, or worse if the time bore
Some seed of hatred in its fiery core
And nought of praise were left to me to gain
But the boon we talked of as so vain[.] (ll. 41–56)[20]

Note that it is not so much the loss of love (now an accomplished fact) which the poet fears, but permanent isolation, pointless rancor, and evacuation of the "boon" of poetic success, which now seems to him "vain" and secondary. In this context isolation and desertion were not in fact improbable: in the notes to William Fredeman's edition of Rossetti's letters, the editors remark that in 1871–1872 Rossetti seemed to expect that Jane Morris would leave her husband to live with him at Horrington Square in Turnham Green.[21]

But it was his own potential bitterness Morris dreaded most: "worse, if the time bore / Some seed of hatred in its fiery core." The clearest expression of this ethical imperative may be found in an oft-quoted passage in his 25 November 1872 letter to Aglaia Coronio, then in Athens:

29

But must not speak of, still I count the hours
That bring my friend to me with hungry eyes
I watch him as his feet the staircase mount
Then face to face we sit, a wall of lies
Made hard by fear and faint anxieties
Is drawn between us, and he goes away
And leaves me wishing it were yesterday.

Then when they both are gone, I sit alone
And turning foolish triumphs pages o'er
And think how it would be if they were gone
Not to return, or worse if the time bore
Some seed of hatred in its fiery core
And nought of praise were left to me to gain
But the poor we talked of as so vain.

Fig. 7. Stanza beginning, "But must not speak of," from "Alone, Unhappy by the Fire I Sat," B. L. MS. 45,298B, f. 29. Jane Morris copyist.

I am so glad to have Janey back again: her company is always pleasant and she is very kind & good to me . . . another quite selfish business is that Rossetti has set himself down at Kelmscott as if he never meant to go away; and not only does that keep me away from that harbour of refuge, (because it is really a farce our meeting when we can help it) but also he has all sorts of ways so unsympathetic with the sweet simple old place, that I feel his presence there as a kind of a slur on it: this is very unreasonable though . . . There, dear Agalia see how I am showing you my pettinesses! *please* don't encourage me in them. . . . O how I long to keep the world from narrowing on me, and to look at things bigly and kindly![22]

A notable embodiment of this resolution was "O Fair Gold Goddess," the fifty-six-line poem in Eddic meter mentioned earlier. This has been tentatively dated by Ruth Ellison as from 1873, after Morris had begun to co-translate Icelandic sagas with the help of Eiríkur Magnússon and before he made his second trip to Iceland (p. 101). In self-conscious "kennings," adeptly used but unexpected in the poem's English context, "Vilhjálmr Vandraeðaskáld" ("William the Troubled Skald") explains to "the fair gold goddess" (a standard kenning for "woman") what motivates him to study a past and foreign culture:

O fair gold goddess
As fain as thou mayst be
That gone I were
To the white sea's-roof land, [Iceland]
Yet fainer were I
To leap on the wave-swine [ship]
If God for me
The ghosts would quicken
Of Odin's fellows

. . . . . .

Might the world go backward
Then, Roses' Freyia, [beautiful woman]
Soon were I faring
Along the way
That leads to Valhall,
Long rest before me,
And my right hand holding
A story maybe
To give to Odin. (ll. 1–9, 16-24)

Ellison remarked that "rose" does not occur in any recorded kenning, and asks whether "it [is] too far-fetched to catch, in this apostrophe to Janey Morris, an echo of her lover's name?" (p. 101, n. 7). The motive for "Vilhjálmr"'s journey also evokes the desolation of "The Wanderers" in *The Earthly Paradise* and other medieval plaints, as the poet employs a "chant-meter" of six line stanzas with internal alliteration and three-stressed third and sixth lines:

For foul is waxen
That world the gods made,
And I . . . help nought
Nor holpen am I.

Fig. 8. "O Fair Gold Goddess," autograph, William Morris Gallery, J150, f. 1.

Fig. 9. "O Fair Gold Goddess," autograph, William Morris Gallery, J150, f. 2.

But all are gone by,
And the edge-play is over
And the long frost is fallen upon them.
There the wind wails ever
Without a story;
No whither the sea's way leadeth. (ll. 25–34)

The brave deeds of saga heroes have not sufficed for the world's betterment ("And lo, the world ever worseneth"), but the "Troubled Skald" hopes that his likewise-beleaguered medieval predecessors may be true friends:

Yet these are they
I must turn to now,
The dead—Yea the dead forgotten.
Fair friends were they
Were they alive;
And now for me meet friends it may be. (ll. 41–46)

Morris sought, in effect, an antipode to his anomie and emotional isolation in a counterfactual northern past, in which solitary individuals, such as "Grettir the Strong," could convey forms of wisdom that transcend their messengers:

O Rhine-fire's goddess,
This wretched trickle
Of Kvasir's mead, [poetry]
(The last it may be)
Thy skald now poureth;
Still praying pardon
For fainting heart
And tongue grown feeble,
Since nought he helpeth
Nor holpen is he. (ll. 47–56)

In "Everlasting Spring," a nostalgic poem of partial reconciliation in octameter quatrains copied in Jane's notebooks but never published, a rebuffed suitor imagines an ancient painting of lovers whose love, unlike that of the present, "nought ended, nought perfected, but [remains] all wrapped in peace and calm." In the harsh present the poet faces, by contrast, a "Love that cannot love me":

Fig. 10. "Everlasting Spring," B. L. 45,298A, f. 93.

Fig. 11. "Everlasting Spring," B. L. 45,298A, f. 94.

O my love my darling, what is this men say
 That I, for all my yearning have no words to deny. . . .
Love that cannot love me, een as I would believe
 Those dreams of the sad morning, when thou callest me to come . . .
 So I long to trust the story of that innocent sweet home.

Those fair meads of the old painter with their blossoms red and white, . . .
Nought lost and nought forgotten of old sorrow and delight,
 Nought ended, nought perfected, but all wrapped in peace and calm . . .

There to certain expectation all hope and fear is turned,
 And love swalloweth up all longing, and yet longing ne'er is done,
And the dreadful wearying patience, and the passionate pain that burned
  Unforgotten and unwasted, are but Love now[,] are but one. (ll. 1-32)[23]

A psychological displacement seems to have occurred, in which the image of a reciprocating lover is superimposed over that of a rejecting one. It is understandable why this poignant poem of unfulfillment was never published, but its displaced,

beckoning image also clarifies a deeply personal sense in which Morris believed that (as in the title of his 1873 poem) "Love Is Enough."

In "Hope Dieth, Love Liveth," a poem Morris *did* publish in 1891, this conviction is apparent. An early Morris near-final autograph of the poem survives, along with the fair copy he made for publication in *Poems by the Way*, and another correctly described in Charles Fairfax Murray's handwriting as "copied by Lady Burne-Jones,"[24] perhaps for *Poems by the Way*. Why such a copy would have been needed unless Georgiana Burne-Jones had owned and preserved an original is not clear, and no copy is included in Jane's notebook.

In twelve quatrains of rhymed couplets, "Hope Dieth, Love Liveth" makes three appeals. In the first two the speaker urges a loved one to remember the source of love, a state of grace in which "we and all the world seemed good" (l. 11), and to cherish a lingering kiss, which is also a farewell.[25] In the third, a voice enjoins him to "hold Love's hand, and make no haste / Down the long way" (ll. 35–36):

Strong are thine arms O love, and strong
Thy heart to live and love and long[26]
But thou art wed to grief and wrong:
Live then and long, though hope is dead!

Dream in the dawn I come to thee
Weeping for things that may not be!
Dream that thou layest lips on me!
Wake, wake to clasp hope's body dead! (ll. 1–8)

The symbolic farewell kiss is associated with remembrance of better days, when the "minutes of the happy sun . . . while agone on kissed lips shown" (ll. 18–19). The poet insists that these times cannot be revived, "[f]or hope is dead, for hope is dead!" (l. 28) yet seeks some gain beyond mere deprivation:

I bless thee, O my love, who sayest
'Mock not the thistle-cumbered waste!
I hold Love's hand, and make no haste
Down the long way, now hope is dead.

'With other names do we name pain,
The long years wear our hearts in vain

23

HOPE DIETH LOVE LIVETH

STRONG are thine arms O love, and strong
Thine heart to live and love and long
But thou art wed to grief and wrong:
Live then and long, though hope is dead!

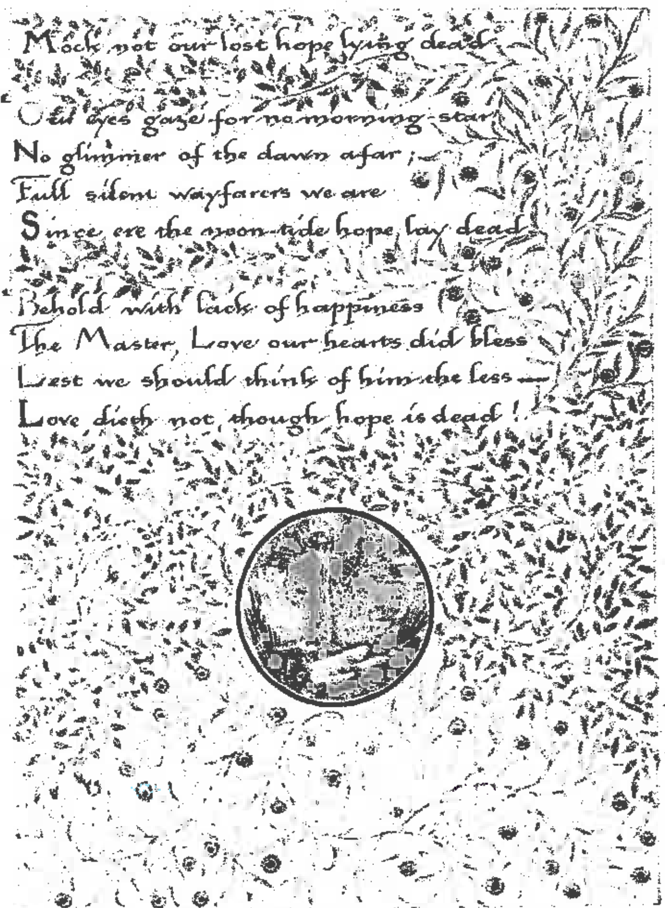
Live on and labour through the years!
Make pictures through the mist of tears
Of unforgotten happy fears,
That crossed the time ere hope was dead.

Draw near the place where once we stood
Amid delights swift-rushing flood
And we and all the world seemed good
Nor needed hope now cold and dead.

Dream in the dawn I come to thee
Weeping for things that may not be!
Dream that thou layest lips on me!
Wake, wake to clasp hopes body dead!

Count o'er and o'er, and one by one
The minutes of the happy sun
That while agone on kissed lips shone.
Count on, rest not for hope is dead.

Fig. 12. "Hope Dieth, Love Liveth," *A Book of Verse*, 1870, p. 23.


25

HOPE DIETH LOVE LIVETH

Mock not our lost hope lying dead
Our eyes gaze for no morning star
No glimmer of the dawn afar;
Full silent wayfarers we are
Since ere the noon-tide hope lay dead
Behold with lack of happiness
The Master, Love our hearts did bless
Lest we should think of him the less —
Love dieth not though hope is dead!

Fig. 13. "Hope Dieth, Love Liveth," *A Book of Verse*, 1870, p. 25.

Mock not our loss grown into gain
Mock not our lost hope lying dead.

'Our eyes gaze for no morning star
No glimmer of the dawn afar;
Full silent wayfarers we are
Since ere the noon-tide hope lay dead.' (ll. 33–44)

Yet the power of love itself remains:

Behold with lack of happiness
The Master, Love our hearts did bless
Lest we should think of him the less –
Love dieth not, though hope is dead!'(ll. 45–48)

"Love" in this passage is a strengthening force which enables "wayfarers" to make their way in the heat of day. Yet it too is subject to rebuff, as in "Guileful Love," also in "A Book of Verse":

All pains, all fears I knew, save only one;
. . . .
Thou didst not say my Love might never move
Her eyes, her hands, her lips to bless my love. (ll. 17, 19–20)

As a literary work, *A Book of Verse* is arranged for aesthetic variety and tonal balance rather than to reflect a progression in the poet's own emotions,[27] but its overall "message" is that we would lack the capacity to recognize love if we failed to mourn its transience: "with lack of happiness / The Master, Love, our hearts did bless / Lest we should think of him the less. . . ." Charles Murray's medallion for "Hope Dieth, Love Liveth" in *A Book of Verse*, set within Morris's tracery, expresses the resonances of its concluding lines well: a little man lies prostrate on the earth, his broken staff beside him, as an angelic figure rises above him in the undulating light of the golden sun.

Morris had striven to represent the burden of loss and existential vulnerability through the narrative tales of *The Earthly Paradise* completed in this period (the summer and fall of 1869), whose protagonists—Paris, Bharam, Acontius and Cydippe, Rhodope and her bereft father, Walter in "The Hill of Venus," and Kiartan, Bodli and Gudrun in "The Lovers of Gudrun"—confront the void of blocked desires. In another private poem of the period, "Written in a Copy of

The Earthly Paradise, December 25, 1870," a Christmas gift to his daughters, he reflects on the common sources of poetry and compassion:[28]

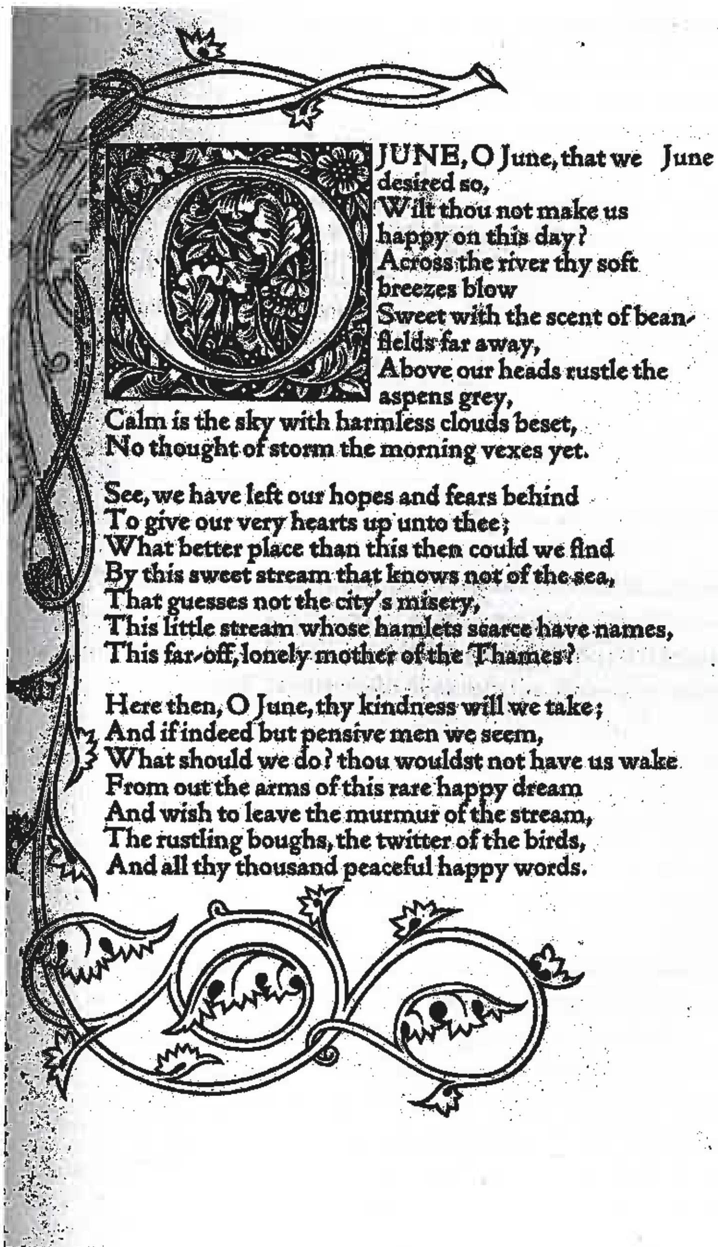
> Ah, my dears . . .
> My wisdom fails me at my need
> To tell why tales that move the earth
> Are seldom of content and mirth
> . . . .
> But those that struggled sore, and failed
> Had one thing left them, that availed
> When all things else were nought–
>   E'en Love–
> Whose sweet voice, crying as they strove,
> Begat sweet pity, and more love still,
> Waste places with sweet tales to fill. (ll. 8–11, 18–24)

At a different level, Morris also experimented with dramatic and narrative fragments whose plots suggested betrayal and adultery, such as the unfinished narrative poem "The Story of Swanhild" and "In Arthur's House," in which two servants observe the adulterous affairs of the aristocrats they serve.

More significantly, Morris increasingly inserted personal and quasi-personal lyrics as interludes within his longer narratives of the period. A prime instance of this pattern appears in "The Story of Orpheus and Eurydice," originally conceived as an *Earthly Paradise* tale but never published in his lifetime. The essentially symbolic resonances of its plot–Orpheus's descent into the underworld and attempts to lead Eurydice out of it through his songs–could be interpreted as a poetic representation of the apothegm "Hope Dieth, Love Liveth."[29] Eurydice is portrayed as not merely Orpheus's beloved but "the desire of all the world," an archetype of beauty and fertility in which nature finds its meaning. Orpheus's descent and struggle through the hideous and terrifying landscapes of hell is broken only by confrontations with Proserpine, Mercury, and other gods, whose permission is needed for his further passage, and by eight songs of petition to the gods and self-encouragement.

Orpheus's encounter with Proserpine, for example, defines the implacably impersonal forces which have created unsatisfied human desire, as she tells him:

> Yet hearken now, thou as thou standest there,
> So loving and so lovesome and so fair,
> All music on thy lips, and in thine heart–



O JUNE, O June, that we desired so,
Wilt thou not make us happy on this day?
Across the river thy soft breezes blow
Sweet with the scent of bean-fields far away,
Above our heads rustle the aspens grey,
Calm is the sky with harmless clouds beset,
No thought of storm the morning vexes yet.

See, we have left our hopes and fears behind
To give our very hearts up unto thee;
What better place than this then could we find
By this sweet stream that knows not of the sea,
That guesses not the city's misery,
This little stream whose hamlets scarce have names,
This far-off, lonely mother of the Thames?

Here then, O June, thy kindness will we take;
And if indeed but pensive men we seem,
What should we do? thou wouldst not have us wake
From out the arms of this rare happy dream
And wish to leave the murmur of the stream,
The rustling boughs, the twitter of the birds,
And all thy thousand peaceful happy words.

Fig. 14. First page of June lyric, *The Earthly Paradise*, Kelmscott Press, 1896–1897.

More than a God in this one thing thou art,
And if love ruled the world thou too shouldst rule.
But so it is not; love is but the tool
They use to make the morning bright and fair;
. . . .
Through the cold patience of thy grief forgot,
A hundred thousand springs wax bright and hot,
A hundred thousand summers ear the rose. (ll. 308–311, 315–317)

Orpheus's songs reflect an existential abyss as he increasingly doubts the presence of the "gods," their heedless power, and the treachery of their "good will":

I stand alone and longing Nor know if ought doth live
Except myself and sorrow Nor know with whom to strive,
Nor know if ye have might To hold back or to give
. . . .
Or if ye are my foes, Or the love that burns in me. (ll. 491–493, 495)

At this point Orpheus boldly defies the gods to their faces, asserting that a suffering human is morally superior to heedless alleged divinities:

O if ye laugh, then am I grown,
O Gods, as here I stand alone
The body of a ceaseless moan,
Yet better than ye are, a part
Of the world's woe and the world's heart. (ll. 648–652)

Like Christ and Prometheus, Orpheus's successful harrowing of hell would heal for all his fellow humans the ancient sting of death:

"O ye, if men should learn that one might die
And yet return, should not their grief be less
Because of hope? Should not their happiness
Falter no more twixt time of longing pain
And time of gaining all that they may gain? (ll. 778–782)

In response to Mercury's "divine" threat that "a fearful wall shall part / Thy soul and her soul" (ll. 977–978), Orpheus accuses the gods of malice:

. . . ye grudge to see love's bliss
Here, where things die not: only on the earth
Beset by cold death's ever narrowing girth
Ye let us love. . . . (ll. 984–987)

In the rhetoric of Morris's personal lyrics, Orpheus's songs to Eurydice briefly evoke and celebrate the lovers' happy union:

O my love, the night shall last
Longer than men tell thereof
Laden with our lonely love! . . .

O my love, how could it be
But summer must be brought to me
Brought to the world by thy full love? (ll. 1053–1055, 1137–1139)

Yet when the arrogant gods prey on his natural desire to verify that Eurydice is with him, he is "caged, prisoned," and fearful that he has been "left all alone / Wandering through space where nothing might be won / By will or strength or courage" (ll. 1206–1208). He pleads with Eurydice to "Be swift . . . to follow after me, / For in the world, if nowhere else, love lives" (ll. 1274–1275), and then in desperation turns "with dreadful face" to gaze on her:

for an instant all was well forgot
But very love; for through the midst of it
His mortal eyes beheld her body flit,
Yea coming toward him her remembered eyes
Gazing upon him in no other wise
Than when upon the earth in some fair wood
Their feet drew each to each and all was good. (ll. 1310–1316)

before she vanishes. The gods have won, and he has lost what he had beheld.

Tormented by guilt and despair, Orpheus is granted a form of empathetic redemption:

[It may be that] . . . there grew a shame
. . . .
Of his own lonely grief within his heart

And to that cry he cried to have a part
In some more godlike sorrow than the days
Shed dully on his petty tangled ways. . . . (ll. 1345–1349)

Like the poet of "Written in a Copy of *The Earthly Paradise*," he finds a measure of consolation in his grief in fellowship with countless others:

From out the world's grief a calm life he won,
Nothing forgotten of his feverish pain,
Nothing regretted, but all spent and vain,
. . . .
And he not glad nor grieved, but God indeed.

Ah let such go their ways,
Thank him low-voiced that even this is sweet
Unto our dying hearts that needs must gain
A little hope from pity and from pain. (ll. 1377–1381, 1384–1386)

Morris was a religious skeptic, or at least an agnostic who thought cruel "gods" should stand up for the afflicted, and he found in an ardent, vulnerable bard's indictment of alleged supernatural beings an empathetic homage to the nature and transience of life.

Yet the most obvious instances in Morris's works of the insertion of personal lyrics into wider narratives were the twelve choral lyrics he wove into the twenty-four tales of *The Earthly Paradise.* Each of these introduces an inner narrative frame for the tales and echoes the responses these evoke in their listeners, and each lyric encompasses three seven-line pentameter stanzas whose "burden" ranged from anguish and isolation to resigned hope.

Consider, for example, the November lyric ("The Weariness of November" in *A Book of Verse*), cast as a response to a sublimely bleak landscape seen from within "these four walls, hung with pain and dreams" (l. 7):

Look out upon the real world, where the moon
Half-way twixt root and crown of these high trees
Turns the dead midnight into dreamy noon,
Silent and full of wonders, for the breeze
Died at the sunset, and no images,
No hopes of day are left in sky or earth—
Is it not fair, and of most wondrous worth? (ll. 8–14)

10

THE WEARINESS OF NOVEMBER.

I

Are thine eyes weary? is thy heart too sick
To struggle any more with doubt, and thought
Whose formless veil draws darkening now and thick
Across thee e'en as smoke-tinged mist-wreaths, brought
Down a fair dale, to make it blind and nought?
Art thou so weary that no world there seems
Beyond these four walls, hung with pain and dreams?

II

Look out upon the real world, where the moon,
Half-way twixt root and crown of these high trees,
Turns the dead midnight into dreamy noon,
Silent and full of wonders; for the breeze
Died at the sunset, and no images,
No hopes of day are left in sky or earth—
Is it not fair, and of most wondrous worth?

III

Yea, I have looked, and seen November there;
The changeless seal of change it seemed to be,
Fair death of things, that living once, were fair;
Bright sign of loneliness too great for me;
Strange image of the dread eternity;
In whose void patience how can these have part,
These outstretched feverish hands, this restless heart?

Fig. 15. "The Weariness of November," *A Book of Verse*, 1870, p. 10.

Yet the moon, elsewhere an image of love and clarity, here presents a cold and unattainable sublimity which outlines the frailty of the speaker's human self:

> Yea, I have looked and seen November there;
> The changeless seal of change it seemed to be,
> Fair death of things, that living once, were fair;
> Bright sign of loneliness too great for me;
> Strange image of the dread eternity;
> In whose void patience how can these have part,
> These outstretched feverish hands, this restless heart? (ll. 15–21)

The imagery of Morris's "changeless seal of change" provided a vast amphitheater for these outstretched hands, an image which spoke for all the feverish and restless as they enter the *néant*.

I have argued in this essay that Morris's poems of personal grief embody an effort to seek solace in metaphysical probings (the purpose of pain, the silence of gods, the meaning of emotions which fail to grant satisfaction or closure). His earlier *Defence of Guenevere*, by contrast, had contained a single comparable first-person poem, the beautiful fourteen-line lyric, "Summer Dawn," and even this, Margaret Lourie has argued, may have been based on a medieval *alba*.[30]

I have also suggested that some of the lyrics of Morris's middle period represented a new development, and that their direct emotions, expressive cadences, and allegorical and allusive references represented his mature poetic preoccupations at their best. Had he been free to extend them and draw them together with narrative passages, as in *Love Is Enough* (1873), he might have fashioned from these a counterpart of the cycles of Tennyson's "In Memoriam" or Rossetti's "The House of Life."

Instead, Morris ceased to write short, free-standing first-person poems in the manner of these 1869–1870 lyrics, in confirmation, perhaps, of Matthew Arnold's well-known dictum that poetry should never represent situations "in which suffering finds no vent in action, in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged."[31] Instead, he sought ways to embed personal lyrics within narrative plots and cycles which interleaved "mental stress" *and* Arnoldian "vent[s] in action."

Morris accordingly fashioned his lyric and introspective passages so that they were spoken by the protagonists of his narratives, displaced into mythic or allegorical settings, or inserted as internal voices in his songs or lyrics. Antecedents of this practice were already apparent in his poems for *A Book of Verse*, no fewer than six of which became part of *The Earthly Paradise* or could be read as pendants to it. As he had done in the "November" poem's shifts of register from winter landscape to intractable sublimity, Morris blended the individual nature of loss into its representative counterparts, and in the process created some of the finest personal and dramatic narrative verses he ever wrote.

Notes

1 *The Collected Works of William Morris Volumes*, 24 vols., ed. May Morris (London: Longmans, 1910–1915), 24: 343–366 (hereafter CW); *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1938), 1: 538–539. For a complete list of these poems and their publication histories, see "Poems of the *Earthly Paradise* Period," William Morris Archive, http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/listpoemsepperiod.html.

2 R. C. Ellison, "An Unpublished Poem by William Morris," *English* 15 (Autumn 1964): 100–102.

3 W. E. Fredeman, *Prelude to the Last Decade* (Manchester: John Rylands Library, 1974), pp. 100–105 and passim; W. E. Fredeman et alia, *Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Brewer, 2002–2008); Oswald Doughty, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Victorian Romantic* (New Haven: Yale, 1949); John Bryson, ed., *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Jane Morris: Their Correspondence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); Jane Morris, *The Collected Letters of Jane Morris*, eds. Frank Sharp and Jan Marsh (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2012).

4 Fiona MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 2012), p. 209. Edward Burne-Jones met Maria Zambaco in late 1866 when invited to paint a portrait of her and her friend Marie Spartali.

5 Letter from William Morris to Aglaia Coronio, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*. 4 vols., ed. Norman Kelvin (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984–1996), 1: 173.

6 John Le Bourgeois, *Art and Forbidden Fruit: Hidden Passion in the Life of William Morris* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2007). See also Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 250: "In the verses of these years the gentle grey-eyed girl with her enormous self-containment recurs in a fascinating counterpoint with Morris's other female, the beautiful shape-changer, desirous and willful. There is the suggestion of a fleeting physicality. We can also surmise that in this sense he was rejected. . . . Perfect self-abnegation and the clarion call of comradeship: they seem to have arrived at a solution from one of the chivalric novels of Charlotte M. Yonge." Kenneth Goodwin offers his considered view in "Unpublished Lyrics of William Morris," *Yearbook of English Studies* 5 (1975), 206: "Morris, denied passionate reciprocation by his wife, the woman to whom he had directed all his romantic longings and hopes, forbidden to express devotion and love to the woman who had comforted him in the collapse of his romantic dreams, had only his verse in which to give expression to the turbulent emotions of his heart."

7 Jack Lindsay, *William Morris: His Life and Work* (London: Constable, 1975), p. 167.

8 Rossetti's sonnets often develop a central metaphor, as do Morris's "Sad-Eyed and Soft and Grey," "As This Thin Thread," and "The Doomed Ship," the latter of which echoes the imagery in Rossetti's "Lost on Both Sides." For the dating of Rossetti's sonnets, see Fredeman, *Prelude*.

9 Three of the six did appear in contemporary periodicals: "Sad-Eyed and Soft and Grey" appeared in *Good Words* for April 1869, and "Rhyme Slayeth Shame" and "May Grown A-Cold" in the *Atlantic Monthly* for February and March 1870. The only other personal lyric published in periodicals during this period was "Hapless Love," also in *Good Words* for April 1869.

10 B. L. Add. Ms. 45,298A, ff. 87–88; also CW, 24, p. 359.

11 Untitled, B. L. Add. Ms. 45,298A, ff. 87–88, Morris autograph on blue ruled paper; 3 drafts, none an uncorrected fair copy. In the last line "death" is uncapitalized. Also a fair autograph copy is in WMG J153. May Morris published the poem in CW, vol. 24, p. 359. It is remotely possible that Morris could have addressed to Georgiana Burne-Jones the remark that she would not lay hand "to thine own work," that is, confronting her husband regarding his actions, but the act of bequeathing a necklace as a symbolic bond—conferring obligations on him as well as her—is more likely that of a husband.

12 Two drafts exist in B. L. Add. MS. 45,298A, ff. 90 and 91. The second draft (f. 90) contains many improved readings; for example, l. 5 had been "And even as a bitter word did rise," and l. 13, "Before me made me bitterly alone." For the text, see William and Mary Archive, http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/listpoemsepperiod.html.

13 In "Rhyme Slayeth Shame," the speaker asks his poem to tell his loved one "That love has slain time, and knows no today / And no tomorrow," and "May Grown A-Cold" anticipates the monthly lyrics of *The Earthly Paradise* in its contrast between the season's beauty and the speaker's loneliness (B.L. Add. Ms. 45,298A, f. 86).

14 These included his other personal lyrics of the period—"Summer Night," "Rest from Seeking," "Love Fulfilled," "Error and Loss," "Hope Dieth, Love Liveth," "From the Upland to the Sea," and "Thunder in the Garden," as well as a pair of monthly lyrics for *The Earthly Paradise* which remained in manuscript. The latter were printed by May Morris in CW, vol. 6, p. xxvii.

15 One was used as an epigraph to the translation in 1869, and May Morris printed the second in CW, vol. 7, p. xix.

16 CW, vol. 24, p. 351.

17 For Morris manuscripts, see Kenneth Goodwin, *A Preliminary List of Manuscripts and Documents of William Morris* (London: William Morris Society, 1983).

18 B.M. Add. Ms. 45,298B, ff. 27–29 and Kenneth Goodwin, "Unpublished Poems of William Morris," pp. 197–201, p. 206.

19 The physical description is doubly accurate: the Morris family apartments in Queen Square were above the shop, and Kelmscott Manor had a sitting room on its second floor.

20 "The Youth of William Morris," B. M. Add. MS. 45,298B, ff. 27–29.

21 *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, Vol. 5, *The Chelsea Years*, III: 1871–1872.

22 Morris, *Letters*, 1: 172–173.

23 B.L. Add. Ms. 45,298B f. 5 and 5v.

24 B. L. Add. MS. 45,298A, f. 96 and copies in HM 6427, f. 26 and ff. 36–37.

25 See *A Book of Verse*, pp. 23–25.

26 In the B. L. Add. MS. 45,298A, f. 96 draft, line 2 reads, "Thy trenchant sword to cleave the wrong." In its first version, then, "arms" was used in its martial sense. Morris may have decided that a cleaving sword was an unlikely metaphor for a woman's constancy in love.

27 The chief sequence discernible in "A Book of Verse" is a movement from poems related to *The Earthly Paradise* sequence ("The Shows of May," "The Hopes of October") and a few personal poems ("Love Fulfilled"), to those with an Old Norse association ("To the Muse of the North," "The Son's Sorrow"), also accompanied by a few personal poems. Poems excerpted from or later inserted into a larger sequence are intermixed with those never again published; and the volume ends with a poem of resigned loneliness, "The Birth of June," and a finale of celebrated love, "In Praise of Venus."

28 Eugene Le Mire, *A Bibliography of William Morris*, (New Castle, DE.: Oak Knoll Press, 2006), p. 32; part IV was issued 1–15 December 1870; the poem appears in CW, vol. 24, p. 343.

29 It could also have been published separately, as was "The Story of Aristomenes," another unused *Earthly Paradise* tale.

30 Margaret Lourie, ed., *William Morris: The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems* (New York and London: Garland, 1981), p. 255.

31 Preface to 1853 *Poems*, *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold*, ed. A. Dwight Culler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 204.