BURNE-JONES and WILLIAM MORRIS

Designs for the *Æneid* and the Kelmscott Chaucer

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Fig. 1 The Death of Dido

Morris and the 'painted book'

The *Æneid* is the most ambitious of Morris' calligraphic manuscripts, justly described by his daughter May as, 'the noblest of all his painted books'. It was, too, the most notable product of a fascination for illuminated manuscripts which Burne-Jones and Morris had shared since their student days in Oxford, between 1853 and 1855. At this time, Lady Burne-Jones recalled, the two friends immersed themselves in anything medieval, reading Chaucer by night, and by day visiting the Bodleian 'to look at painted books'.[1] Burne-Jones' student notebook of *c.*1854 – on display in a tablecase in this exhibition – shows his first, faltering attempts at calligraphy (a popular male Victorian pursuit) by

copying a calender of Saints' days.[2] Morris' earliest essays in the art appear to date from 1856, while he was working in the architectural offices of George Edward Street (1824-81). Unfortunately none of his manuscripts from this period survives, however his earliest biographer Mackail recalled the distinctly medieval character of their rich initial letters and coloured borders.[3] Probably by the beginning of the 1860s, Morris had acquired four Italian handwriting manuals of sixteenth century – two by Ludovico Vicentino Arrighi *(La Operina* (1522), and *Il Modo de Temperare le Penne* (1523)), Sigismondo Fanti's *Thesauro de Scrittori* (1525) and Giovantonio Tagliente's *La vera arte de Scrivere* (1525) – after which his calligraphy became more closely modelled on Italian and Romanesque manuscripts; in fact Morris is known to have referred directly to these while working on the *Æneid* in 1874. His first substantial calligraphic manuscript, *The Dwellers of Eyr*, was written around 1869. This was one of four translations of Icelandic sagas which Morris dedicated to Burne-Jones' wife, Georgiana; three others, *Henthorir Saga*, *Banded Men* and *Howard the Halt*, written in 1874, are now in the Fitzwilliam Museum. Some four years earlier, Burne-Jones collaborated for the first time with Morris on a manuscript anthology of Morris' poetry entitled 'A Book of Verse' (also dedicated to Georgiana Burne-Jones); additional illumination was provided by Charles Fairfax Murray, and the coloured initials and some ornament by George Wardle. This manuscript, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, initiated between the two men a relationship of scribe and illuminator which would achieve its finest expression in the *Æneid*.

Although Morris devoted less of his own time to calligraphy as he became increasingly absorbed in all aspects of printing, his passion for collecting medieval manuscripts was undiminished. In the last weeks of his life, he paid £1000 to Lord Aldenham for a fine psalter, and sent Sydney Cockerell to Stuttgart to acquire a bestiary (for which he paid £700). After his death in 1896, his collection of medieval manuscripts represented – at an estimated £12,500 – one of the most valuable elements in his estate.[4]

The Æneid

In 1873, Burne-Jones was commissioned by his friend William Morris to produce designs of a series for half-page and marginal miniature illustrations and storiated capitals for an illuminated manuscript of Virgil's *Æneid*. Morris himself was responsible for the calligraphy and decorated initial letters, and planned to transfer each of Burne-Jones' designs to the vellum sheets of the manuscript from the paper on which they were drawn. According to the artist's wife, Georgiana, 'This went on for more than a year. It was to have been a glorious vellum manuscript with pictures painted from Edward's designs, twelve large ones and many initial letters – and filled with ornament by Morris. All the pictures were designed, but scarce half of the *Æneid* was written out and less coloured'.[5] After Morris moved from Queen Square to Turnham Green, the two men met regularly on Sunday mornings to continue their work on the Æneid; as Burne-Jones wrote to his friend Charles Eliot Norton, 'Every Sunday morning you may think of me and Morris together; he reads a book to me and I make drawings for a big Virgil he is writing'.[6]

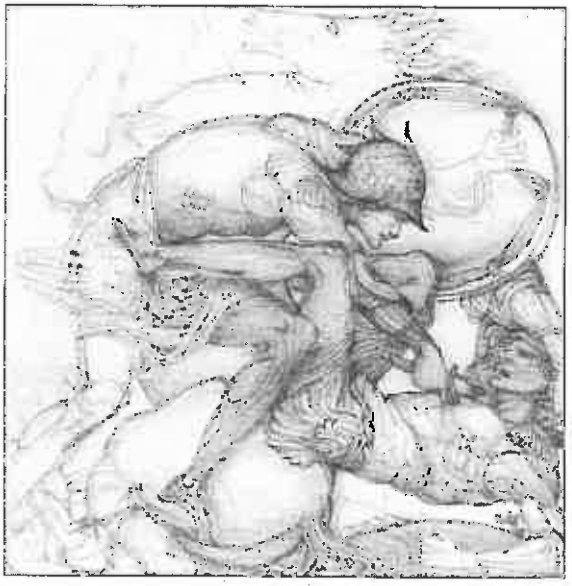

fig 2. *Æneas slaying Mezentius*

During the first year or so of their collaboration, work on text and images appears to have progressed fairly smoothly. Gradually, however, delays began to develop, partly because of Morris's increasing involvement with the activities of the firm, Morris & Company, of which he assumed sole control in 1875,[7] but also because of his insistence on obtaining the highest quality materials available. In the case of the vellum which he planned to use for the finished manuscript, this meant having supplies sent over from Italy by Charles Fairfax Murray. Only by the end of 1874 had Morris acquired a sufficient quantity of large-scale vellum for a folio, and even then he struggled some months later to find sheets of the required thickness. At the beginning of 1875, too, Morris had begun a verse translation of the *Æneid*, which proved to be all- consuming, so that by March he complained to Fairfax Murray that his illumination work had all but reached a standstill: 'As to my illumination, it don't get on just now, not because I shouldn't like to be at it, but because I am doing something else with Virgil, to wit, doing him in English verse'.[8] Despite his frustration, the

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BURNE-JONES and WILLIAM MORRIS
Designs for the *Æneid* and the Kelmscott Chaucer

On display:

The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Kelmscott Press, 1896
Lent by the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge
One of 425 copies printed on paper. Presented by Morris to Philip Webb, and by him to Trinity College, 1907

Drawings by Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98)

The *Æneid*

Letter 'E': The Wooden Horse no.1183/25
Venus appearing to Æneas before Carthage no.1183/1
Æneas fleeing from Troy no.1183/2
Æneas and the Harpies no.1183/3
Letter 'Q': Love and Dido no.1183/24
Letter 'P': Dido's Wedding no.1183/22
The Death of Dido no.1183/4
Letter 'D': Troy burning no.1183/18
The Burning of the Ships no.1183/5
Æneas and the Sibyl in the underworld no.1183/6
Lavinia in the palace of Latinus no.1183/7
Venus bringing armour to Æneas no.1183/8
Iris and Turnus no.1183/9
Æneas slaying Mezentius no.1183/10
Æneas at the tomb of Mezentius no.1183/11
The Death of Turnus no.1183/12
Tartarus, with the punishment of the Damned no.1183/19
Letter 'H': Helen hidden no.1183/16
Juno no.1183/13
Letter 'T': The Golden Bough no.1183/15
Letter 'E': The Ruins of Priam no.1183/21
Letter 'I': Rumour blowing a horn no.1183/23
Letter 'I': Scylla no.1183/27
Letter 'T': Andromache no.1183/28
Letter'P': Polyphemus no.1183/29
Letter 'T': Neptune and the winds no.1183/26

The Kelmscott Chaucer

Study of birds for *The Parlement of Foules* : preliminary study for p.313 no.1079/80
The Knyghtes Tale : 'Palamoun was in a bussh...' no.1050/3
The Knyghtes Tale : 'This goddesse on an hert ful hye seet' no.1050/5
The Knyghtes Tale : The Temple of Dyane – two preliminary studies for p.23 nos.1079/8 and 1079/9
The Knyghtes Tale : 'Arcite in the Temple of Mars' no.1079/ 12
The Tale of the Manne of Lawe : prologue no.1050/8
Trial proof for *The Tale of the Manne of Lawe*: prologue no.1079/n
The Tale of the Clerk of Oxenford : 'Upon Griselde, this povre creature' no.1050/14
The Romaunt of the Rose : 'Sorowe was peynted next Envye' no.1050/32
The Romaunt of the Rose : 'Richesse a robe of purpre on hadde' no.1050/35
The Romaunt of the Rose : 'The lusty folks thus danced' no.1050/38
The Romaunt of the Rose : 'The lusty folks thus danced' – preliminary study no.1079/65
The Romaunt of the Rose : 'I saw the rose when I was nigh' no.1050/45
The Parlement of Foules : 'On every bough the birrdes herde I sing' no.1050/46
The Legende of Goode Wimmen : Ariadne of Athens no.1050/63
The Legende of Goode Wimmen : Philomene no.1050/65
The Hous of Fame : 'Me thoghte I saw an egle sore' no.1050/69
The Hous of Fame : 'Eolus ... tok out his blakke trumpe of bras' no.1050/72
The Hous of Fame : 'And al this hous, of which I rede, was made of twigges, flawe, rede' no.1050/73
Troilus and Criseyde : 'This Troilus sat on his baye stede' no.1050/77
Troilus and Criseyde : 'Aprochen gan the fatal destinee' no.1050/84
Troilus and Criseyde : 'The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen' no.1050/75
The Romaunt of the Rose: 'Gladnes and Mirthe' – preliminary study no.1079/64
The Hous of Fame : 'Tho I saw al the half ygrave' no.1050/71
The Hous of Fame : 'Tho I saw al the half ygrave' – intermediate study no.1079/ xxiii
The Hous of Fame : 'How I gan to this place aproche' preliminary study no.1079 xx (a)
The Hous of Fame : 'But up I clomb with alle paine' preliminary study no.1079 xx (b)
The Hous of Fame : 'But up I clomb with alle paine' preliminary study and caricature of dogs no.1079 xx (c)
Sketchbook with designs for *The Hous of Fame* no.1070/3
The Tale of the Wife of Bath – preliminary study and caricatural figure group no.1079/28
Sketchbook layout design for the Kelmscott Chaucer no. 1079 I

Photographic proof: *Troilus and Criseyde* no.1079p
The Frankeleyns Tale : 2 proof woodcuts nos.1079 (i,ii)
Title page of The Kelmscott Chaucer: trial proof
Sheet of six trial proofs for the Kelmscott Chaucer : 3 trial borders for Kelmscott Chaucer no.1079z
Troytype, lent by the University Library, Cambridge

Charles Fairfax Murray (1849-1919)

Portrait of Sir Edward Burne-Jones no.778
Self-portrait no.1401

translation soon became a source of 'great joy'[9], and he worked energetically on the text, once translating 488 lines in one day. *The Aeneids of Virgil: Done in English Verse by William Morris* was published by Ellis and White the following year. Morris' manuscript translation – which he claimed to have made 'as a poet, not as a pedant'[10] – has been used as the source of the text of the labels in this exhibition[11]; Burne-Jones thought it 'simply divine'.

Given this extraordinary level of activity, it was perhaps inevitable that Morris' work on the manuscript dwindled. In May 1875 he told Fairfax Murray that he was progressing slowly, but still apparently resolutely, with the illumination of Burne-Jones' designs, and invited him to help him complete this task[12]; not long thereafter, work on the manuscript appears to have ceased completely. At the time he left off, Morris had completed 177 pages, almost to the end of Book VI, as well and 22 decorative initials as a half-page miniature of Venus and Æneas on the opening page. The manuscript remained in his hands until 1890, when it was bought by Murray. He employed Graily Hewitt to complete the calligraphy in gold and ink, much of which had already been prepared by Morris with red bole on a grey-purple ground. The floral and foliate decoration was completed by Mrs Louise Powell on the basis of patterns used for the Kelmscott Chaucer. After Murray's death, the manuscript was sold by his son at Sotheby's in 1928, and passed into the collection of Mrs George W. Millard. From 1932 to 1989 it was in the collection of Mrs Estelle Doheny, Los Angeles; it is now in the collection of Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Burne-Jones' drawings for the *Æneid*, for all their smallness of scale, are among the finest he ever executed, condensing into a maximum space of five inches square a remarkable fluidity of execution and sense of design. The twenty-nine drawings in the Museum's collection, of which a selection is presented here, had left the artist's collection by 1899 (a year after his death), when they were acquired by Laurence Hodson. In 1906 they were bought as a group at Christie's by J.R. Holliday, who bequeathed them to the Museum in 1937.

The fact that Burne-Jones' designs were intended to be manuscript illuminations rather than printed illustrations to a text allowed him considerable freedom of conception and design. Unlike the drawings for the Kelmscott Chaucer, which had to survive a complex process of translation into print (see below: **Drawing into Print**), those for the *Æneid* were intended to be transferred manually to the vellum folio, so that the need to make them stylistically viable in another medium was not a concern. Instead of working to the prescribed dimensions of page and/or canvas Burne-Jones could allow his conception of a subject to be determined by the (often eccentric) formal constraints of initial letters and storiated capitals; the powerful image of the Trojan Horse, within the initial 'E', for example (*fig. 3*), shows how imaginatively he responded to the challenge.[13]

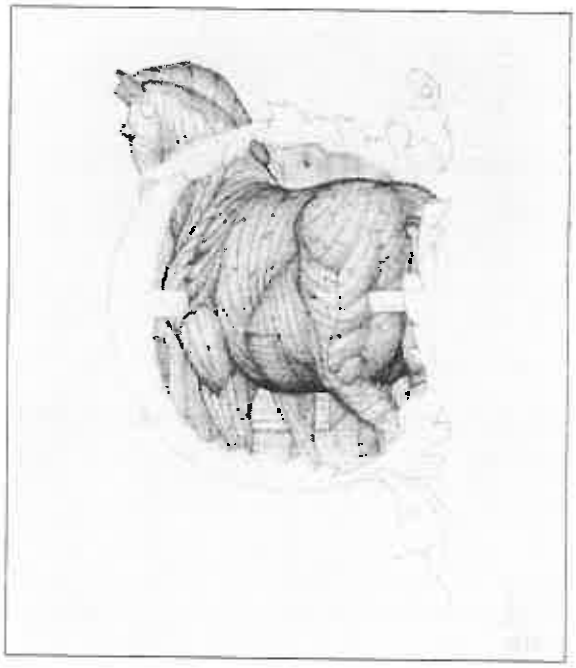

fig. 3 *Letter 'E': The Wooden Horse*

In all but size, the stylistic preoccupations apparent in the *Æneid* drawings , with their emphasis on line and surface pattern, are echoed in Burne-Jones' work in other media, from finished paintings to decorative designs for stained glass and furniture. Although these qualities are generally considered to link his work with the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetic movement, their interwoven planar lines and intensity of expression also recall Rossetti's book illustrations of late 1850s and 1860s, which Burne-Jones had so admired as a young man; the former's design for the *Maid of Elfen-mere*, in particular, he considered to be 'the most beautiful drawing for an illustration ... I have ever seen'.[14]

Burne-Jones evidently considered some of the imagery which he created for the *Æneid* successful enough to re-use, with minimal modifications, in his designs for the Kelmscott Chaucer. In his illustrations for both manuscript and printed text he favoured certain types of architectural settings or landscape backgrounds: the tall pillars and arches in his drawings of *Helen Hidden*, for example, are also to be found in a number of the illustrations for the Chaucer; the dense forest thicket of the *Golden Bough* (Letter 'T') recurs in the *Knyghtes Tale*; and the desolate rocky landscape of the Underworld, become the *roche of yse* in Chaucer's *Hous of Fame*. In addition, certain motifs were transposed directly from the earlier manuscript designs: Rumour blowing his trumpet (Letter 'I') becomes Eolus in *The*

Hous of Fame; the draped, howling furies of Tartarus link hands in the *Romaunt of the Rose*, and, somewhat uncomfortably, the Wooden Horse is revived – with every nail intact – as the fearsome 'steede of bras' in the prologue to *The Squieres Tale*.

Burne-Jones, Morris and Chaucer

In December 1892 the Kelmscott Press issued a list of forthcoming publications including an edition of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* in a new type face 'with about sixty designs by E. Burne-Jones'. This was to be the most important achievement of the press and a landmark in book production. Known simply as the Kelmscott Chaucer, it has been described in superlatives since its appearance but it is perhaps best understood as the pinnacle and finest expression of the Arts and Crafts movement as a whole. Appearing at the end of the careers of both Morris and Burne-Jones, the Kelmscott Chaucer also represents something of a conclusion to the lives of these two great figures in the Victorian art world. In Morris' case this is only too literally true. He was in the advanced stages of his last illness when handed the completed volume in June 1896. He died just four months later. For Burne-Jones, who survived Morris by only two years, it could not have quite the same significance; but it did represent the culmination of a lifetime of close collaboration between the two men in which Chaucer's poetry was a recurring theme.

As early as 1858, when Morris and Burne-Jones were sharing lodgings at Red Lion Square in London, the pattern of their artistic relationship was set. Unsatisfied with the stock furniture that was available, they decided to design and make their own in a heavy, solid style that gave physical expression to their taste for the medieval. The finest of these early pieces was a wardrobe decorated by Burne-Jones with scenes from Chaucer's *Prioresses Tale* to celebrate the wedding of Morris to Jane Burden.[15] The theme was taken up by Morris in his new home at Bexley Heath. Situated by the old pilgrims' route to Canterbury, the Red House contained numerous references to Chaucer. The dining room, for example, was decorated with a series of embroidered hangings depicting *The Legende of Goode Wimmen* and Morris took to describing the garden porch as the 'Pilgrims' Rest'. Chaucer also provided the subjects for several pieces, particularly tapestries, produced by the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., set up in 1861 to further promote the ideals of a return to medieval values in taste and the life enhancing qualities of true craftsmanship.

Morris' own poetry has a strong Chaucerian quality. *The Earthly Paradise*, at the time his most successful and celebrated work, is a cycle of linked stories inspired by the form of *The Canterbury Tales*. At one stage Morris went so far as to to suggest that a 'resemblance' between his own work and that of Chaucer, 'comes of our both using the narrative method'.[16] If Morris' poetry is somewhat tedious to modern ears, it may be due in part to the speed and gusto with which he wrote. When writing *Jason*, which he addressed to Chaucer ('my Master'), we are told that Morris could get down seven hundred lines in a single day.[17]

Morris and the printed book

With this abiding literary interest it is hardly surprising that Morris should feel drawn to books which so strongly evoked the very spirit and texture of the medieval world. It also seems a short step from his fascination with manuscripts to the attempts to reform modern printing, as he had reformed most other aspects of traditional crafts. In fact, book production had never been very far from his thoughts. He made an initial foray into this field in 1866 when planning an edition of *The Earthly Paradise* with illustrations by Burne-Jones. A number of the designs were engraved by Morris himself but the project was abandoned. During the next two decades they continued to explore different aspects of book production and illustration, notably in manuscripts like the *Æneid*, but it was not until 1888, after a lecture by Emery Walker, that Morris returned to the subject of fine printing. At this time he was working on an edition of his historical romance *The House of the Wolfings*, to be published by the Chiswick Press. Indeed, his work on this preceded Walker's lecture, but it was probably the latter's sympathy for good examples of early printing (incunabulae) and his practical approach which inspired Morris. Soon he was experimenting with type design, layout of text, papermaking and different materials for binding.

The culmination of this was the founding of the Kelmscott Press in 1890, allowing Morris control of all aspects of the book himself and therefore ensuring that the highest standards of design and production could be maintained. As set out in the 'Note' on his aims in founding the press, Morris was clear in his own mind what was wanted: 'I began printing books with the hope of producing some which would have a definite claim to beauty, while at the same time they should be easy to read and should not dazzle the eye, or trouble the intellect of the reader by eccentricity of form in the letters'.[18] It also appears that his primary concern was with the quality of the typography. He went on to declare his interest in the calligraphy of the Middle Ages as well as the early printing that replaced it, while deploring the tendency to overdecorate with little or no concern for the appropriateness of the design. Nevertheless,

there can be little doubt that, while traditional typographic concerns spurred his need to reform the basic criteria of book design, illustration was a key element and played a major role in many Kelmscott Press titles.

fig 4. Charles Fairfax Murray (1848-1919): *Edward Burne-Jones* c. 1869

The Kelmscott Chaucer

The most ambitious project of the press, to produce a lavishly decorated edition of Chaucer's works, brought Morris and Burne-Jones closer together than they had been since the early stages of their careers. Although they had always remained in touch and on good terms, Morris' commitment to political issues during the 1880s put a distance between them. In 1891, however, having agreed to the basic aims of the book, 'the friends sat down dutifully to read Chaucer over again before beginning their work'.[19] It was clear from the beginning that this would be a huge undertaking but their long-held admiration for the poet was an inspiration, giving them new reserves of strength. Morris, above all, seemed to his partner a kind of powerhouse when their project was begun; 'strong, self-contained, master of himself and therefore of the world'.[20] Indeed, such was Morris' enthusiasm that Burne-Jones had some doubts about the clash of personalities; not between the two friends but between Morris and Chaucer: 'if he and Morris were to meet in heaven, I wonder if they'd quarrel'.[21]

The division of labour on the Chaucer corresponded to that already established for the *Æneid* and other illuminated manuscripts. Morris would design the typeface, the layout, the decorative borders and the storiated initials, while Burne-Jones would be responsible for the illustrations. This approach had also been rehearsed in some of the earlier books produced by the Kelmscott Press, notably *The Dream of John Ball* and *The Golden Legend*, both of which appeared in 1892; however these contained only a handful of illustrations.

As the initial announcement indicated, the Chaucer was to have 'about sixty designs by E. Burne-Jones'. In the event this proved to be something of an underestimate. Burne-Jones' method was to read through the text and identify those passages which inspired an image or which seemed to lend themselves to some form of visual accompaniment. Before long his estimate was for seventy-two illustrations, creeping up to eighty within a few weeks, to a final tally of eighty-seven. Morris who, it must be remembered, was underwriting the whole project, accepted these increases as inevitable if the book was to achieve their avowed aim. At no time did he stint on any expense which may have compromised the quality of the final work. Nevertheless, there is a suggestion that he was becoming nervous of the scale of the project and the possibility of it being a commercial failure. The widespread view that Morris ran 'the Firm' and subsequently the press as a privileged hobby is somewhat inaccurate. In fact, all aspects of his professional activities operated on solid financial principles. In November 1894, Morris wrote to the subscribers to the Chaucer informing them that 'It has been found necessary for the due completion of the above work to add considerably to the number of woodcuts designed by Sir Edward Burne-Jones.' He also took the opportunity to announce an increase in the number of copies to be printed from 325 to 425, thus ensuring a more healthy return on sales. Morris could feel fairly confident of this since the edition had all but sold out in advance.

In his approach to the illustrations, Burne-Jones set out to be completely faithful to Chaucer's text. 'I am putting myself wholly aside, and trying to see things as he saw them; not once have I invaded his kingdom with one hostile thought.'[22] This was hardly the case, however, and it seems that he showed a strong preference for the romantic and courtly tales, with a corresponding distaste for the more bawdy passages. A note in one sketchbook records his aversion to certain tales; 'no picture to Miller no picture to Reeve no Picture to Cook's Tale'.[23] *The Miller's Tale* caused him particular discomfort and at one time he doubted whether such a coarse piece could even be by the hand of Chaucer. Although Morris seems to have pressed for a more even representation in the designs, the overall balance clearly reflects the sensibilities of Burne-Jones' late Victorian character.

If this implies any conflict between the two men during the collaboration, nothing could be further from the truth. Morris and Burne-Jones had agreed on complete honesty in order to create an appropriate setting for the father of English poetry.

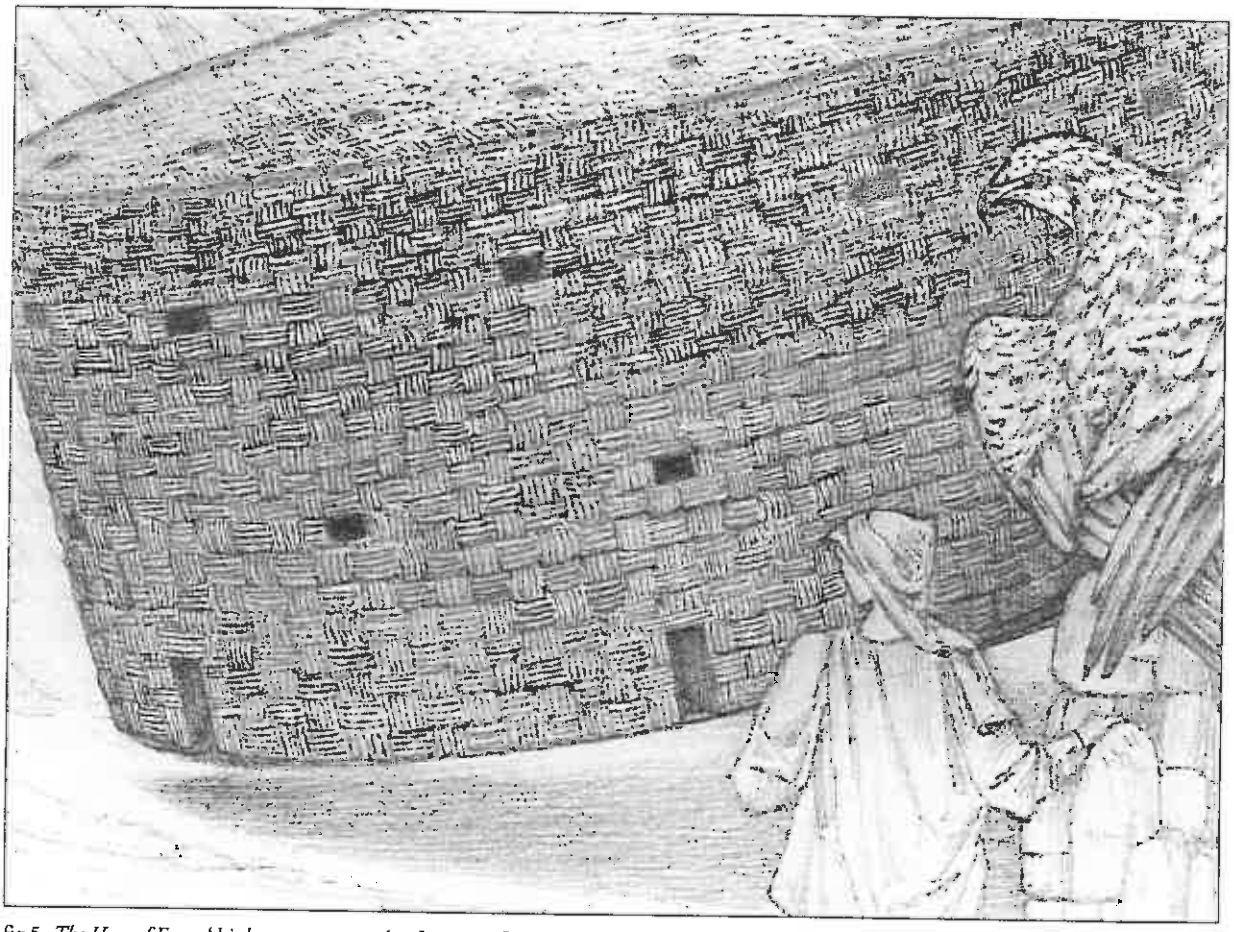

fig 5. *The Hous of Fame:* 'this hous … was made of twigges, flame, rede'.

Any design condemned by one party was to be done over again. However, there are very few examples of rejected designs throughout the course of the whole enterprise. Such alterations as there are, seem to have been on the part of the artist himself due to some dissatisfaction with the design. The scene of the knight and his haggard bride from *The Tale of the Wife of Bath* went through at least one different version before arriving at the drawing which was eventually used. This is something of an exception, however. In most cases it is striking how close Burne-Jones' initial idea is to the finished drawing. The various stages of the design for Dyane in *The Knyghtes Tale* serve to emphasize the clarity of Burne-Jones' initial conception which was only refined as the work progressed. Another example is the dream scene of the 'roche' from *The Hous of Fame.* The basic idea of the setting was established in a few pencil strokes in Burne-Jones' sketchbook (no.1070/3). Subsequent alterations to the design reflect not so much a change in the conception but some variation over precisely which phrase should be illustrated.

In one or two cases Burne-Jones was hard put to visualise the passage chosen for illustration. In *The Romaunt de la Rose,* for example, he seems to have been at his wit's end over the conception of Venus: 'make her naked, never mind Chaucer'[24] is an uncharacteristic display of forceful, if irritated, independence. On another occasion he complained of the difficulties in conceiving the allegorical figures of vice; 'I wish Chaucer could once for all make up his unrivalled and precious mind whether he is talking of a picture or a statue.'[25] These conflicts are rare, however, and in the main Burne-Jones was happy to work within the information that the poet had provided.

A different problem was that of images evoked by the text but only loosely described. Burne-Jones is uneven here but his approach shows a curious combination of the literal and the imaginative. In *The Hous of Fame,* for instance, where Chaucer writes of a house 'made of twigges, falwe, rede, and grene eek,' the artist conceives of an immense basket inhabited by figures like some rustic spacecraft (*fig. 5*). This illustration has been dismissed as perhaps his most absurd but it has genuine power as an image which his wife makes even more suggestive in her description of it as a 'whirligig home of whisperings'.[26]

Another example of how this gap between word and image was bridged can be seen in the illustration of Venus from *The Knyghtes Tale.* In Chaucer's text the statue of the goddess in her shrine is described, confusingly, as 'naked, fletynge in the

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fig 6. Preliminary Study of birds for *The Parlement of Foules*

large see'. Burne-Jones' response was to create a kind of watery sphere through which we can see the lower portion of the goddess floating over the plinth. It is a solution which Burne-Jones probably derived from early medieval manuscripts and one which he had used already as a shorthand for the domain of Neptune in his drawing for the *Æneid*.

In several illustrations, Burne-Jones was able to rework designs from earlier in his career. *The Prioresses Tale* is, in part, related to the wardrobe he had decorated for Morris in 1858 when the two were newly committed artists embarking on their careers. With others, such as his design for Chaucer dreaming from *The Legende of Goode Wimmen*, which first appeared as a drawing in 1865 (City of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery), we are able to observe not only the artist's refinement of the design but the evolution in his work as a whole. Where the first design has some of the fussy mannerisms of his early conception of Medieval art, the Kelmscott drawing shows greater elegance and fluidity in conception. This marks out the passage of Burne-Jones' work as a whole. His early fascination with the archaisms of Rossetti gave way, partly under Ruskin's active supervision, to a more monumental style derived from Italian Renaissance art and finally to the order and grace of the antique. All these facets are to some extent represented in the Chaucer drawings. There is even the possibility that Burne-Jones was looking to the Japanese sources which so inspired other artists of his generation. The preliminary drawing of birds for *The Parlement of Foules* (*fig. 6*) not only recalls Japanese models; but the harmonious arrangement of the birds on the sheet is strongly reminiscent of prints and pattern books such as Hokusai's *Manga* which were in widespread circulation.

From Drawing to Print

Morris and Burne-Jones were fortunate in the collaborators they employed at Kelmscott, who undertook all stages in the production with great care and sympathy for the spirit of the work. This was essential because the process was fairly laborious and aspects of the design could be marred at each stage. Morris was already fairly skilled at block cutting and although he did not undertake this himself for the Chaucer, he understood the principles of translating an ink drawing into a woodblock. His designs for the borders and initial letters were among the first to be engraved. It was no mean achievement because, in all, some fourteen different borders were designed, eighteen frames to surround the illustrations, and over twenty initials and storiated capitals as well as the large title page. In each case the blocks were cut by the veteran engraver W. H. Hooper. Burne-Jones, on the other hand, had little experience of the practice of cutting and his drawings required greater work in the translation from pencil to wood. The normal practice of handing over each drawing to the engraver for transfer proved to be impossibly slow and presented a major delay to the progress of the book. The solution to this was Emery Walker's, who persuaded Morris to overcome his opposition to the use of photographic process. From each of Burne-Jones' drawings a full size photographic print, or 'platinograph', was made allowing another artist, Robert Catterson-Smith, to go over the outlines under supervision. This simplified the image to the essential lines that could be followed by the engraver. Even with this mechanical aid there was a constant need for sensitive interpretation and Catterson-Smith consulted Burne-Jones regularly, while referring to prints by Dürer for guidance. Others also helped out at this stage, notably the collector and copyist Charles Fairfax Murray, who assisted with the inking. Following this a photograph of the reworked design was made on the woodblock itself which was then cut by Hooper. After several trial impressions, with last minute adjustments, the woodblock was approved and handed over to the printers.

Work on the printing of the Chaucer began on August 8th 1894 using the two old Albion presses at Upper Mall, Kelmscott. Even at this stage there were further problems to be overcome. The ink, for example, took several attempts to get right before a traditionally-made German ink was selected which had the desired darkness and consistency. Even then it was found to stain the hand-made paper which

Morris had spent a great deal of time choosing. There was also the white pigskin binding, about which Morris had strong views, to be prepared by Cobden-Sanderson at the Doves Bindery. His control of the physical character of the book extended even to the design of the silver clasps which were made by Douglas Cockerell.

All of these different tasks were undertaken as the need arose although, given the distractions and the age of the two creators, progress was in fits and starts. On March 21st, 1896 the last three illustration woodblocks were delivered to the printers. On May 6th the final block, that for the titlepage, was approved and two days later printing was complete. On June 2nd the first bound copies were delivered to the two artists, just in time for Burne-Jones to give his as a present to his daughter on her birthday.

For the preceding few weeks Morris had been showing the effects of physical decline which only his enthusiasm for the Chaucer overcame. He died at Hammersmith on October 3rd 1896. As one doctor put it, 'the disease is simply being William Morris, and having done more work than most ten men'.[27] The collaboration between the two men which had carried on throughout their adult lives found its 'crowning achievement' in this edition. Writing to Charles Eliot Norton, Burne-Jones described it as 'like a pocket cathedral', an architectural analogy that seems to sum up the ideals, the practice and the achievement of the Kelmscott Chaucer. 'My share in it is that of the carver of images at Amiens, and Morris's that of the Architect and Magister Lapicida'.[28]

After the deaths of both Morris and Burne-Jones there was considerable interest and value placed upon their work. In particular, the success of the Kelmscott Chaucer had drawn attention to the laborious practice and the range of designs produced for the completed book. Morris had bequeathed everything to his family who disposed of many of the artefacts related to the press through auction. Burne-Jones' drawings, which survived almost intact due to the unusual process of block-cutting, had a similar fate. Sold at auction in 1919, they were bought by Georgiana Burne-Jones' nephew, Stanley Baldwin MP. Two years later he presented the drawings to the Fitzwilliam Museum.

1 G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, London, 1904 I, p.104
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3 See Paul Thompson, *The Work of William Morris*, 1967, p.132
4 Sydney Cockerell's estimate. See C. Harvey and J. Press *William Morris: design and enterprise in Victorian Britain*, Manchester, 1991, p.219-20
5 *Memorials*, II, p.56
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7 In 1874, Morris claimed to be 'up to his neck in designing papers, chintzes and carpets', see *Memorials*, II, p.56
8 *Letters*, March 11 1875, no.265, p.246
9 ALS to Louise MacDonald Baldwin, March 25 [1875], *Letters*, no.266, p.248
10 Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 1994, p.362
11 Now in the Huntington Library, San Marino, Ca. Ms 6439
12 *Letters*, May 27 1875, no.273, p.254
13 As Peter Cormack has recently pointed out (orally), it seems likely that Morris, as calligrapher, would have drawn the brown ink outline within which Burne-Jones executed his design, perhaps using paper cut-outs.
14 Burne-Jones' comments originally appeared in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 1856, quoted *Memorials*, I, 119. Rossetti's illustration was for William Allingham's *The Music Master*, published by Edward Moxon in 1855.
15 Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, on loan to the V & A Museum.
16 J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, London, 1899, I, p.197
17 C. Faulkner, quoted in Duncan Robinson, *A Companion Guide to the Kelmscott Chaucer*, London, 1975, p.26
18 William Morris, A Note by William Morris on his aims in founding the Kelmscott Press, Kelmscott, 1898, p.1
19 *Memorials*, II, p.217
20 *Op.cit*, p.216
21 *Op.cit*, p.217
22 *Memorials*, II, p.217
23 Sketchpad with designs for *Chaucer* no. 1079 I, Fitzwilliam Museum
24 Sheet of notes in Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, quoted in Robinson, 1975, p.29
25 *Memorials*, II, p.217
26 *Ibid.*
27 Mackail, II, p.336
28 *Memorials*, II, p.278

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Duncan Robinson and Stephen Wildman, *Morris & Company in Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1980
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