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neck surmounted by a colossal head, covered with a quantity of luxuriant fair hair—large fine face, and blue eyes." Sigríður described at length his intellectual aspirations:

> The dream of his life had been to go to the Latin School at Reykjavík, but too poor to attempt that, he resolved to go to Reykjavík and learn some trade, which he did, apprenticing himself to a saddlemaker. He knew, being in Reykjavík, books were within reach, and there he would have the opportunity of coming in contact with the college students and other educated men, from whom he could always pick up something. His leisure hours were entirely spent in studying English, French and German. His historical knowledge was perfectly marvelous, and many of the college students heartily wished that their memory might serve them as well as Jóns during their examinations, for he never forgot a date or a deed in history worth remembering. Returning to the countryside, he had barely enough money to live and have a few books.

A letter from C. J. Faulkner to Eiríkur Magnússon, dated April 4, 1872, mentions sending a copy of Wood's *Natural History* to Jón in that year, and Sigríður Einarsdottir said, in her lecture, that Morris "used to take great delight in selecting books, and other presents, that he thought would give Jón pleasure."[14] Several letters from Morris to Magnússon, one dated as late as January 12, 1896, refer to letters from Jón which the poet wanted translated.

From some points of view Jón Jónsson í Hlíðarendakoti is a centralizing symbol of Morris' interests in Iceland—the laborer struggling to better himself, and the Viking reincarnate. In 1876, Matthías Jochumsson once had dinner with the Morrises; afterwards, his host reminisced about his Iceland journeys, and the subject of his famous guide came up:

> "When we came to Búðará undir Sandi," said Morris, "it was very hot, and men and horses were dead tired. And then I say Þórr drink the sea when Jón the strong lay down flat by the river and gulped water until we thought it unbelievable."[15]

In this brief but vividly and affectionately recalled scene, the associations of modern Iceland with the medieval world of the sagas is made explicit, and it was surely in such associations that much of Iceland's attraction lay for Morris.

[14] See note 3, above.

[15] Jochumsson, p. 285: "Þórr drink the sea" is a reference to a trick played on Þórr by Útgarða-Loki, who challenged the god to empty a drinking horn the other end of which, unknown to Þórr, was in the sea. See Snorri Sturluson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, ed. Guðni Jónsson (Akureyri, 1954), pp. 69-76.

Illustration and Morris' "Ideal Book"

ALLAN R. LIFE

WILLIAM MORRIS' precise conception of book illustration is surprisingly difficult to determine. Early in his career, his interest in illustration was so typically Pre-Raphaelite that he intended specific passages of *The Earthly Paradise* to be printed with wood-engravings after Edward Burne-Jones, and he engraved most of the completed blocks for this abortive edition himself.[1] Unfortunately, Morris failed to articulate his view of illustration during the 1860's, when he probably had the fullest appreciation of the interpretative and creative aspects of this art form. By 1892, when he outlined his criteria for ideal illustration in a lecture to the Society of Arts on "The Woodcuts of Gothic Books," he had committed himself, in theory and in practice, to the principles he expounded a year later in "The Ideal Book."

Significantly, Morris' paper on "The Ideal Book," like his "Note. . .on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press" (1895), largely ignores illustration. "However bare it may be of decoration," Morris declares, a book "can still be a work of art, if the type be good and attention be paid to its general arrangement" (*AWS*, I, 310). As he proceeds, it becomes clear that "decoration" in the broadest sense is not only unnecessary to an artistic book, but often threatens its very existence. In one characteristic pronouncement, Morris declares that "any book in which the page is properly put on the paper, is tolerable to look at, however poor the type may be—always so long as there is no 'ornament' which may spoil the whole thing" (*AWS*, I, 315). Only true ornament can enhance the ideal book, and to be ornamental a design

> must form as much a part of the page as the type itself . . .and. . .it must submit to certain limitations, and become architectural; a mere black and white picture, however interesting it may be as a picture, may be far from an ornament in a book; while, on the other hand, a book ornamented with pictures that are suitable for that, and that only, may become a work of art second to none, save a fine building duly decorated, or a fine piece of literature. (*AWS*, I, 317-318)

[1] Joseph R. Dunlap gives a full account of this project in *The Book that Never Was* (New York, 1971). See also A. R. Dufty, "Introduction," *William Morris: "The Story of Cupid and Psyche," with illustrations designed by Edward Burne-Jones, mostly engraved on the wood by William Morris* (London, 1974).

To Morris, that fine building duly decorated, that fine piece of literature, together constitute "the one absolutely necessary gift that we should claim of art" (*AWS*, I, 318). Doubtless this conviction explains his fascination with book production towards the end of his career, for an edition of a literary masterpiece can attain at least some of the qualities of Morris' ideal "work of architecture": "a harmonious co-operative work of art, inclusive of all the serious arts" (*AWS*, I, 266). After describing illuminated manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Morris concludes that "the only work of art which surpasses a complete Medieval book is a complete Medieval building," and he declares that books, being "self-contained things," could become "generally good in the present day" to a far greater extent than buildings (*AWS*, I, 321, 337). Hence his insistence that the components of the ideal book must be "architectural," that the total book must be "architecturally good" (*AWS*, I, 311). Hence, too, his disparaging reference to "a mere black and white picture," which reflects his impatience with any work of visual art that fails to meet his "architectural" expectations. In his paper on "Woodcuts of Gothic Books," Morris emphatically identifies the qualities of his ideal, "organic" art as "the epical and the ornamental; its two functions are the telling of a story and the adornment of a space or tangible object." Still more emphatically, Morris adds that "the labour and ingenuity necessary for the production of anything that claims our attention as a work of art are wasted, if they are employed on anything else than these two aims" (*AWS*, I, 320). As his comment on book ornament suggests, Morris often bends his first criterion to accommodate purely decorative, "unepical" art, but "academic" works that violate the second are denounced in some of his lectures with messianic vehemence.

"Messianic" is not too strong for the spirit in which Morris advocates that last best hope of architectural excellence, the ideal book. Occasionally, his lectures and essays on printing contain an attempt at humor—in "The Ideal Book," he assures his audience that the publishers of the *Westminster Gazette* had lowered "the tone (not the moral tone)" of their paper, by dyeing it green (*AWS*, I, 312). Generally, however, the orientation of these works is not only moral but ethical: printers of past and present are condemned for "licentious spacing,"[2] "infernal abbreviations," and "gross and vulgar" letters, and even laudatory references to "purity of line" and "decency" of appearance reinforce Morris' argument that "artistic morality" demands the production of beautiful books (*AWS*, I, 255, 316, 321). Appropriately, his ideal volume is consistently based on works from the first

[2] "A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press," in H. Halliday Sparling, *The Kelmscott Press and William Morris, Master-Craftsman* (London, 1924), p. 137.

decades of printing: the late "Gothic" period "when written literature was still divine, and almost miraculous to men" (*AWS*, I, 321). Even the size of the perfect book, though ostensibly functional, is basically medieval. Morris recommends "a big folio," which "lies quiet and majestic on the table, waiting kindly till you please to come to it, with its leaves flat and peaceful, giving you no trouble of body, so that your mind is free to enjoy the literature which its beauty enshrines" (*AWS*, I, 317). Not only an ideal of book design, but an ideal of living informs this passage.

Keenly aware of the gulf between his ideals of art and life and those of "our own anti-architectural days" (*AWS*, I, 273), Morris devotes numerous lectures to expounding a few aesthetic premises, radically simplifying historical transitions to inspire a return to "Gothic" virtues. Consequently, his public utterances, like the workshop pronouncements recorded by his acolytes, can misrepresent his true convictions. If he appeared "a petulant veteran wilfully and invincibly ignorant of the latest developments" in art, declares George Bernard Shaw, it was because of "a fixed and very sound rule of his that it was no use arguing with a man who didn't know. . . .You never knew how much Morris had up his sleeve until he thought you knew enough to understand him."[3] Even for those outside this select circle, there is evidence in Morris' comments following the first delivery of "Woodcuts of Gothic Books" that his view of illustration was less inflexible than his general papers on book design and printing would suggest. After a talk censuring modern illustrators for ignoring ornamental requirements, Morris criticized his audience for not advancing "the contrary view to his own. . . , as there was a good deal to be said *pro* and *con*" (*AWS*, I, 335). As this statement indicates, Morris was aware of the interpretative, "epical" function of illustration, and he might have discussed it more frequently in his lectures if his principles of book design had been more widely appreciated.

Shaw also emphasizes, however, that "what Morris said he meant, sometimes very vehemently" (p. 9), and one can go too far in qualifying his public opinions. His rigorous adherence to "architectural" and "organic" principles is characteristic of his genuine dogmatism, which is most conspicuous in his conception of beauty. Like Ruskin, Morris regards beauty as an absolute, and he explains its rarity (to him) in several centuries of Western art by arguing that "beauty, however unconsciously, was no longer an object of attainment" after the "Gothic" period (*AWS*, I, 281). Accompanying this cessation of the aesthetic quest was the virtual disappearance of such prerequisites for beauty as the happy artist-craftsman, and "the fitness of a piece of craftsmanship for the use [for] which it is made" (*AWS*, I, 317). The functional aspect of Morris' aesthetic is represented in his lectures on printing, in which beauty

[3] *William Morris as I Knew Him* (New York, 1936), pp. 24-25.

and legibility are often equated. However, H. Halliday Sparling urges that " 'legibility' and 'beauty,' for Morris, meant something other than easy readability for the mass of readers" (p. 17)—a point amply confirmed by Morris types. This fact is also demonstrated by Morris' "strong reservations" concerning the fourth and fifth articles of a "tentative statement" on printing by Talbot Baines Reed, which propose that a type lending "itself most readily to. . .rapid and comprehensive action of the eye" is not only "the most legible," but "the most beautiful." As Sparling never wearies of repeating, Morris was far more impressed with Reed's first article: "That the eye, after all, is the sovereign judge of form" (p. 17). Undoubtedly, Morris' enthusiasm for this proposition was increased by Reed's emphasis on the eye's regality, which suggests both the intellectual functions and the metaphorical connotations of seeing. At times, Morris' moral preoccupation with external beauty echoes Ruskin's eloquent celebration of the visual faculty, and he also emphasizes the eye's role in transmitting impressions to the intellect: "reason" and "logic" are invoked throughout his prescriptions for the beautiful book, and the ideal illustration is praised for "giving pleasure to the intellect through the eye" (*AWS*, I, 331). In one Ruskinian and even Panofsky-like tribute, he describes medieval art as being "not only. . .obviously and simply beautiful as ornament, but its ornament also is vivified with forcible meaning, so that neither in one or the other does the life ever flag, or the sensuous pleasure of the eye ever lack" (*AWS*, I, 320). Yet Morris reputedly prided himself on the paucity of emblematic significance in his own book initials and borders,[4] and his lectures dwell more often than he would have conceded on the purely formal aspects of books. Illustrations, he declares, should be so subordinate to the "harmonious whole" of the book, that "a person with a sense of beauty" will derive "real pleasure whenever and wherever the book is opened, even before he begins to look closely into the illustrations" (*AWS*, I, 330). Associated with this concern for the immediate visual impression is Morris' contention that "we only occasionally see one page of a book at a time; the two pages making an opening are really the unit of the book" (*AWS*, I, 315). Those less interested in adorning their shelves with "a visible work of art" than in reading literature and looking at illustrations are assured that their "interest in books. . .is literary only, and not artistic" (*AWS*, I, 330-331). For "artistic," to Morris, is synonymous with "architectural" and "organic" values.

[4]Sparling, p. 68, derides the "silly complaint" that Morris' decorations "did not 'fit the text,' or, in other words, were not symbolic of its meaning; to this [Morris] would have retorted, as he did when one of his romances was taken for an allegory, that when he had anything to say, he said it in so many words and plainly; that his decorations were not intended to be illustrative or emblematic, but exactly decorations and no more."

Unlike some of his disciples, however, Morris is chiefly concerned with artistic practice, and he often turns from the physical appearance of ideal books to the ideal men who alone can produce them. Reminiscent of the creators of a Gothic cathedral, all the producers of a beautiful book, from the illustrator to the printer, must be "thoughtful, painstaking artists, and all working in harmonious co-operation for the production of a work of art" (*AWS*, I, 335). Ideally, an illustration should be produced after the other components of the book have been designed; otherwise, the artist may fail to harmonize his work with the page—or opening—where it will appear. Just how formidable this "harmonizing" process could be is suggested by four "requirements" that Halliday Sparling regards as "fundamental for an illustration intended to go with type." Whether Morris would have considered each of them equally fundamental is questionable—Sparling evolved his criteria from "what Morris wrote as to illustration in conjunction with what may be deduced from his practice"—but this statement is valuable as an unqualified synthesis of his "architectural" pronouncements:

> (a) There should be in [the illustration] no line much thinner than the thins nor much thicker than the thicks of the body-letter; (b) there should be approximately the same ratio of black to white in any one square inch of the drawing that there is in any one square inch of the typography; (c) the character and tone of the lines used in the drawing should repeat or "play up to" those of the type in straightness or curvature, no less than in colour; (d) it must be confined within a definite frame or outline. (Sparling, pp. 126-127)

Morris argues that the artist who wishes to approach standards of this sort must adhere to certain procedural formulae. Ideally a wood-engraver himself, the illustrator must either cut his own design, or provide a fellow artist-craftsman with a "sketch" suitable for engraving. Though the engraver will endeavor to "translate" the drawing "without injuring in any way the due expression of the original design," Morris emphasizes that the artist's " 'sketch' should be as slight as possible, i.e., as much as possible should be left to the executant" (*AWS*, I, 334). Consistent with Morris' emphasis on an almost sacramental contact between "the hand" and "the work," this ideal relationship between illustrator and engraver differs totally from the actual practice of such Victorian engraving firms as those headed by the Brothers Dalziel and Joseph Swain. Admittedly, these engravers strengthened linear contours in designs by John Tenniel and other prolific draftsmen, "translated" wash drawings, and made it their prime objective, according to the son of one of the Dalziels, "to interpret faithfully the *intention* of the designer."[5] Furthermore, several leading illustrators of the '60's were apprenticed to wood-engravers to study the techniques of drawing for publication, and a spirit of "harmonious co-operation" often existed between the draftsmen and

[5]Gilbert Dalziel, "Wood-Engraving in the 'Sixties' and Some Criticisms of To-Day," *Print Collector's Quarterly*, 15 (January, 1928), 82.

the engravers. Yet, though Morris acknowledged the technical skill of these firms—the principal engraver of the Kelmscott Press, W. H. Hooper, was a veteran of the "Sixties"—he was convinced by 1866 that "all wood-cutting" since Bewick had "been wrong in principle," and in 1877 he denounced the "manufacturers of wood-engraving, e.g. the Dalziels, as big humbugs as any within the narrow seas."[6] The Dalziels' notion of "interpretation" was not Morris', for they tried to produce facsimiles of drawings, and were freely censured by artists whose works they inaccurately rendered. Such a situation seemed to Morris doubly objectionable. On the one hand, it encouraged draftsmen to neglect the limitations of wood-engraving, and to produce such technical puzzles as Rossetti's "The Maids of Elfen-Mere," sent to the Dalziels as a "many tinted drawing" executed in "wash, pencil, coloured chalk, and pen and ink."[7] On the other, it confined the engraver to reproducing designs already completed, making both his craft and his work "dead" and "mechanical" (*AWS*, I, 334). Nor does Morris approve of the books and periodicals where these engravings appeared. To him, these works are epitomized by the *Cornhill Magazine*, where Frederick Walker's illustrations for Thackeray's *Philip* (Plate 3) are "embedded" in a "mass of utilitarian matter" that is "absolutely helpless and dead" (*AWS*, I, 330).

Though Morris calls Walker's designs "about the best of such illustrations" (*AWS*, I, 330), he finds them as unsuitable for the ideal book as the typography they face. Indeed, he declares that such engravings "could never make book ornaments," and even his praise for them as "excellent black and white pictures" (*AWS*, I, 332) is probably half-hearted. Dramatizing momentary events with foreshortening and prominent *repoussoirs*, rendering fluctuations of light with painterly freedom, Walker's designs violate Morris' aesthetic and even moral preference for linear designs that emphasize the picture plane. To Morris, the clusters of irregular hatchings through which Walker and his contemporaries achieve impressionistic effects are "mere meaningless scrawl," and he strongly doubts that "any artist will ever make a good book illustrator, unless he is keenly alive to the value of a well-drawn line, crisp and clean. . . .In this art vagueness is quite inadmissible" (*AWS*, I, 332-333). Besides dissociating the designs from adjacent type, "vagueness" contradicts what Morris considers the essential "conditions" of both engraving and printing, at which "the wood-cutter or the artist [has] no more right to grumble. . .than the poet. . .at having to write in rhyme instead of prose" (*AWS*, I, 336). Significantly, Morris interchanges the terms "wood-cutter" and "engraver" as readily as "illustrator" and "ornament"; to him, the fact that finer detail is possible in a wood-engraving than in a woodcut simply imposes a greater need for self-restraint on the artist-craftsman, who must remember that "the essential character of a book [is] that it [is] stamped," and that an illustration should possess "that absence of vagueness which you [get] in the stamping of a coin" (*AWS*, I, 336). Appropriately, Morris' ideal illustrations are woodcuts from the first decades of printing, and even among these he prefers the essentially graphic designs to the more "pictorial" or naturalistic ones.[8]

Morris also finds narrative qualities in these woodcuts that he urges modern illustrators to emulate. Describing the cuts in Johann Zainer's edition of *De Claris Mulieribus* (1473, Plate 4), "a very old friend" which he esteemed as much as Ruskin did the illustrated edition of Rogers' *Italy*, Morris praises their "epical sincerity and directness": "no story-telling could be simpler and more straightforward, and less dependent on secondary help" (*AWS*, I, 351). Similarly, he commends medieval illuminations for telling "the written tale again with the most conscientious directness of design" (*AWS*, I, 321). Thus, simplicity of form is linked with simplicity of content, and both qualities are repeatedly contrasted with the "rhetorical" and "academical" art of the Renaissance. Particularly notable is Morris' emphasis on the independent narrative qualities of the woodcuts, which enable them to serve as visual equivalents of accompanying texts. It is strange that Morris, with his abhorrence of "doing the work twice over" (*AWS*, I, 334), ignores the more interpretative capacities of illustration, through which designs can function as visual syntheses and even critiques of entire literary works. It was partly their enthusiasm for one such illustration, Rossetti's "Maids of Elfen-Mere," that brought Morris and Burne-Jones into the Pre-Raphaelite circle, which produced numerous illustrations employing complex allegorical techniques. Even Burne-Jones's designs for the abortive edition of *The Earthly Paradise*, however, basically mark a return to the traditional narrative sequence, in which significant events in stories are depicted with a minimum of textually irrelevant imagery.[9]

[6]William Michael Rossetti, ed., *Rossetti Papers: 1862 to 1870* (London, 1903), p. 246; *Letters*, p. 98.

[7][George and Edward Dalziel], *The Brothers Dalziel: A Record of Fifty Years' Work. . .1840-1890* (London, 1901), p. 86.

[8]Discussing the cuts in "a life of Christ, published by Gerard Leeuw in 1487," Morris surmises that "there are certainly two artists in this book, and. . .one. . .appears to be the more pictorial of the two; though his designs are graceful, he is hardly as good as the rougher book illustrator" (*AWS*, I, 327-328). In such comments, Morris anticipates the findings, though not the critical preferences, of Erwin Panofsky and other art historians who have traced the development of "pictorialism" in Northern woodcuts.

[9]The independent narrative qualities of Burne-Jones's illustrations for Morris' "The Story of Cupid and Psyche" can be fully appreciated in a recent catalogue, where the engravings are reproduced in sequence without the text. See *Pre-Raphaelite Graphics and "The Earthly Paradise" Woodcuts by Burne-Jones and Morris* (London: Hartnoll and Eyre Ltd., March 18 to April 5, 1974), nos. 42-85.

Perhaps the thick borders around these and later Burne-Jones designs, corresponding to the "definite frame or outline" specified in Sparling's "requirements," helped to resolve a basic paradox in Morris' conception of illustration. For Morris was attempting both to "harmonize" pictures and type, and to make the narrative element of the pictures independent of its literary source. By using borders, he could clearly delimit the confines of illustrations without necessarily violating their relationship with their physical contexts. In addition, the use of frames accords with Morris' preference for illustrations clearly related to the picture plane, and to a rectangular format. Or perhaps one should say Burne-Jones's preference, since on the subject of illustration the two men's opinions are virtually synonymous. Burne-Jones's original "sketches" for *The Earthly Paradise* leave as much "interpretation" to the engraver as Morris could have wished, and the artist avowedly tried to make his designs "fit the ornament and the printing" of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. To Burne-Jones, reconciling his *Chaucer* illustrations with Morris' ornate pages was a joyous and reinforcing task: "I love to be snugly cased in the borders and buttressed up by the vast initials—and once or twice when I have no big letter under me, I feel tottery and weak." Even after his drawings were completed, Burne-Jones was further bolstered by R. Catterson-Smith, who "translated" his "very grey pencil tones" into pure line, and by W. H. Hooper, who engraved the results on wood. As the *Chaucer* took shape, Burne-Jones eagerly anticipated that "it will be a little like a pocket cathedral—so full of design."[10]

Burne-Jones' specifically architectural tribute to the emerging masterpiece shows how much he shared Morris' ideals of book design, which he endorsed to a far greater degree than most Victorian artists. As Morris concedes in his lecture on "The English Pre-Raphaelite School" (1891), modern art is pre-eminently "the work and the expression of individual genius, individual capacity, working towards a certain end" (*AWS*, I, 306), and the primary "end" of most artists' labors was not filling lacunae in "organic" buildings or books. Consequently, Morris is not merely concerned in his lectures with elevating the craftsman; he is also trying to argue the artist off his stilts. His contribution to combating what he considered creative "egotism" is uncertain, for though many late Victorian painters and draftsmen were interested in decorative values, the theoretical groundwork for this preoccupation had already been laid by 1877, when Morris' lectures began. Nor, in the field of illustration, was Morris' practical example as important as his acolytes believed. Generally reproduced through the photomechanical processes that Morris ignored, the designs of Aubrey Beardsley, Charles Ricketts, Charles Shannon, Laurence Housman, Edmund J. Sullivan, and other innovative draftsmen had far more impact than the engravings in Kelmscott Press publications on the illustration of the '90's and subsequent periods. Even in the statements on illustration by these artists, there is a catholicity of taste, a receptivity to the formal and interpretative techniques of various periods and cultures, that is conspicuously absent from Morris' pronouncements. After reading Morris' lectures and essays on book design, with their hostility to most of the aesthetic and practical developments of the preceding four centuries, a young illustrator of the '90's might well have recalled the consequences attributed by Morris to the Renaissance: "Henceforth the past was to be our present, and the blankness of its dead wall was to shut out the future from us" (*AWS*, I, 281).

In fairness to Morris, it should be repeated that his writings can misrepresent his overall conception of illustration, and it should be added that he avowedly advocates emulation of the past to establish a living tradition in the present. Morris also maintains that "the *practice* of any art rather narrows the artist in regard to the *theory* of it" (*Letters*, p. 85), and he would probably deny that his prescriptions for the ideal book should be treated as critical doctrines. The fact remains, however, that Morris delivered and published enough on aspects of book production to fill a substantial volume, and the tone of these papers is authoritarian, if not messianic. Morris could not have adopted a manner more capable of attracting dogmatic followers, bent on ignoring his practice and sanctifying their notions of his theory. Consequently, Morris must bear some responsibility for the travesty of critical method that dominated the study of post-Renaissance illustration for several decades. Ignored until recently by art and literary historians alike, these designs have been victimized by writers who, in William M. Ivins' devastating words, "know books only as means for diversion," and hold "that illustrations are mere decorations, and that as such no illustrations are 'good' unless. . .they 'harmonize' with the printed text pages." Ivins particularly opposes one "idea loudly expressed by William Morris and some of the typographical ideologues who followed in his train":

> that the way to test the design of a book is to look at it two pages at a time—although no mere human being can read more than one page or see more than one illustration at a time. . . .The irony of the doctrine can only be fully appreciated when we think that very few of the greatly illustrated books conform to the Morrisanian teaching, while many very poorly illustrated books do.[11]

Ivins' criticisms relate to the accentuation of Morris' visual criteria by his disciples, who had little of his practical knowledge and less of his literary

[10] *William Morris and the Kelmscott Press: An Exhibition held in the Library of Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, from October 9 to December 31, 1959* (Providence, 1960), pp. 19, 20.

[11] *Prints and Visual Communication* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1953), pp. 29-30.

sensitivity. For them, the architectural unity of Morris' shrine for great literature became an end in itself; the "look of the book," the supreme aesthetic consideration; "the page" or "opening," a sacred paragon, whose inviolable two-dimensionality must be defended against heretical naturalism. In the process, the distinction between decoration and illustration, already obscured by Morris, was effaced, along with the objectives and achievements of most modern illustrators. Nor were these issues really clarified by an opposite group of writers, who treated illustrations as isolated pictures, devoid of physical and even literary contexts. The resulting polarization of work on illustration, all too reminiscent of Morris' distinction between "artistic" and inartistic bibliophiles, had two unfortunate results. First, by confusing further the already uncertain attributes of illustration and decoration, it impeded the development of flexible criteria for book design, such as those evolved in recent years by Ruari McLean. Second, it ensured that the complex interrelationship between literature and illustration, one of the principal links between two arts, would be either ignored or impressionistically surveyed. It is only during the past two decades that a substantial number of literary analyses of illustration have appeared, and each of these studies, focusing on interpretative rather than decorative issues, has demonstrated the inadequacy of "Morrisanian teaching." However organic and architectural the ideal book may be, the critical consequences of Morris' advocacy of it have been the reverse of ideal.

Morris and the Book Arts before the Kelmscott Press

JOSEPH R. DUNLAP

I

IN AN August night in 1855, on the quays of Le Havre, William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones committed their lives to the service of art. Though the latter followed his original decision to become a painter, Morris' choice of an architectural career lasted less than a year; but during that time he began to explore the crafts of clay modelling, carving in wood and stone, and illuminating. Though the arts of the book were not foremost in his mind until he turned to printing, there were several periods in his life when he gave them serious attention and worked at them diligently.

Several strong interests which pervaded all his work are evident in Morris' practice of the book arts: his passionate love of nature and his feeling of kinship with all forms of life that come from the earth; his love of beauty and his realization of its necessity for the proper furnishing of a humane society; and his delight in certain periods of the past, especially in the works of the Middle Ages and in the spirit he found in the Icelandic sagas. His distaste for nineteenth-century civilization is well known. He used the past as a symbol of dissent, a method of protest, and, in the arts at least, an inspiration for reform. His keen sense of the continuity of man's life on the earth included the continuity of man's communication by means of the book, whether written or printed, rich with color or austere in black and white.

While still undergraduates, Morris and Burne-Jones were fired with enthusiasm by two illustrations—both printed from wood blocks as was usual in the nineteenth century before photoengraving prevailed. Neither one, as printed, appears particularly remarkable today, but both stood out for the young men above the ordinary illustrations of their time. They spent hours poring over a contemporary rendering of Dürer's "The Knight, Death, and the Devil" as it appeared in La Motte Fouqué's *Sintram and his Companions*, and they were so impressed by Rossetti's drawing for his friend William Allingham's poem, "The Maids of Elfen-Mere," that Morris "at once set to work at drawing on wood and cutting the designs himself" (Mackail, I, 87).