


Chapter six

The Burning Days of Mid- summer Suns:

Volume ij

Than cōeth June & thā is the sōne hiest
ī his meridyornall he may assende no
hyeer in his stacyone his glemerryng
goldene beames rypenethe the corne and
than . . . man . . . may assende no more
for than hathe nature gyven hym beauty
and strength at the full.

Kalendar of Shepberdes



NTRODUCING "The Love of Alcestis," an elder describes the tale as sad:

Sad, though the life I tell you of passed by,
Unstained by sordid strife or misery;
Sad, because though a glorious end it tells,
Yet on the glorious end of life it dwells,
*And striving through all things to reach the best
Upon no midway happiness will rest.* (CW 4:88)

Striving for immortal perfection is the theme of summer, the phase of man's and civilization's cycle that is "the flower and fruit of mastery, with hope more than conscious enough." Moving away from the spring themes of the Golden Age, the "birth" when "hope [is] scarcely conscious of itself,"¹ the second volume of tales, more than any other, utilizes the *mythos* of romance. The hero typically engages in the quest for an ideal state, aided by the gods and the frequent suspension of natural law. "Translated into dream terms," says Frye, "the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still retain that reality."²

In the romance the motive toward wish-fulfillment is released without check, asserting "mastery" of the impossible without critical acknowledgment of the mode's essential paradoxes: that the presence of heroic conflict and struggle, the *agon* of romance, contradicts the hero's dependence on exter-

nal forces; that the full realization of conscious will is countered by desire for its annihilation; that the assumed "return" to society is prevented by experience in an otherworld, whether it in fact destroys consciousness or unbearably heightens it. While he treats his summer legends as romances, Morris characteristically qualifies their idealistic attitudes through a more realistic pastoral vein that gives him critical access to their contradictions.

First, the dialectical form central to romance is modified from heroic conflict between the hero and his enemy into a format resembling pastoral debate, the use of the eclogue "as an instrument for the clash of conflicting ideas, demonstrating the weakness of one of them."³ It is probably in the tradition of medieval *débat*, influenced by Virgil, that Spenser uses his summer eclogues to explore disparate points of view about love, society, and responsibility. For example, his criticism of "proude and ambitious Pastours" occurs in the July debate between Thomalin and Morrell. Morris's transformation of active quest into meditative dialectic is less conventional, although he again uses pastoral frames to distance, interrupt, and criticize the heroic narrative. There is also a clear pattern of "alternate song" in the pairing of complementary stories for each month of summer.

A second concern of both romance and pastoral is the nature and effects of love. While the romance is apt to make wooing peripheral to dragon-slaying or a reward for heroic conquest, Morris and the pastoralists make it central. In the pastoral world, summer brings the heat of the sun and of love. The wiser shepherds seek shelter for themselves and their sheep "under midsummer suns. The burning days are coming in and the buds already swelling on the tender shoots of the vine."⁴ But the love-sick shepherd, driven by passion beyond his control, wanders abroad to sing of his plight. As Gallus says, "Omnia vincit Amor: et nos cedamus Amori" (Virgil x:69). Several love-motifs of the pastoral illustrate some incipient dangers only suggested in the romances.

The ardor is often attributed to external agents, especially Venus and Cupid, and it becomes an irrational force that drives its victim to restless despair, madness, or destruction. In many cases, though not all, the doomed quality of love results from the passion of a mortal shepherd for a god, goddess, or at least a person of different degree. The story of Hylas, related in Theocritus XIII and incorporated by Morris into the story of *Jason*, reverses the pattern to show the attraction of the immortal Nymphs to the young Argive, a tale prefaced by the poet's sober reminder: "From what God soever sprung, Nicias, Love was not, as we seem to think, born for us alone; nor first unto us of mortal flesh that cannot see the morrow, look things of beauty beautiful."⁵ The story of Polyphemus, alluded to in Theocritus VI and developed in XI, combines the elements of external compulsion and the fateful passion for a person of differing degree. The love typically grows in proportion to rejection. Wounded by "the shaft of the great Cyprian," the old Cyclops yearns for fair Galatea. "His love was no matter of apples, neither, nor of rosebuds nor locks of hair, but a flat frenzy which recked nought of all else" (XI:10-11).

The result of frenzy is sometimes appeal to the gods for assistance, as in the case of Simanthea, the rejected heroine of Theocritus II (cf. Virgil VIII), who casts spells under moonlight to punish the lover who has abandoned her after capturing her heart. Recalling a previous tryst she says,

And no sooner was I ware of the light fall o's foot across my threshold,—

List, good Moon, where I learnt my loving—than I went cold as ice my body over, and the sweat dripped like dewdrops from my brow; aye, and for speaking I could not so much as the whimper of a child that calls on's mother in his sleep; for my fair flesh was gone all stiff and stark like a puppet's.

List, good Moon, where I learnt my loving. (II:103-10)

It is to counteract the burning effect of Venus and Cupid (II. 130-34) that Simanthea invokes the paralyzing power of the moon, Diana's emblem, to lead her lover to a death (I. 162) which echoes her symbolic one.

More typically, however, unrequited pastoral love effects alienation or death in the lover himself. It first separates him from nature and his fellow shepherds. Of Polyphemus the narrator says: "Time and again his sheep would leave the fresh green pasturage and come back unbidden to fold, while their master must peak and pine alone upon the wrack-strown shore a-singing all day long of Galatea, sick at heart" (Theocritus XI:12-14). Corydon, of Virgil's second eclogue, acknowledges his restless alienation: "This is the hour when even cattle seek the coolness of the shade; when even the green lizard lies hidden in the thorny brake; when Thestylis brews a fragrant soup of pounded garlic and wild-thyme for the reapers wearied by the scorching heat. Yet I am wandering in the paths that you [the beautiful Alexis] have trod, under the burning sun, while the orchards echo to the harsh cicadas' notes and mine" (II:8-13). Turning away to "hard life in the forest, where the wild beasts have their caves" (Virgil X:52-53), Gallus rejects his pastoral surroundings: "No; all is over. Tree-nymphs and poetry itself have ceased to please. Even you have failed, woodlands; away with you!" (X:62-63).

Its separating effects make love a disease (Theocritus XI:1-18; Virgil X:60-61). The medicine is music, which soothes Polyphemus who "got more comfort thereout than he could have had for any gold" (Theocritus XI:80-81), but song is also apt to intensify the sickness. If the singer has a modifying audience, introspective isolation is averted: Colin's emotionally complex despair in Spenser's sixth eclogue is balanced by Hobbinol's mundane simplicity. Without a human listener, the singing lover frequently exhibits extreme solipsism that produces the pastoral of the self. This lover, like Gallus, carves his love on trees for others to read. Or like Daphnis (Virgil V:43-44), he carves his own epitaph:

Countrymen, Daphnis is my name:
 The very stars have heard my fame.
 Here in the woods I lived and lie—
 My flock was lovely: lovelier I.

The association of death, self-celebration, and carved images carries the cycle of alienation to completion, echoing the static imagery of Simanthea's spells and climaxing the implications of disease. The configuration also gives a poet like Morris a way of criticizing some of the central attitudes and symbols of romance.

A third interest of romance that is countered by pastoral criticism is wealth, especially the descent to an underworld and the discovery of buried treasure. The subject synthesizes the themes of love, self-interest, paralysis, and death. In the quest buried treasure is associated explicitly with material wealth and symbolically with power, wisdom, sexual fulfillment, and even immortality. After its discovery, a display of ingenuity, it must be wrested from its hiding place and its dragon guardian, a forceful act of an energetic hero. Such aggression is praised by the romancer, but it is condemned by the pastoral writer. Following Ruskin, Morris sees this kind of exploitation as the antithesis of natural earthly process; thus he describes it variously as vicious plundering or as death, the ultimate stasis. Morris's underworld is a Cave of Mammon whose seeker is motivated by greed or narcissism; or it is Hell, the unearthly Garden of Persephone. This pastoral evaluation of wealth is expanded in the stories of summer as Morris associates it, especially gold, with the paralysis of doomed love or the unnatural quest for immortality. In each case wealth is associated with carved images, gold, statues, or other static images.

If quest in Volume II can be reduced to a single theme, it is the paradox unconsciously implied by romance and explicated by the pastoral: the desperate attempt to avoid death and unhappiness, or to find love, immortality, or worldly wealth leads to an inversion of the romantic assumption of

apotheosis. When the desiring self is unsuccessful, the anxieties of remembered reality are magnified while the reality itself is impossible to reattain. When the quest is successful, the teller, listener, or reader is blocked from the experience of the characters in a way that collapses the reality of the tale. The controlling imagery contrasts motion and stasis, attributing motion to pastoral, earthly process and stasis to the other-world of romance.

"The Story of Cupid and Psyche" at first appears to be a spring tale revealing an innocent heroine whose quest for love is completed in marriage, "a wonderful new birth." But the marriage announces no human society; it is a union between mortal and immortal characters. Instead of reflecting the themes of the preceding volume, it points toward the other-world of the summer volume, which concludes with a similar union in "Ogier the Dane." Both characters literally vanish from sight as they achieve the apotheosis of fictional experience. Besides introducing the thematic frame of the volume, the story initiates its dialectical format by developing the first complementary motifs of the summer tales—the fabulous terrain of romance, specifically the descent into the underworld, and the earthly landscape of the pastoral. Psyche is in addition Morris's first fully developed type of the radically innocent, earthly heroine, repeated in this volume in Alceste and in subsequent volumes in Aslaug and Philonöe. The story thus curiously blends assertion and rejection of romance, achieving unity through the characterization of Psyche.

The external force typical of romance is apparent in the tale, especially its love quest. Psyche's exile is initiated by Venus; her love is the work of Cupid; and in her desperate quest she is both deterred and assisted by principal and minor deities as well as by nature. Yet she is consistently characterized as passive, earthly, and self-delighting, with "divine fresh singleness of heart" (*CW* 4:29). Viewed always in contrast to hostile society, her jealous sisters, her weak father, and vindictive Venus, she embodies the principles assigned to Michael in "The Man Born to Be King." Her innocence and passivity are

virtues which tie her to earthly process, which protect her from the artificiality of the gardens of Venus and Persephone, and which reward her with unsought immortality. Informed of her imminent sacrifice at the beginning of the story, she is sad but resigned to "the woe the gods have dowered me" (*CW* 4:7). Discovered by Cupid, she converts his indifference by her beauty mirrored by nature—a harmonious configuration of sleeping girl, splashing fountain, and "all sweet sounds and scents" in "a fair green close, / Hedged round about with woodbine and red rose, / Within the flicker of a white-thorn shade" (*CW* 4:14). Rescued to his palace, she responds simply to its intricate otherworldly detail, a process conveyed by a series of sense verbs—*feel, smelt, touched* (*CW* 4:19). She wanders, "still noting everything" (*CW* 4:22), eats, bathes, and sleeps in mortal curiosity and weariness.⁶

Although Psyche is in many ways a pastoral heroine, the pastoral idea cannot be sustained within the powerful linear movement of quest-romance. The alternatives of the poet are detached pastoral contrast or synthesis. In this initial story of the solstice season, he chooses the latter, indulging the fantasy of "a fulfilment that will deliver [the desiring self] from the anxieties of reality but will still retain that reality."⁷ Before the withdrawing narrator finally denies the reader access to the union, he allows its evolution, transforming pastoral mortality into romantic immortality. Love is idealized as the alchemy that alters mutability and material flux even while it depends upon them. The plot subjects Psyche to quest and temptation to measure and purify her love of mortal weakness and to heighten its strength; simultaneously, it reveals the feeling of the god who cannot weep. Since Cupid, already immortal and omniscient, cannot essentially change, it is Psyche who must. Her discoveries must reveal to her and to the gods that it is possible to retain *self* at the same time it is offered, selflessly, in "deathless love" to another. In short, Psyche must embody both her earthly vitality and Cupid's otherworldly immutability.

The various garden paradises of the story—Cupid's, Venus's, Persephone's—reveal and test potential in Psyche's character. As a result, her quest unfolds a series of balances that are resolved only momentarily at the tale's conclusion. Cupid's garden appropriately represents a mean between the other two, which lack its ambiguity. His palace garden, "like a paradise" (*CW* 4:18), is associated with artifice. It is "void of mankind," and "all amidst the trees / Were strange-wrought founts and wondrous images" (*CW* 4:18). Yet the garden also suggests process. Nature is useful as well as decorative; there are images of harmony to balance those of isolation and stasis:

And all about were dotted leafy trees,
The elm for shade, the linden for the bees,
The noble oak, long ready for the steel
Which in that place it had no fear to feel;
The pomegranate, the apple, and the pear,
That fruit and flowers at once made shift to bear,
Not yet decayed therefor; and in them hung
Bright birds that elsewhere sing not, but here sung
As sweetly as the small brown nightingales
Within the wooded, deep Laconian vales. (*CW* 4:17)

The garden's ambiguity thus reflects the antithetical characters of Psyche and Cupid, natural and immortal, and suggests their potential harmony. Inside Cupid's palace, we are also aware of the potential barriers to its realization. The "wonders of the place" include "silver mirrors" that reflect the lonely mortal figure and

a chamber cool
Paved cunningly in manner of a pool,
Where red fish seemed to swim through floating weed.
(*CW* 4:19)

Again the mirror image occurs when "the glassy floor" gives back Psyche's face. Artifice, illusion, and stasis are here linked to suggest the possibility of narcissism. In Psyche its form is

not self-celebration but self-destruction, a temptation developed in her three suicide attempts after her expulsion from the garden. It stems from separation from kind within the garden and separation from Cupid without.

The decisive dream which Venus induces appeals to Psyche's love for kind, her aging father; but its results, the arrival and temptation of her greedy sisters, are directly related to the deadly stasis represented by Venus herself and by the acquisitive motive Cupid has warned against:

And thou—beware—for, fresh and good and true,
Thou knowest not what worldly hearts may do,
Or what a curse gold is unto the earth. (CW 4:26)

These lines recall Cupid's description of ideal love as antithetical to greed, associated with static images:

Come then, beloved one, for such as thee
Love loveth, and their hearts he knoweth well,
Who hoard their moments of felicity,
As misers hoard the medals that they tell,
Lest on the earth but paupers they should dwell:
"We hide our love to bless another day;
The world is hard, youth passes quick," they say.
(CW 4:21-22)

Thus stasis is linked variously with the positive immutability of love (Cupid and Cupid's palace) and the negative qualities of greed and death. Psyche's quest must deny the negative impulses and affirm the positive. She must prove her faith in things unseen while she preserves her vital mortality.

The Venus garden is chanced upon when Psyche "her back upon the world [has] turned" (CW 4:42). Thus it represents a temptation to self-annihilation, already once countered by nature when the "kind river" denies her attempt to die and casts her ashore near "Shepherd Pan," who reprimands her "hurrying to the feeble Shade" (CW 4:41). Seeking "deathless love" she is oblivious to human types—the huntsman, shepherd, and

soldier (CW 4:42-43)—and even to familiar natural detail (CW 4:40-41, 45). Her plea for help rejected by Ceres, she arrives "wearily" (CW 4:48) in Venus's garden where she is attracted to its peace and the goddess's apparent kindness but where "her heart" recovers strength to warn her through consciousness of "small flowers as red as blood," "restless sparrows," and all the paralyzing artifice of the place (CW 4:48). Again the garden is evaluated through Psyche's response: her senses are confused and dulled, her fear is killed, she seems to lose memory of good or evil; her vision is "dizzied," and she feels "half-dead" (CW 4:48-49). The garden's illusion, a kind of living death, is penetrated by Psyche, but she lacks strength to prevail even though she can endure.

The tests which follow are designed to sustain Psyche's misery and to tempt her to self-destruction. Yet she is saved by ants, "the kingless folk" (CW 4:55); by a friendly reed, "soother of the loving hearts that bleed" (CW 4:57); an eagle (CW 4:59); and by the ghost of a dead queen (CW 4:62-64).⁸ The descent to the underworld, the climactic task, reveals a setting that repeats the deadly implications of the Venus garden. Because her first longing for death called for "whatsoever dark place dwell the dead" (CW 4:41), the world of Persephone is the ultimate test of her will to live and pursue mortal vitality. The dark "changeless place" (CW 4:64) intensifies many of the images of stasis heretofore introduced. Death is of course prominent, linked with royalty and wealth in this kingdom where "on a throne, the Queen of all the dead" sits "with gold-embracèd head, / in royal raiment, beautiful, and pale" (CW 4:67). In addition there are negative mirrors, "still pools" whose "dull surface cast no image back" (CW 4:64), and the prevailing notion of sleep, significantly enclosed in the golden casket which Psyche brings to be filled. Psyche saves herself by isolation, refusing to touch all the artifice "strange of shape and of strange-blended hues." She refuses underworld cuisine and eats "the food that mortals eat" (CW 4:67). When she leaves with the casket, she at last submits to mortal weariness, curi-

osity, and death-wish; but she opens the casket full of "deadly sleep" having proven herself to both Venus and Cupid, who rescues her and wins her immortality. The darker side of immortality is shadowed for a moment in the static imagery of her sleep (*CW* 4:69). It is a concept developed in succeeding stories. Here, however, the *deus ex machina* conclusion reveals a brighter glimpse of "fate" and the mysterious world beyond: self-delighting mortality seems simply to be granted continuation, appropriately at the moment when selfhood is paradoxically fulfilled and sacrificed.

While the apotheosis of quest-romance structurally displaces the unresolved tendency of idyll, the story does generate distinctly pastoral feeling, partly through its descriptive style but primarily through a quest that is essentially nonaggressive. Psyche's quest, much like Endymion's, shows a passive character, of properly established natural sympathies, responding to the proper agents of the otherworld and rejecting the others. Morris, bound more to his sources, fails to complete Keats's circle which finally locates the ideal in the natural. Part of the reason, of course, is that Morris consistently withholds personal vision from the stories, preferring to entertain the limiting and fragmenting perspective of second-hand narration. Furthermore, no single story of the collection is allowed to resolve the tensions of its particular context. In this case the tensions themselves are characteristically a result of organizational hindsight, since the Psyche story, one of Morris's first compositions for the *Earthly Paradise*, assumed its initial position in Volume II after the composition of other tales, including "The Writing on the Image." The published arrangement reveals the appropriateness of their juxtaposition.

Following the elaborate narrative of Psyche, "The Writing on the Image" is a powerful footnote. The oldest version of the tale as Morris might have known it was in William of Malmesbury's *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, where an erring Pope, accompanied by a servant, uses magic to open the ground and explore a mysterious golden palace. In this early

version the servant shoots the carbuncle and plunges the cavern in darkness, but with the aid of a lantern both master and servant escape, "their boundless avarice unsatiated."⁹ Morris, however, seems more directly guided by the treatment of the tale in Brunet's *Gesta Romanorum*, where the moral is retained but the plot simplified to relate the death of a lone clerk in the underground setting.

The tale's stark force is preserved in its recounting by Laurence the Swabian priest, whose four assigned tales¹⁰ reflect his ironic preoccupation with man's darker side, especially his pride and failure. Maurer, who emphasizes Morris's mutability theme, says: "The allegory . . . of the *Gesta* is gone. There is no punishment here of the cardinal sin of avarice, but rather the melancholy example of the shortness of life, the vanity of human wishes and the mockery of fate."¹¹ While it is undeniable that Morris expands the thematic center of the tale, it is also true that he retains its suggestion of avarice, employing static imagery in a way that comments on the themes of Psyche and succeeding stories.

The dialectical contrasts with "Psyche" arise from negative echoes of character and setting. The innocent, passive character of Psyche is countered by the aggressive drive of the unnamed scholar of "much strange lore" (*CW* 4:77). She seeks the fellowship of love and harmony with earthly process. He delves beneath the earth for knowledge, wealth, and immortality which will give him singular power. Because Psyche's primary resources are internal and self-delighting, she wins the sympathies of the gods; the scholar, whose limited bookish wisdom forces him to seek external power, ultimately defies fate and precipitates self-destruction. In some ways the two tales contrast innocence and analytic experience, criticizing the cold pursuit of rational control in a romantic fashion. The use of similar settings, however, multiplies possibilities of meaning.

Following the classical treatment of the palace of Persephone, the underworld cavern recalls its suggestions, but it in-

roduces nonclassical ones as well. When the tale is told, the listeners respond variously to this second descent into the earth. First, the hero is associated with other

treasure-seekers balked,
And shame and loss for men insatiate stored,
Nitocris' tomb, the Niblung's fatal hoard,
The serpent-guarded treasures of the dead. (CW 4:85)

The Christian condemnation of avarice is thus expanded into the Germanic fear of buried treasure and its implication that wealth is sacred to the memory of its first and only rightful owners. The mysterious symbol, most familiar in *Beowulf*, is therefore elegiac in recalling dead heroes and the brevity of fame as well as life. This second consideration leads to a third meditative topic, the sacredness of the earth itself as man's appropriate setting and as object of stewardship, not exploitation:

Strange hopes and fears for what shall be but nought
To dead men! better it would be to give
What things they may, while on the earth they live,
Unto the earth, and from the bounteous earth
To take their pay of sorrow or of mirth,
Hatred or love, and get them on their way;
And let the teeming earth fresh troubles make
For other men, and ever for their sake
Use what they left, when they are gone from it.
(CW 4:85-86)

The acquisitive theme is the basis for the others. It is associated with the simple desire for wealth but more prominently with belief in the magical power of human consciousness to convert wish into reality. The desires are linked in the Prologue's reference to the search for "the stone . . . whereby base metal into gold is brought" (CW 3:7). It is thus possible to see the underworld journey as a descent into self, an idea already suggested by Psyche's quest for complete identity.

Identity here is first associated with the scholar's sorcery—an unnatural art, the narrator implies. It draws him away from society, at midnight, to delve with pickaxe and shovel for a goal he cannot initially describe. The first discovery, "some metal thing . . . a brazen ring" (CW 4:78), crystallizes his longings, which are as essentially static as the series of images that follow. Everything is "wrought all curiously" (CW 4:78) to suggest both value and artifice. He now anticipates "the treasures of a king to see" or the creation of "some sweet paradise" as enervating as a Venus garden:

And if my soul I may not save
In heaven, yet here in all men's eyes
Will I make some sweet paradise,
With marble cloisters, and with trees
And bubbling wells and fantasies,
And things all men deem strange and rare,
And crowds of women kind and fair,
That I may see, if so I please,
Laid on the flowers, or mid the trees
With half-clad bodies wandering.
There, dwelling happier than the King,
What lovely days may yet be mine!
(CW 4:79)

The function of illusion, a sorcerer's art, is distinguished from vision of the sort that literally keeps Psyche awake to reality. Seeing for the scholar is voyeurism, an act that converts life into object. It is therefore ironically significant that his final discovery of the inner chamber, "the goodly hall hung round with gold," presents a static tableau mocking and revealing his aspirations:

He raised the cloth and entered in
In hope that happy life to win,
And drawing higher did behold
That these were bodies dead and cold
Attired in full royal guise,
And wrought by art in such a wise

That living they all seemed to be,
 Whose very eyes he well could see,
 That now beheld not foul or fair,
 Shining as though alive they were. (CW 4:80-81)

A terrible echo of Persephone's hall, the scene fuses wealth, artifice, and death—three forms of stasis that in both stories have causal links.

Fear coexists with the desire "to know / What all these marvellous matters meant" (CW 4:82). It is greed that eases the scholar's fear, and Morris makes it even clearer than the *Gesta* that greed also precipitates death. Morris has the mysterious archer shoot the carbuncle as the scholar reaches for an especially "wonderful green stone" (CW 4:83). It is at once the magic stone of the Prologue and "that fatal stone" (CW 4:84) that grants knowledge of death's mysteries.

Full knowledge or self-discovery is thus equated with darkness and the ironic metamorphosis of the scholar into the ultimate stasis he has coveted. Psyche's transformation among a heavenly company was accompanied by dazzling light and birth of new feeling. Imprisoned in darkness with the royal dead, the scholar experiences a brief flash of memory before consciousness is annihilated: "And midst the marvels of that hall / This Scholar found the end of all" (CW 4:84).

The brief tale provides a good example of the prismatic effects of archetypal story, choice of narrator, structural location, and audience response. The listeners' reactions clearly depends on the other elements even as it reflects their own preoccupation with death. The tale is wisely given to Laurence, whose cynicism seems channeled through the short tetrameter lines and simple syntax, a contrast to the slow enumerative style of Psyche. His consciousness also dominates the frame, which focuses the listeners' attention on the wooden image that gives the tale its title. Recognized and respected by the simple folk as a guidepost to forbidden mysteries, it is left to endure the natural elements, "the hot sun

and summer air, / The snow-drift and the driving rain" (CW 4:92), the same forces that set it back in place after the scholar's violation. Granted, the folk are superstitious enough to replace the wood with a statue of Jove, but they escape Laurence's sarcastic criticism of "some Lord or other" who "being in need, / Took every ounce of gold away" (CW 4:103). Finally, the brevity of life is an important topic, but it is undeniable that Laurence—and likely the poet—is pleased to correlate inevitable death with inevitable avarice, two versions of stasis that do not affect nature's eternal recurrences.

The June and July tales are two pairs of idylls that repeat the quest theme while they control its romantic fulfillment. Instead of excluding the reader from the vision of immortality (as Psyche does), they suggest its alienating force. In almost every case, the sought immortality is some form of love, which is increasingly revealed to be an ironic fulfillment of Cupid's promise to Psyche of "The glory and the joy unspeakable / Wherein the Treasure of the World shall dwell" (CW 4:24). Treasure, stone and stasis, already associated with death and greed, are now overtly linked with love. Separation is of course experienced between lovers, but it is also universalized as cultural alienation because three of the four heroes are kings.

The June tales, "The Love of Alcestis" and "The Lady of the Land," link love with rescue, contrasting Alcestis' selfless rescue of Admetus from death with the selfish failure of an Italian mariner to save the Lady of the Land from immortality. Both tales again posit the value of mortal process through female characters and associate weakness with heroes whose fear of death is akin to desire for wealth. Several elements, besides character contrast, link the two tales. Most important perhaps to the four tales of mid-summer is the characteristic use of a descriptive frame to establish the earthly norm from which the heroes wander in search of immortality. In the more complex Alcestis, however, Morris introduces a mysterious external agent—Apollo—who invites comparison with the

seer of "The Man Born to be King" (Vol. I), Guest the Wise in "Gudrun" (Vol. III), Nereus in "The Golden Apples" (Vol. IV), and even Cupid in this volume. Two of these figures are mortal and three are immortal, but all share a prophetic role and a philosophical distance that give them narrative overview even though none of the stories are shaped from their perspectives. The agent becomes a pastoral mediator whose insight is divorced from judgment. In the cases of Cupid, Nereus, and Apollo, this quality of nondirective insight is a function of immortality, a state which dissociates vision from mortal limitations and actions. It is familiar even in the mortal character of Sophocles' Teiresias, who perceives Apollo's oracle but leaves others to act on his revelations. In the play, as here, Apollo is associated with total insight that transcends individual human suffering or pleasure. His eyes cannot weep (*CW* 4:112). Cupid, though a lesser and more limited deity, shares this immortal quality.

In "Alcestis" a pastoral role is also suggested by Apollo's disguise as a shepherd. While his homespun coat and herdsman's staff and horn serve to hide his identity as a god, they also direct our attention to revelations that are particularly pastoral. First, the immortal disengagement of the god is channeled through the familiar detachment of the *fortunate senex* (Virgil I) whose simple visions emerge in music. With his bow and lyre, Apollo is something of an idle singer who leaves evaluation to his audience (*CW* 4:114). He arrives at Admetus' prime to offer choice without the limitation of advice. Second, the choices are directly related to the conflict of aspiration and mortal acquiescence. The one song shared with the reader foreshadows Admetus' conflict. A shepherd's song with a god's perspective, it is apologetically "translated" by the tale's narrator, whose own description of the harmonious setting must imply what he cannot perfectly repeat. The "new herdsman" lay

Close by the white sands of a little bay
The teeming ripple of Boebeis lapped;

There he in cloak of white-wooled sheepskin wrapped
Against the cold dew, free from trouble sang,
The while the heifers' bells about him rang
And mingled with the sweet soft-throated birds
And bright fresh ripple: listen then, these words
Will tell the tale of his felicity,
Halting and void of music though they be.

Song

O dwellers on the lovely earth,
Why will ye break your rest and mirth
To weary us with fruitless prayer;
Why will ye toil and take such care
For children's children yet unborn,
And garner store of strife and scorn
To gain a scarce-remembered name,
Cumbered with lies and soiled with shame?
And if the Gods care not for you,
What is this folly ye must do
To win some mortal's feeble heart?
O fools! when each man plays his part,
And heeds his fellow little more
Than these blue waves that kiss the shore
Take heed of how the daisies grow.
O fools! and if ye could but know
How fair a world to you is given. (*CW* 4:94-95)

This song, Morris's invention, gives direction to the long first half of the story—Admetus' quest, for Morris's own "translation" of Alcestis' sacrifice requires a context that points up its depth. A gift of love through self-annihilation, it comprises a separate idyll within the story of her husband's search for self-fulfillment. Ultimately, the story of Alcestis is dialectical commentary on the central story of Admetus. In this light, Apollo's song states the antithesis of character. It also repeats the suggestions of Morris's pastoral frame which asserts at beginning and end the bounty, harmony, and peace of the kingdom of Thessaly—enough, the poet implies, to satisfy and engage any man. Admetus, a king of the "old simple days,"

rules in a pastoral setting, "Midst sunny grass-clad meads that slop adown / To lake Boebeis" (*CW* 4:89):

this King Admetus sat
Among his people, wearied in such wise
By hopeful toil as makes a paradise
Of the rich earth; for light and far away
Seemed all the labour of the coming day,
And no man wished for more than then he had,
Nor with another's mourning was made glad.
(*CW* 4:89-90)

Admetus' quest begins when he returns, a victim of love, from Iolchus. He wanders "in the fresh and blossom-scented air" at dawn:

Yet by his troubled face set little store
By all the songs of birds and scent of flowers;
Yea, rather unto him the fragrant hours
Were grown but dull and empty of delight. (*CW* 4:94)

The cause of this alienation is revealed in his interpretation of the events in Iolchus. He describes love at first sight, but his rhetoric betrays his early identification of love with immortality and of Alcestis herself with a paradisaal prize. His picture of Alcestis employs the negative hyperbole of paradise descriptions¹² and metaphors of wealth (*CW* 4:96-97). His own response of "Kindness, and hot desire, and rage, and bliss, / None first a moment" he interprets as love, but he notes that he felt "now half a God" and "as God-possessed" (*CW* 4:97) as he claimed the power to free Alcestis from Diana's curse.

Apollo's assistance, though freely granted, should not be interpreted as intervention. It merely extends the possibilities of Admetus' own choice, albeit without his full realization of its irreversible direction. The ivory chariot and mysterious beasts are a fitting symbol for Admetus' aspiration. Taking his bride away he anticipates "at least one godlike hour" (*CW* 4:103); and all mortal process seems held in aesthetic stasis:

Grief seemed a play forgot, a pageant vain,
A picture painted, who knows where or when,
With soulless images of restless men;
For every thought but love was now gone by,
And they forgot that they should ever die. (*CW* 4:106)

Although the chariot must be returned to Apollo, its supernatural power has produced lingering effects in Admetus. Having secured his bride and prize, he ignores the larger patterns of necessity and tries to claim her before proper settlement with Artemis. The goddess's emanation as a serpent, while on one level associated with sexual tabu and thus with female character, is also an interesting reflection of the darker side of Admetus' quest. The "dreadful coil," which recurs in many of the stories, guards the treasure that Admetus unconsciously equates with his bride. The serpent's appearance is also directly effected by Admetus, momentarily unaware that his impetuosity endangers Alcestis, who wishes *him* away:

O get thee hence; alas, I cannot flee!
They coil about me now, my lips to kiss.
O love, why hast thou brought me unto this?

The force of this single scene of horror is its glimpse of the mysteries of the unseen immortal world that attracts Admetus. Like Milton's hell or the wilderness of *Beowulf*, the world just beyond the frontiers of imagination reveals multiple chaos from a human perspective. In the pastoral romance, it can mirror human potential as well. Consciousness is capable of ordering and simplifying it; aspiration releases it. Love, as it is represented by Alcestis, is an ordering relationship. Admetus confuses love with possession of ultimate knowledge and transforms its ordering potential into a barrier between the two lovers, one isolated in unselfish simplicity and the other isolated in irreversible longing for total experience.

The momentary association of Admetus and the serpent foreshadows the conclusion of the story, where again Alcestis

must be "sacrificed" to fulfill Admetus' will. This final phase of the tale is set within a second frame reiterating Admetus' earthly bounty. Apollo has revealed himself and departed, leaving the shafts to offer final choice. With his revelation, the god offers advice for the only time:

And now my servitude with thee is done,
 And I shall leave thee toiling on thine earth,
 This handful, that within its little girth
 Holds that which moves you so, O men that die;
 Behold, to-day thou hast felicity,
 But the times change, and I can see a day
 When all thine happiness shall fade away;
 And yet be merry, strive not with the end,
 Thou canst not change it. (CW 4:112-13)

The idyllic frame of the second part of the story offers extensive evidence of Admetus' felicity. His marriage to Alcestis seems an emblem of a good society. The narrator extols the king's virtues and blessings: a happy man, he does not search for fame; he saves the earth from war, spoil, corruption, and idleness. "Honour and love, plenty and peace, he had" (CW 4:116). The narrator summarizes:

In all things grew his wisdom and his wealth,
 And folk beholding the fair state and health
 Wherein his land was, said that now at last
 A fragment of the Golden Age was cast
 Over the place, for there was no debate,
 And men forgot the very name of hate. (CW 4:115-16)

The tale then distinguishes between ordinary and ultimate aspiration. Admetus, certainly in many ways a sympathetic character, lacks the petty desire of the scholar in the "Image." His deep desire is to conquer death, to gain entrance to Apollo's world. He neither dreads death nor forgets it; "Rather before him did a vague hope gleam" (CW 4:116) with the memory of Apollo's intimation of final assistance. Literally facing

death, all fades but his loneliness. He feels separated from Alcestis and bound to the old longing for eternal life: "O Thou who madest me, / The only thing on earth alike to thee, / Why must I be unlike to thee in this?" (CW 4:118). The final appearance of Apollo, again in shepherd's attire, is before the joint audience of Admetus and Alcestis, who both hear the decree that life requires life—or put another way, that one life requires another death. Alcestis' decision shows her willingness to face alone what Admetus cannot; but close to bitterness, she also states what the story has implied about her position in Admetus' life—a form of treasure:

Alcestis! O Alcestis, hadst thou known
 That thou one day shouldst thus be left alone,
 How hadst thou borne a living soul to love!
 Hadst thou not rather lifted hands to Jove,
 To turn thine heart to stone, thy front to brass,
 That through this wondrous world thy soul might pass,
 Well pleased and careless, as Diana goes
 Through the thick woods. (CW 4:122)

Her literal metamorphosis into cold stasis parallels Admetus' more terrifying change into an eternal mortal (CW 4:123). He has now attained the state of the gods who cannot weep even though he experiences traces of human feeling.

The tale might well have taken the shape of romance, celebrating as "Psyche" does the victory of the hero over the limitations of the flesh. Admetus' stewardship of the earth stands him in good stead for reward in an unearthly paradise. Yet the story operates to qualify his success. Alcestis, in narrative emphasis little more than an instrument of contrast, receives the final sympathy of the narrator, who fuses her life-principles with the idyllic frame that defines natural and human reality. She finally becomes the symbol of the *earthly* paradise of Thessaly, where immortal Admetus is forgotten as the world grows old and men

gather unseen harm and discontent,
 Along with all the alien merchandise
 That rich folk need, too restless to be wise. (*CW* 4:89)

Human memory, however, preserves the story of Alcestis, whatever men "are dwelling now on that green spot." Her "fame / Grew greater . . . / Lived, in the hearts of far-off men enshrined" (*CW* 4:124). Apollo's role is also recalled by the frame. His capacity of vision identifies fate with total insight. The narrator's more limited vision identifies human insight with temporal and aesthetic distance. The construct of tale is finally associated with the projected overview of its supernatural agents. The shaping power is memory: "The gods at least remember what is done."

"The Lady of the Land," based on a single episode, seems at first to expand its counterpart in "Alcestis," the scene on the wedding night where Diana's emanation takes similar form and Admetus must perform rituals to release his bride. In this sense, Admetus and the Italian knight-mariner are parallel examples of successful and unsuccessful quest. The mariner's failure is related to acquisitive instincts that intensify Admetus' weaknesses. An adventurer by nature, he is drawn to the isolated spot

with a heart that burned
 To know the most of what might there be learned,
 And hoping somewhat too, amid his fear,
 To light on such things as all men hold dear. (*CW* 4:128)

The underground palace, also a version of the two preceding underworld settings, offers the illusion of life to veil its death:

It seemed that time had passed on elsewhere,
 Nor laid a finger on this hidden place,
 Rich with the wealth of some forgotten race. (*CW* 4:130)

Its perfect stasis, which produces "in his heart a longing for some bliss, / Whereof the hard and changing world knows

nought," is linked in his consciousness with the incredible wealth on every hand, "the glory of great heaps of gold" (*CW* 4:131). When the Lady of the Land is finally discovered and presented through his perspective in a lengthy tableau, she embodies both the wealth and stasis which dominate his impressions. Surrounded by precious stones, she appears to be a statue with golden hair. For a long time motionless, she seems to be asleep.

The treatment of the Lady herself, however, shifts the dialectical relationship of the two tales. Her situation extends the implications of the immortal state Admetus attained and reveals the dark, heretofore hidden side of eternal life in death. Desiring rescue into mortality, she requires a "saviour" (*CW* 4:134) like Alcestis, whose simple love and courage can effect "natural magic" to restore natural form. Ultimately then, the Lady is compared to Admetus and the mariner to Alcestis.

The Lady is the lone survivor of another age, spellbound for four hundred years (*CW* 4:138). Her account of her doom gains sympathy and authenticity from that fact and from her own interpretation of her fate. That she is the victim of a tabu is less important here than her original motives that precipitated the curse—human longing for love—and her desire now for release from the static isolation of immortality:

Ah! with what joy then shall I see again
 The sunlight on the green grass and the trees,
 And hear the clatter of the summer rain,
 And see the joyous folk beyond the seas.
 Ah, me! to hold my child upon my knees
 After the weeping of unkindly tears
 And all the wrongs of these four hundred years.
(*CW* 4:138)

It is not her story of fate that frightens the mariner, who is in fact compelled by its mystery, challenge, and promise of a "prize" (*CW* 4:137). It is the purely physical horror of viewing the Lady's imposed form that changes him to a trembling

man who "Ran swiftly, with a white and ghastly face" (*CW* 4:141). Finally he dies, the effect of internal turbulence the narrator can only guess to be shame and nightmare of the supernatural metamorphosis he has witnessed (*CW* 4:141). Buried at Byzantium, "between two blossoming pomegranate trees," he ironically and unhappily achieves what he has failed to give the Lady of the Land. It is clear that being "maddened with love" (*CW* 4:137) is not enough to effect rescue, which requires more fortitude and less narcissism.

We might note several directions of the volume to this point. First, there is the obvious concern with human mastery or self-assertion. Certainly it is compatible with the linear drive of romance and its heroes. Within the work as a whole, the poet acknowledges action as human necessity. It is the concept of goal that poses the dilemma. Romance not only locates the ideal in an otherworld but grants the hero mastery by quest. Romance, especially the nineteenth-century variety, also recognizes human consciousness as the means of mastery. Equating "romance" and "romantic" in this sense, we might recall T. E. Hulme's distinction between romanticism and classicism: "Put shortly, these are the two views, then. One, that man is intrinsically good, spoilt by circumstance; and the other that he is intrinsically limited, but disciplined by order and tradition to something fairly decent. To the one party man's nature is like a well, to the other a bucket. The view which regards man as a well, a reservoir full of possibilities, I call the romantic; the one which regards him as a very finite and fixed creature, I call the classical."¹³ Morris's proximity to the latter notion is especially clear in this volume. He seems to contrast ultimate control or mastery with order—in the sense of recognition of bounds. [The characters who exceed the bounds find immortality to be a form of paralysis. Part of the implication is that "mastery" is often a kind of possession or an attempt to separate oneself from society. Put more strongly, man appears to be incapable of asserting mastery in more ideal terms. While he feels that he lives on two levels, only the earthly, mortal one is accessible to his order. Man's finest hour

is earthly order of the sort that Admetus achieves in Thessaly. It is clearly pastoral in the sense of contained vitality. The kingdom is simultaneously organic, temporal, and structured. In the romance, if love is the goal, it too appears to be either drive or object, two forms of external meaning that prevent its incorporation into mortal and temporal kinesis. It either remains inaccessible or becomes overwhelming to consciousness. Thus all the forms of the "ideal" are associated with stasis, a state of being which separates or is separate from the hero. Pastoral stasis is a containing order; eternal stasis, or its counterpart, chaos, is an absolute.

Second, there is the matter of perspective in the volume. Bush has remarked that even in the most supernatural stories, Morris "changes some of [the otherworld's] more naive manifestations."¹⁴ He always acknowledges man's interest in the unseen, in the larger patterns of "fate," but he also recognizes the cloudiness of the otherworld, sometimes suggesting that it is imaginary. He is interested in human response, and all the stories of this volume—in fact of all four volumes—approach the otherworld, immortality, or the ideal from the limited perspective of mortal vision. Thus vision itself becomes a way of ordering experience, whether it involves distance or immersion. The *Alcestis* story even suggests that what we call fate is what we might also imagine to be total vision.

Finally, some of the structural rhythms derive from the rhythms of perspective. "The Lady of the Land," a medieval tale from the *Voyage and Travel* of Mandeville, confirms a fairly consistent pattern in the larger work: that the nonclassical tales offer a darker and often closer view of life than their classical counterparts. "Ogier" is an exception in this volume, but the pattern becomes overtly thematic in the final volumes. Although the style is fancifully decorative, the tale of the Lady operates on a realistic level that tempers supernatural actions with a human perspective. Both temporal and spatial setting are vague but accessible. We are given to feel that the time of the story is closer to the medieval present of the framework

than some of the others. There is an initial suggestion of "modern" corruption, a suggestion of other stories as well, and the castle itself is a ruined and vandalized paradise of another age. The effect of this painterly shift of perspective is both spatial and temporal, producing varying degrees of aesthetic participation and recalling the idea of historical change, especially the movement toward complexity and economic corruption. The framing structure of each story works similarly within the individual tale.

The tales of July, "The Son of Croesus" and "The Watching of the Falcon," do little to alter or elaborate the concerns of the volume; rather they reiterate the topics already introduced: fear of death, pursuit of immortality, desperate love, and avarice. Two attempts to avert death through love make the tales complementary versions of quest as escape.

King Croesus tries to save his son by isolation when he dreams that he is to be killed by an iron weapon. The son, unafraid, is eager for earthly play, heroic deeds, and natural life. It is finally in a boar hunt deep in the woods that he is accidentally slain by his closest friend, Adrastus, who sacrifices his own life as a token of fidelity. The story's focus, however, is Croesus. Characterized by his wealth, he hoards his "great heaps of gold" and his son's life alike. In his "golden hall" he seeks to buy protection for Atys from the gods (*CW* 4:147); and ironically, the young Adrastus, the potential slayer he befriends, is grandson of Midas, "rich enow / In corn and cattle, golden cup and ring" (*CW* 4:148). The story is given a typically medieval interpretation by the listeners as a tale of fortune, of the fall of great men; but they also give its theme of wealth an interesting assessment:

Purblind are most of folk,
The happy are the masters of the earth
Which ever give small heed to hapless worth;
So goes the world, and this we needs must bear
Like eld and death: yet there were some men there

Who drank in silence to the memory
Of those who failed on earth great men to be,
Though better than the men who won the crown.
(*CW* 4:159)

"The Watching of the Falcon" is a deeper exploration of consciousness by the Swabian Laurence, who links the questing king's "wilfulness and sin" with the tradition of "searchers for fine stones and gold" (*CW* 4:160). He also frames the king's encounter with the fairy lady with another outspoken introduction. It is a vision of the land that the king abandons in his quest:

For it is fair as any land:
There hath the reaper a full hand,
While in the orchard hangs aloft
The purple fig, a-growing soft;
And fair the trellised vine-bunches
Are swung across the high elm-trees;
And in the rivers great fish play,
While over them pass day by day
The laden barges to their place.
There maids are straight and fair of face,
And men are stout for husbandry,
And all is well as it can be
Upon this earth where all has end.

Laurence interprets death as a blessing because it interrupts human weakness as well as life:

That envy, hatred and hot love,
Knowledge with hunger by his side,
And avarice and deadly pride,
There may have end like everything
Both to the shepherd and the king:
Lest this green earth become but hell
If folk for ever there should dwell. (*CW* 4:161-62)

The Swabian's point, which he does not hesitate to state, is that this land appreciates the blessings of neither life nor

death. People teem with restlessness; the king is their representative type. Supernatural temptation is represented by the immortal lady. She links the themes of immortality and love, impossible alchemy, through her total vision and permanence which make her incapable of experiencing love, capable only of inducing it. Her effect on the king, who attempts to return to society, renders him incapable of continuing temporal happiness or success. The unearthly paradise (*CW* 4:166-67), the promise of mastery and bliss (*CW* 4:168), the lady's cold and golden perfection (*CW* 4:172), and her Blakean warning of the destructive quality of illusion (*CW* 4:174) all summarize the tropes of the volume and prophesy the king's shameful and tormented death. It is a pattern summarized first through the lady:

Better it were that men should live
As beasts and take what earth can give,
The air, the warm sun and the grass,
Until unto the earth they pass,
And gain perchance nought worse than rest,
Than that not knowing what is best
For sons of men, they needs must thirst
For what shall make their lives accurst. (*CW* 4:173)

Then it is summarized by Laurence as he concludes:

And at this day all things are so
As first I said; a land it is
Where men may dwell in rest and bliss
If so they will—Who yet will not,
Because their hasty hearts are hot
With foolish hate and longing vain,
The sire and dam of grief and pain. (*CW* 4:185)

For all their apparent similarity, these two voices express two extreme views of man's condition. One reduces him to an animal; the other criticizes his aspiration. Both are cynical, and neither presents a synthetic view of the dilemma of the

story. As curious an example of the form as it is, the tale is a typical idyll that presents unresolved tensions.

The volume concludes with a pair of quests which echo Psyche's success and combine with the opening tale to seal off the volume from ordinary reality. All three narrators withdraw apologetically, like a pastoral poet from his idyll, subtly bringing down night with "dim moon" and "fleecy cloud" (*CW* 4:207) or overtly blocking their readers' perceptions:

O for me! that I,
Who late have told her woe and misery,
Must leave untold the joy unspeakable
That on her tender wounded spirit fell!
Alas! I try to think of it in vain,
My lyre is but attuned to tears and pain,
How shall I sing the never-ending day?
(*"Psyche," CW* 4:72)

The assertion which must be checked in all three stories is their fulfillment of the summer ethos, expressed by Rolf, the narrator of "Ogier":

Hope is our life, when first our life grows clear,
Hope and delight, scarce crossed by lines of fear;
Yet as the day comes when fain we would not hope,
But forasmuch as we with life must cope,
Struggling with this and that, who knoweth why,
Hope will not give us up to certainty,
But still must bide with us. (*CW* 4:215)

Each of the three enclosing stories achieves the "certainty" that the cycle of man culminates without decay at its full blossom, or as all three stories express it, its "new birth." The withdrawal of the narrator denies perception of the certainty, but it cannot quite dispel the dream of metamorphosis.

Laurence introduced "The Writing on the Image" with a "shudder" at his own young belief

in many a mystery
I thought divine, that now I think, forsooth,
Men's own fears made, to fill the place of truth
Within their foolish hearts. (CW 4:75)

He also once believed in "the stone . . . whereby base metal into gold is wrought" (CW 3:7). The magic stone, the romantic symbol for knowledge and power, is also introduced in *The Prelude* with its antithetical symbol, the shell, representing natural truth. In the poet's apocalyptic dream in Book v, the mysterious Arab "wandering upon [his] quest"¹⁵ holds both symbols and calls them "books":

The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
And wedded soul to soul in purest bond
Of reason, undisturbed by space or time;
The other that was a god, yea many gods,
Had voices more than all the winds, with power
To exhilarate the spirit, and to soothe,
Through every clime, the heart of human kind. (ll. 103-9)

The stone the Bedouin calls "Euclid's Elements," but the shell he says,

"Is something of more worth;" and at the word
Stretched forth the shell, so beautiful in shape,
In colour so resplendent, with command
That I should hold it to my ear. I did so,
And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,
Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
A loud prophetic blast of harmony;
An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold
Destruction to the children of the earth
By deluge, now at hand. (ll. 89-98)

Although Morris considerably alters this romantic view, reducing the shell's scope and expanding the stone's, he gives the stone—with its various associations of power and immor-

tality—a similar evaluation in this volume. Yet the summer ethos of romance insists on releasing its power to transform mutability into permanence. Surrounding the more negative middle tales, the framing stories achieve the impossible. For-saking earthly passion, Pygmalion, "loving the form of immortality" (CW 4:195), pursues and accomplishes incarnation of his marble sculpture. Driven by "vain desire, / the ever-burning, unconsuming fire" (CW 4:194) and assisted by Venus, he transforms the statue, "motionless and white and cold" (CW 4:193), into a lover and wife who enraptures him with her mechanical recitation about "my new-made soul" (CW 4:203). The pursuit divorces him from nature, a separation described in almost exactly the same terms as Psyche's (CW 4:192 and 45), but no matter: in the same way that Psyche contains her own potential wishes and Cupid's, Pygmalion's image embodies the dreams of her creator.¹⁶

Ogier, a more sympathetic character, likewise profits from alchemy. Wrecked on the loadstone rock (CW 4:216ff.), he is transformed into the eternal lover of Morgan le Fay, who obliterates his memories and doubts. She triumphs through a paradisaical setting that induces regressive sleep (CW 4:226-30) and witchcraft that reduces him to passivity (CW 4:233). When he returns to France for battle, he is compared to an effigy (CW 4:236), his eyes are calm (CW 4:237, 239), and he sleeps frequently. With the reappearance of Morgan, the "noises . . . of wakening folk" and "the changing rush of the swift stream / Against the bridge-piers" (CW 4:253-54) all turn into "dream," and he goes with the immortal lady to Avalon.

The volume criticizes the stone, even while it triumphs, but it remains the task of the subsequent volumes to tell of the shell and to acknowledge the end of human life, "destruction to the children of the earth," by the recurring figure of "the deluge," the eternal sea of flux.