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Unpublished Lyrics of William Morris

At the end of a letter to Andreas Scheu giving some biographical details about himself, William Morris wrote: 'I should have written above that I married in 1859 and have two daughters by that marriage very sympathetic with me as to my aims in life.'¹ The comment on his daughters was no empty platitude. Both Jenny and May Morris took a profound interest in all of their father's activities: they embroidered, they helped with the arrangements for socialist meetings, they made fair copies of his poetry. Because of chronic illness, Jenny could not undertake strenuous tasks, but May energetically devoted her life, as Sir Basil Blackwell said, 'to keeping her father's memory not only green but dynamic'.² Her edition of her father's work in twenty-four volumes, published by Longmans between 1910 and 1915, was undertaken with prodigious care and love: manuscripts were diligently sought out and copied; the collation of manuscripts with earlier editions was scrupulously undertaken; editorial emendation was kept to a minimum and was made only after taking advice from Morris's executors (notably Sir Sydney Cockerell, formerly Morris's secretary); and the critical commentary offered was intelligent and full of insight.

The task was, however, an enormous one, the manuscripts were scattered, and May was not entirely systematic. As a result, *The Collected Works of William Morris* is, in places, confusingly and repetitively organized. Nevertheless, by the twenty-fourth volume May had managed to include virtually all of what was available to her except for items that she deliberately, though often reluctantly, excluded. Unfinished poems and drafts were generally not printed in full, though they were often drawn from in the introductions to the volumes; and much of Morris's journalistic and lecturing work was passed over. Her pencilled comment on an unfinished ballad of which she quoted part is 'I see no reason to print *more* of this, as we are not printing early fragments wholesale'.³ In general she accepted Cockerell's opinion: 'the three existing volumes of lectures contain the greater part of what he wished to stand as his message on art and socialism. I do not think his reputation will gain by a gathering together of everything by him that can be collected, the bulk of his writing being already very large.'⁴

Even while the edition was in progress, though, May seems to have felt that she had been too rigid in excluding certain material, and when the opportunity was provided by Sir Basil Blackwell to bring out two supplementary volumes (*William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*, 1936) she included many more lectures and journalistic items, many more fragmentary drafts and notes. But perhaps the most interesting items were drawn from a manuscript that had come to light only after the completion of *The Collected Works*. It was a set of very early poems discovered in

¹ 5 September 1883; *The Letters of William Morris*, edited by Philip Henderson (London, 1950), p. 188.

² 'More about Miss Lobb', *The Bookseller*, 27 October 1962, p. 1736.

³ British Museum Additional Manuscript 45298A, f. 110a.

⁴ Letter to May Morris, 25 August 1913, British Museum Additional Manuscript 32470, provisional f. 20.

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the drawer of a bureau belonging to Morris's eldest and favourite sister, Emma, in 1921. The poems, some possibly in Emma's hand, some almost certainly in Morris's, now form part of British Museum Additional MS 45298A.

With twenty-six volumes devoted to Morris's work by a competent and sympathetic editor who had taken great care with the selection of the items to be preserved, it might be thought that the likelihood of other worthwhile material becoming available was slight. Yet since then eleven other lectures, ten of them at least having been available to May Morris, have been published, with considerable profit to students of Morris.¹

Only three poems, however, have so far been added to the canon.² The first was in Ward Ritchie's private publication of 1958, *William Morris and his 'Praise of Wine'* (Los Angeles: Printed for distribution to the members of the Roxburghe Club and Zamorano Club) which contained, in addition to the poem mentioned in the title (already published in May Morris's 1936 edition, 1, 541-3), the draft of a sonnet beginning 'Ah shall this day be e'en as morn of yesterday?'. The draft is roughly written on the back of the leaf containing 'Praise of Wine', now owned by Mr Ritchie. The poem had probably been rejected by May Morris because it had not received her father's final revision; unlike 'Praise of Wine', it is roughly scribbled.

The second previously unpublished poem to appear was one beginning 'O fair gold goddess', edited in a scholarly manner by Miss R. C. Ellison in her article 'An Unpublished Poem by William Morris', *English*, 15 (1964), 100-2. Miss Ellison collated the two available manuscripts, the draft in British Museum Additional MS (hereafter BM Add. MS) 45318, f. 92a-b, and a fair copy at the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, MS J150. Miss Ellison noted that the same British Museum Manuscript contains two letters dated 1931 from May Morris to Dame Bertha Phillpotts about Morris's work in Scandinavian literature. From this fact she produced an ingenious and plausible set of conjectures. She assumed that when May inquired about the origin of what looked like the draft of a translation by Morris the poem referred to was 'O fair gold goddess'; that the existence of the correspondence suggests May was intending to publish the poem; and that her intention must have been deflected by what Dame Bertha told her about the poem.

Miss Ellison suggests that Dame Bertha must have cast doubt on May's assumption that the poem was a translation. Her own opinion is that it is 'an outspoken and poignant expression of regret' (p. 100) by Morris at his wife's love for Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and that it was written about 1873 (the year of Morris's second visit to Iceland). She points out that Morris seems to have made an attempt to conceal the personal reference of the poem by signing the fair copy with what looks like the name of an Icelandic skald, 'Vilhjálmr Vandradaskáld', but is really a

¹ *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*, edited by Eugene D. LeMire (Detroit, 1969), and 'An Unpublished Lecture of William Morris ["How Shall We Live Then?"]', edited by Paul Meier, *International Review of Social History*, 16 (1971), 217-40.

² A fourth might seem to be the pamphlet song, 'Wake, London Lads!', written for and distributed at a meeting convened by the Eastern Question Association and the Workmen's Neutrality Committee in Exeter Hall on 16 January 1878. Arthur Kyle Davis, Jr, thought he was rescuing this poem from neglect in his article 'William Morris and the Eastern Question, with a Fugitive Political Poem by Morris' in *Humanistic Studies in Honor of John Calvin Metcalf* (*Virginia University Studies*, 1 (1941), 28-47). The poem had, however, already been reprinted in *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*, II, 572-3.

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transparent reference to himself — 'William Troublous-skald', to use the style of Morris and Magnússon's saga translations.

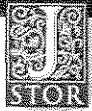
The third previously unpublished poem was printed in David J. DeLaura's note, 'An Unpublished Poem of William Morris' (*Modern Philology*, 62 (1965), 340-1). It is 'Lonely Love and Loveless Death', which Mr DeLaura printed from a manuscript acquired in 1963 by the Miriam Litcher Stark Library of the University of Texas at Austin. Mr DeLaura unfortunately failed to realize that there are two other manuscripts of the poem, one an autograph draft with a number of unresolved readings in BM Add. MS 45298A, f. 92a-b, the other an autograph fair copy in the beautiful calligraphic illuminated manuscript made by Morris for Georgiana Burne-Jones in 1870, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (R. C. AA. 17). Most of the variant readings in the calligraphic version (pp. 44-6 of the manuscript) affect only accidentals, but in one line the text is a little more tentative than the Texas version in stating the writer's relation to his beloved. The calligraphic version reads 'I beheld her through anguish'; the Texas version reads 'She was mine through all anguish'. It is a line that had obviously given Morris some trouble, for the draft reads 'She sat oer mine anguish'. The chief value of the draft and the calligraphic fair copy is, however, that they help to clarify the answer to DeLaura's question about the 'thou' in the second half of stanza six:

If thou didst behold her,
If thine hand held her fingers,
If her breath thou wert hearing,
What words wouldst thou say?

(In the first of these lines the draft reads 'If thou didst beholder'; in the next line both draft and calligraphic text, with characteristic reticence, substitute 'touched her fingers' for 'held her fingers'.) DeLaura asks: 'Is it the poet addressing himself? Or is it some assumed addressee (or the "reader")?' Now the calligraphic manuscript 'A Book of Verse' was written for and presented to Georgiana Burne-Jones, and the fact that Morris did not publish this poem in any other way may indicate that he considered it a personal statement intended only for her. Whether that is so or not, the 'thou' (and the 'beholder' of the draft version) does seem to refer to her. In the earlier part of the poem Morris has been grieving about the failure of his ideal love-relationship. He is presumably speaking about the deterioration in his relationship with his wife. If this is so, it would seem natural for him, in stanza six, to turn directly to the addressee of the poem. Georgiana Burne-Jones was thoroughly aware of the situation, had known the Morrises well for almost the whole of their married life, and was having her own marital troubles at the time. In his anguish Morris asks her what she would say to Jane Morris if she were in his situation.

Mr DeLaura conjectures that the poem was omitted by Morris from *Poems by the Way* for one of two reasons: 'It may have been because of the obscurities in phrasing and situation mentioned above. Or the personal, even revealing, intensity of the poem may have held his hand'. The chief obscurity that DeLaura points to is the one that I have attempted to dissipate. His second conjecture stands, however, and it is likely to have weighed with May Morris also. She possessed the draft copy of the poem among her father's papers and it is certain that she examined 'A Book of Verse' because in her Introduction to Volume Nine of the *Collected Works* she

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discusses the ornamentation and the painted figures of the manuscript (pp. xxi-xxii), quotes the end-note of the text (pp. xxvii-xxviii), and refers to some of the 'Poems by the Way' included in it (pp. xxxiv-xxxvi). It is likely, then, that May considered the poem for publication but decided to respect her father's reticence about it.

There is, however, one other set of possibilities: that May did not check the contents of 'A Book of Verse' very carefully, assuming that all the poems in it had been published; that she took the draft to be the only extant copy of the poem; and that because it was in an obviously unfinished state she rejected it. This conjecture is made more plausible by the fact that 'A Book of Verse' contains two other poems that have never been printed, and which exist, as far as I am aware, uniquely in this manuscript. Oddly enough, one of them has been published without being set in type: 'Guileful Love' appears in a page reproduced photographically from 'A Book of Verse' as an illustration in Gerald H. Crow's *William Morris, Designer* (the Special Winter Number of *The Studio*, 1934), p. 97.

Both poems, 'Guileful Love' and 'Summer Night', are readily datable, on stylistic grounds, as belonging to the *Earthly Paradise* period; both could easily have been used as inset lyrics in such tales as *The Story of Cupid and Psyche* or *The Hill of Venus*.

As these two poems exist in a single holograph manuscript, very carefully written as a gift for a special friend and inevitably checked by Morris, consciously or unconsciously, when he was drawing and painting the decoration for the pages, the text available can be assumed to be an exceptionally good one. 'Guileful Love' comes from page 21 of the manuscript, 'Summer Night' from page 22.

GUILEFUL LOVE.

LOVE set me in a flowery garden fair
Love showed me many marvels moving there
Love said, Take these, if nought thy soul doth dare
To feel my fiery hand upon thine heart,
Take these, and live, and lose the better part.

Love showed me Death, and said, Make no delay;
Love showed me Change, and said, Joy ebbs away;
Love showed me Eld amid regrets grown grey —
I laughed for joy, and round his heart I clung,
Sickened and swooned by bitter-sweetness stung.

But I awoke at last, and born again
Laid eager hands upon unrest and pain,
And wrapped myself about with longing vain:
Ah, better still and better all things grew,
As more the root and heart of Love I knew.

O Love Love Love, what is it thou hast done?
All pains, all fears I knew, save only one;
Where is the fair earth now, where is the sun?
Thou didst not say my Love might never move
Her eyes, her hands, her lips to bless my love.

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Unpublished Lyrics of William Morris

SUMMER NIGHT.

O LOVE O love though thy lids are shut close,
Yet hearken the sweet-breathed rustling rose!

Why liest thou sleeping, yet red with shame
While the harp-strings tremble to hear thy name?

Hearken the harp in a trembling hand!
Hearken soft speech of a far off land!

O my love, if thou hearest my foot-steps anear
Thy very breathing methinks I may hear.

O my sweet, is it true that we are alone,
The grey leaves a-quiver, twixt us and the moon.

O me, the love, the love in thine eyes,
Now the night is a-dying as all life dies!

Art thou come, swift end of beginning of bliss?
O my sweet! O thine eyes, O thy hand, O thy kiss!

If 'Guileful Love' were to be interpreted biographically it would be taken to refer to Morris's love-relationship with his wife, a relationship which, on the evidence of the poem, passed through a period of trouble to one of courageous resolve and then to one of desolate despair at his failure to be loved in return. 'Summer Night', a more generalized poem, is remarkable for the final gasp of joy at the fulfilment of love, a climactic expression that is made all the more vibrant by the softness and gentleness of the first six couplets. Both poems, indeed, have surprising, and surprisingly passionate, endings.

With the poems that exist only in 'A Book of Verse' it is uncertain whether May Morris omitted them from her edition intentionally or accidentally. With the manuscripts that she herself owned, however, and from which she drew for her edition, the failure to print a particular item must almost certainly be deliberate. There are, in fact, in the manuscripts which she owned and which she bequeathed to the British Museum, a number of unpublished poems and fragments. Some are juvenilia, some are discarded parts of *The Earthly Paradise*, some are unfinished. It is easy to understand why they were omitted. But others are mature, finished poems, where the reason for May Morris's omission is more puzzling and the argument for publishing now stronger.

The classified list that follows gives details of the apparently unpublished poems and fragments in the British Museum May Morris Bequest, excluding fragments omitted from larger works.

Juvenilia

'And then as the ship moves over the deep' (fragment; in a copyist's hand). Add. MS 45298A, f. 14a-b.

'The Blackbird', beginning 'Listen the blackbird singing' (complete; ?autograph fair copy). Add. MS 45298A, f. 34a-b.

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But must not speak of, still I count the hours
That bring my friend to me, with hungry eyes
I watch him as his feet the staircase mount 45
Then face to face we sit, a wall of lies
Made hard by fear and faint anxieties
Is drawn between us, and he goes away
And leaves me wishing it were yesterday.

Then when they both are gone, I sit alone 50
And turning foolish triumph's pages o'er
And think how it would be if they were gone
Not to return, or worse if the time bore
Some seed of hatred in its fiery core
And nought of praise were left to me to gain 55
But the poor [] we walked of as so vain.

44 me,] me *draft and fair copy*

In the autograph draft, the right-hand margin is dotted at random with leaves and flowers until the last two stanzas; at that point some notes apparently intended as a reminder of how the poem was to continue occur:

was dull but all right now

poets unrealities

x tears can come with verse
we are in the same box
and need conceal nothing —
dont cast me away —
scold me but pardon me
What is all this to me (say
you)

shame in confessing ones
real feelings —

It is the subject, as much as the unfinished state of the poem, that must have militated against its publication by either Morris or his daughter.¹ One might even suspect, indeed, that the poem was too naked an expression of Morris's feelings and situation for him to be able to finish it. The last line of the last draft stanza seems to have been written so fast that a word (marked by a gap in Jane Morris's fair copy) was inadvertently omitted from what he wanted to say.

The poem appears to be a verse epistle addressed to Georgiana Burne-Jones. In it Morris expresses his loneliness and misery, offers sympathy to Mrs Burne-Jones in her similar troubles and hints at his love for her, and refers in a dramatic way to Rossetti's visits to his house to see Jane Morris. On this interpretation the 'changed

¹ Ten lines were printed, together with most of the notes for continuation, in Philip Henderson, *William Morris: His Life, Work and Friends* (London, 1967), pp. 93-4. Henderson, however, in a way that is justified neither by the setting out in the manuscripts nor by the scansion and rhyme-scheme of the lines themselves, included these lines as part of another poem.

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'From all other moving shadows' (fragment; in a copyist's hand). Add. MS 45298A, f. 13a-b.

'The Ruined Castle', beginning 'The dream of a castle, standing alone' (complete; ?autograph fair copy). Add. MS 45298A, ff. 32a-33b.

'The Three Flowers', beginning 'Now the crocus is beside me' (complete; ?autograph fair copy). Add. MS 45298A, ff. 30a-31b.

Between 'The Defence of Guenevere' and 'The Earthly Paradise'

'The Sleeve of Gold', beginning 'It was when the thrushes sing their best', with some alternative stanzas beginning 'Fair Catherine made as if she rowed' (incomplete; ? in hand of Charles Fairfax Murray). Add. MS 45298A, ff. 47a-67a. Another copy of part of this poem exists in the Tinker Library of the Yale University Library, as Tinker 1595, ff. 1-8; it is in a copyist's hand on paper watermarked '1856'. This manuscript contains other fragmentary pieces of the same period including a mutilated poem about Katherine and Yoland ending 'I am not now afraid of God'.

The Period of 'The Earthly Paradise'

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'Peace for the joy abiding' (complete; copy by Jane Morris). Add. MS 45298B, f. 1b.

'Peevish and weak and fretful do I pray' (three lines; autograph and copy by Jane Morris). Add. MSS 45298A, f. 86b (autograph); 45298B, f. 51a (copy).

'They have no song, the sedges dry' (fragment; copy by Jane Morris). Add. MS 45298B, f. 50a.

'Three chances and one answer', beginning 'O love if all the pleasures that the earth' (complete; autograph fair copy and copy by Jane Morris). Add. MSS 45298A, f. 104a (autograph); 45298B, f. 14a (copy).

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'The world perchance to mock and jest would turn' (complete sonnet; autograph draft and copy by Jane Morris). Add. MSS 45298A, f. 86b (draft); 45298B, f. 51a-b (copy).

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After 'The Earthly Paradise'

'Axel Thordson and Fair Walborg', beginning "They set the gold tables on the board" (fragmentary translation from Danish; autograph draft and typescript). Add. MS 45318, ff. 45a-56b (draft), 57a-77a (typescript). A rough literal translation made for Morris of the remainder of the ballad follows (ff. 76a-81a).

'Moreover in that time and place' (fragment; autograph draft). Add. MS 45298A, f. 114a-b.

'O land sore torn and riven' (fragment; autograph draft). Add. MS 45298A, f. 119a.

'So I rose and felt my feet on the daisied grass in a while' (fragment; autograph draft). Add. MS 45298A, f. 124a.

'Thou hast it then the pouch?' (fragment of a dramatic poem; autograph draft). Add. MS 45298A, f. 116a-b.

'Three spae-wives left a rune staff on the bed' (fragment; autograph draft). Add. MS 45318, f. 93a.

'Thus have I told many ways of the dealings of prudence with men' (fragment; autograph draft). Add. MS 45298A, f. 125a.

'Well put thy case and more than one of us' (fragment of a dramatic poem; autograph draft on paper watermarked (f. 117) '1872'). Add. MS 45298A, ff. 117a-118b.

None of the juvenilia in this list is really worth reviving. Morris came, in fact, to adopt a fairly patronizing attitude to his early work. In the letter to Andreas Scheu mentioned earlier he described the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* as 'very young indeed' (p. 185), and referred even to *The Defence of Guenevere* as 'exceedingly young also and very mediaeval' (p. 186). May Morris excerpted skilfully from this material for *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* and rejected those in the foregoing list presumably because of the dreamy, inconsequential nature of the stories they tell, the confusing shifts in the point of view and in the temporal sequence, the faults of metre and rhyme, the infelicities of diction, the occasional indications of a lack of final revision, and perhaps the rather tiresome and indulgent self-pity of some of them (notably 'The Three Flowers'). The most gripping narrative is in the gothic ballad 'The Ruined Castle', which is, however, the most marred in rhythm. The most interesting poem, in view of Morris's fascination with the same theme in so many other stories and poems, is 'The Three Flowers', where two friends are in love with the same woman.

'The Sleeve of Gold' was, according to a note by Sir Sydney Cockerell on the manuscript containing it, one of a group of poems 'rejected when "Poems by the Way" was got together' (f. 47a). In this copy, owned by Charles Fairfax Murray and possibly in his hand, a few lines and words are missing here and there and the poem seems not quite finished. It tells the story of May Catherine, who begins by bemoaning her fate of being pregnant and of having her knight Richard absent from her. But Richard returns, and after heroic difficulties rescues her from her father's castle and defeats her father's men. Lord Lawrence, her father, is furious, but to the astonishment of the lovers he rushes into their wedding ceremony to embrace them. He says he has had a dream in which they have appeared happy and blessed. The loping ballad metre in which all this is told, with its frequent forced stresses, is somewhat wearying, but the stanzas on Catherine's distress and her fears for Sir Richard's safety are charged with tense excitement.

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Of the remaining poems listed above, all those from the period after *The Earthly Paradise* can be set aside as being fragmentary drafts, not intended for publication; none of them exists in more than one manuscript.¹ The same can be said of the three pieces of verse included in the period of *The Earthly Paradise* that were apparently intended as rhymed captions for illustrations or pictures. These three pieces, beginning with the lines 'Alas Paris that thou shouldst live', 'Paris in arms again behold', and 'Paris of Troy you here may see', bear a resemblance in syntactical structure to such lines in the rejected Prologue to *The Earthly Paradise* (*The Wanderers*) as 'Here fields of corn and pleasant hills | Dotted with orchards shall ye see . . .' (*Collected Works*, xxiv, 166).

All the other poems of the period of *The Earthly Paradise*, however, are accompanied by some evidence, in that they exist in fair copies, that either Morris or the copyist considered them appropriate for publication. 'Peevish and weak and fretful do I pray' can be discounted because of its brevity, though the question of why Jane Morris thought it worth copying remains unresolved. 'They have no song, the sedges dry' has eight lines, but is obviously a fragment and is no longer extant in an autograph version; the British Museum copy was made by Jane Morris. 'Deep sea, mighty wonder' is a fragment of six lines, copied not by Jane Morris but by an unidentified hand. The eight lines of 'Dead and gone is all desire' are complete in themselves and could be considered as a finished poem except that they express a sentiment on which Morris normally expatiated at greater length and they are in a stanzaic form that seems to demand either repetition or reworking into the octave of a sonnet. The poignancy of the world-weariness and despair and the extraordinary nature of the rhyme-scheme (*abcbedad*, a symmetrical pattern of seven lines with an unrelated closing line), unused elsewhere by Morris or by any other poet,² suggest that the poem should be printed here.

Dead and gone is all desire
Gone and left me cold and bare
Gone as the kings that few remember
And their battle-cry 'twixt furrow and air
Past and gone like last December
Gone as yesterday's winds that were
Gone as the flames of yonder fire
Oh my heart! How mayst thou bear it?

The only significant variant to be noted is that in the fourth line the draft reads 'they' in place of 'their'.

In the British Museum manuscripts of poems of the period of *The Earthly Paradise* there remain seven works copied by Jane Morris possibly with a view to publication. One, 'Alone unhappy by the fire I sat', is not quite complete in the draft; for another, 'Peace for the joy abiding', the autograph is no longer extant. In accordance with May Morris's editorial practice, all seven are here printed from Jane Morris's fair copies with a minimum of emendation. Variants occurring in the

¹ With regard to 'Axel Thordson and Fair Walborg', May Morris's decision, expressed to Dame Bertha Phillpotts, was that the 'translation . . . is so very much in the rough that I am sure I ought not to publish it, on consideration' (letter dated 2 December 1931; BM Add. MS 45318, f. 44A).

² For another unique stanza form see 'Love Fulfilled', written at about the same time (it is included in Georgiana Burne-Jones's 'A Book of Verse') and published in *Poems by the Way*.

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autograph and copy (except for insignificant variants of punctuation) are noted. The poems are printed in the order of the classified list given above.

Alone unhappy by the fire I sat
 And pondered o'er the changing of the days
 And of the death of this good hope and that
 That time agone our hearts to heaven would raise
 But now lie buried 'neath the stony ways 5
 Where change and folly lead our wearied feet
 Till face to face this verse and sorrow meet.

I strove to think what like the days would be
 If ere we die we should grow glad again
 But yet no image of felicity 10
 From out such twice-changed days my heart could gain
 For still on pain I thought, and still on pain
 Of shifts from grief to joy we poets sing
 And of the long days make a little thing.

But grief meseems is like eternity 15
 While our hearts ache and far-off seems the rest
 If we are not content that all should die
 That we so fondly once unto us pressed
 Unless our love for folly be confessed
 And we stare back with cold and wondering eyes 20
 On the burnt rags of our fool's paradise.

So I when of the happy days to come
 I strove to think no whit would all avail,
 Rather my thoughts went back to that changed home
 And in mine ears there rang some piteous tale 25
 And all my heart for very pain did fail
 To think of thine; I cannot bridge the space
 'Twixt what may be and thy sad weary face.

Ah do you lift your eye-brows in disdain
 Because I dare to pity or come nigh 30
 To your great sorrow, helpless weak and vain
 E'en as I know myself? — ah rather I
 On you my helper in the darkness cry
 For you alone unchanged now seem to be
 A real thing left of the days sweet to me. 35

Dreamy the rest has grown now that my lips
 Must leave the words unsaid my heart will say
 While I grow hot, and o'er the edge there slips
 A word that makes me tremble and I stay
 With fluttering heart the thoughts that will away. 40
 We meet, we laugh and talk but still is set
 A seal o'er things I never can forget



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But must not speak of, still I count the hours
That bring my friend to me, with hungry eyes
I watch him as his feet the staircase mount 45
Then face to face we sit, a wall of lies
Made hard by fear and faint anxieties
Is drawn between us, and he goes away
And leaves me wishing it were yesterday.

Then when they both are gone, I sit alone 50
And turning foolish triumph's pages o'er
And think how it would be if they were gone
Not to return, or worse if the time bore
Some seed of hatred in its fiery core
And nought of praise were left to me to gain 55
But the poor [] we walked of as so vain.

44 me,] me draft and fair copy

In the autograph draft, the right-hand margin is dotted at random with leaves and flowers until the last two stanzas; at that point some notes apparently intended as a reminder of how the poem was to continue occur:

was dull but all right now

poets unrealities

x tears can come with verse
we are in the same box
and need conceal nothing —
dont cast me away —
scold me but pardon me
What is all this to me (say
you)

shame in confessing ones
real feelings —

It is the subject, as much as the unfinished state of the poem, that must have militated against its publication by either Morris or his daughter.¹ One might even suspect, indeed, that the poem was too naked an expression of Morris's feelings and situation for him to be able to finish it. The last line of the last draft stanza seems to have been written so fast that a word (marked by a gap in Jane Morris's fair copy) was inadvertently omitted from what he wanted to say.

The poem appears to be a verse epistle addressed to Georgiana Burne-Jones. In it Morris expresses his loneliness and misery, offers sympathy to Mrs Burne-Jones in her similar troubles and hints at his love for her, and refers in a dramatic way to Rossetti's visits to his house to see Jane Morris. On this interpretation the 'changed

¹ Ten lines were printed, together with most of the notes for continuation, in Philip Henderson, *William Morris: His Life, Work and Friends* (London, 1967), pp. 93-4. Henderson, however, in a way that is justified neither by the setting out in the manuscripts nor by the scansion and rhyme-scheme of the lines themselves, included these lines as part of another poem.

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Unpublished Lyrics of William Morris

home' is the Burne-Joneses', the 'thine' and the 'you' refer to Mrs Burne-Jones, the ironically slanted 'my friend' is Rossetti, and the 'they' are Rossetti and Mrs Morris.

The notes for continuation make this interpretation highly plausible. In his prose letters to Georgiana Burne-Jones of about this time Morris frequently complains of feeling dull, or expresses the hope that his correspondent is not dull or is no longer dull. It would be natural for him in this verse letter to make the same comment. But the most cogent lines in the notes are 'we are in the same box and need conceal nothing'. Morris, as is well known, was greatly troubled during the period of *The Earthly Paradise* by Rossetti's attentions to his wife, and by the pleasure she evidently derived from them.¹ Georgiana Burne-Jones too had her marital difficulties. Her husband, Morris's great friend, had become infatuated with Mrs Mary Zambaco, with unpleasant, if somewhat comic-opera-like, results.²

On the evidence of both the poem and the notes, Morris seems to have felt that Georgiana Burne-Jones would disapprove of any confession of love by him or even any discussion of their situation. He imagines her in the poem raising her eyebrows at his attempt to express pity (lines 30-1); he feels that he must be discreet in what he says, though one incautious word (presumably 'love') does slip out (lines 36-9); he states the conventional mode of behaviour that they conform to (lines 41-2). In the notes he is again apologetic about his words and pessimistic about the likelihood of engendering any favourable response.

Morris may or may not have sent the finished verse epistle. We cannot be certain, either, how much, if any, of these sentiments he expressed to Mrs Burne-Jones in private conversation. What is probable, though, is that in 'A Book of Verse' he intended many of the poems to be read by her as an expression of his feelings towards her. There is, for instance, a song published as part of *The Man Who Never Laughed Again* beginning with the line 'O thou who drawest nigh across the sea'. As a pleasant song heard by Bharam during his voyage, any biographical interpretation is entirely concealed. But as included in 'A Book of Verse' (with a first line of 'O weary seeker over land and sea' and numerous other variants) Morris may well have hoped that Georgiana would feel the repeated 'come' and 'draw nigh' as a personal invitation; that she would see a reference to her marital troubles in 'thy lips too long have borne | Hunger of love thy heart hath long outworn'; that she would heed the injunction to neglect the thoughts and opinions of those around, treating such people as 'well wrought images' or 'whispering trees'; that she would sympathize with the momentary bravado expressed in 'think not of Time then'; and that she would respond to the poignant urgency of 'why makest thou delay?'

In 'Alone unhappy by the fire I sat' a transition from the relations between Morris and Georgiana Burne-Jones to the relations between him and Rossetti occurs in stanza seven. Morris observes Rossetti's visits with 'hungry eyes', yearning for the affection from Jane that she directs instead to his 'friend'. Rossetti calls to take Jane out; Morris escorts him up the stairs to the drawing room; they sit facing each other, waiting for Jane to appear; then Rossetti leaves with her, perhaps to

¹ See, for example, the evidence gathered in Oswald Doughty, *A Victorian Romantic: Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London, 1949), pp. 453-68 and in Henderson, pp. 91-105.

² See, for example, the evidence presented in Henderson, pp. 97-8.

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take her to an evening party or the theatre, as we know he often did. Between the two men exists 'a wall of lies', not dissimilar, really, to the screen of convention existing between Morris and Mrs Burne-Jones. Morris was later to write to Aglaia Coronio, when his relations with Rossetti had further deteriorated, that 'it is really a farce our meeting when we can help it' (25 November 1872; *Letters*, p. 51). The wall is 'Made hard by fear and faint anxieties' — fear, presumably, of how the matter will end, anxiety, perhaps, for Jane.

When they have gone, Morris retreats into the same introspective loneliness with which he began the poem. As he perhaps turns the leaves of some of the books he has published, he reverts to the thought of what it would be like if both Rossetti and Jane were 'gone | Not to return'. But he seems to be of the same mind as he was in stanza three, 'not content that all should die | That we so fondly once unto us pressed'. The recurring thought brings him no consolation, only sorrow; but a 'worse' thought is what it would be like if his affection for Jane turned to 'hatred'.

This detailed biographical interpretation can account for all the details in the poem. In particular it can account for the otherwise puzzling transition from second-person address in the first part to third-person statement at the end, and for the denotation of the 'you's', 'we's', and 'they's' throughout.

The next poem, 'Dear if God praise thee much for many a thing', differs from 'Alone unhappy by the fire I sat' in that it requires no biographical explanation to make sense of any of the details; it is a literary construction in its own right.

Dear if God praise thee much for many a thing
And somewhere builds for thee a house of bliss
I poor and weak must praise thee most for this,
That thou beholding how my heart doth cling
To thy dear heart makest no questioning 5
That ne'er in longing look, nor word, nor kiss
There hideth aught where aught of guile there is
For thee nor me thou fearst no treacherous sting.
Yet do I wonder — praise thee as I may
Or fear to trust thee utterly herein 10
Or deem that thou wouldst call my service sin.
Thou who with love for all thy staff and stay
Goest great-hearted down the weary way
Still looking for the new dawn to begin.

6 ne'er] nor draft

Despite its apparent autotelic quality, the poem must have been considered by Morris and his daughter to contain a biographical element too dangerous to be revealed. If the poem were addressed to Jane Morris the indiscretion of publishing it during her lifetime is apparent. Morris would be recognized as praising her for implicitly trusting his love in the octave, but expressing a 'wonder' and a 'fear to trust' her attitude in the sestet. If the poem were addressed to Georgiana Burne-Jones the indiscretion in publishing would have been even greater.

The next unpublished poem, 'Everlasting Spring', looks forward to a paradisaical period when love will be fully reciprocated and fulfilled, and ends by blaming the social conditions of this present world, 'the wise world's wisdom, the rich world's growing bliss', for the fact that untroubled love cannot exist on this side of the grave.

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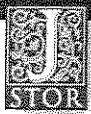
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*Unpublished Lyrics of William Morris**Everlasting Spring*

O my love my darling, what is this men say
 That I, for all my yearning have no words to deny?
 Why was I made for nothing, for my life to pass away
 For thy kindness as my madness all utterly to die?

Love that cannot love me, e'en as I would believe 5
 Those dreams of the sad morning when thou callest me to come,
 Little touches, little kisses, all forgiveness to receive,
 So I long to trust the story of that innocent sweet home.

Those fair meads of the old painter with their blossoms red and white 10
 That thy feet touch, and my feet touch, as our hands cling palm to palm,
 Nought lost and nought forgotten of old sorrow and delight,
 Nought ended, nought perfected, but all wrapped in peace and calm.

Nought has changed us mid those blossoms, but the breath of happiness,
 As on earth am I ungainly, and thou sweet and delicate,
 But thou lov'st me as I love thee, for now innocence doth bless 15
 My fierceness into patience, and I fear no change or hate.

O my love, my darling! thou kissest me again
 In that far-off country, and still a little shame
 Burns on thy cheek to tell me, of remembrance of the pain 20
 When my lips unknissed and trembling nigh to thine of old time came.

Thy beloved and clinging fingers still loosen from mine own
 For a minute, then cling tighter, as thou thinkest of the days
 When thou must thrust back pity, and I must not bemoan,
 When I heard thy sweet name spoken, burning with unspoken praise.

There as I behold thee no change shall chill thine eyes, 25
 No fear my ears shall deafen, as I hear thy heavenly speech;
 I shall not miss the pleasure 'twixt doubting and surprise
 Of thy kisses, O beloved, that no more I may beseech.

There to certain expectation all hope and fear is turned,
 And love swalloweth up all longing, and yet longing ne'er is done, 30
 And the dreadful wearying patience, and the passionate pain that burned
 Unforgotten and unwasted, are but Love now they are one.

Yes, thy pity and thy wisdom, and thy kindness and thy care,
 No longer then shall part us, for no more than love are they,
 And the bitter earthly folly of my craving and despair 35
 No less than love, my darling, shall seem that endless day.

Alas, for the white morning with no hope of touch or kiss!
 Woe worth the world's awaking from the simple days bygone!
 Woe for the wise world's wisdom, the rich world's growing bliss 40
 That make that hope a folly of twain grown into one!

10 touch, and] *Morris's fair copy*; touch, that *Jane Morris's copy*.
 32 they are] are but *Morris's fair copy*.

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This seems to be an honest and magnanimous recognition of the situation between Morris and his wife. He recognizes love in Jane, but it is 'Love that cannot love me' (line 5), that leaves his 'lips un-kissed and trembling' despite their being 'nigh to' hers (line 20), that forces him to 'beseech' kisses (line 28), but to have 'no hope of touch or kiss' (line 37), and that expresses itself in 'pity', 'wisdom', 'kindness', and 'care' (line 33) rather than in the 'passionate pain' (line 31) that he experiences. In the paradisaal state to which he looks forward in 'that innocent sweet home' the existence of which he longs to believe in (line 8), the past will not be lost or forgotten or vitiated, but life will be 'wrapped in peace and calm' (line 11), his 'fierceness' will be transformed into 'patience' (line 16), an attitude quite different from the 'dreadful wearying patience' (line 31) that he is now forced to exert.

'Peace for the joy abiding', a much less intense poem, is a reworking of three stanzas towards the end of a longer work, included in *Poems by the Way* (1891) as 'Earth the Healer, Earth the Keeper'. It is best considered simply as a variant rather than as an original poem. Like 'Everlasting Spring' it expresses faith in the permanence of human emotions and relationships, even when 'Thy soul and lips shall perish, | Thy very name depart', and a similar longing for a future day of peace and joy. For this poem there is no autograph manuscript; it is, however, the first poem that Jane Morris copied into the black-covered quarto exercise book used as the source of copy-texts for the poems printed here.

Peace for the joy abiding
That thou lookest soon to hold,
Shall Earth keep for a tidings,
When this new day is old.

Thy soul and lips shall perish, 5
Thy very name depart,
But earth the deeds shall cherish
Wherein thou hadst a part.

So all thy joy and sorrow, 10
So great but yesterday,
So little on tomorrow,
Shall never pass away.

2 thou] they *Jane Morris*

May Morris rejected this poem from the canon presumably on the ground that it was merely a variant of part of another. Alternatively, she may have felt that it was vague and obscure both in the intended statements and in their syntactical expression, these faults being especially evident in the first and last stanzas.

The situation in 'Three chances and one answer' is also somewhat obscure; it is not clear whether the beloved who is addressed is dead or irretrievably alienated. It is clear, though, that Morris is expressing the same longing for the unity of two lives that he expressed in 'Everlasting Spring' and that he is doing so in similar imagery of the earth and new birth that he uses in several of the poems printed here.

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Unpublished Lyrics of William Morris

Three chances and one answer

O love, if all the pleasures that the earth
Can give one life, if new and happy birth
Were given me now, how could I weigh their worth
If low and soft thy sweet voice spake to me
‘We, who were twain, one loved soul let us be.’ 5

Love, if they showed me plenteous rest and peace,
A summer land, and fruitful years’ increase,
Thou knowest how my soul would turn from these,
If thou shouldst say, ‘One kiss, love, ere the cold
The lonely dark, and the sad year grown old.’ 10

And now that thou art silent, and thine eyes
Must turn no more to these my miseries,
Thou wilt not think me grown so bitter-wise
That I the dream of what thy lips might say
For all the good of life, could give away. 15

1 that] *fair copy*; of *Jane Morris's copy*

The ambiguousness surrounding the state of the beloved in this poem can be resolved by considering ‘Thy lips that I have touched no more may speak’, a poem expressing a similar situation and attitude. The diction used for the beloved’s state in both poems (notably the repeated ‘no more’, which occurs in a number of these poems) borders on what would be appropriate if she were dead, but it is clear from ‘Thy lips that I have touched’ that she is still alive, though dead in any response to the poet’s love.

Thy lips that I have touched no more may speak
The words that through my sorrow used to break
Yet may they tremble sometimes for my sake
Because pure love thou art and very ruth.

The eyes that I have kissed no more may gaze 5
As they were wont my heart to heaven to raise
Yet may they change to think of my sad days,
And look with pure love from the heart of truth.

Thine oft-kissed little hands no more may write 10
The treasured words of comfort and delight
Yet may they yearn for what thou dost endite
A heart of very love, a life of ruth.

Hands eyes and lips dear ministers of love
How shall I pray sweet pity not to move
Your loveliness my folly to reprove
Since of my heart thou knowest lady Truth. 15

But midst thy ruth think not of me as one
To curse the sun that yesterday it shone
To wish the light of all my life undone
And yet — thy pity O sweet love and Ruth!

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K. L. GOODWIN

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3 sometimes] *Morris's draft*; something *Jane Morris's copy*

8 And look with pure love from] Because pure love
they look *uncancelled variant in draft*

The last of these unpublished lyrics poses problems of both formal structure and biographical reference.

The world perchance to mock and jest would turn
My love for thee, and ask what I desire
Or with the name of some unholy fire
Would name the thing wherewith my heart doth yearn
For they Love's proper self may scarce discern
Nor to his golden house have they drawn nigher
Then where his flowers of joy with poisons burn —

5

But I now clinging to thy skirt pass through
The dangerous pleasant place with halfshut eyes
And with new names I name old miseries
And turned to hopes are many fears I knew
And things I spoke seem coming true
Since thou has shown me where the high heaven lies —

4 name the thing wherewith] stain the light that
uncancelled variant in draft

5 following in the draft is a cancelled line:
But where love into love is nigh turned liar

In BM Add. MS 45298A these lines occur on the verso of a folio the recto of which contains two sonnets, 'If as I come unto her she might hear' (printed as 'Rhyme Slayeth Shame' in *Collected Works*, xxiv, 357) and 'Dear if God praise thee much for many a thing' (printed above). Also on the verso are the lines beginning 'Peevish and weak and fretful do I pray', which may be an attempt at another sonnet. 'The world perchance to mock and jest would turn' formally constitutes a sonnet if the cancelled line following line 5 is included, but the difficulty is that the line does not fit into the syntax. In Jane Morris's fair copy it is omitted. In both the draft and the fair copy the last six lines of the poem have a rhyme-scheme commonly found in Morris's (and Rossetti's) sonnets: *cdcdcd*. This rhyme-scheme is, however, identical to that of the first six lines of the first stanza; because of this and because of the dash at the end of the thirteenth line in Jane Morris's copy, it is just possible that Morris intended at one time to write two (or more) seven-line stanzas.

If the poem is to be interpreted biographically, it would seem to be addressed to a close woman friend — presumably Georgiana Burne-Jones — rather than to his wife. He suggests in the second stanza that she has helped him come through some crisis by enabling him to give a new interpretation to his situation. One is inevitably reminded of the words in 'Alone unhappy by the fire I sat' where Morris seems to refer to Mrs Burne-Jones as his 'helper in the darkness' (line 33), regarding her as 'alone unchanged . . . A real thing left of the days sweet to me' (lines 34-5). In another sonnet possibly addressed to Mrs Burne-Jones, 'Dear if God praise thee much for many a thing', Morris refers to the possibility that the addressee (whether

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Unpublished Lyrics of William Morris

Mrs Burne-Jones or his wife) 'wouldst call my service sin' (line 11); here, in 'The world perchance', he devotes the first seven lines to an expression of scorn for those who 'with the name of some unholy fire | Would name the thing wherewith my heart doth yearn'. Morris is anxious, in fact, to deny that lust is his driving passion and fastidiously cautious lest he give offence with his expressions of love. On the cumulative evidence of these poems it almost seems as if Georgiana Burne-Jones forbade any passionate declarations and insisted on conventional formalities. Morris, denied passionate reciprocation by his wife, the woman to whom he had directed all his romantic longings and hopes, forbidden to express devotion and love to the woman who had comforted him in the collapse of his romantic dreams, had only his verse in which to give expression to the turbulent emotions of his heart.¹

LONDON

K. L. GOODWIN

¹ The poems by William Morris in this article are published by kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries of London, the holder of the copyright; all rights reserved. I am also most grateful to the staff of the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum for assistance in my research.

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