A STUDY OF THE MAJOR PROSE ROMANCES OF WILLIAM MORRIS

by

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ABSTRACT

William Morris' late prose romances can be regarded as the culminative development of themes and narrative structures apparent in his early prose tales. Of these early works, the "Hollow Land" is the most complex. It is a dream-vision narrated both by the dreamer and the major character of his dream. The hero-narrator passes through a purgatorial dream-realm in order to free himself from the burden of guilt gathered in worldly conflicts. After this purgative experience, he is united with his mystical Love and enters the realm of eternal peace. The narrator's concern is that this dream be realized in life so that men may live in harmony with one another. The dream is secondary to its relationship to human society. A similar emphasis on social action is found in "A Dream" and "Lindenborg Pool," both of which are dream-narratives. "Gertha's Lovers," written from a detached narrative perspective, urges above all else heroic social action for the benefit of the Folk.

The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains are transitional works. Each concerns a Folk threatened by a foe whose evil assumes metaphysical dimensions while the hero and heroine assume god-like statures. The major developments in these works are the appearance of a hero in a war-god aspect and his necessary unity with the beauty of the earth. Once

the hero is united with the beauty of the earth, those powers of materialism which would thwart Nature can be destroyed, and with their apocalyptic destruction the fertility of the Folk is ensured.

This structure is intimately related to Morris' aesthetic, which, taking Nature as its standard, equates beauty with harmony and ugliness with disharmony. Morris called for the destruction of luxury and tyranny so that Art might return to humanity as "popular art," an art "made by the people for the people as a joy for the maker and the user." He stressed that the state of society depends upon the state of the imagination, which can become fertile only if ugliness is destroyed. He believed that ugliness arose from those forces of nineteenth-century commercialism which sacrificed natural beauty and individual creativity to the efficiency of the machine.

The fullest expression of this aesthetic appears in The Story of the Glittering Plain, and especially in The Wood beyond the World, The Well at the World's End, and The Water of the Wondrous Isles. The three latter works contain the pattern of Witch, Maid, and Wise-woman, while The Glittering Plain expresses the same themes but does not partake fully of this pattern. Within the Witch, Maid, and Wise-woman complex, the Witch corresponds to forces out of harmony with Nature which enthrall beauty; the Maid corresponds to the beauty of earth, or art, for she is the inspirer of the creative imagination; the Wise-woman corresponds to forces in harmony with Nature

that liberate beauty. The hero's quest leads him through dream-like realms beyond the World to unity with beauty, so that his becomes the creative imagination. The hero--a god-like warrior--becomes a unity of the passive and active principles of creative vision and the strength to make that vision manifest. Hence, the hero becomes the artist-warrior whose service to humanity destroys all forces seeking to enslave beauty. In effect, Morris' artist-warrior allows the free expression of beauty in the world, thus fulfilling Morris' dream of the re-birth of popular art.

Dedicated to my wife Lynn

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INTRODUCTION

The reader of this study of William Morris' prose romances will find it rather limited in its orientation. He might even regard its creator as one whose nose was so caught between the pages of his subject matter, that he found himself unable to look around, behind, or ahead at anything save that which was before his very eyes. I must confess that such an impression of myself would be a fairly accurate one. However, this confession is intended not to be an admission of guilt but of necessity. I will try to explain myself.

My discussion concerns itself almost entirely with the prose romances as they stand by themselves, that is, in their own self-defined context. There emerges from out of this context a basic pattern of character relationships and narrative structure of which each individual work partakes in varying degrees. Central to this pattern is the relationship of Witch, Maiden, and Wise-woman, and the journey of the hero and heroine through realms of the Imagination. It has been my method to establish the correspondences of Witch, Maiden, and Wise-woman as they are expressed within the romances themselves. Thus, it can be said, for instance, that the Witch attempts always to thwart and corrupt the Maiden, that the Maiden always wears green and is beautiful, and that the Wise-woman always frees the Maiden from her servitude to the Witch. Once these general character-

istics are discovered, they can be equated with dominant principles of Morris' aesthetic as expressed in his lectures on art. When it is known that Morris regards that which is out of harmony with and attempts to thwart Nature as ugly, and that which is harmonious with Nature as beautiful, it becomes plausible to say that the Witch corresponds to a type of destructive power, the Maiden to beauty, and the Wise-woman to a creative power. Hopefully, the advantage of such an approach begins to make itself apparent. Morris' lectures were entirely related to contemporary affairs, to revolution within the arts and the existing social system, for he felt strongly that the state of society was greatly dependent upon the state of man's imagination, influenced as it is by the type of art surrounding it. The connection between Morris' theories on art an society on the one hand, and the general pattern of his prose romances on the other, makes it possible to view the latter as an expression of something far other than escapist fantasies.

This brings me to the reason behind the inward orientation of my discussion. Much of my time has been spent in establishing the existence of certain patterns in the prose romances and their connection with Morris' aesthetic. I believe, however, that such labor was entirely necessary for what I will presume to call a better understanding of the prose romances, for these works have traditionally been dealt with in an incredibly careless fashion. One critic dismisses them in contemptuous tones for their lack of contemporary

relevance,[1] another writes: "Morris could not have arrived at his opinions or at his dreams without the corpus of communist theory on which he worked. The opinions he expresses about life through the medium of his romances are those which he worked out in the course of his apprenticeship to socialism and Marxism;"[2] and a third assumes a Jungian stance[3] which in its subjectivity fails to ascertain the social relevance of the romances. The result of such criticisms has been either the utter dismissal of the romances or the attempt to impose upon them preconceived systems of thought to which they simply do not conform. This is like putting a sane man in a strait-jacket: it completely misrepresents Morris and his works.

A discussion of the tales contributed by Morris to The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine some thirty years before News from Nowhere was published demonstrates the fallacy of the belief that his concern with the state of society can be dated from the time of his acquaintance with Marxism. At the same time, a knowledge of the later romances makes one wary of seeking mysticism in the early tales. Morris' later heroes develop into artist-warrior figures who fulfill themselves in service to their fellow men, and they become artist-warriors largely as the result of their journeys through realms of the Imagination. Yet, even in the early work, "The Hollow Land," the narrator relates a dream-experience which he associates with the need for an end to foolish conflicts among men, originating as they do in pridefulness. One might also note that as a dream-

narrative, the tale employs the same form as that of the more "relevant" works: A Dream of John Ball and News from Nowhere.

The relationship between Morris' prose and his aesthetic defines itself more and more in The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains. These works begin to connect the heroine with the beauty of the earth, to create the hero as a semi-divine warrior whose strength is entirely dedicated to the well-being of the Folk, and to define clearly Morris' concept of evil, though this concept can also be seen in "Gertha's Lovers" and "Svend and his Brethren." At this point, the conflict between good and evil takes on apocalyptic dimensions, and the rebirth of the world becomes inseparable from the unity of the Folk with the fertility of Nature.

Finally, The Wood beyond the World, The Well at the World's End, and The Water of the Wondrous Isles portray the hero as artist-warrior, as one whose strength is allied to the creative source of the Imagination. His marriage to the heroine transfigures himself and the land, for she corresponds to that beauty of the earth from which arises all fertility, if only it is allowed freedom within the world. The Well at the World's End especially demonstrates the relationship between the Maiden's escape from the Witch and Morris' desire to liberate art from the dominance of materialism. Such freedom would lead to a new fertility of the individual creative self in a resurrection of "popular" art which would transfigure society just as Ralph and Ursula are transfigured by the water of the Well.

Perhaps most readily discernable in Morris' aesthetic is its debt to Ruskin rather than Marx. Morris was acquainted with the "Edinburgh Lectures" even before the publication of The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine. Morris' equation of beauty with that which is in harmony with Nature, his belief in the creative influence of such beauty upon the imagination, and his conviction that a society is greatly affected by the character of its art might have easily had their roots in Ruskin's lecture, "Architecture," delivered in 1853. Even more, throughout Morris' entire career the influence of "The Nature of Gothic" from The Stones of Venice is evident. Of course, now the limitations of my study of the prose romances begin to manifest themselves, for I deal almost not at all with Ruskin in the course of my discussion. But while Ruskin's influence on Morris is generally realized, there exist other areas of influence relatively unexplored.

In 1885, Morris compiled a list of those books which had made a profound impression upon him.[4] This list includes such works as Grimm's Northern Mythology, Malory's Morte d'Arthur, and The Mabinogion. Morris refers to Thorpe's Northern Mythology in "Lindenborg Pool," and Norse gods are mentioned in The House of the Wolfings. Thus, it is evident that Norse mythology had a life-long interest for Morris. While I discuss some of the myth-analogues in The House of the Wolfings, I have been unable to study in any detail the form in which these myths were known to Morris, or in what manner he may have altered them to suit

his own purposes. Again, it would be fascinating to know just when Morris became acquainted with The Mabinogion, for his constant use of the dream-narrative in his early prose and the interpenetration of the dream-realms and the "real" world in the later romances might have been stimulated by those Celtic tales in which men and gods dwell together in a world which itself is often the expression of a visionary dream.

I find particularly striking Morris' awareness of the Kalevala, which he honors so much as to include it in a group of eight works considered by him to be "Bibles," since they arose "from the very hearts of the *people*."[5] Not only is the Kalevala an exceptionally beautiful poem from which Sibelius drew so much of his inspiration, but its heroes, like the wizard-god Väinämöinen, are bound to have had an effect on Morris' use of magic and his concept of the semi-divine artist-warrior. For, Väinämöinen engages in duels of sorcery wherein the winner is he who possesses the most powerful song. Moreover, what might have been Morris' influence on Yeats, who alone seems to have fully appreciated the late prose romances? Could it not be that Yeats' essay, "The Celtic Element in Literature," in which he speaks of the Kalevala and The Mabinogion, and of "our 'natural magic'" as being "but the ancient religion of the world, the ancient worship of Nature and that troubled ecstasy before her, that certainty of all beautiful places being haunted, which it brought into men's minds,"[6] owes something to William Morris and the forest of Evilshaw haunted by Habundia's beauty? These

are questions which I hope to pursue at a later date. At this time, I will feel well rewarded if the present study, despite its limitations, has the effect of illustrating the self-integrity of the prose romances just so that such questions may be asked.

Perhaps a chronology may prove helpful in following the relationships between Morris' prose works:

The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine (1856)

The Lesser Arts (1877)

The Beauty of Life (1880)

The House of the Wolfings (1888)

News from Nowhere (1890)

The Roots of the Mountains (1890)

The Story of the Glittering Plain (1896)

The Wood beyond the World (1894)

The Well at the World's End (1896)

The Water of the Wondrous Isles (Published 1897)

The Sundering Flood (Published 1898)

CHAPTER I

THE LATE ROMANCES

The advantage of a general discussion of William Morris' late prose romances is that it brings to light a basic pattern which runs fairly consistently throughout the individual works, though it may vary in specific respects from one romance to another. The broad outlines of this pattern emerge when the narrative structures and main characters of the major romances are compared. It can then be seen that The Story of the Glittering Plain, The Wood beyond the World, The Well at the World's End, The Water of the Wondrous Isles, and The Sundering Flood all tell a similar story. Morris' prose contributions to the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, and The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains also partake to some degree of the pattern which will be discussed below but are important primarily from a developmental point of view and, hence, will not be considered at great length in the general discussion. However, an understanding of the basic pattern followed by the late romances may provide additional insight into Morris' earlier works; thus, this general discussion precedes a more detailed look at the earlier prose as well as certain of the major romances.

Briefly, the story of the late romances runs as follows: a young man leaves home out of a desire for adventure which

may be prompted by a loss or disillusionment in love. On his journey he meets an enchantress and a maiden. He has a sexual relationship, which may or may not involve love, with the enchantress. Shortly thereafter, the enchantress or witch drops out of the story and the youth finds himself engaged upon a quest for the maiden, with whom he has fallen in love. The maiden has been captured by slave-merchants or a band of armoured men, either while fleeing from a witch or while engaged upon her own quest. Now follows a series of adventures eventually leading the youth to the maiden. It is essential to the fulfillment of the quest that the warrior and the maiden, either separately or together, enter a dream-realm. Their experience in the dream-realm brings about spiritual growth and insight and leads untimately to the rejection of the deceptive nature of the dream. The quest completed, the lovers journey to some land, which may be the man or the maiden's home, where they are accepted as leaders and receive great worship. There they live happily, the land grows mighty, and they die in peace leaving a long line of successful progeny to rule their kingdom.

The above story-outline mentions only three characters and these characters are essentially the same throughout Morris' romances. They are not so much individuals as "types" or "tapestry images" and, as such, they may be considered in general terms without greatly distorting their natures in the interest of an overall interpretation of these works. Here I am imply-

ing that these characters possess no important individual trait which will alter the course of the tale, or remove them from their type. The world wherein they move and the situations in which they find themselves do not evolve out of complex emotions and motivations but are rather the result of conventional responses to circumstances determined by Weird. More significant than a character's individuality is his place in a certain pattern of character-relationships. What a character may represent beyond himself is seen by his position within a given pattern, not by an expression of individualism which breaks this pattern.

Morris' hero is a young man blessed with luck and the love of women. His knowledge of the world extends little beyond his father's small kingdom or the medieval village in which he lives. His journey takes him through farm country, and downs, and walled towns until he must eventually face the forest or some enchanted land away from the safety of his fellows. Here the dream-world begins, a world of guile and deception which gives birth to his new adventures. If his journey from home to the completion of his quest and triumphant return home is seen as a simple dialectical movement from innocence, to experience, to higher innocence, then, curiously, it is in the dream-realm that experience begins. The path through the forest or across the water leads to strange lands and alien peoples. The way itself opens up into deception, guile and possible captivity. The dream is not his own and he is captured, for it is in the forest that he meets and is seduced by the more than earthly

beauty of the enchantress. Here he enters a sensual world overpowering and unknown in his familiar realm. Here the hero is not the dreamer so much as he is that which is dreamt.

The hero's quest takes form after he enters the dream world. That is to say, he enters with a vague desire for adventure but leaves with the purpose of finding the maiden. Only by immersing himself in the realm of the enchantress--this being expressed literally by his sexual union with her--can he go on to a unity with the maiden-figure. Whether the dream of the enchantress be good or evil, it leaves him with a defined purpose. It alters his consciousness. And, only by working through the difficulties which beset him on his new-found quest does he become the master that he is at the story's end.

Throughout the young man's adventures, the forces which prevail are those of luck and wizardry. Being an excellent warrior allows the hero to survive many battles, but wizardry often thwarts the sword when luck and prowess are in doubt. In a world of such forces as these, it is difficult to tell exactly wherein lies the hero's importance. He is never a wizard himself, masterful and god-like though he be at the tale's finish. He seems to be a sort of active principle, perhaps representing the physical aspect of things--action through the objective world--which becomes completely dominant and able to enforce individual will upon reality only after achieving unity with the maiden.

Invariably, the maiden-figure in these stories has this

peculiarity (though an interesting variation occurs in The Well at the World's End): she has grown up from childhood as a witch's thrall. The witch-wife, an evil sorceress, has most likely, as happens in The Water of the Wondrous Isles, kidnapped the child and taken her to a dwelling in the forest. Employed in all the routine chores necessary for existence, the child lives in constant fear of her mistress,who rewards her only with cruelty or indifference. However, only if the child becomes overly curious and interferes with the witch's sorcery is her life in danger. As she becomes a young woman, the maiden begins to realize that there exists a world beyond the witch's hut. One day she meets a woman in the forest. This woman, a lore-master, teaches her wisdom in its broadest sense, for her lore concerns the ways of Nature and the world, and includes such arts as leechcraft and magic. Finally, her servitude having become entirely unbearable, the maiden with the lore-master's aid escapes the witch. The maiden is now free to join the hero, whom she may or may not have met just prior to escape.

The relationship of the maiden to the witch is most significant. The two figures can hardly be discussed apart from one another. The maiden possesses the beauty of a goddess and, in the full freshness of her beauty and strength of desire, escapes the witch. The one tangible advantage she gains by serving as the witch's thrall is a nearness to Nature. Though the maiden must hunt for her sustenance, she is not feared but loved by the forest creatures and, for the most part, lives

with them in peace. Birdalone can persuade even the shy rabbits to follow her, and the Lady of Abundance speaks thus of her childhood: "and shortly I may say that the wild things, even to the conies and fawns, loved me, and had but little fear of me, and made me happy, and I loved them."[1] Only in the forest does the maiden have any freedom. She finds it to be her true home; for the rest, she is "not her own, but a chattel and a tool" of the witch.[2]

The maiden's servitude would appear to be simply the exploitation of one person's labor by another, a typical master-slave relationship. Birdalone's tasks are these: "The kine and the goats must she milk, and plough and sow and reap the acre-land according to the seasons, and lead the beasts to the woodland pastures when their own were flooded or burned; she must gather the fruits of the orchard, and the hazel nuts up the woodlands, and beat the walnut-trees in September. She must make the butter and the cheese, grind the wheat in the quern, make and bake the bread, and in all ways earn her livlihood hard enough."[3] Much the same drudgery is forced upon the Lady of Abundance.[4] However, the witch's purpose goes beyond mere exploitation of the maiden's physical labor. A terrible end purpose which the witch has in mind for the maiden is apparent, but only vaguely so, in each of these tales. It is most clearly stated in The Water of the Wondrous Isles when Birdalone became aware: "that she was not her own, but a chattel and a tool of one who not only used her as a thrall in

the passing day, but had it in her mind to make of her a thing accursed like to herself, and to bait the trap with her for the taking of the sons of Adam. Forsooth she saw, though dimly, that her mistress was indeed wicked, and that in the bonds of that wickedness was she bound."[5] This still rather vague insight into the witch's ultimate purpose helps to explain why the witch is careful to kidnap a child who will grow up to be of overwhelming beauty. For she seeks to make the maiden's beauty nothing more than a tool, an instrument through which to achieve her own wicked ends. Whatever her ends may be, the witch must exploit the maiden's beauty in such a way that upon realizing womanhood her nature will be corrupted, her beauty serving merely as a mask for guile and deceit.

The sudden appearance of a wise-woman thwarts the witch's plans. This wise-woman always meets the maiden in a place removed from the witch's hut. Usually, she appears as an old carline, though in The Water of the Wondrous Isles she is the stunning Habundia. Nothing is told of the wise-woman's origins; she may be a being of more than mortal stature. If she is mortal her powers exceed those of most. Habundia is definitely not, as she herself says, of the race of Adam. She is called the Woodmother and may be either a High Faery or a goddess. Also, unlike the other wise-woman figures, Habundia appears as the very image of Birdalone. She is at one point referred to as Birdalone's "other self," and it is she who controls the woods. The wise-woman does not meet the maiden by accident.

She knows all about the witch and her ways and has come with the intention of preparing the maiden for escape.

The Maid of The Wood beyond the World describes the wise-woman thus: "Amongst all these unfriends is a friend to me; an old woman, who telleth me sweet tales of other life, wherein all is high and goodly, or at the least valiant and doughty, and she setteth hope in my heart and learneth me, and maketh me to know much . . . O much . . . so that at last I am grown wise, and wise to be mighty if I durst."[6] The wise-woman who befriends the Lady of Abundance is "an old woman grey haired, uncomely of raiment, but with shining bright eyes in her wrinkled face."[7] Of their first meeting the Lady says: "In good sooth she told me much of the world which I had not yet seen, of its fairness and its foulness; of life and death, and desire and disappointment, and despair; so that when she had done, if I were wiser than erst, I was perchance little more joyous; and yet I said to myself that come what would I would be a part of all that."[7a] Habundia, the most striking of these wise-women, appears to Birdalone in this way: "[Birdalone] heard one say her name in a soft voice, and she leapt up trembling, deeming at first that it would be the witch come to fetch her: but yet more scared she was, when she saw standing before her the shape of a young woman as naked as herself, save that she had an oak-leaf round about her loins."[8] When Habundia would teach Birdalone wisdom she says to her: "this day and now shall we begin to open the book of the earth before thee. For

therein is mine heritage and my dominion."[9] In effect, Habundia is the perfection of the type character which the above quotations describe.

Before going on, it is necessary to examine more closely the relationship between witch, maiden, and wise-woman. The series of relationships which form the early life of the maiden form, too, I think, the womb out of which grows Morris' romance. The setting for this series of relationships is an isolated one. The witch dwells either in Evilshaw, a forest feared by all as the haunt of devils, totally isolated from mankind, or in a forest where only seldom does the young girl see man or woman and where she speaks to none.[10] If these characters are regarded more as types than individuals, then it may be said that in this formative setting the maiden is subject to two opposing forces expressed through the figures of witch and wise-woman. In order to approach the question of why the young girl must be brought between these two forces, their natures need to be discussed.

Morris' witches are no mere novices in their art; they are puissant sorceresses, masters of the black arts. They demonstrate their powers through such practices as shape-changing, commanding spirits to animate inanimate objects through the operator's will, changing a human being into an animal form, and casting images. A discussion of magic is relevant here. It may be said that these witches are evil because they employ Black Magic, but the distinction between Black and White Magic is really an extremely vague and ill-defined one which varies from one magician to another, though the Church would say that

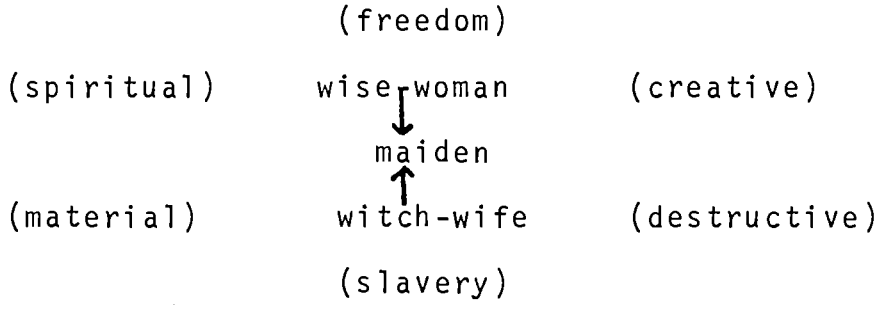
any practice outside of its accepted ritual is Black. Actually, the distinction might best be made in terms of the end for which the magic is employed and the source from which it is derived.

The employment and the source of magic are interconnected, for White or High Magic, derived from higher spiritual sources, can only be used towards creative ends, while Black Magic, which derives its power from demonic forces, is essentially destructive in character and effect. This implies a more sophisticated distinction between the two sorts of magic. A practitioner of Black Magic must of necessity be evil, because he channels through his will disharmonious, i.e., evil, forces which he imposes upon reality so that they may serve his own desire for power. The very desire for self-power is an expression of evil inasmuch as it seeks to disturb the balance of Nature. On the other hand, the White Magician is powerful because he is attuned to the harmony of Nature and becomes himself an expression of it. His self actually vanishes into Nature so that he becomes a sacred figure, his body a sacred vessel for these forces. In becoming selfless, he acquires a greater Self, which is of the Spirit, while the Black Magician tends towards the mundane. In effect, the Black Magician uses demonic forces for material gains; the White transcends his material-self for heightened spirituality.

The result is that the White Magician is inevitably more powerful than the Black, for he himself is an expression

of spiritual forces, while the lower forces manipulated by the Black Magician always remain external objects temporarily enslaved by an exertion of the self-will. The White Magician is never a tool, but the Black Magician must always make blood-sacrifice to the power which he seeks to carry out his will. Thus, the sorceress of The Well at the World's End sacrifices a goat after having been interrupted during her magical practices, for she must placate a possibly offended power. Thus, also, whoever would use the witch's Sending Boat of The Water of the Wondrous Isles must pay for its services with his blood. Yet, the wise-woman figure who suddenly appears, as if out of Nature itself, to free the maiden, is never seen practicing any sort of ritual, diabolic or Christian, and is always most learned in leechcraft.[11]

So far, I have been working with a simple diagram of relationships which emerges easily from the above discussion:



This diagram expresses the idea that the witch-wife represents a destructive, material force which seeks to enslave the maiden in order to use her as an object to its own ends, while the

wise-woman is the expression of a spiritual, creative force desiring to free the maiden from her servitude. The diagram is simple to the extent that it does not allow for variation arising out of the individual works nor does it as yet attach symbolic significance to the figures with which it deals.

Before attempting a symbolic interpretation of the wise-woman, maiden, and witch figures, it may be pointed out that such an attempt goes against the weight of traditional criticism. Morris replied as follows to a reviewer's assumption that The Wood beyond the World was an allegory: "I had not the least intention of thrusting an allegory into The Wood Beyond the World; it is meant for a tale pure and simple, with nothing didactic about it. If I have to write or speak on social problems, I always try to be as direct as I possibly can be. On the other hand, I should consider it bad art in anyone writing an allegory not to make it clear from the first that this was his intention, and not to take care throughout that the allegory and the story should interpenetrate. . . ."[12] Statements such as "it is meant for a tale pure and simple"--though perfectly consistent with Symbolist theory--have probably had much to do with the convenient way in which many dismiss Morris' prose romances as the products of self-amusement, quite unreadable but understandably valuable aids in escaping reality at a time when the author needed a rest.Thus Philip Henderson in the introduction to his collection of Morris' letters deals briefly with the prose romances: "It was at this period that

Morris began writing his long prose romances, The House of the Wolfings, The Roots of the Mountains, The Story of the Glittering Plain, The Waters of the Wondrous Isles, The Well at the World's End. Of all his voluminous works, these, with their artificially archaic prose, set in vaguely defined periods of the early Middle or Dark Ages, are very nearly unreadable to-day. But they provided Morris, as he confessed, with a much-needed escape from reality."[13] In the course of this summary dismissal, Henderson manages also to misspell the title of The Water of the Wondrous Isles. Yet,assuming this not to be a typographical error, such carelessness seems the order of things when dealing with the prose romances. For example, Paul Thompson in The Work of William Morris deals with the romances in this manner:

> To Yeats the prose romances had more meaning than they are likely to have to most modern readers. It is very difficult to keep an interest in this utterly unreal world of natural happiness. The shortest tale, The Glittering Plain, is brief enough to sustain a sense of primitive wonder, but the shallowness of character, the frequent use of magic, and the general feeling of purposelessness makes the longer stories almost unreadable. The House of the Wolfings, in which the vacuous narrative and silly rambling speeches are alternated with unsettling sections in verse, is the worst of all. Morris intended it 'to illustrate the melting of the individual into the society of the tribes,'

> but he protested when it was interpreted as a socialist allegory. The other tales were not meant to have even this much contemporary relevance: they were pure escape.[14]

Crowning Thompson's insightful review of the prose romances is, of course, his fallacious connection of Morris' protest with The House of the Wolfings instead of with The Wood beyond the World.

A more positive view of Morris' characters can be found in other sources. Yeats writes in "The Happiest of the Poets": "It is as though Nature spoke through him at all times in the mood that is upon her when she is opening the apple-blossom or reddening the apple or thickening the shadow of the boughs, and that the men and women of his verse and of his stories are all the ministers of her mood."[15] Yeats, then, regards Morris' characters as being intimately linked with Nature, as being, in effect, channels through which Nature expresses Herself, rather than individuals. Dorothy Hoare feels much the same way: "In most cases, the characters matter little. They are merely types or symbols of the delicacy and sweet perfume of spring, the heat and desire of summer, the mellowness and gravity of autumn. They repeat, as it were, and emphasise more strongly, the beauty and attraction of the actual earth. They melt into it and are at one with it, impalpably. They are as much at home in the story as painted birds and animals on a painted landscape."[16] This is fine as far as it goes,

but to say that a character is a symbol of the "sweet perfume of spring" is not to say much of substance. Yet, it is interesting that Hoare speaks of "types or symbols."

As Morris himself implied, when he stressed that The Wood beyond the World was meant for "a tale pure and simple, with nothing didactic about it," these characters cannot be interpreted allegorically, for to do so would be to impose upon them definite positions in some political or moral system which might be represented in any number of ways. In addition to what Morris has said, his characters, to the very extent to which they are types, cannot help but appear as symbolic figures. They continually appear in coincident forms and relationships, as if their creator were trying to perfect a form of Truth. Names such as the Lady of Abundance, Habundia, the Knight of the Sun, the Sage of Swevenham, Aurea, Viridis, and Atra, the Hostage, the Maid, and the Lady are those of symbolic characters, of characters who are the embodiments of essences, of spiritual truths within the Imagination. For, the conflict between Witch, Maiden, and Wise-woman is one within the Imagination, within a realm strangely beyond and yet of this world. Indeed, a figure such as Habundia is "the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame."[17]

All Morris' maidens are of great beauty, and their beauty is that of innocence. The image of the Maid of The Wood beyond The World appears thus when Walter first beholds it: "After

him came a maiden, young by seeming, of scarce twenty summers; fair of face as a flower, grey-eyed, brown-haired, with lips full and red, slim and gentle of body. Simple was her array, of a short and strait green gown, so that on her right ankle was clear to see an iron ring."[18] Both the Lady of Abundance and Ursula are of such beauty that each is considered at some point to be of more than mortal birth. With Birdalone of The Water of the Wondrous Isles comes what is perhaps the perfection of her type. Her beauty and its innocent sensuality are described in detail by Habundia:

> Thus it is with thee: thou standest before me a tall and slim maiden, somewhat thin, as befitteth thy seventeen summers; where thy flesh is bare of wont, as thy throat and thine arms and thy legs from the middle down, it is tanned a beauteous colour, but otherwise it is even as fair a white, wholesome and clean, and as if the golden sunlight, which fulfilleth the promise of the earth, were playing therein . . . . Low are thy breasts, as is meet for so young a maiden, yet is there no lack in them; nor ever shall they be fairer than now they are . . . . The hair of thee is simple brown, yet somewhat more golden than dark: and ah! now thou lettest it loose it waveth softly past thy fair smooth forehead and on to thy shoulders, and is not stayed by thy girdlestead, but hideth nought of thy knees, and thy legs shapely thin, and thy strong and clean-wrought

> ankles and feet, which are with thee as full of thine heart and thy soul and as wise and deft as be thy wrists and thine hands, and their very fellows. Now as to thy face . . . thine eyen are as grey as a hawk's, but kind and serious, and nothing fierce nor shifting. . . . Delicate and clear-made is the little trench that goeth from thy nose to thy lips, and sweet it is, and there is more might in it than in sweet words spoken. Thy lips, they are of the finest fashion, yet rather thin than full; and some would not have it so; but I would, whereas I see therein a sign of thy valiancy and friendliness. Surely he who did thy carven chin had a mind to a master-work and did no less. Great was the deftness of thine imaginer, and he would have all folk that see thee wonder at thy deep thinking and thy carefulness and thy kindness. Ah maiden! is it so that thy thoughts are ever deep and solemn? Yet at least I know it of thee that they be hale and true and sweet.[19]

Of the maiden of The Story of the Glittering Plain all the reader may know is that she is named the Hostage and is extremely desirable. The Hostage also finds herself a captive because of her beauty.

I mentioned some time ago that the witch seeks ultimately not only to use the maiden as a thrall whose physical labor is exploited, but also as one whose physical beauty may serve

as an object for gain of an ill-defined nature. Already the perversion of the physical-spiritual beauty of such a figure as Birdalone can be seen in the witch's apparent desire to objectify and exploit the physical while corrupting the spiritual side of it. Complete sexual servitude is another aspect of this thralldom, for the maiden's beauty must remain barren as long as it is merely the instrument of the witch's desires. This sexual servitude is never explicit. However, though the witch may desire to exploit the maiden's sensuality, two incidents, apart from the obvious repression which the maiden's isolated captivity entails, suggest the witch's repression of creative-sensuality. When the Lady of Abundance interferes with her mistress's sorcery, punishment takes the form of the sacrifice of the maiden's pet goat. This sacrifice is significant first because of the goat's association with the pastoral world and, secondly, because of its erotic associations with Pan and the Devil. Thus, in sacrificing the maiden's pet goat, the Sorceress shows herself opposed both to natural innocence and harmony, and to the sensual awakening of the maiden into life and the world of Experience. The Sorceress's interest lies not in the fertility of Nature, but in the thwarting of that fertility. And Birdalone was long kept from discovering the boat, which was her only possible means of escape, by being told as a child that a huge serpent guarded the Rock Eyot. Indeed, when the wight of the Sending Boat--which demands blood sacrifice--manifests itself, its

form is that of "a big serpent, mouldy and hairy, grey and brown-flecked."[20] Yet, this serpent-wight was Birdalone's guide into the world, and not until the Sending Boat's destruction did Birdalone become completely free of the witch's evil influence. On the other hand, the maiden's freedom, her escape into the world where eventually she finds unity with her lover, comes about always through the aid of the wise-woman.

At this point, the overall significance of the relationship between Wise-woman, Maiden, and Witch can be examined. The creator is, I believe, in no way obligated to express either his meaning or intent in any way beyond the creation itself. However, the mere fact that Morris persists in employing a basic pattern from one romance to another suggests a conscious purpose behind the use of that pattern. Within this pattern, Morris' characters have certain persistent characteristics, while the structure of their relationships also remains consistent. From these common attributes can be derived a meaning appropriate to the pattern as a whole.

The attributes of the wise-woman are thus far established as those of a creative, spiritual being whose wisdom prepares the maiden for escape. She is creative and spiritual inasmuch as her wisdom is in harmony with Nature. To say that the wise-woman is spiritual is to imply not that she is anti-sensual but that in her exists no spiritual-sensual duality. She is sensuality heightened by a harmony with creative spirituality.

The wise-woman appears as a pagan rather than Christian figure; her paganism implies a unity with Nature instead of Christianity's ascetic denial of the sensual world and opposition to it. Selfish desire, the exploitation of the maiden for barren ends, and a seeming delight in cruelty characterises the witches of these tales.

Yeats says of Morris' women:

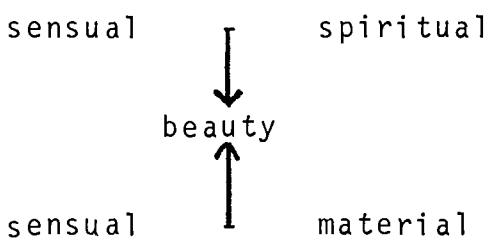
> All his good women, whether it is Danaë in her tower, or that woman in The Wood beyond the World who can make the withered flowers in her girdle grow young again by the touch of her hand, are of the kin of the wood-woman. All his bad women too and his half-bad women are of her kin. The evils their enchantments make are a disordered abundance like that of weedy places, and they are cruel as wild creatures are cruel and they have unbridled desires. One finds these evils in their typical shape in that isle of the Wondrous Isles, where the wicked witch has her pleasure-house and her prison, and in that 'isle of the old and the young' where until her enchantment is broken second childhood watches over children who never grow old and who seem to the bystander who knows their story 'like images' or like 'the rabbits on the grass.'[21]

The "disordered abundance" of which Yeats speaks is the result of the disharmonious forces which come of the witch's Black Magic. The witch's pleasure-house serves also as a prison to

any lover who may happen to find himself trapped therein. And that "isle of the old and the young" is one example, paralleling the young woman's isolated captivity, of the barrenness resulting from the witch's magic.

As may be expected of him, Yeats has gone beyond the structure set forth here, for he has linked Morris' good women with the bad by making both the kin of the wood-woman, or Habundia. If Habundia is taken to be an embodiment of Nature, then this connection becomes quite logical. The wise-woman and the witch become two aspects--the one delighting in harmony, the other in disharmony--of forces inherent in the totality of Nature. The individual, then, must inevitably be subjected to both forces, though his freedom and development depend upon his overcoming the enchantments of the witch.

The relationship of the maiden to these two forces differs from that of an ordinary individual, for the maiden is a type-character whose central characteristic is a special kind of beauty, perhaps that beauty which inspires the imagination, which lends itself to the creative desire. Keeping this in mind, it becomes possible to change the terms of our diagram to the following:



Consequently, the maiden's escape from the witch represents the freeing of beauty from a relationship based upon the exploitation of beauty as a secondary object in the satisfying of desires of a basically material nature. And, taking a slightly different perspective, one might say that beauty will of necessity remain barren as long as the imagination is dominated by material desires.

Inevitably, the young woman finds herself in a dream-realm. Birdalone can escape the witch only by entering this dream-realm, and Ursula finds herself within its bounds perhaps as soon as she enters the Wood Perilous, while the Maid of The Wood beyond the World escapes one dream only to enter another before her final escape. Morris' dream-realms need not be seen simply as amusing indulgences. These realms are carefully constructed worlds of the imagination. As such, enchantment and wizardry are their ruling powers.

The relationship portrayed by the above diagram does not cease when the maiden escapes from the witch, for the dream-realm is in large part merely an extension of it. And, the adventures she encounters, the people whom she meets are by their nature expressions of the dominant influence of wise-woman or witch. Hence it is that the maiden is always in danger of being taken either by a slave merchant who would sell her at a cheaping-town, or by some warrior who would use her beauty merely as the servant of his sexual desires. The state of beauty in the world of the imagination directly rè-

flects the state of art in the real world. If beauty is enslaved by the materialistic forces of the witch, then art must remain barren, for beauty is not her own master. But if beauty is free, then--once united with an active principle, a principle which applies it to the real world--art will blossom into an abundance of creation in the real world. So, the state of the real world is quite dependent upon which force prevails in the imagination of the individual, or the culture as a whole.

While many critics would seem to feel with Thompson that the prose romances were meant to have no "contemporary relevance," Morris himself might have felt differently. Despite the dictates of dogma, a work of art need not lack relevance because its author denies that it has the overt didacticism of allegory. I will now quote at length from Morris' lecture, "The Beauty of Life," delivered before the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design, February 19, 1880.[22]

> I cannot refrain from giving you once again the message with which, as it seems, some chance-hap has charged me: that message is, in short, to call on you to face the latest danger which civilization is threatened with, a danger of her own breeding: that men in struggling towards the complete attainment of all the luxuries of life for the strongest portion of their race should deprive their whole race of all the beauty of life; a danger that the strongest and wisest of mankind, in striving to attain to a complete mastery over Nature,

> should destroy her simplest and widest-spread gifts, and thereby enslave simple people to them, and themselves to themselves, and so at last drag the world into a second barbarism more ignoble, and a thousandfold more hopeless, than the first.
>
> Now of you who are listening to me, there are some, I feel sure, who have received this message, and taken it to heart, and are day by day fighting the battle that it calls on you to fight: to you I can say nothing but that if any word I speak discourage you, I shall heartily wish I had never spoken at all: but to be shown the enemy, and the castle we have got to storm, is not to be bidden to run from him; nor am I telling you to sit down deedless in the desert because between you and the promised land lies many a trouble, and death itself maybe: the hope before you you know, and nothing that I can say can take it away from you; but friend may with advantage cry out to friend in the battle that a stroke is coming from this side or that: take my hasty words in that sense, I beg of you.[23]

Anyone familiar with the prose romances, especially in light of my interpretation of their structure and characters, can not help but think of The Wood beyond the World, The Well at the World's End, or The Water of the Wondrous Isles in connection with the passage above. Morris' language demands such a connection and his figures of speech enforce it. The castle

to be stormed might well be that of the wizardous Red Knight, and what desert is that which leads to the promised land with death between, but the desert leading to the Well at the World's End lying beyond the poisonous waters of the Dry Tree. Here Morris is truly summoning his fellows to battle and heroic deeds.

To continue from the lecture:

> That the beauty of life is a thing of no moment, I suppose few people would venture to assert, and yet most civilized people act as if it were of none, and in so doing are wronging both themselves and those that are to come after them; for that beauty, which is what is meant by *art*, using the word in its widest sense, is, I contend, no mere accident to human life, which people can take or leave as they choose, but a positive necessity of life, if we are to live as nature meant us to; that is, unless we are content to be less than men.[24]

Perhaps this last explains why the witch, much though she may desire to kill the maiden, is curiously unable to, as if to do so would be the bane of her. The witch queen of the Wondrous Isles, for instance, is not permitted to slay Aurea, Viridis, or Atra; indeed, she may not even punish them, unless her case be proven, without achieving at the same time her bane. And, says the evil sorceress of <u>The Well at the World's End</u> to her thrall: "It were thy due that I should slay thee here

and now, as thou slayest the partridges which thou takest in thy springes: but for certain causes I will not slay thee."[25] The Maid of The Wood beyond the World telling Walter of her thralldom to the Lady says: "Now why or wherefore I know not, but it seemeth that it would not avail her to slay me outright, or suffer me to die; but nought witheld her from piling up griefs and miseries on my head."[26]

In the lecture, Morris also speaks of an age in which art was "*made by the people for the people as a joy for the maker and the user*":

> So the matter stands: from the first dawn of history till quite modern times, Art, which Nature meant to solace all, fulfilled its purpose; all men shared in it: that was what made life romantic, as people call it, in those days--that and not robber barons and inaccessible kings with their hierarchy of serving-nobles and other such rubbish: but art grew and grew, saw empires sicken and sickened with them; grew hale again, and haler, and grew so great al last, that she seemed in good truth to have conquered everything, and laid the material world under foot.[27]

In light of what Morris says here about the romance of life, it is not hard to imagine that his romances should be concerned largely with the escape of beauty from the destructive-material influence of the witch, ending in a new abundance, a fertility, which would correspond to Morris' desired rebirth of the popular arts.

Morris speaks in these terms of the evils of what he calls the "Century of Commerce," contrasting the individuality expressed through art with the degradation of men into mechanical beings in the interest of material concerns. Even eschewing an approach to the romances as "socialist allegory," I would not wish to deny that for Morris art and politics are intimately connected, nor that the exploitative Capitalist has in him much of the witch.

> And among those evils, I do, and must always, believe will fall that one which last year I told you I accounted the greatest of all evils, the heaviest of all slaveries; that evil of the greater part of the population being engaged for by far the most part of their lives in work, which at the best cannot interest them, or develop their best faculties, and at the worst (and that is the commonest, too) is mere unmitigated slavish toil, only to be wrung out of them by the sternest compulsion, a toil which they shirk all they can--small blame to them. And this toil degrades them into less than men: and they will some day come to know it, and cry out to be made men again, and art only can do it, and redeem them from this slavery; and I say once more that this is her highest and most glorious end and aim; and it is in her struggle to attain to it that she will most surely purify herself, and quicken her own aspirations towards perfection.[28]

Certainly, the ideas expressed by Morris in this lecture concerning the oppressed position of art in the Century of Commerce serve to support the present interpretation of his prose romances. The abundance of beauty which would arise from the creative freedom of the imagination were art allowed its predominate position is contrasted to its present servile state. For now it is merely a secondary commodity to be had by an exclusive few in the superficial, barren freedom of the market-place. Clearly, these ideas, urgently concerned with contemporary affairs, are the formative ground from which arises the symbolic womb-relationship of wise-woman, maiden, and witch.

I have discussed the most important character-types in these prose romances and their symbolic significance, the latter being illustrated to a great degree through the structure of their typical relationships to one another. However, these works do not end with the escape of the maiden from the witch. The quest remains, and it must be determined whether the significance I have given these characters is coincident with the story of their quest.

The titles of Morris' romances are alluring, and, from the general tone of criticism which the works receive, it would appear that most readers do not feel their expectations justified by the nature of the tale. The general reaction becomes one of summary dismissal or an attempt, perhaps arising out of despair, at a Socialist interpretation of the

work. But, the significance of these titles can not be dismissed. The Glittering Plain or the Land of the Living, the Wood beyond the World, the Water of the Wondrous Isles, the Well at the World's End--these phrases all describe dream-realms, realms which in a number of ways are central to the tale.

The forces which animate and determine the direction of the hero's (or heroine's) quest emanate either directly or through intermediaries from that realm named by the title. The desperate riders who question the young warrior of the Ravens concerning the Glittering Plain introduce him to the thought of a realm about which he knows nothing. Soon, however, the black-clad pirates of the Isle of Ransom, themselves the servants of the dream, through their machinations introduce the hero to the Land of the Living. The sea-pirate, Puny Fox (who may only superficially be taken to be the young man's enemy), surrounds the Raven warrior with guiles such that "reality" becomes very dubious when first he conducts him to the Isle of Ransom. Yet, when they meet again after the hero has returned from the Glittering Plain, Puny Fox befriends him, making it possible for the quest, the winning of the Hostage, to be achieved.

Now, a number of things which prove themselves typical can be remarked in the Raven warrior's adventures. First, the emanations from the so-called "dream-realm" appear immediately to the hero. Similarly Walter, hero of The Wood beyond the

World, sees, even before he leaves his native city, the images of the Lady, Maiden, and Dwarf. Ralph at the very outset of his adventures in The Well at the World's End receives from Dame Katherine the pagan, unblessed token of a seeker of the Well. And Birdalone's only possible escape from the witch-wife is via a craft called the Sending Boat which takes her upon the water of the Wondrous Isles. Like Walter's apparitions, and Ralph's token, the Sending Boat is an emissary which, being spell-bound, can travel to the Wondrous Isles, as can no other vessel.

Secondly, the dream land of the Glittering Plain definitely is not a positive realm. Morris is not writing about an escape into a pleasant world of fantasy. Though the land of the Glittering Plain is a land of eternal youth wherein exists no sorrow, the Raven-son longs to escape from it. For, in that land, there is no conflict, no chance of winning glory as befits a young warrior. It is a land which the hero merely passes through, essential to his development but not a place wherein he can develop himself. His stay in the Land of the Living transforms, even transfigures him, but to remain would be to stagnate, to entertain a death-in-life existence. He must re-enter the active world. The ultimate goal, then is not for the hero to reach the Glittering Plain, but for him to pass through it and return to the world of change. It is only through the return to the active world that the hero's journey to the dream-world becomes meaningful. Hence, Walter

and the Maid, having destroyed the evil Lady, leave the Wood beyond the World to become king and queen of the warrior-town, Stark-Wall. Ralph and Ursula return from the Well at the World's End to rule Upmeads, the transfigured Ralph having first utterly destroyed his enemies. And Birdalone and Arthur eventually settle in Utterhay where Arthur becomes the town's War-duke.

Morris' young warriors and their ladies would find it difficult to agree with the escapist-critics that their dream-existence is a pleasant one. These lands are full of guile and deceit; their imaginer cannot be called simple, good, pleasant or anything of the sort. The Lady of the Wood delights in cruelty for its own sake. Like herself, her realm is beautiful, luxurious, incredibly tempting in its sensuality, but also like herself it is manipulative, cruel, and false. Her tortures are true in their pain but the ambrosial delights brought by her love are illusory, much like those in Spenser's Bower of Bliss.

He who would journey to the Well at the World's End must cross a desert strewn with the dead only to be tempted, perhaps fatally, by the deceptive water of the Dry Tree. And if the Well is reached, there lies only ocean beyond, so that one must return back across the desert into the world. Obviously, if the Seeker does not greatly desire to return to the world he gains nothing by drinking of the Well. For the Well provides no means of escape but only prolonged strength to those who

are "strong in desire" and "strong of heart."

Finally, those Wondrous Isles to which Birdalone must journey are ruled by the enchantment of the witch-queen, an enchantment the essence of which is expressed by the barrenness of the Isle of Nothing where Birdalone comes near to death. And, even with the enchantment broken, Birdalone barely escapes sexual-servitude on the Isle of the Kings. Only with the destruction of the Sending Boat, the craft that wends the enchanted isles, does Birdalone become completely her own.

These realms have a third attribute which makes them of a nature other than simple lands of dream. They all in some way partake of the eternal; there is a changelessness about them uncommon to the chaotic world of dream wherein one impression follows quickly on another with little heed for any laws of continuity in time or space. The Land of the Living is a place of eternal youth ruled by the will, not the sword, of its eternal king. An old man entering that land grows backwards to the age of thirty-five and remains so forever. It can almost be seen as the life-after-death realm depicted from a Theosophic viewpoint. The Glittering Plain is, in effect, an absolute, changeless world to which the hero is drawn and over which he has little control. Far from being the dreamer, the Raven-warrior may be seen rather as the dreamed, subject as he is to the god-king's will.

Like to the god-king of the Plain is the Lady of the Wood. She speaks to Walter of the "woe, and fear, and trouble of the

World beyond the Wood, which he hath escaped, to dwell in this little land peaceably, and well-beloved both by the Mistress and the Maid."[29] The reader realizes that her little land is not so peaceable, but still there is a qualitative difference between the Wood and the World. This difference, once again, results from the essential, eternal quality of the Lady's Wood. On another occasion she assures Walter, who seeks an explanation for the appearance of her image in Langton: "I dwell in the Wood beyond the World, and nowhere else. . . . Wherefore, I deem that an enemy hath cast the shadow of me on the air of that land."[30] What Walter perceived in Langton to be "real" was but a form of the imagination. The reality of such a form, inasmuch as it is eternal, actually exceeds the reality of the worldly realm. True, the Lady commits suicide; however, if her death is to be believed, it cannot be regarded as the death of a mortal character, for the Lady was she who was worshipped as the God of the Bear-folk, whose elder says to the Maid: "Many winters have worn since my father's father was a child, and saw the very God in the bodily form of a woman."[31] She has not aged since that time, and the Maid's response strengthens the idea that those beyond the world, perhaps until they enter the world, exist more as eternal forms, essences, than as mortal beings. She says to the Bear-folk: "Now, then, is the day of your gladness come; for the old body is dead, and I am the new body of your God, come amongst you for your welfare."[32] Ralph and Ursula return from the

Well, transfigured, having partaken of the waters of eternity. Quite fittingly, their final guide to these waters is a wizard-figure by the name of the Sage of Swevenham, from "*sweven*" meaning "a dream, vision."[33]

Propelled by the will of whoever makes sacrifice to its wight, Birdalone's magical Sending Boat is a vehicle of the imagination. It does not guide its passengers to ordinary lands but to the Wondrous Isles, whose inhabitants are ruled not by the laws of reality that govern the people of the mainland but rather by the dictates and enchantment of some unseen Imagination of which they are a part. In effect, the island inhabitants are the manifest forms of that prevailing imagination. Thus there are seemingly eternal islands of eternal childhood, old age, and emptiness which suddenly change and blossom into fullness but do so entirely according to hidden laws of transformation closely associated with whichever force prevails--wise-woman or witch.

What I am saying, then, is that these not always so pleasant lands represented by the titles of the romances are not simply idle dream-worlds. These lands have a force of their own. They draw the hero towards them, for he does not seek them without some external stimulus. This does not deny the dream-like nature of these realms; however, it does emphasize the concept that if they are realms of the imagination, they are realms common to the experience not of an isolated individual but of an entire society. That this is

so may explain why the narrative, when dealing with these worlds, does not seek to dislocate the reader in time and space, as it might if it were dealing simply with ordinary dreams. Instead, the narrative follows a fairly consistent linear pattern. Day follows day, one event leads to another, and even the cardinal points of direction are clearly established in these lands. In passing through these realms beyond the world, the hero is either transfigured or in some way freed, being able to see through the deceit of others. The inhabitants partake of the eternal; the land is either beyond the world of change or it changes by hidden means. These lands are islands of the Imagination--like dreams, but qualitatively different, for within them dwell the eternal forms. The absolute quality of Morris' world did not escape the attention of Yeats who wrote:

> his mind was illuminated from within and lifted into prophecy in the full right sense of the word, and he saw the natural things he was alone gifted to see in their perfect form . . . . He found it enough to hold up, as it were, life as it is to-day beside his visions, and to show how faded its colours were and how sapless it was. And if we had not enough artistic feeling, enough feeling for the perfect, that is, to admit the authority of the vision; or enough faith to understand that all that is imperfect passes away, he would not, as I think, have argued with us in a serious spirit.[34]

Though Yeats is speaking of Morris himself, what he says certainly reflects on those realms which are come of Morris' artistic vision. In effect, the so-called "dream worlds" of Morris' romances are realms of Eternal Form within the Imagination to which the artist must travel and of which he must partake if his creative vision is to be reborn.

The hero's position may be regarded as that of the artist who, through artistic vision, travels to that part of the Imagination wherein lie the eternal forms, that core of the Imagination which emanates its power throughout reality, and of which art is an expression. There, in the Imagination, he finds the maid, or Beauty, continually struggling to escape the toils of the witch's power. In freeing the maid, in finally destroying the witch, the artist has defeated the materialistic forces within himself. He now finds beauty in a sensuality flooded with spirit; beauty is freed in the world, thus transforming all into art.

Perhaps it may appear too radical to interpret Morris' young heroes as representative of the artist. After all, none of them--except Osberne of The Sundering Flood, who has the gift of spontaneous poetry--appear to be artistic. They are all warriors. Two of them--Walter and Ralph--return from their journeys to become mighty kings; a third, Arthur, serves as War-duke of Utterhay. The warriors' swords serve as the instruments by which the world may be changed directly according to desire, not indirectly, as through art. So that, if the hero

cannot be seen as an artist figure, he may, as the god-like warrior married to manifest beauty, be seen as the expression of an active principle able directly to oppose those forces which would hinder the growth of beauty in the world--that is, of art.

Actually the warrior is a figure essential to Morris' desire for a world in which all is art--that is to say, a world wherein nothing intervenes between art and its direct involvement in the material realm--for Morris felt that Art, having become subservient to the dictates of material expediency, served only the privileged few.[35] The "individual forms of art" may have reached a sort of perfection and been able to survive under this servitude, but "the art of the people" for the most part perished.[36] Morris looks back to a period of universal art:

> So much is now known of the periods of art that have left abundant examples of their work behind them, that we can judge of the art of all periods by comparing these with the remains of times of which less has been left us; and we cannot fail to come to the conclusion that down to very recent days everything that the hand of man touched was more or less beautiful: so that in those days all people who made anything shared in art, as well as all people who used the things so made: that is, *all* people shared in art.[37]

This period of abundance can be reborn by the rule of a warrior whose unity with higher natural beauty is complete and in whose

very self this beauty is manifest. In a real sense, then, he is not simply a warrior, but an artist-warrior.

Ralph of Upmeads best expresses the ideal of the artist-warrior. His enemies flee from him as from a god, for he has partaken of the very fountain of life, of creation, of Truth. Appropriately, he becomes ruler of the Land of Abundance. As a Friend of the Well, Ralph's being is tied to the waters of life; hence, his actions cannot help but further the abundance of life. The water of the Well is the water of Truth. Thus Beauty must of necessity flow through the rule of Upmeads' king and queen. And, when their will manifests itself in action it becomes Art. Hence, art would become universal in the kingdom ruled by the artist-warrior.

Perhaps the development most noticeable in the above discussion has to do with Morris' increasing concentration on the wise-woman, maid, and witch relationship. The hero as artist-warrior reaches his fullest expression in The Well at the World's End, though he is also portrayed quite explicitly in Osberne of The Sundering Flood. Ralph's growth towards becoming the semi-divine artist-warrior is, however, more complicated and complete than Osberne's. When Morris writes The Water of the Wondrous Isles, he concentrates on the heroine rather than the hero. The Maid of The Wood beyond the World presents only a vague past to the reader, while Ursula and the

Lady of Abundance of The Well at the World's End are more explicit in their histories, and Birdalone of The Water of the Wondrous Isles actually supplants the hero as the central figure of the quest. As Ralph represents the fully developed artist-warrior, so is Birdalone the fullest expression of the heroine allied to the beauty of the earth, for her "other self"--that self of which she is the wordly expression--is the pagan High Faery or goddess, Habundia, the embodiment of natural abundance and beauty.

The general themes of these three works remain essentially the same, though they are more all-encompassing in The Well at the World's End and The Water of the Wondrous Isles than in The Wood beyond the World. The two former works take the reader through a broader spectrum of experience than does The Wood beyond the World and consequently allow Morris to portray more fully his feelings concerning art and its connection with the state of society. It will become apparent in the ensuing discussion of the tales contributed by Morris to the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine that his basic social and aesthetic theories and sympathies pre-dated by many years his Socialistic convictions, for his disgust with nineteenth-century society reflects itself vehemently in "Lindenborg Pool," over thirty years before News from Nowhere appears in print.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY PROSE

Of all the prose fiction contributed by William Morris to the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, "The Hollow Land" stands as the most complex and complete.[1] Its integrity as a whole lends it a special significance in relation to the general pattern followed by Morris' later prose romances. However, its complexities place it in a position of self-defined importance. Morris' major romances contain two basic movements: the movement from the real world to the "dream-world" or realm of the Imagination, and the return to the real world. The "Hollow Land," on the other hand, contains six movements: the move from the real world to the Hollow Land, the losing of the Hollow Land, the ensuing movement to another dream-realm of a purgatorial nature, the movement back to the Hollow Land, then to a hollow city within the Hollow Land, and, finally, unseen by the reader, another losing of the Hollow Land.

Unlike the later works, which are narrated from a detached perspective, where the narrator is telling a tale of the past in which he himself is not involved, the narrator of "The Hollow Land" is Florian de Liliis, the main character. Florian's opening words are these: "Do you know where it is, the Hollow Land? I have been looking for it now so long, trying to find it again, the Hollow Land; for there I saw my love first. I

wish to tell you how I found it first of all; but I am old, my memory fails me: you must wait and let me think if I perchance can tell you how it happened" (254). Florian recalls, in the course of his tale, his finding and losing of the Hollow Land and his return to it. At the conclusion of his narrative, he and his love are re-united in what would seem to be a final return to the Hollow Land: "And then we walked together toward the golden gates, and opened them; and no man gainsaid us. And before us lay a great space of flowers" (290). Despite its air of finality, the fulfillment suggested by this ending is not complete. There must have been an unseen movement out of fulfillment because the last paragraph of "The Hollow Land" is written in the past tense, i.e., it is still a recollection, while the first paragraph is written in the present.

Another curious point is the narrator's introduction of himself. He writes: "Now my name was Florian" (254). If his name *was* Florian, then who is actually relating this tale? Apparently, the reader has to deal not only with four different reality-realms but also with a narrator who possesses a dual reality. The narrator both is and is not Florian de Liliis. One possible explanation of this singularity is that the narrator is none other than Florian's discarnate spirit trying desperately to regain life in the Hollow Land. Another possibility is that the narrator is indeed an old man to whom all these things occurred in a dream the reality of which he has been trying to find ever since. Whichever the case may be, it becomes clear

soon after "The Hollow Land" begins that the reader cannot expect the narrative to conform to traditional concepts of earthly logic. And if from the first the tale is regarded as a dream--even those parts which Florian lives before entering the Hollow Land--in effect, if Florian himself is an actor in a dream, then perhaps the work as a whole becomes more clearly understandable.

As Florian's recollections begin, the narrator describes the origin of the feud between the House of the Lilies and Red Harald in a scene rich with color:

> Many young knights and squires attended the Lady Swanhilda as pages, and amongst them Arnald, my eldest brother. And as I gazed out of the window, I saw him walking by the side of her horse, dressed in white and gold very delicately; but as he went it chanced that he stumbled. Now he was one of those that held a golden canopy over the^the lady's head, so that it now sank into wrinkles, and lady had to bow her head full low, and even then the gold brocade caught in one of the long slim gold flowers that were wrought round about the crown she wore. She flushed up in her rage, and . . . caught at the brocade with her left hand, and pulled it away furiously, so that the warp and woof were twisted out of their places, and many gold threads were left dangling about the crown: but Swanhilda stared about when she rose, then smote

my brother across the mouth with her gilded sceptre,
and the red blood flowed all about his garments. (255)

The dominant color here is gold, which may be considered a color of dissension, of materialism, of grasping onto the things of the world. The tangle of gold brocade in gold flowers results in a blow with a gilded sceptre. Before Arnald stumbled, he wore white and gold, white in its purity being appropriate to a young man. After his fall, however, the white is stained with red and his heart is bent on revenge.

Sixteen years later white is worn before blood is to be shed. On the night of Arnald's revenge, he and his fellows are given by the prior of an abbey white albs to wear over their armor so that they might be better camouflaged in the snowy night. The ladders used to scale the walls of the Queen's abode are wrapped in white. Speaking to Florian before they set out on their mission, Arnald describes his feelings as follows: "I said at first, I forgive her; but when the news came concerning the death of the King, and how that she was shameless, I said: I will take it as a sign, if God does not punish her within certain years, that He means me to do so" (256). It is ironically fitting that those who believe themselves to be carrying out God's judgments should treacherously be using pure, cold white.

As the attackers approach the guard-house, they hear the sentinel singing "to keep the ghosts off":

"Queen Mary's crown was gold,
King Joseph's crown was red,
But Jesus' crown was diamond
That lit up all the bed
Mariae Virginis."

"Ships sail through the heaven
With red banners dress'd,
Carrying the planets seven
To see the white breast
Mariae Virginis." (259)

Again, the color white appears, now associated with the nativity. This use of white creates a terrible irony when it is remembered that the warriors dressed in white are coming to kill a Queen on this particular Christmas Eve. Why are Mary and Joseph wearing crowns of red and gold? This too is ironic, for Swanhilda wore a golden crown on the day she struck Arnald. And, King Urrayne, whom Swanhilda stabbed, certainly had a red crown, i.e., a "hacked head" (274). It becomes apparent that Morris is bringing into contrast the sacred and the mundane by juxtaposing both contexts onto the same colors. The achieved effect is a continual mockery of the sacred, Christian order of things by the distortions resulting from the actions of mundane, worldly motives.

This mockery goes beyond the use of color. The Queen is murdered on Christmas Eve in God's name by men of the House

of Lilies, whose emblem is a blue cross and white lily. Those whose token represents the resurrection of Christ are engaged in murder on the eve of the anniversary of his birth. In effect, two realities are opposing one another. The core reality is the divine one; it is this reality out of which Arnald acts, inasmuch as he creates a divine sanction for his actions. On the other hand, his following actions clearly oppose one another--as the colors oppose one another. Arnald's existence is fleeting; God's order is eternal. It is not for Arnald to pronounce God's judgments. God's truth is unchanging; man's is but a false dream. Thus, Arnald's men are mistaken for ghosts just before they attack the guard-house. The sentinel, says Florian, "must have seen the waving of some alb or other as it shivered down to the ground, for his spear fell with a thud, and he seemed to be standing openmouthed, thinking something about ghosts" (259).

By the time the battle-cry of Florian's House is heard in earnest, the enigmatic nature of earthly reality has become a point of great importance to the men of the Lilies. They are under attack by Red Harald, Swanhilda's son, and have only one route of retreat--a pass leading to the castle of their House. It is as if the coming of Harald's men is the fulfilment of God's judgment upon them, for now allusions are made to the past history of their House. Florian says of the moor upon which they await battle: "In the old time, before we went to the good town, this moor had been the mustering-place of our people; and our House had done deeds enough of blood and horror to turn our white lilies red, and our blue cross to a fiery one.

But some of those wild tales I never believed; they had to do mostly with men losing their way without any apparent cause (for there were plenty of landmarks), finding some well-known spot, and then, just beyond it, a place they had never even dreamed of" (268). At this point, the pass is blocked from view. Arnald accepts its disappearance as a sign that God's judgment is about to fall on them. Hugh, the old warrior, refers to the past as if the House were cursed: "Thirty years ago I thought this: that the House of the Lilies would deserve anything in the way of bad fortune that God would send them" (268-269). And Florian wonders: "Had our House been the devil's servants all along? I thought we were God's servants" (269). However, just before battle is joined, the pass returns to sight, and these doubts are dispelled.

Though Arnald's men fight well, the battle ends in their defeat. As they are pushed nearer to the pass, the following conversation takes place in which one of the knights addresses Sir Florian:

> "Then Sir Florian, men say that at your christening some fiend took on him the likeness of a priest and strove to baptise you in the Devil's name; but God had mercy on you, so that the fiend could not choose but baptise you in the name of the most holy Trinity: and yet men say that you hardly believe any doctrine such as other men do, and will in the end only go to Heaven round about as it were, not at all by the intercession of Our Lady: they say too that you can see no ghosts

> or other wonders, whatever happens to other Christian men." I smiled: "Well, friend, I scarcely call this a disadvantage; moreover what has it to do with the matter in hand?" . . .
>
> "This, Sir Florian," said the knight again; "how would you feel inclined to fight if you thought that everything about you was mere glamour, this earth here, the rocks, the sun, the sky? I do not know where I am for certain, I do not know that it is not midnight instead of undern, I do not know if I have been fighting men or only *simulacra*--but I think, we all think that we have been led into some devil's trap or other, and--and may God forgive me my sins!--I wish I had never been born." (231-2)

What prompts the above exchange? It cannot be simply the fear of death, for these are brave knights and one of them, as if to prove a philosophical point, summarily commits suicide. The only explanation I can suggest is that the men are aware of a change which Florian does not discover until later. They have perhaps noticed that when the pass to their Hill-castle re-appeared it opened up onto an entirely new landscape, thus confirming the old, wild tales of Goliah's Land. This being the case, they find life to be of arbitrary value and would just as soon live as die, though Florian urges them to be masters of *simulacra*. Perhaps they doubt Florian's awareness of the change, and are thus prompted to tell him of his baptism.

Soon, Florian does become aware that there lies ahead of them "a great Hollow Land, the rocks going down . . . in precipices" (274). If Florian is aware of the Hollow Land, is it or is it not illusory? Is the reader to believe the story of his baptism? If the tale is true, then the Hollow Land is not illusory; if not true, then it may or may not be a real land; yet, if this is the case, why is the tale recounted at all? Considering all that happens to Florian, it seems highly doubtful that he cannot see ghosts or other wonders. On the other hand, if the reader accepts the knight's words at face value, then he must accept all that happens to Florian as having taken place in the "real" world. That is, he must think of Florian as having been alive--as a mortal being is alive--throughout the course of the tale. Of course, this is highly unlikely, considering the backwards aging process that Florian undergoes, nor does it explain the nature of a narrator who says: "My name was Florian." At the same time, Florian is a mortal being in that he is inseparable from the life of the narrator of whose dream he forms a part. Thus, the knight is speaking to the narrator indirectly through Florian and telling him that he can "only go to Heaven round about," and not by the "intercession of Our Lady." This indicates that Florian's, or the narrator's, salvation depends not on anything external to himself but comes about by the unity of the individual with that Love which lies within himself. The disclosure that Florian "can hardly believe any doctrine such as other men

do," emphasizes that the narrator regards revelation and salvation as originating from within the individual instead of depending upon the individual's strict adherence to any set of beliefs.

One explanation of the value of the knight's disclosure could arise from the possibility that it refers primarily to the *way* in which Florian perceives reality. He does not differentiate between one reality and another. He perceives everything as real and nothing as illusory. The effect of having such a narrator is that the reader too is forced to see experience in the same way. This may be a key to Morris' feelings at this time. All is real; nothing is real. Symbol is as real as the thing itself. Colors--abstractions--are perhaps even more real than those qualities of the world which they traditionally are said to represent. Color is permanent; experiences and associations are transitory.

It must be remembered, however, that Florian is only the pseudo-narrator. Florian's perceptions are those of a dream-entity. He is not the dreamer but is rather the dreamer once removed. He is the dreamer's eye, the dreamer's self projected onto the dream. The *true* narrator is always standing behind his Florian-self. And, at this point, it can be safely said that the narrator is one who *was* Florian during a visionary experience, but who returned to himself with his dream's dying out and who has ever since been trying to regain the final peace experienced in that dream. Florian is, in effect, the

narrator's hollow-self; the narrator is attempting to re-enter his hollow land.

With Florian's fall into the Hollow Land, all laws of logical sequence in time and space are removed from the narrative. Florian must now be thought of as having died a physical death. Arnald has committed suicide by plunging over the precipice. It is an obviously lethal fall, for Red Harald and his men do not bother to use the sword on Florian, feeling it quite sufficient to force him over the precipice. And yet, Florian awakes to find himself bathed in a "cool green light" and enchanted by a glorious clear voice (276). Opening his eyes, he sees close to him one whom he intuitively recognizes as his Love and describes thus: "She sat about five yeard from me on a great grey stone that had much moss on it, one of the many scattered along the side of the stream by which I lay; she was clad in loose white raiment close to her hands and throat; her feet were bare, her hair hung loose a long way down, but some of it lay on her knees. I said white raiment, but long spikes of light scarlet went down from the throat, lost here and there in the shadows of the folds, and growing smaller and smaller died before they reached her feet" (276).

A certain ambiguity becomes noticeable when Florian speaks of his Love. She has something of a not entirely mortal air about her. She is an abstract entity--his Love--rather than an individual woman. Her figure and face are not described in any detail; instead, the setting and her costume receive

emphasis. She sits upon a grey stone. Grey is particularly powerful here in its contrast with the bright primary colors Morris is wont to use; it establishes an initial ambiguity. And then, her costume has something not entirely pleasant about it. Her white raiment is perhaps a shroud--white were the ghostly albs of the Queen's attackers--for, its whiteness is qualified by "spikes of light scarlet." "Spikes" has a violent connotation, which, when coupled with scarlet, makes it possible to see Florian's love as a shrouded being whose blood has streamed out of a death wound in her neck. Florian himself is inexplicably frightened by his Love and says, after telling of his fear, that "she was not fair in white and red as many beautiful women are, being rather pale" (276). It is this kind of ambiguity that invests "The Hollow Land" with an almost macabre air. The work is occupied essentially with death and God's judgment of the dead. And death is present everywhere, as in the "shadows of the folds" of Love's raiment hiding the scarlet that "dies" before reaching her feet.

Just what Florian's fear of his love stems from is unknown. It is most likely a fear of his own sinful nature that prevents his touching her, and only after he undergoes something of a purification do they embrace. Florian, leaving to search for Arnald's body, wounds his Love with his scabbard. Perhaps this indicates that his violent worldly nature, still a part of him, will prevent spiritual fulfillment, for, at the same time, he shouts fiercely and in doing so injures himself. Upon finding

Arnald's body, Florian accuses God of being unjust in taking Arnald's life, since Swanhilda clearly deserved to be slain. But his Love confronts him, saying that God's judgment rested heavily on Swanhilda while yet alive, that no one other than Swanhilda herself might have known the greatness of her torments, and that in killing her the brothers had committed "a base cowardly act" and deserved God's judgments themselves (280). Florian weeps, having realized his sin, and the two finally embrace. So, in a realm outside of worldly reality, the hero undergoes an important change brought about by his Love.

Florian is going through a purgatorial existence in which he must resolve those conflicts unresolved during his earlier life. Perhaps it is misleading to imply that Florian's existence is one after death, for he is a dream-self and is just as much alive as he ever was. Arnald's "death" might better be spoken of as the termination of a certain aspect of the narrator's self. For, Arnald killed Swanhilda believing that God's justice commanded him to do so; thus Arnald--that aspect of the narrator which accepts doctrine--fails to continue with Florian the pilgrimage to Love. There is yet a presence in the Hollow Land which plagues Florian. It manifests itself as he and Margaret, his Love, are walking together, just before he first loses the Hollow Land. Here Florian describes the incident: "Presently we came upon a woman sitting, dressed in scarlet and gold raiment, with her head laid down upon her knees; likewise we heard her sobbing. 'Margaret, who is she?' I said; 'I knew

not that any dwelt in the Hollow Land but we two only.' She said: 'I know not who she is; only sometimes these many years I have seen her scarlet robe flaming from far away amid the quiet green grass; but I was never so near her as this. Florian, I am afraid; let us come away'" (281). This woman is most likely Swanhilda. Gold and flaming scarlet might well be identified with her, and it is this woman's appearance which immediately precedes Florian's next adventure, in which he must resolve his feud with Red Harald.

"Fytte the Second" opens with an extraordinarily powerful passage in which Florian appears to rise from the grave an old man with little memory of his lost years. No excuse is made for Florian's losing of the Hollow Land. He simply finds himself in a different realm having no knowledge of how he arrived there. The key to the section is an exchange between Florian, who has forgotten his name, and Red Harald, who is painting God's judgments. Red Harald asks Florian: "'What do *you* know about God's judgments?' 'Well, they are not all yellow and red at all events; you ought to know better.' He screamed out: 'O you fool! yellow and red! Gold & blood; what do they make?' 'Well,' I said; 'what?' 'HELL!'"(284).

Finally, Florian and Red Harald become as brothers and the paintings gradually change: "And as the years went on and we grew old and grey we painted purple pictures and green ones instead of the scarlet and yellow, so that the walls looked altered; and always we painted God's judgments. And we would sit in the sunset and watch them, with the golden light changing

them, as we yet hoped God would change both us and our works" (287). Morris' colors here embody states of spiritual evolution, and it is spiritual consciousness which defines reality for the narrator. As the narrative moves from one color to another, so it moves from one reality to another, with no regard for any reality which might follow logical rules, independent of the individual's state of being. It would be difficult to classify any one of these realms as dream-worlds, for each of them is just as real as another. No standard exists which the reader might call "real" as opposed to "dream."

At last, Florian returns to the Hollow Land, from whence he and Margaret travel to the hollow city that lies within the Hollow Land. The city contains within it a palace which Florian describes: "At last we came to a fair palace, cloistered off in the old time, before the city grew golden from the din and hubbub of traffic. . . . In like manner was it now cloistered off from the eager leaning and brotherhood of the golden dwellings: so now it had its own gaeity, its own solemnity apart from theirs; unchanged, unchangeable were its marble walls, whatever else changed about it" (290). Florian's spirit, now purged of the pollution of the land of scarlet and gold, is free to return to the source from which all emanates, to the land of perfect form as it exists immutable at the center of reality.

On the archway of the golden gates set before the palace Florian beheld: "two figures of a man & woman winged and garlanded, whose raiment flashed with stars; and their faces

we had seen or half seen in some dream long and long and long ago, so that we trembled with awe and delight. And I turned, and seeing Margaret, saw that her face was that face seen or half seen long and long and long ago; and in the shining of her eyes I saw that other face, seen in that way and no other, long and long and long ago--my face. And then we walked together toward the golden gates, and opened them; and no man gainsaid us. And before us lay a great space of flowers" (290). Florian de Liliis has finally returned to his name, to a reflection of his pure self--a great field of flowers.

Florian's journey may have ended, but final peace has not yet come to the narrator who was Florian yet who is, even as he relates the tale, seeking once again the Hollow Land. The unseen movement from Florian to the narrator's present state of being brings "The Hollow Land" full cycle. The soul cannot rest forever in the realm of pure form. No vision is absolute. The spirit must return to the level of mundane reality, must be bound again to worldly conflict and begin again its journey to the Hollow Land. Hence, at the end of his tale, the narrator is implicitly left wondering still as he was at its beginning:

> What time have we to look for it or any good thing, with such biting carking cares hemming us in on every side? Cares about great things, mighty things: mighty things, O my brothers! or rather little things enough, if we only knew it. Lives passed in turmoil, in making one another unhappy; in bitterest misunderstanding of

> our brothers' hearts, making those sad whom God has not made sad: alas, alas! what chance for any of us to find the Hollow Land? what time even to look for it? Yet who has not dreamed of it? Who, half miserable yet the while, for that he knows it is but a dream, has not felt the cool waves round his feet, the roses crowning him, and through the leaves of beech and lime the many whispering winds of the Hollow Land? (254)

Like "The Hollow Land," "The Story of the Unknown Church" is narrated by one not entirely of this world. Indeed, Walter, the narrator, is long since dead and his tale is largely that of a dream within a dream wherein he speaks of the sorrow brought to himself and those he loved through worldly conflict. Yet, his tale fulfills itself somewhat differently than does that of "The Hollow Land." "The Story of the Unknown Church" tells of the long awaited return of a young man from the crusades. Amyot has been gone five years and has left behind him Margaret, his betrothed, sister to the narrator. When Amyot finally does return, the joy of the lovers is shortlived, for he lies dead the next day. Margaret resolves to fulfil her desire in the next world and soon lies by Amyot in the tomb. Narrating the "Story of the Unknown Church" is Walter, "the master-mason of a church that was built more than six hundred years ago."[2] Other-worldly concerns--the building of a church, fighting for the Lord in the crusades, the fulfilling of love

through death, the careful carving of the lovers' tomb--dominate the tale. However, this other-worldliness arises not out of disregard for the beauty of the world, but rather from an appreciation of its intensity. It is as if the characters accept death as they do because life is so real to them that they cannot imagine its essential destruction. A flower may die; the color of which it partakes does not. Margaret and Amyot may die in the body, but the absolute love of which theirs partakes cannot die a physical death. Its essence exists somewhere always, perhaps in some Hollow Land where the waters run unseen.[3]

The work is saturated with the sensuality of color. Thus Walter recalls the setting wherein the church was built: "Through the boughs and trunks of the poplars we caught glimpses of the great golden corn sea, waving, waving, waving for leagues and leagues; and among the corn grew burning scarlet poppies, and blue corn-flowers; and the corn-flowers were so blue, that they gleamed, and seemed to burn with a steady light, as they grew beside the poppies among the gold of the wheat. Through the corn sea ran a blue river, & always green meadows and lines of tall poplars followed its windings" (150). And thus he describes the church's garden:

> In the garden were trellises covered over with roses, and convolvulus, and great-leaved fiery nasturtium; and specially all along by the poplar trees were there trellises, but on these grew nothing but deep crimson roses; the hollyhocks too were all out in blossom at that time, great spires of pink, and orange, and red, and white, with their

> soft downy leaves. I said that nothing grew on the trellises by the poplars but crimson roses, but I was not quite right, for in many places the wild flowers had crept into the garden from without; lush green briony, with green-white blossoms, that grows so fast, one could almost think that we see it grow, and deadly nightshade, La bella donna, oh! so beautiful; red berry, and purple, yellow-spiked flower, and deadly, cruel-looking, dark green leaf,all growing together in the glorious days of early autumn. (151)

Red roses and deadly nightshade are growing together, the warmth of the one complementing the poison of the other, and both are beautiful. The rose garden always holds the promise of death, but life and death are part of a cycle which is all one, for death promises life. Walter dies beneath the promise of resurrection. He says of himself: "They found me lying dead, with my chisel in my hand, underneath the last lily of the tomb" (158).

Above all, "The Story of the Unknown Church" is Walter's tale. Like "The Hollow Land," the narrative is quite complex involving a number of levels of experience. Since the narrator is one who died over six hundred years before the relation of his tale, the narrative itself belongs to his after-life dream-existence. The entire narrative must be regarded as a dream, for there is no device such as the tense change found in "The Hollow Land" to indicate that the narrator is alive in the flesh.

However, not only is the narrative that of an after-life dream, it also involves a dream within a dream. Walter's dream within a dream runs throughout his remembered reality, and, to be perfectly frank, I have as yet been unable to elucidate its meaning. The fact that I am unable to do so is not meant as anything other than an admission of my own deficiency. The intense beauty of "The Story of the Unknown Church" remains a beauty unto itself, and, since beauty is sufficient in itself, the tale demands no apology. However, it is the development of the artist-warrior in Morris' later romances which largely concerns me, and some aspects of such a hero can be perceived in Amyot.

When carving the figure of Abraham, Walter envisions the "Father of the faithful" in his warrior-aspect: "I could not think of him sitting there, quiet and solemn, while the Judgment-Trumpet was being blown; I rather thought of him as he looked when he chased those kings so far; riding far ahead of any of his company, with his mail-hood off his head, and lying in grim folds down his back" (153). Then, the movement of water-lilies changes his dream to a setting of unknown lands wherein he meets Amyot. Amyot appears throughout both the dream and the recollection to be of an almost divine nature. His beauty is overwhelming and, like that of the Divine Androgyne, perfectly complete and unified in itself. Walter relates of Amyot that: "he was so wondrously beautiful, so fearfully beautiful!" (153-4), and that "his hand was white and small,

like a woman's" (154). Also, he says of Amyot's "brave, honest face" that it was "the most beautiful among all the faces of men and women" he had ever seen (156). Thus, Amyot can quite plausibly be regarded as the principle of divine beauty which has entered into the earthly world of experience in an active sense--indeed, in the role of warrior. And, it is in his role as warrior, as one engaged in worldly conflict, that Amyot sustains his fatal illness, so that, given his god-like beauty, Amyot's death is somewhat analogous to Christ's.

But, if there is a Crucifixion here, there is also a Resurrection. Walter, who dies under the symbol of the Ressurrection, recalls a certain grave with particular detail: "for at the head of it was a cross of carved wood, and at the foot of it, facing the cross, three tall sun-flowers; then in the midst of the cemetery was a cross of stone, carved on one side with the Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and on the other Our Lady holding the Divine Child" (151). It is Walter who is the artist, the master-mason. If Amyot is analogous to Christ, then it is Art, working through its human agent, that is analogous to the Divine Child. By carving the lover's tomb, Walter resurrects their existence into a thing of beauty, thus transfiguring the very real tragedy of their story. Walter tells how as he carved the tomb: "the monks and other people too would come and gaze, and watch how the flowers grew; and sometimes too as they gazed, they would weep for pity, knowing how all had been" (158). Moreover, in relating the story of

the unknown church, Walter is resurrecting himself and the art of his era. Thus it is that the concept of art allied to life and its happenings, which Morris later refers to as *popular* art and opposes to the isolated luxury of his own time, can be perceived even in this early tale, in the love of Walter and Amyot.

"A Dream" also concerns the plight of two lovers. Lawrence, the young man, is challenged by his betrothed, Ella, to spend a night "in the cavern of the red pike."[4] Ella makes this demand in order to prove the strength of his love, for none have ever been seen again after entering that cavern. Lawrence accepts Ella's dare but has her promise that, should he not return the next day, she will seek him in the cave. As it happens, Ella must follow him and the two are lost to the sight of man.

Before Lawrence leaves, however, Ella says: "Let us pray God to give us longer life, so that if our natural lives are short for the accomplishment of this quest, we may have more, yea, even many more lives" (162). God answers their prayer, though not perhaps in the fashion they desired. It seems the lovers must be punished for their foolishness, particularly Lawrence, who abandoned to Ella's selfish whim his higher obligation to serve in a war. God gives them no rest in death. Their desire for one another remains as it was in life but can be consumated only after a period of longing greater than an hundred years has passed. During this period, they see one another momentarily at intervals many years apart. The reader

is told of two such incidents by the main speakers of the tale, both of whom are themselves long since dead. At these moments the lovers possess the bodies of a living man and woman. They embrace but must soon part. Still, they are promised a final fulfillment which is to be witnessed by the four men of the narrator's dream. First Ella enters the room, then Lawrence. They embrace. As the four men looked on, "the bells of the church began to ring, for it was New Year's Eve; and still they clung together, and the bells rang on, and the old year died. And there beneath the eyes of those four men the lovers slowly faded away into a heap of snow-white ashes" (174). This is another expression of cyclical change; the lovers die just as the year is reborn.

There is some similarity between "A Dream" and "The Hollow Land." Lawrence and Ella seem to be experiencing a purgatorial existence. Lawrence, like Florian, has entered a realm beyond the world which he describes to Ella during one of their meetings: "O love, it is very terrible . . . I could almost weep, old though I am, and grown cold with dwelling in the ivory house: O Ella, if you only knew how cold it is there, in the starry nights when the north wind is stirring; and there is no fair colour there, nought but the white ivory, with one narrow line of gleaming gold over every window, and a fathom's-breadth of burnished gold behind the throne. Ella, it was scarce well done of you to send me to the ivory house" (170).

The verses sung by Florian's Margaret might remind the

reader of Lawrence's path to the ivory house. The verses are as follows:

"Christ keep the Hollow Land
All the summer-tide;
Still we cannot understand
Where the waters glide:

"Only dimly seeing them
Coldly slipping through
Many green-lipped cavern mouths
Where the hills are blue.[5]

The setting of the cavern Lawrence entered is described as follows: "That bar of red sand rock . . . used to stand above the river in a great cliff, tunnelled by a cave about midway between the green-growing grass and the green-flowing river" (159). The settings are not identical, but both speak of caverns opening up onto realms beyond and yet within the world. Both realms are of a purgatorial nature and both, it must be remembered, come of the narrator's dream-experience. Thus, it is the dream-reality--a thing both within and without this world--which guides the narrator to realizations of desired social actions within this world. "The Hollow Land" urges an end to blind and petty conflicts among men, while "A Dream" portrays the consequences of obeying foolishly romantic whims which lead to the selfish denial of one's higher duty to one's fellows in time of need.

"Gertha's Lovers" anticipates The Roots of the Mountains

and The House of the Wolfings in a number of respects. Unlike "The Story of an Unknown Church," "The Hollow Land," and "A Dream," the narrator is neither a dreamer nor the spirit of one involved in the tale. The narration is done from an historical perspective. It begins: "Long ago there was a land, never mind where or when."[6] The people who dwell in this land are much the same as those whom Morris praises in later works, especially in their concern as individuals for the well-being of their people as a whole. They are "free, brave men" eager to defend their freedom with their swords.[7] Their leaders are as comrades to them rather than tyrants.

Like "The Story of the Unknown Church" and "A Dream," "Gertha's Lovers" is about those whose love is thwarted by an untimely death. The young king, Olaf, and his companion, Leuchnar, fall in love with Gertha, a peasant's daughter. Eventually, despite his own love for her, Leuchnar pleads the king's suit. Gertha readily admits her love for the handsome king but does not feel herself fit to become his queen. Before the matter can be settled, the king is killed in battle, for his realm is being attacked by three different enemies. He leaves Leuchnar a message asking that Gertha be made queen. She accepts the queenship, and her people defeat their enemies. Leuchnar dies of many wounds, and a young knight who loves Gertha dies bravely in battle, after which Gertha relinquishes the queenship and joins Olaf in death.

"Gertha's Lovers" is the first of Morris' works discussed here in which duty to a people exercises control over the desires of the individual. Leuchnar, who at first rides off to present his own suit to Gertha, curbs his desire and pleads the king's case. Gertha too faces a conflict when she is asked to become queen, as is apparent in the following exchange:

> "You must be Queen over us yet awhile, Lady Gertha."
>
> "Ah! and must I be; may I not go to him [Olaf] at once? for do you know, Leuchnar, . . . do you know, I saw him just now lying pale and cold, waiting for me, his arms stretched out this way towards me, his changed eyes looking longingly."
>
> "O noblest," he said, "know you not with how many perils we are beset? Whose spirit but his can help us through, and with whom does it dwell but with you?"
>
> She wept: "Leuchnar, though he call for me so, yet perhaps that is because he is sick and weak and scarce knows what he says: and I know that in his heart he desires above all things the safety of this people that goes westward; so I will be Queen till the last foe is vanquished: tell them so." (203)

By putting duty ahead of selfish desire Gertha and her lovers die nobly and at peace with themselves, unlike Lawrence and Ella of "A Dream."

Like the other works, "Gertha's Lovers" contains little separation between the realms of life and death. King Olaf's

spirit appears "with bright-gleaming sword and yellow hair blown by the wind" to protect Gertha from catapult-shot (205). The enemy king fires the shot at Gertha, but the stone goes mysteriously astray and kills a few of the enemy officers. So, once again, death proves to be no barrier to love.

At the last, the enemy having been vanquished, Gertha surrenders her crown. She then goes to King Olaf's grave, where she meets death in her lover's form. Gertha's handmaiden sees her lady talking with and being embraced by Olaf before finding her dead. The new king orders a church to be built above the place where Olaf and Gertha lay, of which the tale tells: "This Church, though the people wrought at it with such zeal and love, was never finished: something told them to stop by then they had reached the transepts of it: and to this day the mighty fragment, still unfinished, towering so high above the city roofs toward the sky, seems like a mountain cliff that went a-wandering once, and by earnest longing of the lowlanders was stayed among the poplar trees for ever" (225). The church, then, is a reflection of Gertha and her lovers, whose desires, remaining unfulfilled, rendered their passions the stronger and their deeds the braver. As in the other tales, it is not peaceful love which seems to interest Morris so much as it is desire and the process of desire heightened by death.

The attitude of the people of "Gertha's Lovers" towards life is well expressed in the following exchange between Leuchnar and Sir Richard before going into battle. Richard says: "'I

myself have been careless about deeds at all; I have loved beauty so much that I fear if any crime had at any time stood between me and beauty, I should have committed that crime to reach it; yet has God been so kind to me, and kindest of all in this, that I who have done nothing all my life long yet, should do this and then die.' 'And it is good to do one thing, and then die,' said Leuchnar; 'farewell'" (210-211). Sir Richard worships beauty and dies, as does Leuchnar, for Gertha--not for Christ.

There is evident in "Gertha's Lovers" a strangely ambiguous feeling towards Christian priests, described here as they appear in the council of warriors held after the death in battle of their king, whose body lies before them: "Great waxen candles burned all about him; two priests sat at the head and two at the foot of the bier, clad in gorgeous robes of deep sorrowful purple, gold embroidered; for these men reverenced man's body so, even when the soul was not so near to it as it had been, that in those hours of doubt and danger, they thought the time well spent in making the body of their king, of him the best and most beautiful of all men, look as beautiful as God would ever have dead bodies look" (194). As the council continues, the priests are described in various attitudes:

> One of the priests who sat by him had fallen asleep, wearied out with tending the wounded and dying, and his head had fallen on his breast; another sat quite upright with his hands laid on his knees, thinking

> dreadful things of what was coming on the land; the third, a spare young man, black-haired and sallow-faced, in his nervous anxiety twitched at the border of his cope as he glanced about the tent, looking uneasily on the face, first of one, then of another, of those that sat there; the fourth, as he sat, sad-faced and great-eyed, thinking of his mother and sisters whom he had left in a castle of the lowland country, had taken one long yellow tress of the dead man's hair, and was absently twining it about his fingers. (198)

Except for the weary, dedicated priest, these priests stand in sharp contrast to the warriors. They are described for the most part in negative terms, preoccupied with their own fears and dwelling on the pleasant past or grim future while the knights decide how to act in order to save their land. In later works Morris presents priests as men of contemplation rather than action, as men who have failed in the world.

William Morris himself is often referred to as "the dreamer." The problem with this epithet is that to many it probably connotes just such a person as Morris himself depicts in the above priest figures. When one reads Morris' works with care, however, one finds that they show an intense appreciation for worldly beauty, that duty and fellowship are regarded as far more important than selfish, escapist desires, and that the dreams experienced by his characters are not always of the more pleasurable variety. The advantage of Morris' dream-

narrative lies above all in its ability not to deny but to intensify "reality." The dream-narrative allows the writer the freedom to escape the expectations of a normal, linear, time-space structure in prose. The reality-experience thus obtained is one which transcends common perceptions and enables symbols and correspondences to communicate with one another as through the eye of vision rather than the intellect. The one faculty unifies experience, abstracting from it its essential qualities; the other divides and analyzes. Thus, far from escaping "reality," Morris' dream-narratives, such as "The Hollow Land," and "Lindenborg Pool," provide a heightened insight into the essential nature of experience. Even at this point, the sensuality of "The Story of the Unknown Church," the punishment of Lawrence and Ella of "A Dream" as opposed to the dedication of Gertha, and the grotesque experiences of the narrator in his dreams of the Hollow Land illustrate that Morris cannot comfortably be labelled an escapist. However, it will become more fully apparent in my discussion of the later romances that if William Morris is a dreamer at all, he is one whose dreams are entirely concerned with the well-being of his fellow man. After all, News from Nowhere and A Dream of John Ball are no less dependent upon the vehicle of the dream than are The Wood beyond the World and The Well at the World's End, though this point has gone unnoticed by most.

"Svend and his Brethen" is much the same as "Gertha's Lovers" in that it concerns itself with a period in the history

of a people who are being attacked by the armies of a mighty nation. However, "Svend and his Brethren" is far clumsier a tale than "Gertha's Lovers." It covers a great period of time in an incoherent manner and arrives at nothing but a vague, and apparently meaningless ending.

The reader is told of the might of King Valdemar's nation, a power comparable to that of ancient Rome. But it is a nation of slaves: "king and priest, noble and burgher, just as much as the meanest tasked serf, perhaps more even than he, for they were so willingly, but he unwillingly enough. They could do everything but justice, and truth, and mercy; therefore God's judgments hung over their heads, not fallen yet, but surely to fall one time or another."[8] Valdemar's nation constantly wars with a small but brave people against which he has gathered a great army. This people is also under God's judgment. Their forefathers long ago "mad with rage at some defeat from their enemies, fired a church, and burned therein many women who had fled thither for refuge" (231). This brought a curse upon them, but it is believed that they "may be saved from utter destruction by a woman" (231). As it happens, their ruler's daughter, Cissela, decides to sacrifice herself to her people by becoming Valdemar's wife in exchange for peace. In order to do this she must leave her lover.

At this point, the narrative skips several years. When it is time for Svend, the offspring of the new alliance, to become king of Valdemar's nation, he is rejected by its people

and must, together with his brothers, flee for his life. The brethren fight their way to the pier and sail to the West. Once again, the narrative breaks off, for that which William the Englishman wrote has come to an end. However, this William the Englishman, according to the narrator, afterwards found "the book of a certain chronicler" which speaks of events that occurred 550 years after the death of "Svend the wonderful king" (243). A group of knights sailing due eastward in that year came upon a strange land, a harbour wherein they saw many ancient ships (244). All about this city "lay many people dead, or stood, but quite without motion, and they were all white or about the colour of new-hewn freestone; yet were they not statues but real men, for they had, some of them, ghastly wounds which showed their entrails, and the structure of their flesh and veins and bones. Moreover the streets were red and wet with blood, and the harbour waves were red with it, because it dripped in great drops slowly from the quays" (244). Apparently, Svend and his brethren managed to found a kingdom when they sailed westward and 550 years later the descendants of their realm unknowingly came upon the city from which they had fled.

John's history, that is, the history discovered by William continues as follows: "Then when the good knights saw this, they doubted not but that it was a fearful punishment on this people for sins of theirs; thereupon they entered into a church of that city and prayed God to pardon them; afterwards,

going back to their ships, sailed away marvelling" (244). And, so ends "Svend and his Brethren."

"Svend and his Brethren" is a terribly undeveloped work. There are great confusing gaps in the narrative, and the only theme I can detect is that of God's judgment on wicked men, so that all these narrative leaps over the years land on nothing but a weak platform built on Christian moralizing. The only things that stand out in the work are Morris' apparent sympathy with the "meanest serf" who is unwilling to be a slave, Cissela's sacrifice of personal happiness for the sake of her people, and the violent description of God's judgment on sinners. However, the tale does illustrate significantly the violent nature of Morris' judgment of social systems based upon oppression of the many by the few.

Such violence breaks out again in "Lindenborg Pool," where the nineteenth-century narrator imagines himself to be a Medieval priest who, when in danger of his life, does not hesitate to wield a sword. He tells of his escape from evil: "I looked about me fiercely, I sprang forward, and clutched a sword from the gilded belt of one of those who stood near me; with savage blows that threw the blood about the gilded walls and their hangings right over the heads of those--things--I cleared myself from them."[9]

The work begins with its narrator explaining how it came upon him as he was reading Thorpe's Northern Mythology. He imagines himself on a wild and windy evening by the edge of a

strangely still and dismal pool. Gradually, he becomes aware of himself being transformed into a thirteenth-century priest riding "to carry the blessed sacrament to some dying man" who "had been a bold bad plundering baron" but who "was said lately to have altered his way of life" (247-248). The narrator racalls the baron's piggish face and asks the reader: "Now don't you think it strange that this face should be the same, actually the same as the face of my enemy, slain that very day ten years ago?" (248). Evidently, there is a relationship between the narrator's actual life and that of his thirteenth-century counterpart.

As it happens, this baron who so greatly resembles the narrator's enemy actually is the priest's enemy. For, the priest has been lured to the baron's hellish castle only so that hundreds of fiend-like persons might mock him and abuse his faith. The abuse is nightmarish: "The hundreds of people through all those grand rooms danced and wheeled about me, shrieking, hemming me in with interlaced arms, the women loosing their long hair and thrusting forward their horribly-grinning unsexed faces toward me till I felt their hot breath" (252). The priest escapes only by resorting to the savage violence related above.

"Lindenborg Pool" can be regarded as a vehement attack on nineteenth-century decadence. Morris contrasts a dedicated Medieval priest with a baron who epitomizes vice. The baron-pig lives in grotesquely luxurious surroundings; those who

people his castle are degenerates. The priest-narrator describes them thus: "Moreover it increased my horror that there was no appearance of a woman in all these rooms; and yet was there not? there, those things--I looked more intently; yes, no doubt they were women, but all dressed like men; what a ghastly place!" (250).

Moreover, as the priest begins to administer the sacrament a strange dance begins: "those behind me . . . began to move about, in a bewildering dance-like motion, mazy and intricate; yes, and presently music struck up through all those rooms, music and singing, lively and gay; many of the tunes I had heard before (in the nineteenth century); I could have sworn to half a dozen of the polkas" (251).

Clearly, in the baron's castle all natural beauty has been perverted and destroyed. Morris does not allow the reader to relegate this evil to the thirteenth century. The music is nineteenth-century music. The priest's enemy corresponds to the narrator's enemy. The narrator possesses a dual time-identity. Morris is attacking "luxury" as opposed to beauty in general, and nineteenth-century luxury in particular through the vehicle of a Medieval setting. Of all the early works, it is "Lindenborg Pool" that most explicitly makes use of the dream as a vehicle through which to comment on contemporary society. The later romances, such as The Wood beyond the World, further develop Morris' attack on luxury and perverted beauty, but the use of the medieval setting and the dream as

in "Lindenborg Pool" remains as essential element throughout the later works. However, Morris' later heroes become servants of the gods of the earth rather than priestly servants of God.

"Lindenborg Pool" is one of Morris' better early works. It is well structured and concise, and its Medieval setting justifies itself as something other than escapist fantasy. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of "Golden Wings." "Golden Wings" is set in the Middle Ages. Told in the first person by the main character, the narrative ends with his death. It is a tale of worldly glory narrated by one who is dead. Essentially, "Golden Wings" repeats the pattern found in "A Dream," "Gertha's Lovers," and "The Story of the Unknown Church" of two lovers being parted by death at the peak of their love. However, inasmuch as "Golden Wings" does not contain any significant additions to this pattern, my purposes do not require that it be discussed in detail.

"Frank's Sealed Letter" carries the warning never to forget love: never--though one's love be unrequited--to harden one's heart against the memory of happier things (324) since to do so would have the effect of denying one's own higher self. The truly great man--the narrator learns--does not forget love in bitterness, but keeps his memory green (325), that it may sometime blossom afresh rather than be blighted by hate. Like the other tales, "Frank's Sealed Letter" involves a dream experience, but unlike them, it is given a

contemporary setting. It is narrated in the first person by Hugh, the main character. In my opinion, the tale fails, for its narrative is too confusing, depending as it does on too many changes from the past to the future. The characters do not impress me as being symbolic in nature, while, at the same time, they are unconvincing as real persons. Mabel, for instance, is almost ludicrously melodramatic when she rejects Hugh, as is Hugh himself at a point in the narrative when it is impossible to discern the nature of their relationship. Hugh says initially: "She was dead, and the twenty years that I had lived with her, man and boy and little child, were gone--dead too and forgotten" (310). To what does the "twenty years" refer? The reader gradually discovers that it refers not to marriage, but to the fact that Hugh and Mabel grew up together. Yet, there exists a deeper confusion. At the close of the narrative, the reader finds that Hugh's "failure" in life has been a dream. How then does one explain that even at the beginning of "Frank's Sealed Letter" Hugh refers to his failure in life--that is, refers to this failure even before his dream-recollection of it? Hugh is dreaming even before he opens Frank's letter and explains only long after reading the letter that his recollection of failure had been but a dream. This confusion seems to me a flaw in the construction of the narrative rather than something requiring interpretation. Moreover, since "Frank's Sealed Letter" does not contribute to the development of the later romances, there seems to be no point in discussing it here any further.

These works, contrast greatly with the later romances. Here, Morris' God is one capable of incredibly violent judgments, while at the same time, Christian morality has little to do with the passionate lives of the heroes and heroines of these tales. These tales appear to be preoccupied with lives the passions of which are intensified only by death; yet these passions must be answered for in the next world. In the later romances, this other-worldly moralizing gives way entirely to a standard of judgment based upon the conditions of society here and now. Apocalyptic retribution is common to both the early and late romances, but the agent of retribution changes from the Christian god to the god-like warrior. Thus, while Morris' concept of evil and his sympathy for the "meanest serf" remains fairly consistent throughout his work, it is Ralph, the "glorious wolf" of war, rather than the Christian god, who will come to destroy evil peoples such as those from whom Svend flees. It might be observed here that if Morris' later socialistic beliefs had any great influence on his thinking, they seem not to have greatly changed his concept of good and evil--which should be traced to Ruskin rather than Marx--but did perhaps bring his apocalyptic vision out of the next world into "the world of living men."

CHAPTER III

THE TRANSITIONAL WORKS: THE HOUSE OF THE WOLFINGS AND THE ROOTS OF THE MOUNTAINS

Both The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains are similar to "Gertha's Lovers" and "Svend and his Brethern" in their emphasis on communality and resistance to a certain type of evil. The evil depicted in The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains assumes metaphysical dimensions subsumed in the later romances in the power of the witch. To counter this evil, Morris creates Thiodolf and Gold-mane: heroes who become manifest war-gods. Two things prevent me from regarding either hero as an artist-warrior figure: first, Thiodolf and Gold-mane do not enter realms of the Imagination as do the later heroes; secondly, their marriage to the beauty of the earth is not so complete as is, for instance, Ralph's in The Well at the World's End. However, The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains can be regarded as transitional works, since in both there exist elements of the dream-realm journey and the marriage to beauty, though not to the same degree as in the later works. Gold-mane's marriage to Sun-beam is not so complete a union with beauty as is Ralph's with Ursula primarily because the heroine's correspondence to beauty does not entirely define itself until its expression within the witch, maiden, and wise-woman relationship

of the later romances. Sun-beam is obviously beautiful, but Ursula and the Lady of Abundance can be more plausibly regarded as principles of beauty which form the hero's imagination. Moreover, such an interpretation of the relative significance of the Sun-beam and Ursula is intimately connected with the extent to which the hero's journey takes him through realms of the imagination. Consequently, a discussion of these transitional works leads to a further understanding of those elements essential to Morris' creation of the hero as artist-warrior.

Morris wrote of The House of the Wolfings in a letter to T.J. Wise dated 17 November, 1888:

> The book which I have in the press is called The House of the Wolfings. It is a story of the life of the Gothic tribes on their way through Middle Europe, and their first meeting with the Romans in war. It is meant to illustrate the melting of the individual into the society of the tribes: I mean apart from the artistic side of things that is its moral--if it has one. It is written partly in prose and partly in verse: but the verse is always spoken by the actors in the tale, though they do not always talk verse; much of it is in the Sagas, though it cannot be said to be performed on their model.[1]

The typically medieval setting of the early works is replaced by the forests of pre-Christian Europe. Here are found neither militant priests nor the judgments of God. The House of the

Wolfings concerns itself not with the purgatorial sufferings of those who have sinned but rather with the earthly plight of a hero whose people are in dire need.

The story of The House of the Wolfings can be briefly summarised. It tells of a Gothic Folk called the Markmen who are divided into separate tribes or kins, such as the Wolfings, the Bearings, the Elkings, but who regard themselves as one Folk. They are threatened by the legions of Rome and find themselves in a precarious position. They choose as War-duke Thiodolf of the Wolfings. Thiodolf's lover, the Wood-Sun, a goddess, has told him that unless he wears the dwarf-wrought hauberk she gives to him, he will be killed in battle. He chooses not to wear the hauberk and dies in glory having ensured the victory of the Markmen over the invaders.

The influence of Norse mythology can be seen throughout The House of the Wolfings. The kindreds of the Mark worship the gods Frey, Odin, and Tyr. The night before battle one warrior sees in his dream "the Great Yule Boar, the similitude of the Holy Beast of Frey."[2] He rejoices at the sight of the Boar's image, for Freyr was a powerful fertility god. Freyr's boar "would gallop through the air and over the sea more swiftly than any horse, while his glowing bristles gave light in the darkest night."[3] The dreaming warrior, drawing his sword, swears over the boar "a great oath of a doughty deed" (49), just as oaths were said to have been sworn on the bristles of the boar offered to Freyr at Yule.[4]

Odin is lord of the Aesir; the god of battle, poetry, and magic. Odin awaits the *Ragnarok*, the "fate of the gods"[5]: "Surt, chief of the demons, arrives with a sword of fire, and the gods meet their fate. Freyr fights with Surt, and Óđinn falls before the wolf, to be avenged by his son Víđar, who pierces the monster to the heart. Thór fights with his old enemy the serpent and, as it seems, they kill each other."[6] Fighting alongside the gods are those warriors among men whom Odin has gathered to him in Valhöll.

In order to make certain a favorite warrior's presence during the Ragnarök, Odin might award him death in battle. Thus it is said of the aging warrior Heriulf of the Wolfings: "He was well-beloved for his wondrous might, and he was no hard man, though so fell a warrior, and though of few words, as aforesaid, was a blithe companion to old and young. In numberless battles had he fought, and men deemed it a wonder that Odin had not taken to him a man so much after his own heart; and they said it was neighbourly done of the Father of the Slain to forbear his company so long, and showed how well he loved the Wolfing House" (56-7). When Thiodolf speaks of going to the Slaughter Tofts to learn of the enemy's movements, he alludes to the Ragnarök: "There tidings shall we get / If the curse of the world is awakened, and the serpent crawleth yet / Amidst the Mirkwood thicket" (71). Thiodolf metaphorically identifies the movements of the enemy with those of the world-serpent Miđgarđsorm and thus with the end of the world, for the Ragnarök

is the certain perishing of men as well as gods.[7] And, after Thiodolf's death, his daughter, the Hall-Sun, refers to the Ragnarök in speaking these words over his body: "O father, no more shalt thou draw Throng-plough from the sheath till the battle is pitched in the last field of fight, and the sons of the fruitful Earth and the sons of Day meet Swart and his children at last, when the change of the World is at hand" (206-7). These warriors and their gods, for no reason such as sinfulness, live under the constant threat of destruction. Life for them is fleeting, though glory is not. And glory is defined by one's service to his people and his gods.

Týr is mentioned in The House of the Wolfings far more frequently than either Odin or Frey. The kindred of the Mark often refer to themselves as "the Children of Týr" and one of their victory songs speaks of "the dooming of Týr (184) or Týr's judgment of the battle. Turville-Petre calls Týr one of the "lesser known deities":

> Among the children of Loki and the giantess, Angrboda, was the wolf, Fenrir. He was reared by the Aesir, but only Týr had the courage to feed him. Knowing what damage was to be expected of this wolf, the gods resolved to chain him. He broke two chains, but the third was a magic one, worked by dwarfs. . . . It was smooth and soft as a silken thread, but the wolf would only allow himself to be bound with it so long as one of the gods placed his hand between his jaws

> as a pledge. Only Týr dared do this; he lost his hand, but the wolf was bound and will not break loose before the Ragnarök, when he will be the death of Óðinn.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Snorri characterizes Týr in general terms. He is no peacemaker, and, to a great extent, he disposes of victory. He is bravest of gods, and bold men should invoke him. In the Ragnarök, Týr will meet the wolf Garm [Fenrir], and they will kill each other. Týr is said by Snorri to be son of Óðinn.[8]

I think it can be said that Týr's story provides not an exact but a rough, working parallel to The House of the Wolfings.

After hearing of the Roman invasion, Thiodolf meets his lover, Wood-Sun, in the forest. She urges upon him a wondrous hauberk so that he might be protected in battle. She knows, being of the God-kin, that the Norns have woven his death into the coming war unless he wear the hauberk. Thiodolf is immediately suspicious of the gift: "he put his hand to it, and turned it about, while he pondered long: then at last he said:

> "What evil thing abideth with this warder of the strife,
> This burg and treasure chamber for the hoarding of my life?
> For this is the work of the dwarfs, and no kindly kin of the earth;
> And all we fear the dwarf-kin and their anger and sorrow and mirth." (23)

His suspicion is well founded. According to Turville-Petre: "Sometimes, when dwarfs were compelled to forge treasures, or surrender them, they laid a curse on them. The gold which Sigurd was to sieze from the dragon, Fáfnir, had been taken by Loki from a dwarf, and the curse which it carried led to the tragedies of the Völsungar and Niflungar. A legendary king compelled two dwarfs to forge a magic sword, Tyrfing. It could never be drawn without bringing death, and three dastardly crimes were destined to be done with it" (234). As it happens, a dwarf was forced to give up the hauberk in question, though the Wood-Sun convinces Thiodolf that it bears no curse. So that, upon leaving her, Thiodolf "was covered from the neck to the knee by a hauberk of rings dark and grey and gleaming, fashioned by the dwarfs of ancient days" (24). Characteristically, Morris uses the color grey, which always contrasts sharply with his strong primary colors, to describe that which is mysterious and possibly sinister.

Later, Thiodolf is persuaded by the words of Asmund the Old, who is foreseeing, not to wear the hauberk. Asmund feels the coldness of the rings and speaks these ominous words:

> "I came to the house of the foeman when hunger made me a fool;
> And the foeman said, 'Thou art weary, lo, set thy foot on the stool;'
> And I stretched out my feet,--and was shackled: and he spake with a dastard's smile,
> 'O guest, thine hands are heavy; now rest them for a while!'

So I stretched out my hands, and the hand-gyves lay
cold on either wrist:
And the wood of the wolf had been better than that
feast-hall, had I wist
That this was the ancient pitfall, and the long
expected trap,
And that now for my heart's desire I had sold the
world's goodhap." (73)

When Asmund speaks of shackles, he is referring to the cursed hauberk. He fears Thiodolf is bound by dwarf-magic, that he has surrendered his strength to his worldly desires and given up his freedom in order simply to live. This is the ancient pitfall.

Still later, when Asmund sees the disguised Wood-Sun riding off with the hauberk, he wonders:

"What then are the Gods devising, what wonders do they will?
What mighty need is on them to work the kindreds ill,
That the seed of the Ancient Fathers and a woman of their kin
With her all unfading beauty must blend herself therein?
Are they fearing lest the kindreds should grow too fair and
great,
And climb the stairs of Godhome, and fashion all their fate,
And make all earth so merry that it never wax the worse,
Nor need a gift from any, nor prayers to quench the curse?
Fear they that the Folk-wolf, growing as the fire from out
the spark
Into a very folk-god, shall lead the weaponed Mark

From wood to field and mountain, to stand between the earth
And the wrights that forge its thraldom and the sword to slay its mirth?" (104)

Here Thiodolf is spoken of as the Folk-wolf, and as one who might become a folk-god. In this sense the passage very much anticipates Morris' later heroes, especially Ralph of The Well at the World's End, who do become god-like and in doing so transform the earth. Asmund regards the gods as jealous of man's happiness. He speaks of Thiodolf as a Promethean figure whom the gods fear might lead his people to ultimate freedom. His view of the kindreds as potential rivals of the gods differs greatly from that of the characters of the early works so often bowed under by the moral judgments of their Lord.

Thiodolf, however, is not actually of the Wolfing kindred. Wood-Sun tells him:

"thou art not of the kin;
The blood in thy body is blended of the wandering Elking race,
And one that I may not tell of, who in Godhome hath his place." (111)

Though Thiodolf is mortal, his father was of the gods. And, when he chooses death in order to lead the Wolfing-kin to victory rather than wear the cursed hauberk which would give him the shame of the battle, he is, like Týr, sacrificing himself to the Wolf so that the destruction of the Folk might be delayed. As Týr sacrifices his hand to Fenrir, so Thiodolf gives his life

not only for the Wolf-kin but also in a sense to a wolf. The analogy is not exact, though it is quite relevant and reasonably close.

The Roman Wolf[9] which takes Thiodolf's life can be regarded as Garm's earthly relative. While the Markmen respect the prowess of the Romans, they assign them the metaphysically destructive position shared by the monster-demons of the Ragnarök. In speaking of the Romans, the Wood-Sun says to Thiodolf: "For these are the folk of the cities, and in wondrous wise they dwell / Mid confusion of heaped houses, dim and black as the face of hell" (21). Later, when Bork of the Geirings addresses the Folk-mote, he expands upon this theme of the Romans as a destructive force loose in the world:

> "Lo thus much of my tidings! But this too it behoveth to tell,
> That these masterful men of the cities of the Markmen know full well:
> And they wot of the well-grassed meadows, and the acres of the Mark,
> And our life amidst of the wild-wood like a candle in the dark;
> And they know of our young men's valour and our women's loveliness,
> And our tree would they spoil with destruction if its fruit they may never possess.
> For their lust is without a limit, and nought may satiate

Their ravening maw; and their hunger if ye check it
turneth to hate,
And the blood-fever burns in their bosoms, and torment
and anguish and woe
O'er the wide field ploughed by the sword-blade for the
coming years they sow;
And ruth is a thing forgotten and all hopes they trample
down;
And whatso thing is steadfast, whatso of good renown,
Whatso is fair and lovely, whatso is ancient sooth
In the bloody marl shall they mingle as they laugh for
lack of ruth.
Lo the curse of the world cometh hither; for the men that
we took in the land
Said thus, that their host is gathering with many an
ordered band
To fall on the wild-wood passes and flood the lovely
Mark,
As the river over the meadows upriseth in the dark." (60-1)

Here the city-dwellers, the Romans, are explicitly identified with "the curse of the world." It is significant that Morris does not have his narrator refer to the Romans as sinners. They are evil not because they violate any abstract, absolute moral code, but because they are possessed with destructive lust. Ravenous, they destroy the fruit of the earth, trample the hopes of men, and drown the "well-grassed meadows."

As the Ragnarök approaches, the world of men becomes hopelessly corrupt: "Moral values are rejected; brother slays brother and the bonds of kinship are neglected; it is an age of harlotry, a criminal, merciless age."[10] The mercilessness and lustful desires of the Romans have been spoken of above. Below, Morris portrays the moral bankruptcy of their society in a conversation among the Goths:

> Said the Wolfing man:
>
> ". . . Maybe we shall go far on this journey, and see at least one of the garths of the Southlands, even those which they call cities. For I have heard it said that they have more cities than one only, and that so great are their kindreds, that each liveth in a garth full of mighty houses, with a wall of stone and lime around it; and that in every one of these garths lieth wealth untold heaped up. And wherefore should not all this fall to the Markmen and their valiancy?"
>
> Said the Elking:
>
> "As to their many cities and the wealth of them, that is sooth; but as to each city being the habitation of each kindred, it is otherwise: for rather it may be said of them that they have forgotten kindred, and have none, nor do they heed whom they wed, and great is the confusion amongst them. And mighty men among them ordain where they shall dwell, and what shall be their meat, and how long they shall labour after they are weary, and

> in all wise what manner of life shall be amongst them; and though they be called free men who suffer this, yet may no house or kindred gainsay this rule and order. In sooth they are a people mighty, but unhappy.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . [T]heir thralls be not so well entreated as their draught-beasts, so many do they take in battle; for they are a mighty folk; and these thralls and those aforesaid unhappy freemen do all tilling and herding and all deeds of craftsmanship: and above these are men whom they call masters and lords who do nought, nay not so much as smithy their own edge-weapons, but linger out their days in their dwellings and out of their dwellings, lying about in the sun or the hall-cinders, like cur-dogs who have fallen away from kind." (45-6)

Through this passage, Morris has expanded the Roman-Garm association by including within it the entire Roman society as pictured by his Goths. It is this destructive society as a whole which threatens the gods with its evil.

The society described here is similar to that described in "Svend and his Brethen." The cities are "black as hell." The population is free only in name. Freemen are exploited as though they were thralls by rulers who serve only as a burden on the economy. Craftsmanship is enslaved; it is the work of "thralls and unhappy freemen." The ties of kinship are not recognized; the masters are divorced from the people. It is

the type of society--thriving on slaves and ugliness--which Morris' evil men consistently belong to throughout his later works. Nor do I believe it can be denied that it is a society Morris sees reflected in his contemporary England and against which many of his lectures on Art are directed.

The relative worth of Morris' Roman and Gothic societies is reflected in the leaders of the opposing armies. Thiodolf is entirely concerned with the welfare of the Folk. He is the embodiment of the Wolfing House. His name is most likely derived from the Anglo-Saxon roots *þeodwulf*, meaning "Folk-wolf," which he is, in fact, often called. His sacrifice defines the process of "the individual melting into the society of the tribes." The process is that by which the individual surrenders his individual self to the broader Self of the tribe. This should not be mis-interpreted as a loss of individuality, but rather as the individual contributing his unique self to the well-being of the tribe within the context of which his own qualities gain in strength. But, perhaps this is too superficial a view, for Thiodolf's sacrifice is truly of a religious character. One must realize that Morris' tribes exist dependent upon and in harmony with Nature. A metaphor which might best describe the "melting" of the individual into the tribe is that of an icicle thawing in the Spring and becoming part of the flowing stream. Hence, at one point, Thiodolf builds a small dam and then breaks it down. In other words, the individual melting into the tribe becomes both selfless and

All Self. Since a number of critics seem to feel that Morris' remark about this melting process demands a political or anthropological approach to The House of the Wolfings, I should like to stress that the process must be seen in connection with the tribe's relationship to Nature. After all, this melting of the individual into the tribe is the tale's *moral*, as Morris says in his letter to Wise, not its scholarly reflection on history. Morris clearly would not have desired Thiodolf to melt into the Roman society or any other that seemed characterized by selfishness rather than selflessness.

As Wood-Sun attempts a second time to persuade Thiodolf to wear the hauberk, he speaks plainly of the choice lying before him: "[I]f thou sayest that I have deemed aright, and that a curse goeth with the hauberk, then either for the sake of the folk I will not wear the gift and the curse, and I shall die in great glory, and because of me the House shall live; or else for thy sake I shall bear it and live, and the House shall live or die as may be, but I not helping, nay I no longer of the House nor in it" (111). On this occasion, Thiodolf agrees to wear the hauberk; hence, he swoons in the heat of battle and is shamed. Afterwards, he sees his love for the last time. He tells her of his shame and she decides finally that he must not again wear the hauberk. If Thiodolf's sacrifice is not perceived in its true religious sense, then, indeed, the narrative of this work may appear pointless. But such a feeling of pointlessness can hardly be blamed on Morris'

prose, which actually carries its message with a good deal of clarity.

I will now indulge in a lengthy quotation in order to give an example of what Paul Thompson refers to as "the vacuous narrative and silly rambling speeches" that plague The House of the Wolfings.[11] Thiodolf speaks thus to Wood-Sun of his feelings towards the Wolfings when he wore the hauberk's curse:

> "But now must I tell thee a hard and evil thing; that I loved them not, and was not of them, and outside myself there was nothing: within me was the world and nought without me. Nay, as for thee, I was not sundered from thee, but thou wert a part of me; whereas for the others, yea, even for our daughter, thine and mine, they were but images and shows of men, and I longed to depart from them, and to see thy body and to feel thine heart beating. And by then so evil was I grown that my very shame had fallen from me, and my will to die: nay, I longed to live, thou and I, and death seemed hateful to me, and the deeds before death vain and foolish.
>
> "Where then was my glory and my happy life, and the hope of the days fresh born every day, though never dying? Where then was life, and Thiodolf that once had lived?
>
> "But now all is changed once more; I loved thee never so well as now, and great is my grief that we must sunder,

and the pain of farewell wrings my heart. Yet since I am once more Thiodolf the Mighty, in my heart there is room for joy also. Look at me, O Wood-Sun, look at me, O beloved! tell me, am I not fair with the fairness of the warrior and the helper of the folk? Is not my voice kind, do not my lips smile, and mine eyes shine? See how steady is mine hand, the friend of the folk! For mine eyes are cleared again, and I can see the kindreds as they are, and their desire of life and scorn of death, and this is what they have made me myself. Now therefore shall they and I together earn the merry days to come, the winter hunting and the spring sowing, the summer haysel, the ingathering of harvest, the happy rest of midwinter, and Yuletide with the memory of the Fathers, wedded to the hope of the days to be. Well may they bid me help them who have holpen me! Well may they bid me die who have made me live!

"For whereas thou sayest that I am not of their blood, nor of their adoption, once more I heed it not. For I have lived with them, and eaten and drunken with them, and toiled with them, and led them in battle and the place of wounds and slaughter; they are mine and I am theirs; and through them am I of the whole earth, and all the kindreds of it; yea, even of the foemen, whom this day the edges in mine hand shall smite.

"Therefore I will bear the Hauberk no more in battle; and belike my body but once more: so shall I have lived and death shall not have undone me.

"Lo thou, is not this the Thiodolf whom thou hast loved? no changeling of the Gods, but the man in whom men have trusted, the friend of Earth, the giver of life, the vanquisher of death?" (169-70)

This speech, of course, is hardly vacuous. Thiodolf can almost be seen to be the avatar of the tribal fertility-god. He perceives life as a cycle, a continuum of which one is a part even in death so long as one has contributed to life. This cyclical perception ceases as soon as the hauberk wraps him, literally, up in himself, for he no longer sees Time as a thing beyond his own desires. That is, Time ceases when death makes it impossible to grasp merely the material world to himself, but, when the hauberk is taken off, he is once again united with the essence of life which manifests itself through the natural cycle of death and rebirth. In Winter, Nature sacrifices itself to itself so that it may be reborn in Spring. Just so does the fertility-god sacrifice himself to his tribe, so that he may be reborn in its renewed prosperity. At last, Thiodolf leaves his goddess-lover to face death in the world of men: "He looked not once behind him, though a bitter wailing rang through the woods and filled his heart with the bitterness of her woe and the anguish of the hour of sundering" (173).

The Roman Captain, on the other hand, is entirely self-seeking:

> He was both young and very rich, and a mighty man among his townsmen, and well had he learned that ginger is hot in the mouth, and though he had come forth to the war for the increasing of his fame, he had no will to die among the Markmen, either for the sake of the city of Rome, or of any folk whatsoever, but was liefer to live for his own sake. Therefore was he come out to vanquish easily, that by his fame won he might win more riches and dominion in Rome; and he was well content also to have for his own whatever was choice amongst the plunder of these wild-men (as he deemed them), if it were but a fair woman or two. (133-4)

Whereas Thiodolf feels cut off from the days and the seasons when apart from his people, the Roman Captain regards his people merely as an instrument to his own ends. Thiodolf's fame comes from his worth to the Folk; the Roman's from how successfully he can separate himself from his fellow citizens through greatness of wealth.

Whether or not Morris intended such a parallel to be drawn, the Týr myth does provide a convenient conceptual model from which to view The House of the Wolfings. Týr sacrifices his hand to Fenrir--a part of the destructive powers of the old Norse cosmos--in order that the "fate of the gods" might be delayed. Thiodolf, of the gods on his father's side, sacrifices his life to the Roman Wolf that the Wolfings might not be destroyed. From another perspective, Asmund the Old

feels that the gods, out of jealous fear, are trying to bind the Folk-wolf's and thus the Kindred's might. He says, in effect, using as his vehicle the tale of the foeman's guest, that Thiodolf can be bound only if he sacrifices his higher self to his lower self's desires for life even at the cost of shame. When Thiodolf does wear the hauberk, he becomes alienated from the Kindreds and the Earth. In a sense, he becomes similar to the Roman Captain, the product of a society clinging to material wealth gained through destructive energies. This similarity is further established by the observation of Fox of the Hrossings that the Romans also worship a wolf "as if they were of the kin of our brethren" (66). The Roman wolf is not, however, the war-wolf allied to Nature, and hence creative in its strength, but rather the purely destructive wolf of war.

In a sense, it is the Wood-Sun who in bidding Thiodolf to take off the hauberk makes the final decision concerning his fate. This is fitting, for she too has a place in Northern mythology as a Chooser of the Slain.[12] She is a valkyrie, or a dísir.[13] Turville-Petre writes: "the *dísir* were tutelary goddesses attached to one neighbourhood, one family, perhaps even one man.

. . . . . .

In poetry the word *dísir* is occasionally applied to valkyries . . . . Elsewhere, poets use the word *dísir* as if it meant 'norns,' or fate-goddesses who attend the birth of every

child" (221-2). He also elucidates another aspect of the *dísir*:

> The *dísir* were the object of a cult, receiving sacrifice at regular times. The season of their festival was the winter-nights, but they were not the only deities who accepted sacrifice at that time.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> It was the custom to offer sacrifice to Freyr for fruitful harvest and peace . . . as well as on the occasion of marriage. It was the ithyphallic Freyr who governed peace and bestowed sensual pleasure.
>
> Such considerations lead us to suspect that the *dísir* were, from one aspect, goddesses of fertility. This suspicion grows stronger when we remember that the fertility goddess, Freyja, is called *Vanadís* (*dís* of the Vanir); she is the supreme *dís*, whose help should be sought in love.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> It is not extravagant to suppose that one of the functions of the *dísir* was to support the clan by promoting the fertility of its women. (224)

Ultimately, Wood-Sun's actions are guided by her consideration for the prosperity of the Wolfings, to whom she is attached. She is the first of Morris' goddess-women, and this last piece of information on the *dísir* is particularly interesting in light of Morris' later fertility-figures like the Lady of

Abundance and Habundia. It is also notable that she is the hero's lover as the Lady of Abundance is Ralph's in The Well at the World's End, and the Maid is Walter's in The Wood beyond the World.

Wood-Sun's name associates her with the fertility of Nature, and, like Habundia and the Lady of Abundance, she is more at home in the wild-wood than in the dwelling places of men. It is there that she may be met in her proper guise; in one of the book's most striking passages, Morris describes Thiodolf leaving the hall of the Wolfings that he might be with the Wood-Sun before the next day's departure for war:

> The moonlight lay in a great flood on the grass without, and the dew was falling in the coldest hour of the night, and the earth smelled sweetly: the whole habitation was asleep now, and there was no sound to be known as the sound of any creature, save that from the distant meadow came the lowing of a cow that had lost her calf, and that a white owl was flitting about near the eaves of the Roof with her wild cry that sounded like the mocking of merriment now silent.
>
> Thiodolf turned toward the wood, and walked steadily through the scattered hazel-trees, and thereby into the thick of the beech-trees, whose boles grew smooth and silver-grey, high and close-set: and so on and on he went as one going by a well-known path, though there was

no path, till all the moonlight was quenched under the close roof of the beech-leaves, though yet for all the darkness, no man could go there and not feel that the roof was green above him. Still he went on in despite of the darkness, till at last there was a glimmer before him, that grew greater till he came unto a small wood-lawn whereon the turf grew again, though the grass was but thin, because little sunlight got to it, so close and thick were the tall trees round about it. In the heavens above it by now there was a light that was not all of the moon, though it might scarce be told whether that light were the memory of yesterday or the promise of to-morrow, since little of the heavens could be seen thence, save the crown of them, because of the tall tree-tops.

Nought looked Thiodolf either at the heavens above, or the trees, as he strode from off the husk-strewn floor of the beech wood on to the scanty grass of the lawn; but his eyes looked straight before him at that which was amidmost of the lawn: and little wonder was that; for there on a stone chair sat a woman exceeding fair, clad in glittering raiment, her hair lying as pale in the moonlight on the grey stone as the barley acres in the August night before the reaping-hook goes in amongst them. She sat there as though she were awaiting someone, and he made no stop nor stay, but

went straight up to her, and took her in his arms, and kissed her mouth and her eyes, and she him again; and then he sat himself down beside her. (14-15)

The above passage can hardly be said to be the result of a careless narrative. It begins on a quietly ominous note: the cow has lost her calf, the owl's wild cry mocks the evening's merriment. Thiodolf enters the grey beech-wood on an invisible path gradually entering darkness. He is passing into another reality; though it is dark there is hidden life--the fertile green above him. Gradually, the transition made, light re-appears. The heavens are lit by an expression of continuity between memory and promise which coincides both with Thiodolf's passage from clearing, to close-wood, to clearing, and with the unavoidable sense of secret green fertility hidden above the dark passageway. The woman glitters in the middle of the lawn. She is the very expression of fertility; her hair is as the barley in August. Just as "the moonlight lay in a great flood on the grass," so does her hair lie pale as the moonlight. And, it lies upon a grey stone. Florian's Love in the Hollow Land also sat upon a grey stone; again Morris uses grey to express that which is not entirely of this world. The beech-wood silver-grey leads to the utterly grey stone where Thiodolf kisses a Chooser of the Slain. This entire scene might be read as a movement from life to the promise of life in death.

The purgatorial life in death found in Morris' early works changes its aspect in The House of the Wolfings to a life in death which is dependent upon the individual's merging into

the tribe. Actually, the choice of life in death or death in life is the central question behind Thiodolf's decision whether or not to wear the hauberk. Hall-Sun, when speaking to her mother of Thiodolf's shame and the need for him to die gloriously, says to the Wood-Sun: "I shall bid my mighty father make choice of death in life, / Or life in death victorious and the crownèd end of strife" (165). To live alienated from the Kindreds, and from the earth upon which their prosperity depends, would be for Thiodolf a death in life, but to die in glory would be to achieve life in death both by surviving in their memory and winning a place in Valhöll. It might be said that the question of death in life, or life in death in varying aspects is a theme which dominates the greater part of Morris works. The significance of this theme will be seen particularly in my discussion of The Story of the Glittering Plain.

Undoubtedly the greatest flaw in The House of the Wolfings is Morris' unfortunate use of verse. He continually interrupts an otherwise attractive narrative with what is often mediocre poetry. The battle and harvest songs are not so detractive, for they lend an air of tradition to the actions of the narrative and invest the tribes with a sense of community. At the same time, they connect the Folk as a whole with the seasonal cycle of Nature. However, it is disturbing to be reading an interesting, fluent dialogue and suddenly to find that the speakers have burst into exchanges of verse--and rather uninspired verse at that. This flaw is so great that The House of the Wolfings,

for all its splendid descriptive prose, will probably always be regarded by general opinion as "unreadable."

The Roots of the Mountains greatly resembles The House of the Wolfings. It too tells of war between a free Teutonic people and the tyrannous aliens who seek to overrun them. The Roots of the Mountains is a thoroughly exciting romance, the narrative of which is more compelling than that of The House of the Wolfings primarily because it is without verse interruptions of its prose. However, my discussion of The Roots of the Mountains concentrates essentially on those aspects which can be seen as part of a development leading to the later work, The Well at the World's End.

The tale begins "Once upon a time"[14] and tells of the people of Burgdale--a free, prosperous folk--and their war with the aliens, the Dusky Men. Nothing is known of the alien threat growing upon the land until Face-of-god, who is also called Gold-mane, is lured through the forest by spells and meets Sun-beam, or the Friend. Sun-beam is of a kindred which in times past, fleeing a hostile land, immigrated to find a new home. They established themselves in Shadowy Vale, prospered, and bloodlessly conquered Silverdale, a dale which afforded a greater livelihood for their growing folk. Some of their Houses--not, however, the Wolf House to which Sun-beam belongs--wed with the original Silverdalers and produced

many men of "small heart." When the Dusky Men invaded most of the people surrendered, but those of unpolluted stock resisted and retreated as best they could back to Shadowy Vale.

The Sun-beam speaks thus of Silverdale and its invasion by the Dusky Men:

> "Fair and goodly is that Dale as mine own eyes have seen, and plentiful of all things, and up in its mountains to the east are caves and pits whence silver is digged abundantly; therefore is the Dale called Silverdale. . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Happy lived the Folk in Silverdale for many and many winters and summers: the seasons were good and no lack was there: little sickness there was and less war, and all seemed better than well. . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "In the days when I had seen but ten summers, . . . war fell on us without rumour or warning; for there swarmed into Silverdale, though not by the ways whereby we had entered it, a host of aliens, short of stature, crooked of limb, foul of aspect, but fierce warriors and armed full well: they were men having no country to go back to, though they had no women or children with them, as we had when we were young in these lands, but used all women whom they took as their beastly

> lust bade them, making them their thralls if they slew them not. Soon we found that these foemen asked no more of us than all we had, and therewithal our lives to be cast away or used for their service as beasts of burden or pleasure." (111-12)

Here is the usual contrast between the peace and abundance which flourishes about the freedom-loving Folk, and the utterly barren destructiveness of the evil forces who look upon their fellow men purely as objects to be possessed for the satisfaction of base desires.

Sun-beam draws Face-of-god, who is destined to be a great leader of the Burgdalers, to her so that he might fall in love with her. Her purpose is to effect an alliance between her Folk and the Burgdalers through marriage, though as it happens they fall mutually in love despite political considerations. The need for an alliance arises from the fact known to those in Shadowy Vale that the Dusky Men are preparing to attack Burgdale, which would leave Shadowy Vale in hopeless isolation amidst its foes. The alliance is made through the agency of Face-of-god, and the two peoples decide themselves to take the offensive. Being outnumbered, they attack the Dusky Men at unawares, bottling them up in Silverdale like rats in a trap. A great battle is fought during which rises the terrible cry of "death, death, death to the Dusky Men!" and Silverdale is at last reclaimed as the aliens are utterly destroyed.

The plot is fairly straightforward. No character finds himself involved in a significant moral dilemma. The kindreds are clearly good while the Dusky Men are easily the most overtly evil men of any of Morris' creations. Folk-might, Sun-beam's brother, answers in the following passage Face-of-god's questions about the Dusky Men and their thralls:

> "How is it with these thralls?" said Gold-mane. "I have never seen a thrall."
>
> "But I," said Folk-might, "have seen a many down in the Cities. And there were thralls who were the tyrants of thralls, and held the whip over them; and of the others there were some who were not very hardly entreated. But with these it is otherwise, and they all bear grievous pains daily; for the Dusky Men are as hogs in a garden of lilies. Whatsoever is fair there have they defiled and deflowered, and they wallow in our fair halls as swine strayed from the dunghill. No delight in life, no sweet days do they have for themselves, and they begrudge the delight of others therein. Therefore their thralls know no rest or solace; their reward of toil is many stripes, and the healing of their stripes grievous toil. To many have they appointed to dig and mine in the silver-yielding cliffs, and of all the tasks is that the sorest, and there do stripes abound the most. Such thralls art thou happy not to behold till thou hast set them free; as we shall do."

> "Tell me again," said Face-of-god; "is there no mixed folk between these Dusky Men and the Dalesmen, since they have no women of their own, but lie with the women of the Dale? Moreover, do not the poor folk of the Dale beget and bear children, so that there are thralls born of thralls?"
>
> "Wisely thou askest this," said Folk-might, "but thereof shall I tell thee, that when a Dusky Carle mingles with a woman of the Dale, the child which she beareth shall oftenest favour his race and not hers; or else shall it be witless, a fool natural. But as for the children of these poor thralls; yea, the masters cause them to breed if so their masterships will, and when the children are born, they keep them or slay them as they will, as they would with whelps or calves. To be short, year by year these vile wretches grow fiercer and more beastly, and their thralls more hapless and down-trodden; and now at last is come the time either to do or die." (135-6)

This passage expands on the complete barrenness of the Dusky Men. They resemble demons more than they do humans, for even when they mate they can produce nothing but evil offspring. Under their possession the fruit of the earth, the silver which supplied Folk-might's kindred with wondrous jewelery, becomes nothing but waste.

As the host advances on Silverdale, they find clear

evidence of the aliens' cruelty:

> Again presently came a watch of the Shepherds, and they had found a man and a woman dead and stark naked hanging to the boughs of a great oak-tree deep in the wood. This men knew for some vengeance of the Dusky Men, for it was clear to see that these poor people had been sorely tormented before they were slain. Also the same watch had stumbled on the dead body of an old woman, clad in rags, lying amongst the rank grass about a little flow; she was exceeding lean and hunger-starved, and in her hand was a frog which she had half eaten. And Dallach, when he heard of this, said that it was the wont of the Dusky Men to slay their thralls when they were past work, or to drive them into the wilderness to die. (316)

The evil deeds of certain peoples who inhabit Morris' later romances are rarely so explicit as those of the Dusky Men. Their absolutely evil nature provides a solid foundation from which to view any shifting emphasis which might occur in Morris' later portrayals of evil.

Judging from the above descriptions of the Dusky Men, their society, and their deeds, it can be said that Morris conceives of evil in its most extreme manifestation as that which is entirely out of harmony with Nature. This was true of his Romans to a degree, yet they were not depicted as deformed men wallowing in filth but rather as ravenous con-

querors capable of intelligence and bravery. The Roman Wolf was a degenerate Gothic Wolf; the Dusky Men, however, have nothing whatsoever in common with those whose land they invade. While it is merely exciting to read of the battles between the Romans and the Wolfings, it is pure pleasure to watch the Dusky Men being hewn down by the swords of Folk-might and Face-of-god. The gods of the Wolfings and the Burgdalers are gods of the earth; the Dusky Men worship only a "crook-bladed sword, smeared with man's blood, and bigger than any man might wield in battle" (319). It is to this sword that the Dusky Men are about to offer human sacrifice when attacked by the deadly arrow-storm of the Folk. The aliens are a plague which reaps only death out of plenitude. It is significant that they have no children entirely of their own race among them, for the witches of the later works are also barren of natural offspring. These Dusky Men will appear again reflected in the Burgmen of The Well at the World's End.

The name "Shadowy Vale" cannot help but bring to mind "the valley of the shadow of death," and Silverdale is obviously a center of the wealth of the earth. As Gold-mane moves from the one place to the other, he becomes gradually transformed. After his stay in Shadowy Vale, during which he becomes troth-plighted to Sun-beam and speaks to Folk-might of the coming war, he feels he has changed. He says to himself: "I am become a man; for my Friend, now she no longer telleth me to do or forbear, and I tremble. Nay, rather she is fain to take

the word from me; and this great warrior and ripe man, he talketh with me as if I were a chieftain meet for converse with chieftains. Even so it is and shall be" (136). He has gained a new self. He has, in a sense, been initiated into manhood by passing into the shadow of death. Therein, he finds life and emerges re-born.

His journey into Shadowy Vale is described as just such a journey into death. A hound leads him on the unseen path:

> Sure-foot led right into the heart of the pine-wood, and it was dark enough therein, with nought but a feeble glimmer for some while, and long was the way therethrough; but in two hours' space was there something of a break, and they came to the shore of a dark deep tarn on whose windless and green waters the daylight shone fully. . . .
>
> So at last after a six hours' journey they came clean out of the pine-wood, and before them lay the black wilderness of the bare mountains, and beyond them, looking quite near now, the great ice-peaks, the wall of the world. It was but an hour short of noon by this time, and the high sun shone down on a barren boggy moss which lay betwixt them and the rocky waste. Sure-foot made no stay, but threaded the ways that went betwixt the quagmires, and in another hour led Face-of-god into a winding valley blinded by great rocks, and everywhere stony and rough, with a trickle of water running amidst

> of it. The hound fared on up the dale to where the water was bridged by a great fallen stone, and so over it and up a steep bent on the further side, on to a marvellously rough mountain-neck, whiles mere black sand cumbered with scattered rocks and stones, whiles beset with mires grown over with the cottony mire-grass; here and there a little scanty grass growing, otherwhere nought but dwarf willow ever dying ever growing, mingled with moss or red-blossomed sengreen; and all blending together into mere desolation.
>
> Few living things they saw there; up on the neck a few sheep were grazing the scanty grass, but there was none to tend them; yet Face-of-god deemed the sight of them good, for there must be men anigh who owned them. For the rest, the whimbrel laughed across the mires; high up in heaven a great eagle was hanging; once and again a grey fox leapt up before them, and the heath-fowl whirred up from under Face-of-god's feet. A raven who was sitting croaking on a rock in that first dale stirred uneasily on his perch as he saw them, and when they were passed flapped his wings and flew after them croaking still. (99-100)

They cross "another desolate miry heath" walled by crags of "marvellous shapes, coal-black, ungrassed and unmossed," until finally they look down into "a long narrow vale quite plain at the bottom" and walled on one side by "sheer rocks of black stone" (100). At this point, Face-of-god's journey reminds one

of the caves and nearby rivers spoken of in "A Dream" and "The Hollow Land" as well as Thiodolf's passage through darkness to meet the Wood-Sun:

> The plain was grown over with grass, but he could see no tree therein: a deep river, dark and green, ran through the vale, sometimes through its midmost, sometimes lapping the further rock-wall: and he thought indeed that on many a day in the year the sun would never shine on that valley.
>
> Thus much he saw, and then the rocks rose again and shut it from his sight; and at last they drew so close together over head that he was in a way going through a cave with little daylight coming from above, and in the end he was in a cave indeed and mere darkness: but with the last feeble glimmer of light he thought he saw carved on a smooth space of the living rock at his left hand the image of a wolf.
>
> This cave lasted but a little way, and soon the hound and the man were going once more between sheer black rocks, and the path grew steeper yet and was cut into steps. At last there was a sharp turn, and they stood on the top of a long stony scree, down which Sure-foot bounded eagerly . . . ; but Face-of-god stood still and looked, for now the whole Dale lay before him. (100-1)

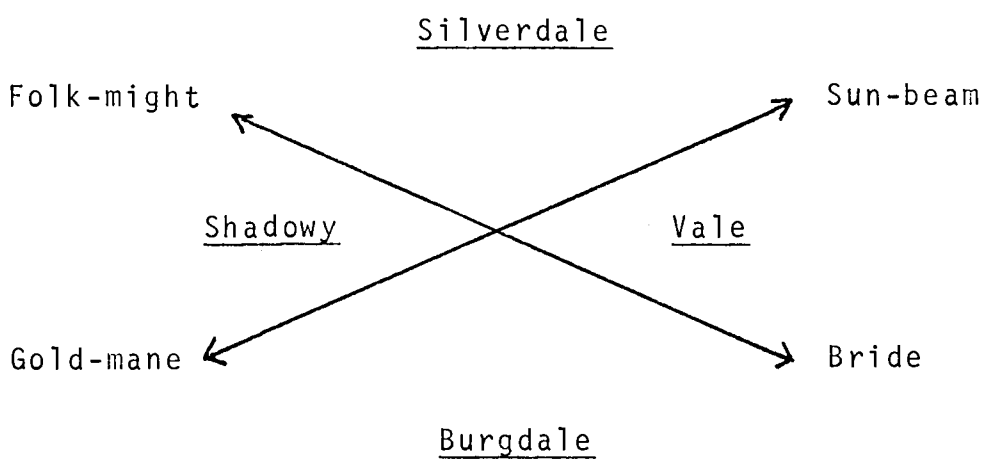
In the midst of all this desolate country he is at last met by the Friend as he goes down the scree: "She was clad like himself in a green kirtle gaily embroidered and fitting close to her body, and had no gown or cloak over it; she had a golden fillet on her head beset with blue mountain stones, and her hair hung loose behind her" (102). She is that Beauty which exists timelessly even within the realm of death. She and her people are those waiting to emerge from the shadow of death so that they may reclaim the material world, Silverdale, and make it flourish again.

After Gold-mane has entered Shadowy Vale, found the beauty therein and become allied to it, he leads the men of Burgdale in their attack on the Dusky Men. In the heat of battle, Gold-mane becomes transformed into a god-like being: "And as he burst forth from the ranks waving his axe aloft, bare-headed now, his yellow hair flying abroad, his mouth crying out, 'Death, death, death to the Dusky Men!' fear of him smote their hearts, and they howled and fled before him as they might; for they said that the Dalesmen had prayed their Gods into the battle" (347). The victory gained, Silverdale once more becomes an abode of beauty.

The movement, then, is from Burgdale, to Shadowy Vale, to Silverdale; from life, to new-found beauty, to the transformation of the earth, as Face-of-god develops from youth, to a position of leadership, to one who becomes as a warrior-god. This structure is roughly similar to that of The Well at the

World's End in which Ralph passes by the Dry Tree in the desert and drinks of the Well, thus enabling him to transform the land, having become god-like himself. Face-of-god cannot be said to be the artist-warrior of Morris' later romances. Like them he is married to that principle of beauty which exists beyond death--though I do not wish to interpret the Sun-beam over symbolically--but unlike them he does not at any point enter a visionary realm.

The Roots of the Mountains ends with a new union of peoples. Kindreds which were once sundered are again joined to one another, while Silverdale and Burgdale are fully united through marriage and the exchange of children--a custom found commonly in the Icelandic Sagas. Such unity expresses a rebirth of fertility in both the folk and their land. For, not only are the Kindreds joined by marriage, they are also brought together ritualistically by a regular return to Shadowy Vale. This new relationship can be diagramed thus:



The diagram illustrates that it is Shadowy Vale that is central to the new unity. And, given the womb-like setting of the Vale, as well as its association with the Sun-beam's beauty and its nurturing of her people's strength, the regular return of the Folk to the Vale can be regarded as a ritualistic celebration of fertility. Just as Gold-mane was transformed through Shadowy Vale, so now do the Folk express the transformation of themselves and their land by a continual rebirth of unity in the Vale of life-within-death. Their passage into and out of Shadowy Vale is like that of Winter into Spring. This theme of renewed fertility through the unity of those who once were twain will be found to be of central importance to The Story of the Glittering Plain, The Wood beyond the World, and The Well at the World's End.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORY OF THE GLITTERING PLAIN

The Story of the Glittering Plain[1] concerns Hallblithe, a young man of the House of the Raven, and his betrothed, the Hostage, "an exceeding fair damsel" (211) of the House of the Rose "wherein it was right and due that the men of the Raven should wed" (211). Three riders approach Hallblithe as he works at making a spear and ask him if desperate tones if they have come to the land of the Glittering Plain, that land wherein they may "forget the days of sorrow" (212). Hallblithe replies that they have come not to the Glittering Plain--a place unknown to him--but to Cleveland by the Sea where "men die when their hour comes" (212), though they perform deeds that die not (212). He knows not if in Cleveland the days of men's life "be long enough for the forgetting of sorrow" (212), for he is "young and not yet a yokefellow of sorrow" (212). Hurriedly, the riders depart crying: "This is not the Land! This is not the Land!" (212).

These riders are but the harbingers of Sorrow, for soon after they leave Hallblithe learns that his betrothed has been captured by the strong-thieves of the sea. He knows that he is now "the yokefellow of sorrow" (213). In seeking the Hostage he meets Puny Fox, one of the Ravagers, who tells Hallblithe that he can take him to the Isle of Ransom where Hallblithe may

cheapen the Hostage. Puny Fox is one of Morris' most memorable characters. A humourous loud-voiced braggart, he continually mocks Hallblithe, calling him by such names as "croaker on the dead branch," "tomb of warriors," "black-fledged nestling," and "little carrion-biter." But Puny Fox, whose name belies his stature, is also a wizard and a powerful one at that. The reader's first glimpse of his super-human abilities, which are surprising in such an earthy fellow, comes as the boat approaches the Isle of Ransom:

> Then the big red man stood up and looked over his left shoulder and said: "Soon shall we have a breeze and bright weather."
>
> Then he looked into the midmost of the sail and fell a-whistling such a tune as the fiddles play to dancing men and maids at Yule-tide and his eyes gleamed and glittered therewithal, and exceeding big he looked. Then Hallblithe felt a little air on his cheek, and the mist grew thinner, and the sail began to fill with wind till the sheet tightened: then, lo! the mist rising from the face of the sea, and the sea's face rippling gaily under a bright sun. Then the winds increased, and the wall of mist departed and a few light clouds sped over the sky, and the sail swelled and the boat heeled over, and the seas fell white from the prow, and they sped fast over the face of the waters. (220-21)

This voyage over water,governed as it is by one possessing magical powers, is a voyage through time rather than space. Just as Walter of The Wood beyond the World is lured over water to the land of the Wood, and Birdalone of The Water of the Wondrous Isles is carried by the Sending Boat into those isles, so is Hallblithe brought to the Isle of Ransom by a wizard of that isle. Being the yokefellow of Sorrow, Hallblithe must go where she leads him. Until he finds the Hostage, his sorrow will determine the direction of his quest, for sorrow seeks its own end.

The Hostage's name defines her place in the tale. She is the hostage of Hallblithe's sorrow. To find the end of sorrow, in effect to ransom the Hostage, is no mean feat. And, in attempting to do so, Hallblithe is beguiled. From the moment his quest begins, he is wrapped in lies, for unbeknown to him Puny Fox and the warriors of the Isle of Ransom serve the will of the king of the Glittering Plain.

Puny Fox is the direct agent of the King. He brings Hallblithe to the Isle of Ransom and then through guile causes him to seek the Glittering Plain. He sends Hallblithe a false dream in which the Hostage speaks to him:

> "Yet again, if I live and thou livest, I have been told and have heard that by one way or other I am like to come to the Glittering Plain, and the Land of Living Men. O my beloved, if by any way thou mightest come thither also, and we might meet there, and we two alive, how

> good it were! Seek that land then, beloved! seek it, whether or no we once more behold the House of the Rose, or tread the floor of the Raven dwelling. And now must even this image of me sunder from thee. Farewell!" (226-7)

Here one should note the similarity between Hallblithe's situation and that of Ralph in The Well at the World's End. Ralph, after the Lady of Abundance's death, seeks also the end of sorrow and sees in a dream the image of Ursula, who tells him to seek her that they may achieve the Well together. But there is an important difference between the two, for Hallblithe's dream is false, while Ralph's is essentially true.

Hallblithe, deserted by Puny Fox, comes to a house of the Ravagers wherein he meets the ancient Sea-eagle who, as an old chieftain of the pirates, is entitled to be taken to the Acre of the Undying. The Sea-eagle, knowing the King's will, befriends Hallblithe and together they sail for the Acre of the Undying. Soon after they arrive in the Glittering Plain the effect of the Land on those near death is seen. Sea-eagle grows backwards to the age of thirty-five and appears again to be a hardy warrior. But Hallblithe, who hears no news of the Hostage, immediately realizes the flaw in that idyllic realm. He asks the Sea-eagle if he will help him pursue his quest now that he has become a young man. He speaks of heroic deeds yet to be done and asks the Sea-eagle what he will do with his youth now that he has it again. The Eagle replies that he will help Hallblithe all he can within the confines

of the Land of the Living but that were he to step outside of that realm "he would be but a gibbering ghost drifting down the wind of night" (257). Hallblithe accepts whatever help the Sea-eagle can give, but says at last: "So it is, shipmate, that whereas thou sayest that the days flit, for thee they shall flit no more; and the day may come for thee when thou shalt be weary, and know it, and long for the lost which thou hast forgotten" (257-8).

So it is that from the first Morris makes his reader aware that the Land of the Living, probably the most desirable of all his dream-realms, is not at all desirable. Here is a land which is deathless, without strife, plentiful, and full of lovely women to be had merely for the asking. Yet, Morris' hero rejects it. The flaw, of course, is that the Glittering Plain is not an earthly but an unearthly paradise. Since it is without death, the Glittering Plain is also without hope, without deeds, without glory. It brings not an end to sorrow but rather endless sorrow. It is not the Land of the Living but the Land of the Dead, for, though those who dwell there are immortal, their immortality is not god-like. Gods are not without creative power and effect in the world of men. Those drawn to the Glittering Plain become as images of their former selves, forms without substance, devoid of meaning. Their existence is meaningful only in relation to death but even then it is a negative meaning. They fear death so greatly that to mention it in that realm is taboo. Their lives are an affirmation of nothing

but the fear of death and change. In effect, their existence is totally stagnant, hence death-like. The Sea-eagle sporting on the fair lawn with his fair damsel might just as well be a rabbit or goat gambolling in the field. Eventually he loses even the memory of his past glory. His friendship with Hallblithe in the Isle of Ransom he remembers only vaguely, as a dream. He becomes nothing but an empty form, an image, thereby creating a pathetic contrast between the Sea-eagle as he is and the Sea-eagle of the past. The one was a ferocious viking warrior, unafraid of the icy sea and the wrathful sword; the other is a rabbit. Here the similarity of The Story of the Glittering Plain with The House of the Wolfings is apparent. Sea-eagle has lost even his will to die, like Thiodolf when wearing the hauberk. Hallblithe, on the other hand, like the true Thiodolf, scorns death so long as he can fulfill his quest, so long as he can do that which is meet for a man of the Ravens.

In the face of such a pervasive theme in Morris' works as the rejection of death-in-life, it is truly amazing that so many critics have dismissed these romances as escapes into idyllic dream worlds. Morris' love is always for the world of process, for deathless deeds done in the service of a people. He opposes to this the choice of an existence dedicated to nothing but life at any cost, the choice of a life bound up entirely in the pursuit of material desires. This is the realm to which Hallblithe's false dream leads him. It is not to be considered a *higher* realm of the Imagination.

The Glittering Plain is ruled by the King. The King, as befits the lord of a land wherein neither conflict nor want nor death exist, is a god-like being. Though the King has drawn Hallblithe to the Land by sundering him from the Hostage, he cannot be considered an evil being: "His face shone like a star; it was exceeding beauteous, and as kind as the even of May in the gardens of the happy, when the scent of the eglantine fills all the air. When he spoke his voice was so sweet that all hearts were ravished, and none might gainsay him" (260). It could almost be said that the beauty of the Glittering Plain is the emanation of its radiant Lord. The King's sword is deedless, for all who come into his realm become the friends of its beauty. Surely he is the genius of the Land.

Hallblithe, however, is never mollified by the Glittering Plain. He rejects it from the first, regarding all he beholds as secondary to his quest. Determined to be cowed by "no man or god" (260), he says to the King: "I came hither seeking no gifts, but to have mine own again; and that is the bodily love of my troth-plight maiden" (261). The king replies: "Thy desire shall be satisfied; thou shalt have the woman who would have thee, and whom thou shouldst have" (262).

Of course it is not likely that the King, who has ordered the Hostage's abduction, will restore her to Hallblithe. The woman whom Hallblithe shouldst love, while "exceeding beauteous," is not the Hostage but the King's daughter. When Hallblithe looks on her from his place of hiding he sees her turning the

leaves of a bejewelled book. He tells the Sea-eagle: "So she turned the leaves, till she came to one whereon was pictured none other than myself, and over against me was the image of mine own beloved" (266). The Princess speaks to Hallblithe's painted image:

> "O my beloved, why dost thou delay to come to me? For I deemed that this eve at least thou wouldst come, so many and strong as are the meshes of love which we have cast about thy feet. O come to-morrow at the least and latest, or what shall I do, and wherewith shall I quench the grief of my heart? Or else why am I the daughter of the Undying King, the Lord of the Treasure of the Sea? Why have they wrought new marvels for me, and compelled the Ravagers of the Coasts to serve me, and sent false dreams flitting on the wings of the night? Yea, why is the earth fair and fruitful, and the heavens kind above it, if thou comest not to-night, nor to-morrow, nor the day after? And I the daughter of the Undying, on whom the days shall grow and grow as the grains of sand which the wind heaps up above the sea-beach. And life shall grow huger and more hideous round about the lonely one, like the ling-worm laid upon the gold, that waxeth thereby, till it lies all round about the house of the queen entrapped, the moveless unending ring of the years that change not." (266)

That the sorrowful Princess is looking at Hallblithe's image in a book filled with images of flaming castles, and kings and warriors creates a very complex situation. The reader sees her at two removes from reality, for he himself is reading a book. She is at one remove from Hallblithe's reality and his existence for her is but as an image. For her, Hallblithe is as much a work of art as the princess herself is for the reader. Hallblithe has entered that realm in which he exists as nothing other than an image of his actual self; in effect, he is confronting himself as a work of art. The princess' experience of him is entirely vicarious. She is unable to break out of the ring of deathlessness and enter into the world of life and death, of change and growth, but finds herself trapped in the realm of eternal forms without substance. She desires Hallblithe to become as empty as the Sea-eagle, though Hallblithe has rejected such emptiness.

However, there is another complexity involved here, for the princess is actually the reflection of Hallblithe. The Princess is the source which has drawn to the deathless realm the embodiment of the image she desires, has drawn to her the reality behind the image. She desires the manifestation of Hallblithe's image but is, at the same time, the embodiment of Hallblithe's existence in the realm of deathless forms. The reader sees her at a double remove not as described directly by the narrator but indirectly by Hallblithe and this creates the sense that she is part of Hallblithe's being: a form of

his imagination more real than he--because deathless--but, at the same time, dependent upon him. For, the end of her sorrow depends upon his decision to sacrifice for her sake his earthly-love, the Hostage, and become the image of himself. This connection is made through what is the central metaphor of The Story of the Glittering Plain: the metaphor of the ling-worm laid upon the gold. Within this earthly paradise the princess' desire is the snake which makes the days grow until they trap her within unending loneliness. And Hallblithe's thoughts are exactly the same though their situations are reversed, for his desire for the Hostage is that which makes the Treasure of the Sea unsatisfactory and causes him immediately to realize its flaw. For Hallblithe, too, the days do not flit by, for without change they are as deadly as a golden prison. Thus, though Hallblithe and the Princess reflect one another, in that both are the captives of their desires, they are in their desires entirely opposite from one another.

The Princess worships an image which she desires to manifest itself; she is the dreamer here, the sender of false visions. The direction of her desire is from essence to existence. Her desire begins from an unearthly foundation and works downwards. Rather than abstract ideal beauty from the earth, she seeks to impose her image-reality upon the earth. For this reason, her desire has the effect of imprisoning its object, of actually preventing it from manifesting itself to her. The nature of her desire would make empty the very thing

it desires. Hallblithe on the other hand, desires only his earthly love. He says to the Sea-eagle's damsel: "What is this tale about a book? I know not of any book that lieth betwixt me and my beloved" (264). Hallblithe desires that beauty which exists in the world; if he pursues a vision, it is a vision which arises from existence. In effect, Hallblithe seeks essence within existence. If he is an idealist at all, if he is one whose journey is guided by dreams, he is an idealist who pursues the beauty of the earth. His maiden is of the House of the Rose and he is of the Raven. Hallblithe seeks what is rightly his. It is meet that life and death be joined. It is the world of process, not stagnant otherworldliness that delights Morris. There will be no end to sorrow, to the desire of the Sorrowful Princess, if civilization continues to sacrifice the earth's beauty by making it a hostage to its dreams. If it continues to impose empty abstractions upon the world, thereby divorcing itself from Nature, it will imprison itself--its systems of politics, morality, and art all divorced from experience--within deathless walls instead of flowing in harmony with the flux of nature. To deny change--to make death a forbidden word--is finally to deny life.

To misinterpret what Morris is saying in The Story of the Glittering Plain, to mis-interpret Hallblithe's idealism as other-worldly, is to fail to see the dominant theme in Morris' major romances. It is almost incomprehensible that Philip Henderson, who has done such knowledgeable studies of Morris'

life and work, can speak as he does about this romance:"The Story of the Glittering Plain . . . is a story of the search for the land of eternal youth, though, characteristically, Hallblithe, like Pharamond before him in Love is Enough, is only bent upon his quest for a lost maiden whose image he is shown in a painted book."[2] This statement, while not strictly inaccurate, certainly tends to mis-represent the nature of Hallblithe's quest. It is followed by a reflection on Morris' personal life:

> It would seem that Morris, whether because of unhappiness in marriage or because of some basic inhibition, was incapable of accepting the actual reality of any woman and so was driven continually to idealistic compensations. In his letter to Charles Faulkner of 16 October 1886, giving his views on sex and marriage in general, he refers to 'the mere animal arrangement' and 'the grotesquery of the act', from which one might infer that in his own marriage the fault was not all on Janey's side, though he says that man has always 'adorned the act variously as he has done the other grotesque act of eating and drinking.'[3]

A couple of things might be said in relation to Henderson's inference and his application of it to the prose romances. First, realising the animality of the sex act is not at all a denial that amidst the pleasure and the pain, the sobs and moans, there is not ecstasy, yes, and even some love. And, as far as eating and drinking are concerned, Henderson himself writes:

"The greatest joke was to deprive [Morris] of his food, for the undisguised gusto with which he partook of his daily luncheon of roast beef and wine was to his friends one of his most endearing characteristics."[4] Morris' eating and drinking habits seem not to have suffered from this later feeling of grotesqueness. One is free to infer what one will about his other appetites.

Still another theme emerges from the speech of the Sorrowful Princess. This has to do with hoarded treasure. The Land of the Living is often referred to as the Treasure of the Sea; the Hostage is taken to the Isle of Ransom, and there are two references to gold being increased by the ling-worm, or snake. In the Princess' speech the hoarded gold is life itself, which grows until it entraps the queen in "the moveless unending ring of the years that change not" (266). Her existence must be unfulfilled as long as she seeks a pre-conceived form, the substance of which is unknown to her. The Hostage, too, is treasure hoarded on the Isle of Ransom. She is earthly love and beauty which will always be held hostage, will be hoarded until it is ransomed by the rejection of the nature of the Princess' desire. The Princess' desire is thus intimately connected with the Hostage's captivity and indeed is responsible for it. Morris, having translated Beowulf, knew that Beowulf met his death in freeing hoarded treasure from a dragon or "worm" in service to his people. Hallblithe's situation is thus somewhat analogous to Beowulf's.

After having been led not to the Hostage but to the Princess, Hallblithe has another interview with the King:

"Why didst thou lie to me the other day?" said Hallblithe.

"I lied not," said the King; "I bade bring thee to the woman that loved thee, and whom thou shouldst love; and that is my daughter. And look thou! Even as I may not bring thee to thine earthly love, so couldst thou not make thyself manifest before my daughter, and become her deathless love. Is it not enough?"

He spake sternly for all that he smiled, and Hallblithe said: "O King, have pity on me!"

"Yea," said the King; "pity thee I do: but I will live despite thy sorrow; my pity of thee shall not slay me, or make thee happy. Even in such wise didst thou pity my daughter."

Said Hallblithe: "Thou art mighty, O King, and maybe the mightiest. Wilt thou not help me?"

"How can I help thee?" said the King, "thou who wilt not help thyself. Thou hast seen what thou shouldst do: do it then and be holpen."

Then said Hallblithe: "Wilt thou not slay me, O King, since thou wilt not do aught else?"

"Nay," said the King, "Thy slaying wilt not serve me nor mine: I will neither help nor hinder. Thou art free to seek thy love wheresoever thou wilt in this my

realm. Depart in peace!"

> Hallblithe saw that the King was angry, though he smiled upon him; yet so coldly, that the face of him froze the very marrow of Hallblithe's bones: and he said within himself: "This King of lies shall not slay me, though mine anguish be hard to bear: for I am alive, and it may be that my love is in this land, and I may find her here, and how to reach another land I know not." (269)

This passage, in speaking of the earthly-love / deathless-love situation in which Hallblithe finds himself, further establishes the relationships discussed above. What is most curious about Hallblithe's situation is that Morris has him reject immediately the land of the Glittering Plain so that the problem confronting Hallblithe is not whether to sacrifice the Hostage's love for that of the Princess but rather how to escape the Acre of the Undying. Hallblithe continually requests death but this is refused him. His death will profit no one. The King, though he may be the King of lies, is neither good nor evil. True, he has lured Hallblithe to his realm by false dreams, but this type of allurement stresses that the King's realm must be seen as the external manifestation of Hallblithe's attempt to find an end to sorrow in the deathless realm of empty images rather than in the world. As the ruler of a principality of the mind, he is subservient to the whole self. His sword, for instance, is deedless (272); he will neither help nor hinder. He merely rules and if one wishes to escape his dominion one must help

oneself; one must act. The individual's death will not profit the King nor will his sorrow slay him. His realm will always exist for those who desire it. So, the problem is merely *how* to act, *how* to escape such a realm so that one may truly find the end of sorrow in the world and not in a realm of false illusions. The King's realm is essentially a lie, since its illusion of happiness is only a mask which conceals the endless sorrow and loneliness of its very daughter, of a concept of beauty unable to escape the deathless world created around it. The Glittering Plain is in this respect the very opposite of Morris' concept of popular art: art allied with life.

Thus, before Hallblithe leaves the Glittering Plain for the first time, the following conversation takes place when he meets the Sea-eagle, who asks him where he is going: "'Away out of this land of lies,' said Hallblithe. The Sea-eagle shook his head, and quoth he: 'Art thou still seeking a dream? And thou so fair that thou puttest all other men to shame.' 'I seek no dream,' said Hallblithe, 'but rather the end of dreams'" (273). Of course, Morris' dream was to restore art to the people, to make it again a part of the world, to remove it from its deadly isolation and once again create a popular art. Indeed, his very concept of the romantic depends on art's connection with humanity, not its domination of it. While this was a dream, it was a dream of escaping from the denial of the beauty of the earth and hence from an essentially false concept of art. Morris said in his lecture, the "Beauty of Life":

> So the matter stands: from the first dawn of history till quite modern times, Art, which Nature meant to solace all, fulfilled its purpose; all men shared in it: that was what made life romantic, as people call it, in those days--that and not robber-barons and inaccessible kings with their hierarchy of serving-nobles and other such rubbish . . . it is strange and perplexing that from those days forward the lapse of time, which, through plenteous confusion and failure, has on the whole been destroying privilege and exclusiveness in other matters, has delivered up art to be the exclusive privilege of a few, and has taken from the people their birthright; while both wronged and wrongers have been wholly unconscious of what they were doing.[5]

Just as art--the people's birthright--has been taken from them, so is the Hostage taken from Hallblithe, whose she is by right of birth and custom. Indeed, Morris felt that it was the "beauty of life" that was meant by the word *art*[6] and fittingly the Hostage is of the House of the Rose.

Before Hallblithe's first attempt to escape the Glittering Plain, he says to the Sea-eagle's damsel: "For abiding here has become irksome to me, and meseemeth that hope is yet alive without the Glittering Plain" (274). She replies: "Yea, and fear also, and worse, if aught be worse" (274). And Hallblithe's first attempt to escape does fail. He finds himself near to death in the Desert of Dread but is saved by those three horsemen

whom first he saw in Cleveland by the Sea. Realizing that to continue is to die, he leads the three back to the Glittering Plain. Why is it that this first escape fails? It seems that though one can enter the Acre of the Undying from the Desert of Dread, one cannot escape through that Desert. One can enter the Treasure of the Sea through Dread because such is the path taken by those seeking to flee the world. It is dread which leads to the denial of the world, to the isolated hoarding of life, to imprisonment within the Glittering Plain. Dread leads only to Death. The three riders are those who have renounced hope and so are led by dread and fear. To be so led is to accept a death-in-life existence in the Acre of the Undying. Thus it is that when Hallblithe and the riders enter the Glittering Plain they do so through a cavern which leads to they wonder where,life or death:

> Hallblithe running forward beheld a great cavern in the face of the cliff at the path's ending: so he turned and cried on his fellows, and they hastened up, and presently stood before that cavern's mouth with doubt and joy mingled in their minds; for now, may-happen, they had reached the gate of the Glittering Plain, or mayhappen the gate of death.
>
> The sad man hung his head and spake: "Doth not some new trap abide us? What do we here? is this aught save death?"
>
> Spake the Elder of Elders: "Was not death on either hand e'en now, even as treason besetteth the king upon his throne?"

> And the second said: "Yea, we were as the host which hath no road save through the multitude of foemen."
>
> But Hallblithe laughed and said: "Why do ye hang back, then? As for me, if death be here, soon is mine errand sped." Therewith he led the way into the dark of the cave, and the ravens hung about the crag overhead croaking, as the men left the light. (284-5)

Here Hallblithe's fearlessness contrasts greatly with the hesitancy of the sorrowful riders. Hallblithe has no dread. He renounces it--much as Ralph renounces despair in the Thirsty Desert--and faces death head-on when his errand demands such a confrontation. The riders never renounce dread and hence will never leave the Glittering Plain but within Hallblithe hope is still alive and thus he will eventually escape.

Hallblithe's hope is reborn by the sight of two ravens in the desert shortly before he discovers the cavern. Morris arranges this meeting in a highly ironic manner, for when the ravens first appear their presence is ominous. The wayfarers are "beset with famine" and very near to the point of death. The ravens seem to forbode death and appear "croaking for the pleasure of the meeting, as though they laughed thereat" (284). But in fact their appearance brings joy to Hallblithe. He falls "to singing an old song of his people" which grimly rejoices in battle and associates the bird of death with the prosperity of the kindred:

Whence are ye and whither; O fowl of our fathers?
What field have ye looked on, what acres unshorn?
What land have ye left where the battle-folk gathers,
And the war-helms are white o'er the paths of the corn?
. . . . . .
O fowl of our fathers, why now are ye resting?
Come over the mountains and look on the foe.
Full fair after fight won shall yet be your nesting;
And your fledglings the sons of the kindred shall know. (284)

These ravens betoken for Hallblithe conflict and change, battle-death and fertility, and thus lead him from Dread to Hope. These tokens of death are the messengers of hope, for conflict and change themselves betoken striving towards a goal.

When Hallblithe re-enters the Glittering Plain he desires still to escape. But the empty existence to which the sorrowful riders who never renounced dread are doomed is apparent when they offer Hallblithe their aid. They speak as if they were still powerful men, as they had been in the world where they were lawyer, captain, and king. The reader, of course, is fully aware that their renewed prowess is totally useless and of service to no one. In the Desert of Dread, feeble as they were, those three were able to save Hallblithe from death but now, ironically, their new strength is imprisoned by that same Desert.

Just as Hallblithe came to the Glittering Plain by following a false vision, so now he escapes by following a true one.

In a dream he sees one whom he first believes to be the Hostage but who becomes the King's daughter (292). However, her countenance is no longer "sick with sorrow; but glad and clear, and most beauteous" (293). She turns a leaf of her book and Hallblithe appears therein sailing swiftly on the sea. Consequently, Hallblithe escapes in a boat which he builds of oak. The vision is quite curious. Having thrown off her sorrow, the Princess furthers Hallblithe's escape but how is it possible that she has done so? If the Sorrowful Princess is regarded as an aspect of Hallblithe himself and that aspect which for a time dominates him, then it may be that his experience in the Desert has had to do with breaking the dominion of sorrow. When first he came to the Glittering Plain, Hallblithe did not do so by himself but was led there by the will of others. However, entering it from the Desert he himself found the Land and led others to it. He had, then, to experience the dread of others and establish his own strength over fear before possessing a will strong enough to destroy once and for all that part of himself which would love only images of the world rather than the world itself. Only by proving the strength of hope over dread even at the point of death can he become fully united with the beauty of the earth. For this reason the Princess' sorrow is ended and the expression of this triumph is that her appearance at first seems to be that of the Hostage. She begins to merge with the beauty of the earth as Hallblithe's strength over dread proves itself.

Hallblithe sails straight to the Isle of Ransom. As if by a magic he cannot deny, he arrives there despite his own desires. But the Puny Fox is now his friend and offers Hallblithe his service, for he desires no longer to serve merely the will of others but to become his own master and Hallblithe's comrade. Puny Fox as wizard can be regarded as the trickster of the imagination. He is the prankster of the mind whose beguilements constantly change the appearance of reality, so that it appears as a dream. Thus, he served the Undying King or that force which would deny the world for its empty image. But Hallblithe, in having conquered that power, has also freed the trickster-imagination so that it desires only to see the earth in its undisguised form. Thus, Puny Fox helps Hallblithe regain the Hostage, or earthly love.

When Hallblithe and the Hostage are finally brought together, both wonder if the other is not a false image and a lie because of the many beguilements which have surrounded them. The Hostage questions Hallblithe:

> "If thou are Hallblithe, tell me what befell to the finger-gold-ring that my mother gave me when we were both but little."
>
> Then his face grew happy, and he smiled, and he said: "I put it for thee one autumntide in the snake's hole in the bank above the river, amidst the roots of the old thorn-tree, that the snake might brood it, and make the gold grow greater; but when winter was over

> and we came to look for it, lo! there was neither ring nor snake, nor thorn-tree: for the flood had washed it all away." (316)

This passage is immediately striking as a parallel to the words of the Sorrowful Princess which employed the metaphor of the ling-worm laid on gold. But here the very same device is used to establish the true identity of the lovers. The obvious difference between the two allusions is that the one refers to horaded gold imprisoning its owner while the other rather humorously refers to the loss of the gold that would be hoarded. And in the latter instance the gold has been lost through the natural cycle of the world. It has literally become a part of the flux of life having been stolen by the river's flow. In a sense, the Hostage's finger-gold-ring is also a treasure of the sea but unlike the Treasure of the Sea it is joined to Nature just as the gold of the earth, the ring of the beauty of the earth, should be a part of the world rather than a ring imprisoning one apart from the earth. Thus in its extreme contrast to the Princess' metaphor, this allusion to hoarded gold establishes the identity of the earthly lovers.

The Story of the Glittering Plain is central to the development of the prose romances. It resembles The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains in that it deals with a Teutonic Folk, and is even more Icelandic in setting than they. The landscape Isle of Ransom certainly derives from Morris'

experience of Iceland. Like Thiodolf and Gold-mane, Hallblithe must be joined to the beauty of the earth before returning to his House and its service. More specifically, he must, like Thiodolf, reject a death-in-life existence before being joined to worldly fertility. He accepts deeds that do not die rather than life at any cost. At the same time, The Story of the Glittering Plain anticipates The Wood beyond the World and The Well at the World's End. Like Walter, Hallblithe follows a vision to a deathless realm in which he must finally reject one concept of beauty which holds another in thrall. And, like Ralph, Hallblithe must prove himself by overcoming the Desert of Dread before final unity is possible.

The Story of the Glittering Plain does not involve the pattern of Witch, Maid, and Wise-woman. The Sorrowful Princess, though she is responsible for the Hostage's captivity is definitely not an evil Sorceress. She herself is the captive of her own desires and, as we have seen, is more complex than the Witch-figure, for she reflects both the Hostage and Hallblithe. Whereas the Witch-figure is entirely opposed to beauty, the Princess represents a mis-application of beauty but eventually comes to merge with the Hostage, thus ending her own captivity. She can be more definitely regarded as an aspect of the hero's imagination than can the evil Sorceress. There is no Wise-woman in The Story of the Glittering Plain but the Puny Fox approaches this figure in that he is largely responsible for the sequence of adventures leading to the hero's

growth and the final unity of his strength with the beauty of the earth.

The main difference between Hallblithe, Thiodolf, Goldmane and Ralph is that Hallblithe is never seen in the aspect of war-god. But when Morris portrays Ralph as such, dealing largely with themes involved in The Story of the Glittering Plain, he creates the mature artist-warrior figure. Thus, The Story of the Glittering Plain can be regarded as a work which in many ways is a unity of the early and late romances.

CHAPTER V

THE WOOD BEYOND THE WORLD

When Golden Walter enters the Wood beyond the World,he finds himself in a land peopled by extraordinary inhabitants. Ruled by the evil Lady, those who dwell in the Wood include her sometime lover, the cruel King's Son; the Dwarf-king, head of the Lady's spy network; and, her thrall, the Maid. How did Walter come to such a land? Well, in a sense, the Wood came to him. Through the arts of either Lady or Maid--it cannot definitely be determined which--the images of these beings appeared to Walter in his native town of Langton on Holm. There he saw "folk passing him toward the gangway" of a tall ship:

> These were three; first came a dwarf, dark-brown of hue and hideous, with long arms and ears exceeding great & dog-teeth that stuck out like the fangs of a wild beast. He was clad in a rich coat of yellow silk, and bare in his hand a crooked bow, and was girt with a broad sax.
>
> After him came a maiden, young by seeming, of scarce twenty summers; fair of face as a flower; grey-eyed, brown-haired, with lips full and red, slim and gentle of body. Simple was her array, of a short and strait green gown, so that on her right ankle was clear to see an iron ring.

> Last of the three was a lady, tall and stately, so radiant of visage and glorious of raiment, that it were hard to say what like she was; for scarce might the eye gaze steady upon her exceeding beauty; . . . as the three passed by him, it seemed to him as if all other folk there about had vanished and were nought; nor had he any vision before his eyes of any looking on them, save himself alone.[1]

If these are dream-images they are those of a waking-dream. Though ordinarily they appear only to Walter, on one occasion his comrade, Arnold, who is with him at the time, also sees these figures and remarks how peculiar it is that no other bystander notices them.

Arnold's awareness of the three can be interpreted in several ways. First, it may be the case that Walter, who called his friend's attention to the three, was, like Yeats' poet-enchanter, casting the images of his imagination onto Arnold. If this is so, then the incident is an illustration of the imagination's ability to create reality around itself. Also, it would argue for Walter's being seen as an artist figure, as one who can transform the reality of others through the strength of his imagination. Alternatively, the incident argues for the existence of these images independent of Walter. They exist in the world as intangible forms projected there by some will beyond themselves and are only truly real and more than real beyond the world. This explanation, implying that these

figures are forms of Truth, of a reality beyond change but which can permeate the changeable world, agrees more with Walter's thoughts on the incident:

> [H]e was thinking and devising if by any means he might find out in what land dwelt those three. And then again he strove to put that from him, saying that what he had seen was but meet for one brainsick, and a dreamer of dreams. But furthermore he thought, Yea, and was Arnold, who this last time has seen the images of those three, a dreamer of waking dreams? for he was nought wonted in such wise; then thought he: At least I am well content that he spoke to me of their likeness, not I to him; for so I may tell that there was at least something before my eyes which grew not out of mine own brain. (10)

Of course, Walter can still be regarded as representative of the artist, for it is he who risks everything in attempting to find the dwelling of those three.

As he attempts to return to Langton on Holm, Walter's ship is blown off course so that he eventually comes to the land wherein lies the Wood beyond the World. Walter meets an old carle who may himself have tried the quest of the Wood years before. When the old man was a stalwart knight, he came to that land and there met another much as Walter meets him. When his predecessor attempted to prevent him from travelling a certain path, the man, who was then young, slew him. Walter asks him, "What came thereof?" "Evil came of it," replies the carle (18).

Walter suspects that that path might lead him to the "wondrous three" but the old carle urges him not to try the adventure, telling him of his own experience: "If I escaped, it was by this, that another woman saved me, and not often shall that befall. Nor wholly was I saved; my body escaped forsooth. But where is my soul? Where is my heart, and my life?" (21). It should not go unnoticed that the old man speaks of "another woman." He must, therefore, have met at least two women during his adventures. Apparently, Walter now has the part of the young man in a ritual which has been going on for any number of years. Those who preceeded him must have failed and retreated to the homestead by the river from whence their journey began, unless they too were playing a role designed for each new seeker. Whichever the case may be, Walter accepts the test--either to return lifeless, souless, and forsaken of fellowship or to re-enter the world heightened in body and soul--and enters the Wood beyond the World.

Soon after Walter entered the Wood, "he heard suddenly, close anigh him, a strange noise of roaring and braying, not very great, but exceeding fierce and terrible, and not like to the voice of any beast that he knew. . . . [H]e turned round towards the noise, . . . and then gave a great cry and tumbled down in a swoon; for close before him, at his very feet, was the dwarf whose image he had seen before, clad in his yellow coat, and grinning up at him from his hideous hairy countenence" (27). The dwarf, in obedience to the Lady's commands, has come

to bring Walter bread, as if the young man were an expected visitor. As he speaks to Walter it becomes obvious that he is obsessed with hatred: "'What! sayest thou of my Lady?--What Lady? O alien, what other Lady is there? And what shall I tell thee of her? it is like that she made me, as she made the Bear men. But she made not the Wretch, the Thing; and she hateth It sorely, as I do. And some day to come--' Thereat he brake off and fell to wordless yelling a long while" (29).

The general relationship discussed above involving wise-woman, maiden, and witch, does not include this dwarf; however, he is accommodated into it easily enough. His grotesque outer form manifests his inner nature. He is extremely brutish, uncontrollably passionate, incoherent and irrational. In contrast to most of Morris' characters, the dwarf possesses a highly repulsive sensuality. This repulsive grotesqueness expresses the lowest element of self, that element of unbridled, unordered urges, of *disharmony* which is repelled by beauty and hates it. Therefore it follows that the dwarf may be not only the Lady's spy but one of her very creations. He is nothing more than an instrument of her will, an extension of herself. The Lady, unlike the witches of The Well at the World's End and The Water of the Wondrous Isles, is in Arnold's words "as lovely as a goddess of the gentiles" (9). But, the dwarf is in his ugliness the manifest form of her inner nature. He belongs to that "disordered abundance" created by the evils of the witch's enchantments.[2] The fact that the dwarf--low, even physically--

speaks of the Maid as the "Thing," and "It," demonstrates that he is dominated by those lusts and selfish desires which are insensible to beauty save as an object secondary to their own requirements. So, considering the dwarf's evil nature and his function as servant to the Lady, all that would be necessary in order to make a place for him in the diagram of basic relationships would be to speak of him as the witch's analogue.

Before discussing Walter's meeting with another creature of the Wood, certain statements made by Morris, again in his lecture, "The Beauty of Life," might provide something of a background against which to consider The Wood beyond the World as a whole. The most striking quality of this work is its conciseness. In a way very unlike Morris' other romances, it is clean and neat. This quality of simplicity about The Wood beyond the World coincides greatly with Morris' ideal of art as he applies it to architecture:

> This simplicity you may make as costly as you please or can, on the other hand: you may hang your walls with tapestry instead of whitewash or paper; or you may cover them with mosaic, or have them frescoed by a great painter: all this is not luxury, if it be done for beauty's sake, and not for show: it does not break our golden rule: *Have nothing in your house which you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.*
>
> All art starts from this simplicity; and the higher the art rises, the greater the simplicity. I

> have been speaking of the fittings of a dwelling-house . . . but when you come to places which people want to make more specially beautiful because of the solemnity or dignity of their uses, they will be simpler still, and have little in them save the bare walls made as beautiful as may be.[3]

This simplicity is found in both the structure and prose style of The Wood beyond the World. For instance, Walter's movements are not so complicated as Ralph's in The Well at the World's End, for he journeys into one dream-realm and out again, and the character-relationships within that realm clearly express its polarities, while passages such as the one below are almost poetic in the economy and significance of their imagery.

When Walter first meets the Maid, the setting is natural and plain. There is nothing overly ornamental or non-essential in the description of the Maid. The scene is pure, much like the Maid whom it describes:

> After he had gone a while and whenas the summer morn was at its brightest, he saw a little way ahead a grey rock rising up from amidst of a ring of oak-trees; so he turned thither straightway; for in this plain land he had seen no rocks heretofore; and as he went he saw that there was a fountain gushing out from under the rock, which ran thence in a fair little stream. And when he had the rock and the fountain and the stream clear before him, lo! a child of Adam sitting beside the fountain under the shadow of the rock. He drew a

> little nigher, and then he saw that it was a woman, clad in green like the sward whereon she lay. She was playing with the welling out of the water, and she had trussed up her sleeves to the shoulder that she might thrust her bare arms therein. . . .
>
> [I]t was the maiden of the thrice-seen pageant. (30)

The colors in this passage are basic, as are most of Morris' colors. The maiden has gray eyes; the rock is gray. It is as if this gray (which must be a positive color for Morris, since all his beautiful women are gray-eyed) is that of twilight and the coming dream. Birdalone of The Water of the Wondrous Isles, has "hawk-grey" eyes:[4] the eyes of vision. And the maiden is clad in green, in common with the raiment of both Ursula and Birdalone. All wear the color of the earth, of life.

Everything about her associates the Maid with life and fertility and links her to the maiden-figure of other works. The Maid is sitting under the shadow of the gray rock surrounded by a ring of oak-trees. This setting is quite pagan, the oak being sacred to the Druids and the Norse. Upon it grew mistle-toe, symbol of eternal life. Birdalone, too, is associated with the oak. She meets Habundia at the Oak of Tryst. Habundia herself wears an oak-wreath. Walter has entered a world of pagan sensuality. The fountain gushes from under the rock; the earth is sexually alive. The Maid plays with the welling water. This throbbing stream might well originate from the same source as

that spring which fills the Well at the World's End. There is nothing careless about this passage, no hint of one hand at the loom while the other holds a pen. Everything in it works to establish the Maid's beauty as the embodiment of that creative sensuality which surrounds her.

What the Maid relates to Walter concerning her present servitude agrees in essence with the experiences of the Lady of Abundance and Birdalone:

> I serve an evil mistress, of whom I may say that scarce I wot if she be a woman or not; but by some creatures is she accounted for a god, and as a god is heried; and surely never god was crueller nor colder than she. Me she hateth sorely . . . . But as things now are, and are like to be, it would not be for her pleasure, but for her pain and loss, to make an end of me, therefore, . . . my mere life is not in peril with her; unless, perchance, some sudden passion get the better of her, and she slay me, and repent of it thereafter. For so it is, that if it be the least evil of her conditions that she is wanton, at least wanton she is to the letter. Many a time hath she cast the net for the catching of some goodly young man; and her latest prey (save it be thou) is the young man . . . by the name of the King's Son. (34)

Like the other witch-mistresses this one is cruel and cannot, without loss to herself, slay the maiden. But, unlike them, she

is "the wonder of all Beauties of the World" (34-5), and carries her purpose to a point of further development. This last is puzzling, because she does not use the maiden as a lure for her prey; her own beauty is enough for that. Also, there is no wise-woman present who may directly free the maiden, though such a figure is indirectly present.

In order to understand the most significant variation from the basic pattern in The Wood beyond the World, something must be known of the Maid's past. At their first meeting she says to Walter: "Thou hast cast thy love upon one who will be true to thee, whatsoever may befall; yet is she a guileful creature, and might not help it her life long, and now for thy very sake must needs be more guileful now than ever before" (36-7). The source of the Maid's guile which is innocent inasmuch as her cunning alone enables her to escape the witch--has its roots in her past. Here appears the wise-woman, in a place where the Maid lived before being brought to the Wood. She tells Walter, after the two have escaped, that in this place "amongst all these unfriends is a friend to me; an old woman, who telleth me sweet tales of other life, wherein all is high and goodly, . . . she setteth hope in my heart and learneth me, and maketh me to know much . . . O much . . . so that at least I am grown wise, and wise to be mighty if I durst" (86). The wisdom taught her by the wise-woman proves her salvation when brought to the Wood. She goes on thus:

> [I]n spite of my past dreams, or it may be because of them, I had not lost the wisdom which the old woman had erst learned me, and for more wisdom I longed. . . . For at first my Mistress was indeed wayward with me, but as any great lady might be with her bought thrall . . . . But so it was . . . that she came to know that I also had some of the wisdom whereby she lived her queenly life. That was about two years after I was first her thrall, and three weary years have gone by since she began to see in me the enemy of her days . . . . At last she set her servant, the Dwarf, upon me . . . . [W]ith all this her hatred grew, and whiles raged within her so furiously that it over-mastered her fear, and at such times she would have put me to death if I had not escaped her by some turn of my lore. (86-7)

So, the Maid was taught lore by a wise-woman, and it did prove to be of great help; however, unlike the other maidens, the Maid found it impossible to escape the witch until the hero had come to the land beyond the World.

The presence of the King's Son in the land of the Maid's captivity creates still another variation from the pattern. Of the King's son the Maid says: "he hath no bowels of compassion; but is a dastard, who for an hour's pleasure would undo me, and thereafter would stand by smiling and taking my mistress's pardon with good cheer, while for me would be no pardon" (35). Obviously, the King's Son is among those who would exploit the

maiden's beauty to serve their own desires.

Thus far, then, the variations from the basic pattern are these: first, the maiden's evil mistress is of wondrous beauty; secondly, though the Maid has learned wisdom from a wise-woman figure, that was any number of years ago and she remains a thrall; thirdly, the witch-figure has a lover; and finally, the maiden cannot effect her own escape but must await the presence of a deliverer, perhaps because the dwarf must be killed. Another curious statement is that made by the Maid when telling Walter of her past: "If I be wholly of the race of Adam I wot not; nor can I tell thee how many years old I may be" (85). Could this maiden have been the other woman alluded to by the old man, she who saved him in his youth?

These variations and this last question are not sufficient, however, to force a reconsideration of the forces represented by wise-woman, maiden, and witch. The lore-master is the same source of positive, liberating wisdom whose influence is present indirectly. The Maid shares with her sisters the attribute of creative beauty, while the Lady, though beautiful, is cruel and selfish like the other witches. The dwarf is merely an instrument of the witch's destructive will, and her lover, the King's Son, is but another of her thralls. However, the variations do effect a change in emphasis. For Walter is caught in the middle of these people and their strange land and he must do what he can to find his place there. Thus, the emphasis lies on Walter's attempt to find himself, caught as he is between

Lady and Maid. The entire situation has about it an element of show, a pageant staged for him who is chosen to be lured into it. Knowing neither the maiden's age, nor the nature of her being, the reader cannot tell how many young men like Walter she may have met, though she does say to Walter: "somewhat more than a year ago hither to this land came the King's Son, the second goodly man, as though art the third, whom her sorceries have drawn hither since I have dwelt here" (87). Whatever the case may be, those others have failed to free the Maid; it is now Walter's turn.

Before Golden Walter meets the Lady, he happens upon her Hall. This progression of Walter's steps allows a certain importance to be attached to Morris' description of the Hall before it is overshadowed by the Lady's dazzling beauty. Just before sunset, after his meeting with the Maid in the bright morning, Walter sees the gleaming Hall:

> [P]resently there was clear before him a most goodly house builded of white marble, carved all about with knots & imagery, & the carven folk were all painted of their lively colours, whether it were their raiment or their flesh, and their housings wherein they stood all done with gold and fair hues. Gay were the windows of the house; and there was a pillared porch before the great door, with images betwixt the pillars both of men and beasts: and when Walter looked up to the roof of the house, he saw that it gleamed and shone;

> for all the tiles were of yellow metal, which he deemed to be of very gold. . . .
>
> Now he entered it by the porch, and came into a hall many-pillared, and vaulted over, the walls painted with gold and ultramarine, the floor dark, and spangled with many colours, and the windows glazed with knots and pictures. Midmost thereof was a fountain of gold, whence the water ran two ways in gold-lined runnels, spanned twice with little bridges of silver. . . . [T]hen he looked up toward the high-seat, and himseemed that a great light shone thence, and dazzled his eyes; and he went on a little way, and then fell on his knees; for there before him on the high-seat sat that wondrous Lady. (38-9)

This setting is most striking in its contrast to that wherein the maiden was found. That setting was natural, bright with the sun, and simple; this is artificial, dark but gleaming with gold, and luxurious. Aptly enough, this hall is named the Golden House. Its pillars, which are abundant, are surely meant to be phallic. The description is sensual but that being described is a dead, frozen sensuality meant to coincide with the barren lusts and wantonness of the Lady. The Lady hems herself with cold, stone phalli but the Maid plays amidst a ring of living, green oak-trees. Here too, midmost of the pillars, lies a fountain. But this fountain does not gush or well; its waters simply run their restricted course, for this fountain is of gold. Its creative sensuality has through artifice been destroyed and enslaved.

The contrast between naturalness and artifice apparent in these two scenes strongly recalls what Morris said of luxury and simplicity in the lecture so often referred to especially where he spoke of luxury:

> Once more I say that the greatest foe to art is luxury, art cannot live in its atmosphere.
>
> When you hear of the luxuries of the ancients, you must remember that they were not like our luxuries, they were rather indulgence in pieces of extravagant folly than what we to-day call luxury; which perhaps you would rather call comfort: well I accept the word. . . .
>
> But some, I know, think that the attainment of these very comforts is what makes the difference between civilization and uncivilization, that they are the essence of civilization. Is it so indeed? Farewell my hope then!--I had thought that civilization meant the attainment of peace and order and freedom, of goodwill between man and man, of the love of truth and the hatred of injustice, and by consequence the attainment of the good life which these things breed, a life free from craven fear, but full of incident: that was what I thought it meant, not more stuffed chairs and more cushions, and more carpets and gas, and more dainty meat and drink--and therewithal more and sharper differences between class and class.

> If that be what it is, I for my part wish I were well out of it, and living in a tent in the Persian desert, or a turf hut on the Iceland hill-side. But however it be, and I think my view is the true view, I tell you that art abhors that side of civilization, she cannot breath in the houses that lie under its stuffy slavery.[5]

The conflict found in The Well at the World's End between the Burg-dwellers and the Lord of Utterbol on the one hand, and the children of the Bear--the downsmen--and the Bull tribe on the other is but an extended development of the conflict between luxury and simplicity in which the fate of art is at stake. The forces of luxury and enslavement in The Well at the World's End, The Wood beyond the World, and The Water of the Wondrous Isles, with its island ruled by the witch-queen, are but expressions of the witch's power, while those of simplicity and nature are the wise-woman's allies.

That the Lady is stunningly beautiful, and the Maid, having long ago been under the wise-woman's tutelage, is possessed of a power of her own--a fact which causes the Lady to regard her as the Enemy--creates a situation of fairly well established relationships among those who dwell in the Wood. Walter enters the Wood entirely new to its surroundings and must, in effect, commit himself either to the Lady or the Maid. It is the Lady's goddess-like beauty that creates the difficulty of choice. It is doubtful, considering the careful construction of this work,

that no significance can be attached to Golden Walter's having come upon the Lady in the Golden House. Unlike Morris' other heroes, Walter comes of a merchant family, so that the House might possibly represent his inherited values. From such an interpretation, a socialist reading could easily follow, especially given the conflict between luxury and simplicity that runs through this tale and Morris' relation of it to class conflict. However, Morris' concern for the fate of art, though inseparable from his political thinking, is always his primary concern. Another possibility is that Golden House represents Walter's mental dwelling place, that is, his state of mind up to the point in his life at which he enters the Wood. Yet, this interpretation, like the other, restricts the tale's scope. The overriding argument against them--though not necessarily a contradiction or exclusion of them--arises from the fact that this realm does not lie merely within Walter's mind. What remains is the argument that the things of the Wood are of the Eternal Forms of that core Imagination--not the individual "imagination"--which emanates itself through, indeed conjures, reality. Thus, the names "Golden Walter" and "Golden House" serve to emphasize the possibility of Walter's choosing to become a servant of this House, of choosing to allow dominance of the negative force-forms of the Imagination and hence becoming in himself essentially destructive, like the King's Son. In effect, if Golden Walter chooses to serve the Golden House, then the Maid remains a thrall to sterile gold. Ultimately, if Walter chooses

the Lady rather than the Maid, he is imprisoning himself, even as the Mistress tells him: "it hath not entered into thine heart to flee from us; and to say sooth, that is well for thee, for flee away from our hand thou mightest not, nor mightest thou depart without our furtherance" (47).

The difficulty of Walter's choice, or rather of carrying out his original commitment to the Maid, is augmented by the continually deceptive nature of reality in the Wood beyond the World. Walter's puzzlement as to the Lady's true nature shows itself in the passage below:

> [H]e deemed her indeed a marvel of women, and wellnigh forgat all his doubts and fears concerning her, whether she were a fair image fashioned out of lies and guile, or it might be but an evil thing in the shape of a goodly woman. Forsooth, when he saw her caressing the dear and friendly Maid, his heart all turned against her, despite what his eyes and his ears told his mind, and she seemed like as it were a serpent enfolding the simplicity of the body which he loved.
>
> But now it was all changed, and he lay on the grass and longed for her coming. (53)

Here should be noted the phrase which speaks of the "simplicity" of the Maid's body. As this passage continues, the reader finds that the Mistress, too, wears a green gown, as before she wore "a coat of white linen." These are the same colors worn by the Maid. Mere outward appearance does not, then, allow Walter

to differentiate greatly between Mistress and Maid.

Further complications involving similarity of appearance arise out of two passages remarkably alike. The first occurs when Walter meets the Lady on the day of their love-making. He "had scarce gone three steps ere he saw a woman coming towards him from down-stream. His heart came into his mouth when he saw her, for she stooped and reached down her arm, as if she would lay her hand on her ankle, so that at first he deemed it had been the Maid, but at the second eye-shot he saw that it was the Mistress" (63-4). The next occurs in the chapter immediately following Walter's adventure in the pleasure-garden. He awoke to find both Lady and garden vanished; "but presently he went his ways and crossed the stream, but had scarce come up on to the grass on the further side, ere he saw a woman coming to meet him, and at first, full as he was of the tide of yesterday and the wondrous garden, deemed that it would be the Lady; but the woman stayed her feet, and, stooping, laid a hand on her right ankle, and he saw that it was the Maid" (67).

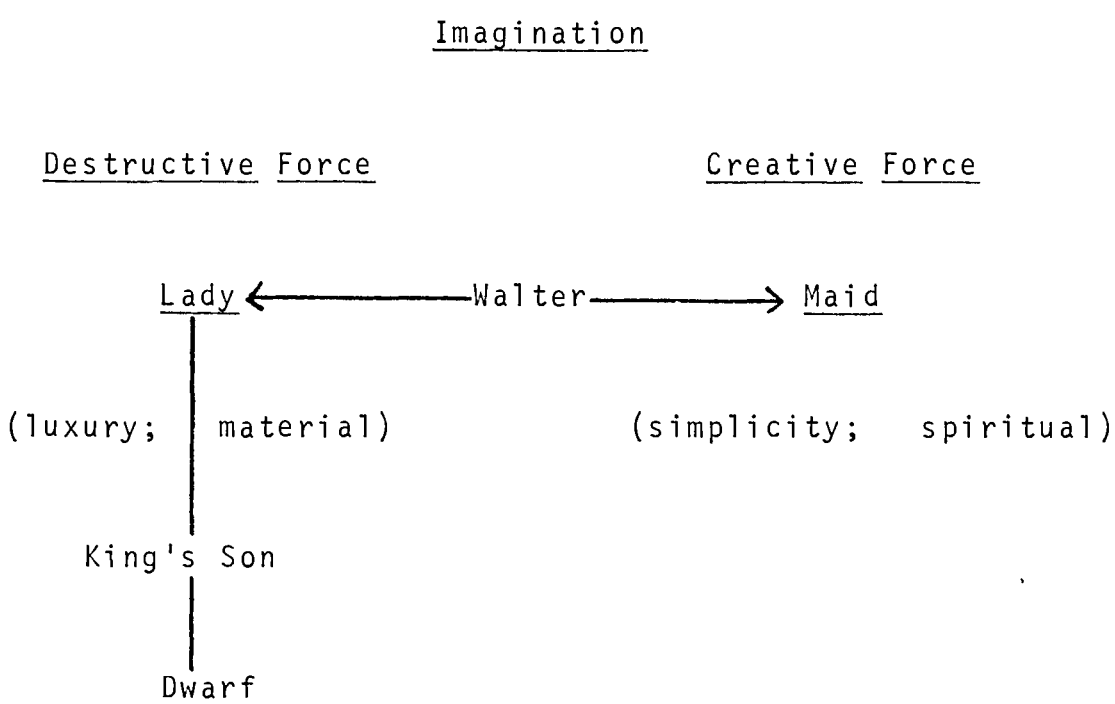
One suggestion that might explain these scenes which establish parallels between Mistress and Maid is that the Maid is the Lady's anti-self,somewhat as Habundia is Birdalone's "other-self." Or, perhaps the Mistress is that which the Maid is in danger of becoming, as the King's Son is what Walter might become. Another possibility is that the Maid and the Lady are but two forms--the one true, the other false--of a core Reality.

A basic problem lies in the fact that the work is narrated from an historical perspective. The narrator never steps in to explain what is and what is not real. Of course, it may be said that the Maid is true, the Lady false. But then how does one explain the incident of the lion? The Maid denies sending it; yet, the hero does not appear fully convinced, probably because he does not understand the purpose of the illusion. What could have been the Lady's motive in creating the lion? What would she gain by creating a false "Enemy?" It could be said that the Lady consciously created the lion in order to ensure that Walter's sympathies were with her rather than with the Maid; however, this argument does not explain the greatness of the Mistress' terror. Answers to these many questions will be suggested later in my discussion.

But first another problem must be dealt with which arises from trying to determine the Maid's connection with the Wood beyond the World. She may well be a sacred form while a virgin. On her wedding night she must lose her magical abilities, probably because once her virginity is lost she ceases to live a "death in life": she loses her self-contained, changeless state and must enter the *world* of birth and death. She could no longer be of those *beyond* the world of change. But then, how did she originally enter the land beyond the world? She was captured by the Dwarf, by the figure of ugliness, disharmony, and base passions. Why can she not flee the Wood? Because her connection with the Dwarf--who is after all, the connecting

force between Lady and Maid--cannot be broken except by Walter's sword, for even with the Lady dead, the Dwarf lives to carry out revenge. Furthermore, why must Walter make love to the Lady? And why does the Lady kill herself thinking she has killed Walter? Did she truly love him?

These questions can best be answered by referring back to my general pattern. Certain things must be remembered in forming a new diagram to suit this particular work. They are: one, that the Wood beyond the World is the realm of the Imagination, so that the diagram should be seen as containing all of its elements within a whole; two, that the Maid is a figure whose power already subsumes the wise-woman's wisdom, and hence is an expression of it; and three, that Walter is strange to the Wood and must choose between its forces. The elements of the Wood can be diagrammed thus:



Now it can be seen that the Lady is the Maid's anti-self. Both are elements of a central Reality but belong to opposite forces within that reality. Both are expressions of essential forces but the essence of those forces is not the same. The essence of the Lady, representing the dominance of the material world, is illusion and falseness. The Maid's essence is that of beauty uncorrupted by artifice and, as such, her essence is truth. The above discussion of Walter's first meeting of the Maid and the Mistress supports the conclusion that the Maid must be accepted as positive and the mistress as negative.

The Lady's creation of the lion-illusion underscores her self-destructive nature. The lion is an aggressive; destructive, bestial force. The Lady may very well have failed to recognize the lion as the product of her own imagination; hence, the convincing quality of her fear. Her Enemy is of her own creation; thus, the product of her imagination becomes a creature of the Enemy. At the same time, it is true that the Maid seeks the Lady's destruction. However, if the Mistress had not subjected her to the tortures of the Dwarf this would not have been the case. Again, out of her own fear she created the Maid as Enemy and thus subjected her to the force of disharmony as expressed through the totally unreasonable, chaotic passions of the Dwarf. When this force expresses itself in the world, only physical force can destroy it; consequently, the Dwarf dies by Walter's sword.

When Walter enters the Garden of Pleasure, he immerses himself entirely in the material world. That his pleasures there

were in their essence empty is shown by what happens when he awakes. He finds himself alone, for the Lady has left him and the wondrous garden quickly disappears. Though his sensual pleasure may not have been illusory, it had nothing within it to carry it beyond the immediate sensation. It was momentarily true, but essentially false, because it was an illusory creation. This sort of pleasure, sensual and nothing more, has no result but emptiness. In effect, the Lady's Garden of Pleasure belies its name for, like all her creations, it is a Garden of Barrenness. The seed sown in the Mistress' garden will never grow. There is no question here whatsoever of fidelity or infidelity as a moral issue. Walter, perhaps like Arthur of The Water of the Wondrous Isles, had to have intercourse with the witch. It was entirely necessary that he experience to its fullest the world of form-without-substance so that he might become completely aware of its barrenness. Only with this awareness might Walter recoil from the primarily material sphere, from the Golden House, to become one with her who makes withered roses blossom at her touch. It is for this reason that the Maid--so like yet so unlike the Mistress--meets Walter on the morning after his pleasure. Only after he has become aware of emptiness can Walter, through the Maid's furtherance, leave the Wood; hence, only then does the Maid arrange the fatal tryst. It is fitting that the Dwarf, the Lady's inner-nature, becomes the instrument of the Mistress' destruction.

The scene of the witch's death brings together all the elements of her self-destructive being, which fulfills itself in suicide. The Maid describes the scene to Walter thus:

> [P]resently she came stealing in softly, holding a lamp in one hand and a knife in the other. . . . She held the lamp up above her head before she drew near to the bed-side, and I heard her mutter: She is not there then! but she shall be taken. Then she went up to the bed and stooped over it, and laid her hand on the place where I had lain; and therewith her eyes turned to that false image of thee lying there, and she fell a-trembling and shaking, and the lamp fell to the ground and was quenched. . . . But she uttered a noise like the low roar of a wild beast, and I saw her arm and hand rise up, and the flashing of the steel beneath the hand, and then down came the hand and the steel, and I went nigh to swooning lest perchance I had wrought over well, and thine image were thy very self. The dastard died without a groan: why should I lament him? I cannot. But the Lady drew him toward her,and snatched the clothes from off his shoulders and breast, and fell a-gibbering sounds mostly without meaning, but broken here and there with words. Then I heard her say: 'I shall forget; I shall forget; and the new days shall come.' Then was there silence of her a little, and thereafter she cried out in a terrible voice: '0 no, no, no! I cannot

> forget; I cannot forget;' and she raised a great wailing cry that filled all the night with horror . . . and caught up the knife from the bed and thrust it into her breast, and fell down a dead heap over the bed and on to the man whom she had slain. (92-5)

With the failing of the witch's lamp, her immortal nature fails. She degenerates progressively: first, like the lion, she lets out a "low roar"; then, like the Dwarf, she falls a-gibbering sounds without meaning. Finally, realizing that she possesses no regenerative powers, she takes up the knife from the bed, the phallic knife, and, consumed by her passions, slays herself. With remarkable neatness this death scene connects all the essential relationships of the book.

At last, having escaped "death in life"[6] by entering the world of change, the Maid, completely in harmony with Nature, brings through her will abundance to the people of the Bear. To the Bear-folk she is a goddess, but in giving herself to Walter, the Maid enters wholly the world of men. At this point, she loses her god-like magical powers and becomes of secondary strength, equal to Walter, as she was not amongst the Bears. For, in the mortal world, unlike the realm of the force-forms of the Imagination, conflicts between the creative and destructive wills must often be settled with the edge of a sword.

When Walter becomes the King of Stark-wall, he proves to be a great warrior and a generous ruler. At the time of his death, it could not be said that "the needy lamented him; for no needy had he left in his own land" (128). Yet, Walter's

final career ends differently from that of most of Morris' heroes inasmuch as he does does not return to Langton to rule. Though he does have dealings in Langton, they are not described in any detail. In a sense, he seems never to have fully re-entered the world of Commerce. Morris' failure to depict Walter's dealings in Langton leaves the reader with a certain sense of incompleteness. The questions that one desires to have answered are: "Did Walter ever avenge his father's death?" "Did he ensure the prosperity of his House?" I believe that the implied answer to both these questions is "Yes"; Walter does become an artist-warrior figure capable of transfiguring the world with his sword as the Maid transfigured the roses with her touch, but it is in The Well at the World's End that this type of hero is portrayed in all his glory.

CHAPTER VI

THE WELL AT THE WORLD'S END

Probably the best work done to date on Morris' prose romances and specifically on The Well at the World's End is that of Norman Talbot in his essay, "Women and Goddesses in the Romances of William Morris."[1] Not only does he perform the much needed task of chastising the typically irresponsible and condescendingly summary manner with which most critics have dismissed the prose romances, he also brings to light for serious consideration a pattern perceptible throughout Morris' work. However, though Talbot refers to F.A.C. Wilson's study of The Well at the World's End in Yeats's Iconography, he fails to acknowledge Wilson's statement that "the image of the virgin escaping from slavery (sometimes slavery to a terrible old woman) occurs with compulsive frequency in Morris's romances."[2] This statement was made as a note to a section in his text which reads: "This is the meeting with the virgin, and, if Morris intends it primarily in a naturalistic sense, it also helps Ralph to a 'reintegration of the soul' and makes possible the fulfilment of his quest. So also when Ursula escapes from a life of degradation, a reader sympathetic to Jungian thought might understand an image of man's changing view of woman, as he dispenses with her terrible in favour of her virginal aspect."[3] Talbot criticizes Wilson's diction saying

that "Morris, of course, would not have been impressed by such terms."[4] The same might be said of Talbot's own diction which is predominantly Jungian.

Talbot is cautious not to constrain Morris' work within too rigid a pattern; nevertheless, he does arrive at a pattern which he speaks of from a Jungian perspective. Talbot defines his terms as follows:

> With such works as Shelley's Alastor in mind, I use "anima" to represent the externalised feminine aspects of the hero's character, which he has to marry to reach any self-fulfilment. This is not a process I am fathering upon Morris, as is made clear in the late poem "Goldilocks and Goldilocks," where both the hero and the heroine are named Goldilocks. The anima may take one or both of two forms, "archetype" and "emanation." The first is primordial, dark and dangerous, working as a goddess or demigoddess beyond the normal human judgments of moral goodness or evil (although the hero often has to make these judgments); the second is the female human counterpart of the hero, or becomes so, and is neither too powerful nor too ambiguous for him . . . . However, since the archetype is primordial (and basically tribal) the emanation is not only a more personalised development of the anima but is also probably dependent upon the dangerous archetype for her *mana* or power. Although the archetype can always be

dangerous, some are more fully negative and some primarily positive archetypes.[5]

The problem with these terms is that though they can provide a conceptual framework which will allow one to regard The Well at the World's End from the viewpoint of twentieth-century personality analysis, they are out of touch with Morris' own theories of art and its place in "the world of living men." It is not Talbot's perceptiveness with which I must sometimes disagree below but rather the limitations of the system out of which his essay is written. This Jungian system is entirely too subjective and is therefore just as limiting in its own way as the entirely too objective Socialistic perspective of Jessie Kocmonova's work on Morris.

"I am the ancient apple-queen; as once I was so am I now;
For evermore a hope unseen; betwixt the blossom and the bough."

- from the Pamona Tapestry of 1885[6]

The Well at the World's End,[7] like The Wood beyond the World and The Water of the Wondrous Isles, contains the pattern of Wise-woman, Maid, and Witch. This relationship is most explicitly apparent in the history of the Lady of Abundance. The Lady was raised by an evil Sorceress apart from the "world of living men" in a hut beyond the Wall of the World. The setting of her early life immediately suggests that she is an archetypal figure, a being living in a realm of experience different from that of ordinary men. She says to Ralph: "I cannot tell where I was born nor of what lineage, nor who were

my father and mother; for this I have not known of myself, nor has any told me" (XVIII, 149). She may well be of the Faery, as Richard the Red suggests, rather than of the race of Adam. She grew up close to and in harmony with Nature, for "the wild things, even to the conies and fawns" (XVIII, 150), loved her as she in turn loved them. Of her daily task she says: "I had to lead our goats to pasture in the wood-lawns, and must take with me rock and spindle, and spin so much of flax or hair as the woman gave me, or be beaten" (XVIII, 150-1). Her situation is much akin to that of Birdalone and the Maid. She is the beautiful virgin in harmony with Nature but under the dominion of an evil Sorceress who certainly will not permit her to go free into the world.

Nothing in the Lady's situation excludes it from my previous interpretation of the significance of this relationship. It does not demand a political interpretation, especially since the Lady does not exist in an industrial society. Morris does, however, in the course of the Lady's history, give the reader complementary insight into the nature of the Sorceress's evil. He has the Lady describe a singular incident of terror:

> "At last one day of late summer when I, now of some fifteen summers, was pasturing the goats not far from the house, the sky darkened, and there came up so great a storm of thunder and lightning, and huge drift of rain, that I was afraid,and being so near to the house, I hastened thither, driving the goats, and when I had tethered them in the shed of the croft,

> I crept trembling up to the house, and when I was at the door, heard the clack of the loom in the weaving-chamber, and deemed that the woman was weaving there, but when I looked, behold there was no one on the bench, though the shuttle was flying from side to side, and the shed opening and changing, and the sley coming home in due order. Therewithal I heard a sound as of one singing a song in a low voice, but the words I could not understand: then terror seized on my heart, but I stepped over the threshold, and as the door of the chamber was open, I looked aside and saw therein the woman sitting stark naked on the floor with a great open book before her, and it was from her mouth that the song was coming: grim she looked, and awful . . . .
>
> I stood for one moment afraid beyond measure . . . then I ran back into the storm, though it was now wilder than ever, and ran and hid myself in the thicket of the wood, half-dead with fear, and wondering what would become of me." (XVIII, 151)

The super-human power driving this loom is demonic. It is invoked through the Witch's song. If steam or electricity is substituted for magic as the driving power, the loom becomes a machine, and specifically, a power-loom.

The polarities in the above situation are clear. The Lady represents beauty in harmony with Nature. The Sorceress

is the embodiment of materialism; she is the Materialist raised to a symbolic level. Later, it will be seen that the Burg of the Four Friths, Cheaping Knowe, and Utterbol are extensions of her power. The Sorceress worships the powers behind the machine: satanic powers invoked through the spells of her *grimoire*. To these powers the Sorceress sacrifices the Lady's pet goat--a creature of the pastoral world--and threatens to sacrifice the maiden herself should she again interfere. I do not say that the Lady is involved in the Machine Age, but rather that she is here a symbol of natural beauty and innocence as it suffers under the dominion of such as will one day worship the Machine. And the maiden wonders pitifully what will become of her, just as Morris wondered what would become of beauty under the thunder of the machine.

It is well known that Morris was greatly influenced by Ruskin's theories. "On the Nature of Gothic and the Role of the Workman Therein," from Ruskin's The Stones of Venice, was published by the Kelmscott Press in February, 1892. Morris felt that mechanical labor was by its very nature detrimental to both art and society because of its directly negative effect on the worker who himself becomes mechanized by being alienated from his creative self. Ray Watkinson explains Morris' feelings on this subject:

> The worker at bench or loom must put something of himself into his work, and as constantly draw upon his work for the renewal of that self. This was to

> Morris of the deepest importance, and the failure of industrial production to take this into account was a large part of his quarrel with the use of machinery and the social system within which it was used. He detested the overwhelming reduction of the man to the status of a part of the machine; nor did he delude himself that this only happened when actual power-driven mechanisms were employed; handicraft, mechanically used, could do as much to reduce the human status of the craftsman turning him into a mere 'hand'.[8]

It is only fitting that the Lady's terror and sense of loss should have been caused by her introduction to the satanically driven power-loom. Significantly, the Sorceress' machine is a loom, for Morris' designs were typically at odds with the machine. The Hammersmith carpets were hand-woven by special weavers from Spitalfields who were employed out of necessity, "hand-weaving having become obsolete in England since the Industrial Revolution and Cartwright's power-loom, patented in the same year as Watt's steam-engine."[9]

It is quite compatible with Morris' theories on Art to equate the Lady's beauty, which is in harmony with Nature, with creative-spiritual energies, and the Sorceress' tyranny, which attempts to thwart Nature, with destructive-material energies. A similar equation is made by Morris in his lecture "The Lesser Arts," delivered in 1877. Here he says: "For, and this is at the root of the whole matter, everything made

by man's hands has a form, which must be either beautiful or ugly; beautiful if it is in accord with Nature, and helps her; ugly if it is discordant with Nature, and thwarts her."[10] That the Sorceress attempts to thwart Nature is apparent in her murderous rage over the Lady's meeting with the Knight who loves her. After this meeting, which signals the Lady's sensual awakening, the Sorceress attempts to kill her but is killed herself instead. Of course, the rage is also brought on by the sight of the token of the Seeker now worn by the Lady, marking her as the enemy of materialism.

In his lecture Morris goes on to say of the popular arts:

> Now if the objection be made, that these arts have been the handmaids of luxury, of tyranny, and of superstition, I must needs say that it is true in a sense; they have been so used, as many other excellent things have been. But it is also true that, among some nations, their most vigorous and freest times have been the very blossoming-times of art: while at the same time, I must allow that these decorative arts have flourished among oppressed peoples, who have seemed to have no hope of freedom: yet I do not think that we shall be wrong in thinking that at such times, among such peoples, art, at least, was free; when it has not been, when it has really been gripped by superstition, or by luxury, it has straightway begun to sicken under that grip.[11]

Needless to say, throughout The Well at the World's End, the Lady of Abundance and Ursula--the principles of Beauty--come under the grip of luxury, tyranny, and--as seen in the Maid-Witch relationship--superstition.

The Lady is finally freed from the Sorceress by the wisdom *and the knife* given her by the old carline, or wise-woman. The wise-woman appears to her "on a day of May-tide" (XVIII, 156) when the earth is blossoming. She sees the Lady lying naked amongst her goats as if "a goddess come back from yore agone" (XVIII, 153). The carline teaches her the wisdom of the world, "of its fairness and its foulness; of life and death, and desire and disappointment, and despair" (XVIII, 158). This wisdom changes the Maiden from a passive servant to a seeker anxious to enter the world. She learns wisdom enough to conquer her fear of her mistress (XVIII, 159), to overcome superstition, and thus finally to slay her with the carline's knife. In effect, the Lady's beauty is, through wisdom, freed from its primordial servitude to superstition and hence enabled to enter the world of men.

At this point, the weaknesses involved in Norman Talbot's approach to The Well at the World's End might be examined. He writes: "The Lady was once emanation, and chose the *mana* of the lore-mistress rather than the witch."[12] Now, using his own definitions, the following questions might be asked: What, in the absence of a hero, is the Lady an emanation of? Of whose "anima" is she a part? Of whose "anima" do the archetypes form

a part? Are both the lore-mistress and the Sorceress, or "terrible mother," archetypes, and of the same "anima"? The only hero present--and he only twice--is the knight who finally takes the Lady with him from the Sorceress's hut to the Land of Tower. This knight is simply not a figure of sufficient importance to justify saying that Witch, Maid, and Wise-woman represent the externalised aspects of his character. Besides, all these figures exist before the knight is even present in the Lady's history. To say that the Lady is "emanation" at this point removes her from the position of central importance in her own history. Indeed, these questions are of such magnitude that, unless Talbot's system can account for them, they make his entire approach to The Well at the World's End of dubious value.

The Lady is an extremely ambiguous figure. As her childhood illustrates, she is good in herself. Her name, like her childhood, suggests that she be regarded as a fertility figure similar to Wood-Sun, the Maid, and Habundia. Yet, she is continually surrounded not by fertility but by conflict. When she comes to the Land of the Tower, war between father and son breaks out and lasts for years. Her enemies regard her as an evil sorceress. Her husband, finally assuming the throne, gives her all power. She has no children, for they have died in the course of the conflict. Finally, her husband dead, she is summoned by the wise-woman to join her in the Well-quest.

Not long after she leaves the Land of Tower, its people destroy themselves through their own greediness and their land becomes desert.

Eventually, after achieving the Well, she joins the Dry Tree and becomes the Lady of the Land of Abundance. Her power amongst the Dry Tree is, however, undermined by their evil Queen. Even in the Land of Abundance, where she is worshipped by the men, her presence causes fear and jealousy in the women. She marries the Knight of the Sun, who both lusts after her and curses her. In fact, in all her relationships it is not harmony but disharmony that surrounds her.

The connection between the Lady of Abundance and the Dry Tree should not be overlooked. The men of Dry Tree are strong-thieves who attack not only the Burg-men but also the lands of the Abbot of Higham-on-the-Way and the peaceful shepherds of the Downs. Ferocious warriors, their armory is that tree of death which stands on the path to the Well. They are ruled by the wicked Queen of Hampton, yet they worship the Lady of Abundance.They are an ambiguous Fellowship. Their token is a deadly one, though it also implies potentiality. The Fellowship of the Dry Tree haunts the Wood Perilous, that Wood between Higham and the Burg of the Four Friths. As long as the Dry Tree remains unable to destroy the Burg-men, it will be incapable of blossoming.

The Dry Tree's impotence may come of its inability to unite physical strength with creative beauty. The strength of

its warriors is neither entirely destructive nor creative, for it is directed by two powers and seems to be split into factions by them. On the one hand their strength serves the Lady, but on the other it serves a "fierce and hard woman" (XVIII, 193), its older Queen, who is full of "anger and malice" (XVIII, 193) and also far stronger than the Lady. The Queen's destructive power undermines that of the Lady, so that the Dry Tree cannot come into harmony with the creative beauty of Nature; consequently, the Lady remains without the physical strength needed to make her beauty manifest.

The Lady's situation not long before her death is typical of her relationships throughout her life. Her husband, the Knight of the Sun, and his closest friend, Walter the Black, are fighting over her. She herself desires neither the Baron, nor Walter. She was long ago "compelled" to marry the Baron of Sunway, not, strangely enough, by force but by the ardour of his suit. The Baron lusts after her, but at the same time hates her, for Walter, whose love the Lady would not accept, has told him that she is a sorceress and has many lovers. One cannot help but look at the situation in symbolic terms. It is proper that the fertility-goddess be married to the Sun, the giver of life. Yet, the Lady's situation is perverse and infertile, there being no harmony between her and the elemental powers of Light and Darkness. Of course, if the Sun loves too dearly the abundance of the earth, he will consume it in fire. As it happens, the Knight of the Sun, mad with jealousy, slays

the Lady. His possessive lust results in her death.

The Lady's beauty never truly blossoms in the world but remains always of the Wilderness. Her lovers are singularly affected by their love. Her first husband's strength consumes itself in war, the Knight of the Sun goes mad with jealousy and the Captain of the Dry Tree becomes a wild-man. Too powerful, too abundant, her beauty envelops its lovers in a passionate wilderness. However, the Lady is not at fault, for the madness of her lovers is the result of their love of her beauty for its own sake. Love of beauty for itself alone leads to a wilderness of futility and madness. It is significant that the Lady did not achieve the Well with a man, for had she done so her beauty would have had its counterpart in strength.

The danger of Ralph's love for the Lady is that her beauty might prove too powerful for him, that he might remain in its wilderness unable to escape. Entirely infatuated with the Lady's beauty, Ralph is never her equal as he is Ursula's. His love-making with the Lady is a momentary unity with super-human beauty. She leads Ralph "into the Seventh Heaven" (XVIII, 140), into an unearthly sphere. She takes him into "broad daylight" even though the sun has not yet risen (XVIII, 141) and they make love in "a cleared grassy place where were great grey stones lying about, as if it had been the broken doom-ring of a forgotten folk" (XVIII, 142). The unnatural light and the grey stones indicate--as they do in other romances--that Ralph has entered a mystical realm. Here he experiences

a sensual-spiritual--the two cannot be divorced--union with that beauty which lies in the earth's abundance. At that time and in that place, the Lady becomes as the ancient Apple Queen manifest, and Ralph experiences her fully. Yet, he must leave this Seventh Heaven and literally come back to earth so that his mystical union does not consume him in itself but instead serves the world of living men.

The Lady's death creates a variation on the general pattern of Wise-woman, Maid, and Witch. It forces the reader to ask why the variation occurs, or what effect it achieves. My feeling is that it creates a development from and connection between the Lady and Ursula, for it is Ursula who takes the Lady's place as Maid.

Ursula, unlike the Lady, is definitely a human character. Her father was a yeoman. She grew up on the edge of the Wood Perilous far from the Wall of the World, and Ralph met her under ordinary circumstances at the inn of Bourton Abbas. She is remarkable--at first sight--only for her beauty, which is similar to that of the maidens of Upmeads, who are not unaccustomed to work in the fields. Ursula meets the Lady shortly after setting out in search of the Well, for she falls prey to the Queen of Hampton, who imprisons her. The Lady secretly frees Ursula and--not without mixed motives--teaches her lore of the way to the Well. At this point, the general pattern reasserts itself. Ursula assumes the position of Maid, the wicked Queen that of Witch, and the Lady that of Wise-Woman.

The most important change here is that Ursula has become the Maid. The destructive forces of the Queen are not dwelt on; to mark her similarity to the Witch it is enough to say that she is malicious and appears opposed to beauty. The Lady's role as Wise-Woman lies in teaching Ursula certain knowledge independent of personal influence. Ursula, however is quite different from the Lady: the previous Maid. She exists on a different level of experience. Her connection with the Lady is that she represents the earthly, human manifestation of the fertility-goddess's beauty. If the Lady is of "a dream of the Land of Fairy," that is, of the realm of Vision, Ursula is of the realm of Experience. Ursula possesses neither the knowledge of sorcery nor the magic of the token--for hers is impotent--to help her achieve the Well. She must rely entirely on natural gifts to save her from harm. In fact, it is Ursula's weaknesses, so lacking in the Lady, that lead Ralph to follow her as he would a sister travelling a perilous path. Ralph experiences with the Lady momentary, ecstatic communion, but he can love Ursula as he would a human creature in need of protection. And it is the image of Ursula and her human beauty--an image actually sent to him by the Lady--that ultimately leads him to the Well.

Ralph's journey begins in the small kingdom of Upmeads, his home. In the strength and beauty of both its people and land, Upmeads is more desirable than any realm through which

Ralph passes. His leaving it in the vague desire for adventure reminds one of the Fool of the Tarot deck stepping out from the center of spirituality that he might enter the world. From Upmeads, Ralph travels south, this direction being dictated by the luck of the lots. He first stops at Wulstead where Dame Katherine gives him the Saracen beads that betoken a Seeker of the Well. She warns him not to have them blessed. Up until this point, the direction of Ralph's journey was dictated apparently by chance--the luck of the lots--but now it is influenced by the magic inherent in the beads, and a hidden guiding will, or genius. Ralph's journey is certainly being observed by some intelligence other than his own. It is by more than chance that the Captain of the Dry Tree meets Ralph at Netherton "the first time," for the words imply another meeting. It is probably also more than coincidental that the Captain meets Ralph twice in situations of a religious nature, as if the external intelligence is one trying to lure him from Christian worship.

The great bastion of Christianity is the town of Higham-on-the-Way. At Higham a monk who befriends Ralph tries also to possess the Saracen beads in exchange for his own token, which has been blessed and is thus impotent. Ralph's denial of the monk's offer takes the form of "a song of eventide of the High House of Upmeads" in which the lover says to his maiden:

O friend of the earth, O come nigher and nigher,
Thou art sweet with the sun's kiss as meads of the May,
O'er the rocks of the waste, o'er the water and fire,
Will I follow thee, love, till earth waneth away.

(XVIII, 35)

This song--aside from being thoroughly delightful--is in complete contrast to the other-worldliness of Higham and, in the above verse, prefigures Ralph and Ursula's journey beyond the Wall of the World. The weakness of Higham and its failure to attract Ralph lies in its being ruled by the Church, by men whom the world has tried and found wanting (XVIII, 36). Higham's apparent strength is false, for it does not spring from the earth. When Higham, representing Holy Church, finally asserts its strength against the Barons of the West, it fails utterly. It has sought to engage in worldly warfare, but has divorced physical from spiritual strength.

After he leaves Higham, Ralph meets the maiden of Bourton Abbas and then, entering the Wood Perilous, the Lady of Abundance. When he first leaves the Wood, he comes to the Burg of the Four Friths. In character, the Burg is the very opposite of Higham. And, it is interesting to note that the Dry Tree, just as it is ruled by the Lady and the Queen, is situated between the extremes of Higham and the Burg. Totally devoid of spiritual concerns, the Burg-men follow only their material lusts. They war incessantly with the Wheat-wearers, killing all the males even to the youngest babe, spoiling their wealth, and carrying

off their women. The women--tall and fair--they sell as domestic slaves that they may pleasure the Burg-men. Their own women afford the Burghers little pleasure, being short, dark, dog-faced creatures. In fact, the Burghers bear a good deal of resemblance to the Dusky Men of The Roots of the Mountains and are later referred to as the "Burg-devils."

Ralph escapes the Burg with the aid of the Dry Tree and the Lady and re-enters the Wood Perilous. His affair with the Lady of Abundance has been discussed, but something more might be said of the setting involved. The Wood Perilous enjoys a reputation of evil and mystery similar to that of Evilshaw of The Water of the Wondrous Isles. Ralph encounters the Lady, the Sun-Knight, and Walter the Black by the Water of the Oak. The oak is usually associated with magic in these romances and was sacred to the Druids and the Norse. The Lady is slain by water, cave, and cliff--a setting found in "The Hollow Land" and "A Dream" and usually leading to a realm beyond death. All these elements add to the concept of the Lady as a mysterious, super-natural being, a creature of the Imagination. When she is slain, Ralph leaves the Wood in a chapter entitled: "Ralph Cometh out of the Wilderness," for he does, indeed, leave the wilderness of her beauty and emerges into the everyday world.

Ralph soon comes to a well-travelled road whereupon he happens to meet his eldest brother, Blaise, and Blaise's squire, Richard the Red. In their company he comes to Whitwall, which lies at the nexus of the southern and eastern roads.

Here he is soon involved in the busy world of merchants and men-at-arms, for Whitwall is another world entirely from that of the desert.

Near Whitwall is the town of Swevenham, a name that derives from a word meaning "dream," or "vision." Originally from Swevenham, Richard the Red tells Ralph a bit about the nature of the town: "In the land and the thorp where I was born and bred there was talk now and again of a thing to be sought, which should cure sorrow, and make life blossom in the old, and uphold life in the young" (XVIII, 212). After visiting Swevenham, Richard brings Ralph tales concerning Seekers of the Well. Before Ralph hears these tales, he "dreams a dream, or sees a vision" (XVIII, 219) of the Lady of Abundance, who admonishes him to seek the Well with Dorothea, who also appears--as a sending of the Lady--and tells him that she is alive in the world and that the seeker may find her. Of the tales of Swevenham, one refers to a woman travelling by "night and moon," who is certainly Ursula. Ralph also learns that this village of dream was the home of a wizard "to whom folk from Swevenham and other places about were used to seek for his lore in hidden matters" (XVIII, 222).

It will be remembered that Walter of The Wood beyond the World saw the forms of witch, maid, and dwarf long before entering the Wood--that, in fact, these forms drew him to themselves. Ralph, too, is drawn to the Well by the forces of the Imagination. He dreams that the maiden of Bourton Abbas--Dorothea, or Ursula--is before him on the eastern road, and Swevenham

confirms his dream. Thus, the closer Ralph gets to the Well, the stronger becomes the pull of the Imagination. Ralph's hope is renewed, his imagination rekindled through the medium of the village of dreams, and he sets out again determined to find the ultimate source of all these tales, that source which attracts to itself so many Seekers.

It should not be thought, simply because of the importance of the forces of the Imagination, that the quest for the Well is other-worldly in character. Believing as he did in the social importance of art, Morris makes it clear in these romances that he regards the Imagination not as a realm of escape but rather as a realm to be activated within the "world of living men."

In fact, Morris establishes the earthly nature of the Well-quest by bringing into contrast paganism and Christianity. Earlier it was noticed that Ralph was not to have the Saracen beads blessed. This conflict between Pagan and Christian, between the gods of the earth and the god of Heaven, continues throughout The Well at the World's End. The salutations of the Captain of the Dry Tree, and Ralph's reply to the monk at Higham have already been noted. When Ralph was abiding at the Castle of Abundance, he asked a priest if the Lady be not "of those who outwardly have a woman's semblance, but within are of the race of the ancient devils, the gods of the Gentiles?" (XVIII, 113). The priest swears that "she is a right holy woman" (XVIII, 114), but goes on to say that she goes to Church by "night and

cloud . . . barefoot in her smock amidst the rugged wood, and, so arrayed, fairer than any queen in a golden gown. Yea, as fair as the woodwives of the ancient heathen" (XVIII, 114-5). It is curious that the Lady goes to church by "night and cloud" just as two women are seen seeking the Well by "night and cloud" and "night and moon" (XVIII, 223-4). Richard speaks also of two young menand a woman who, upon setting out for the Well, were refused blessing by the priest "for he held that such a quest came of the inspiration of the devil, and was but a memory of the customs of the ancient gentiles and heathen" (XVIII, 214). The quest for the Well is truly a pagan quest.

Ralph's quest is not the quest for the Holy Grail. It is a quest for the beauty and the strength of the earth, the eternal creative source. The Seekers must pass the Rock of the Fighting Man and be guided by the Sword and the Bough. The Well welcomes lovers not virgins. Indeed, the loneliness and purity of Galahad in Morris' early poem contrasts greatly with Ralph's love of the Lady and his betrothel to Ursula, both necessary before the Well is reached. The Saracen beads must be given by a woman to a man she loves if they are to be potent in their magic. Those who seek other-worldliness are free to drink the water of the Dry Tree, for therein lies death. Yeats realized this when he wrote of Morris: "The early Christians were of the kin of the Wilderness and of the Dry Tree, and they saw an unearthly Paradise, but he was of the kin of the Well and of the Green Tree and he saw an Earthly Paradise."[13]

Before continuing my discussion, it would be helpful, I feel, to quote at length from that same lecture mentioned earlier. It will be seen that the direction of Morris' thought bears a remarkable resemblance to that of Ralph's eastern journey. The lecture is one of a number grouped under the heading: "Hopes and Fears for Art," and that is exactly what Morris is speaking of:

> Is money to be gathered? cut down the pleasant trees among the houses, pull down ancient and venerable buildings for the money that a few square yards of London dirt will fetch; blacken rivers, hide the sun and poison the air with smoke and worse, and it's nobody's business to see to it or mend it: that is all that modern commerce, the counting-house forgetful of the workshop, will do for us herein.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Unless something or other is done to give all men some pleasure for the eyes and rest for the mind in the aspect of their own and their neighbour's houses, until the contrast is less disgraceful between the fields where beasts live and the streets where men live, I suppose that the practice of the arts must be mainly kept in the hands of a few highly cultivated men, who can go often to beautiful places, whose education enables them, in the contemplation of the past glories of the world, to shut out from their view the everyday squalors

that the most of men move in. Sirs, I believe that art has such sympathy with cheerful freedom, open-heartedness and reality, so much she sickens under selfishness and luxury, that she will not live thus isolated and exclusive. I will go further than this and say that on such terms I do not wish her to live. I protest that it would be a shame to an honest artist to enjoy what he had huddled up to himself of such art, as it would be for a rich man to sit and eat dainty food amongst starving soldiers in a beleaguered fort.

I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few.

No, rather than art should live this poor thin life among a few exceptional men, despising those beneath them for an ignorance for which they themselves are responsible, for a brutality that they will not struggle with,--rather than this, I would that the world should indeed sweep away all art for awhile, as I said before I thought it possible she might do; rather than the wheat should rot in the miser's granary, I would that the earth had it, that it might yet have a chance to quicken in the dark.

. . . . . .

That art [*popular* art] will make our streets as beautiful as the woods, as elevating as the mountainsides: it will be a pleasure and a rest, and not a

weight upon the spirits to come from the open country into a town; every man's house will be fair and decent, soothing to his mind and helpful to his work: all the works of man that we live amongst and handle will be in harmony with nature, will be reasonable and beautiful: yet all will be simple and inspiriting, not childish nor enervating; for as nothing of beauty and splendour that man's mind and hand may compass shall be wanting from our public buildings, so in no private dwelling will there be any signs of waste, pomp, or insolence, and every man will have his share of the *best*.

It is a dream, you may say, of what has never been and never will be; true, it has never been, and therefore, since the world is alive and moving yet, my hope is the greater that it one day will be: true, it is a dream; but dreams have before now come about of things so good and necessary to us, that we scarcely think of them more than of the daylight, though once people had to live without them, without even the hope of them.

Anyhow, dream as it is, I pray you to pardon my setting it before you, for it lies at the bottom of all my work in the Decorative Arts, nor will it ever be out of my thoughts: and I am here with you to-night to ask you to help me in realizing this dream, this *hope*.[14]

The ideas and the hope expressed here are, I believe, intimately connected with the descriptions of Cheaping Knowe, Goldburg and Utterbol. Morris' chastising of the profit-motive and its antipathy to beauty can be seen as a parallel to his descriptions of Cheaping Knowe and Utterbol, while his condemnation of luxury and art for a few finds its literary expression in Goldburg. And, the winning of the Well, transfiguring Ralph into the artist-warrior, is necessary to the fulfillment of Morris' dream.

As Ralph's eastern journey begins, he enters lands manifestly heathen. From Whitwall, he travels in the company of Clement Chapman and other merchants with their men-at-arms to Cheaping Knowe, a town beyond the boundaries both of Chivalry and Christian worship. Clement describes to Ralph the nature of the lands to which they are travelling:

> "And now thou shalt know that this good town of Whitwall that lieth behind us is the last of the lands we shall come to wherein folk can any courtesy, or are ruled by the customs of the manor, or by due lawful Earls and Kings, or the laws of the Lineage or the Port, or have any Guilds for their guiding and helping. And though these folks whereunto we shall come, are, some of them, Christian men by name, and have amongst them priests and religious; yet are they wild men of manners, and many heathen customs abide amongst them; as swearing on the altars of devils and eating horse-flesh at the High-tides, and spell-raising more than

> enough, and such-like things, even to the reddening of the doom-rings with the blood of men and of women, yea, and of babes: from such things their priests cannot withhold them. . . . Thou shalt see castles and fair strong-houses about the country-side, but the great men who dwell therein are not the natural kindly lords of the land yielding service to Earls, Dukes, and Kings, and having under them vavassors and villains, men of the manor; but their tillers and shepherds and work-men and servants be mere thralls, whom they may sell at any market, like their horses or oxen. Forsooth these great men have with them for the more part free men waged for their service, who will not hold their hands from aught that their master biddeth, not staying to ask if it be lawful or unlawful." (XVIII, 232-3)

When Ralph arrives in Cheaping Knowe, he sees for himself the sort of justice which abounds in these lands. The sight is exceedingly strange to the lad of Upmeads:

> Much people was gathered about the gate to see the merchants enter with banners displayed; and Ralph deemed many of the folk fair, such as were goodly clad; for many had but foul clouts to cover their nakedness, and seemed needy and hunger-pinched. Withal there were many warriors amongst the throng, and most of these bore a token on their sleeves, to wit, a sword reddened with blood. And Clement, speaking

> softly in Ralph's ear, did him to wit that this was the token of the lord who had gotten the castle in those days, and was tyrant of the town; and how that he had so many men-at-arms ready to do his bidding, that none in the town was safe from him if he deemed it more for his pleasure and profit to rob or maim, or torment or slay, than to suffer them to live peaceably.
>
> (XVIII, 249)

The token born by these warriors betrays their kinship with the Dusky Men of The Roots of the Mountains, who worship a gigantic sword red with blood. Morris' representation of evil is consistent throughout his work. These men are part of a social system only superficially more advanced than that of the Dusky Men.

From the merchant's point of view, a town such as Cheaping Knowe, though not pleasant, is profitable, so he need not be overly concerned with changing its people's lot. The following exchange between Ralph and the merchant demonstrates that it will not be Morris' merchants who will precipitate a change for the better in these lands:

> "Yea, Master Clement," said Ralph, "these be no peaceful lands whereto thou art bringing us, or very pleasant to dwell in."
>
> "Little for peace, but much for profit," said Clement; for these lands be fruitful of wine and oil and wheat, and neat and sheep; withal metals and gems

> are dug up out of the mountains; and on the other hand, they make but little by craftsmanship, wherefore are they the eagerer for chaffer with us merchants; whereas also there are many of them well able to pay for what they lack, if not in money, then in kind, which in a way is better. Yea, it is a goodly land for merchants."
>
> "But I am no merchant," said Ralph. (XVIII, 233)

Though the merchants have no profit-interest in improving the lot of those who live in these lands, desperate change is needed. This social system which creates many very poor men and a few rich who reap the profits of the mining activity is, as Clement has told Ralph, based on slavery. It is at root just the same as that employed by the Dusky Men, and its evils, rivalling those of the Dusky Men, are graphically described below:

> So Ralph went in company with some of the sergeants and others, and looked at this and that about the town without hindrance, save that the guard would not suffer them to pass further than the bailey of the Castle. And for the said bailey, forsooth, they had but little stomach; for they saw thence, on the slopes of the Castle-hill, tokens of the cruel justice of the said lord; for there were men and women there, yea, and babes also, hanging on gibbets and thrust through with sharp pales, and when they asked of folk why these had suffered, they but looked at them as if astonished, and passed on without a word. (XVIII, 249-50)

The Lady of Abundance was the witch's thrall in a land far from the dwellings of men. Ursula, however, finds herself a thrall soon after leaving Whitwall. She is captured by Bull Nosy who intends to cheapen her at the thrall market of Cheaping Knowe. Just as she is the extension in the world of Experience of the Lady, so is her thralldom the manifestation in the outer world of the dominion of the Witch. For Ursula--as the Lady had been--has become an object to be used for the profits and lusts of others. Her beauty will fetch a high price on the thrall market. However, Ursula is sold neither at Cheaping Knowe nor elsewhere, for Bull Nosy falls in love with her.

Bull Nosy is of the Folk of the Fells who worship the White Bull. These people with their great emphasis on kinship are like the Folk of The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains, but they also possess fetches and in this they resemble the Icelanders of the Sagas. Morris was fascinated by the Icelandic Sagas. The Saga heroes are men with well-defined duties whose words are to the point, and whose swords, once raised, are swift to cut through tendon and bone. In short, they are dutiful, coldly passionate men who fear dishonor more than death. Their country, too, is uncompromising; it is jagged, sparse, at times desolate. Certainly this is the feeling one derives from Morris' accounts of his travels there.

It may be the society of the Icelandic heroes Morris is thinking of when he writes to Georgiana Burne-Jones on 13 May

1885: "I have more faith than a grain of mustard seed in the future history of 'civilization', which I *know* now is doomed to destruction, and probably before very long: what a joy it is to think of! and how often it consoles me to think of barbarism once more flooding the world, and real feelings and passions however rudimentary, taking the place of our wretched hypocrisies."[15] Here Morris looks to a sort of savage innocence as a purgative force. The Folk of the Fells partake of this quality, and it is Bull Nosy's innocence, his emotional honesty, that enables him to purge himself of self-interest and behave towards Ursula as would a brother rather than a thrall-master.

Ralph, too, has dealings with the Folk of the Fells. The merchant company meets them in battle between Whitwall and Cheaping Knowe, and Ralph takes captive Bull Shockhead, brother to Bull Nosy. It is Bull Shockhead who, intent on avenging his brother's death, slays Gandolf, the Bear of Utterbol, and replaces his rule with the freedom and justice of the White Bull. On another occasion, the lives of Ralph and Ursula are saved by these folk, who kill the king of Cheaping Knowe and put his troops to route. Thus, they have to do with both the fall of Utterbol and the lessening of Cheaping Knowe. They are truly a regenerative force newly influenced by their comradeship with Ralph.

The contrast of their society with those of Cheaping Knowe, Goldburg, and Utterbol is extreme. It possesses that savage innocence which allows its people to become a positive force.

Ralph and Ursula stay with the Folk of the Fell on their return journey:

> They came into a valley amidst of the mountains, which was fair and lovely, and therein was the dwelling or town of this Folk of the Fells. . . . The houses thereof were artless, the chiefest of them like to the great barn of an abbey in our land, the others low and small; but the people, both men and women, haunted mostly the big house. As for the folk, they were . . . strong men, but not high of stature, black-haired, with blue or grey eyes, cheerful of countenance, and of many words. Their women were mostly somewhat more than comely, smiling, kind of speech, but not suffering the caresses of aliens. They saw no thralls amongst them; and when Ralph asked hereof, how that might be, since they were men-catchers, they told him that when they took men and women, as oft they did, they always sold them for what they would bring to the plain-dwellers; or else slew them, or held them to ransom, but never brought them home to their stead. Howbeit, when they took children, as whiles befell, they sometimes brought them home, and made them very children of their Folk with many uncouth prayers and worship of their Gods, who were indeed, as they deemed, but forefathers of the Folk.
>
> Now Ralph, he and his, being known for friends, these wild men could not make enough of them, and as

> it were, compelled them to abide there three days, feasting them, and making them all the cheer they might. And they showed the wayfarers their manner of hunting. (XIX, 128-9)

These folk are free men, not at all physically ugly or deformed. Their women are comely, unlike those of Morris' evil peoples, and they enjoy hardy fellowship. Ursula finds the women "frank and free" and is glad of them "after the sleight and lies of the poor thralls of Utterbol" (XIX, 129). The men come to regard Ralph as a god for his prowess in the hunt, and this is similar to the worship of Walter and the Maid amongst the Folk of the Bears in The Wood beyond the World.

After leaving Cheaping Knowe, the Companions come to Whiteness, a peace-loving town whose free-men, though not ill off, pay tribute to Cheaping Knowe. From Whiteness they travel to Goldburg. Goldburg is a town of curious extremes and lies between the desolation of Cheaping Knowe and Utterbol. Legend has it that Goldburg was built by one of the Seekers of the Well who apparently did drink of the Well but was later "slain in a tumult" before the building was completed. He had Goldburg built before he had achieved the Well "to be the house and home of his long-enduring joyance" (XVIII, 261). But Goldburg, though glorious, is seriously flawed:

> Thus they passed the bridge, and turning to the left at its ending, came into the Water-Street of

> Goldburg, where the river, with wide quays on either side thereof, ran betwixt the houses. As for these, beneath the dwellings went a fair arched passage like to the ambulatory of an abbey: and every house all along this street was a palace for its goodliness. The houses were built of white stones and red and grey; with shapely pillars to the cloister, and all about carvings of imagery and knots of flowers; goodly were the windows and all glazed, as fair as might be. . . .
>
> Much people was gathered to see the chapmen enter, yet scarce so many as might be looked for in so goodly a town; yea, and many of the folk were clad foully, and were haggard of countenance, and cried on the chapmen for alms. Howbeit some were clad gaily and richly enough, and were fair of favour as any that Ralph had seen since he left Upmeads. (XVIII, 263)

Goldburg is a very Palace of Art, but its art, riches, and freedom are only for the few.

This Palace is ruled by a Queen who has granted Ralph and Clement an interview:

> They went together to the High House of the Queen, which was like a piece of the Kingdom of Heaven for loveliness, so many pillars as there were of bright marble-stone, and gilded, and the chapiters carved most excellently: not many hangings on the walls, for the walls themselves were carven, and painted with pictures

> in the most excellent manner: the floors withal were so dainty that they seemed as if they were made for none but the feet of the fairest of women. And all this was set amidst of gardens, the like of which they had never seen.
>
> But they entered without more ado, and were brought by the pages to the Lady's innermost chamber; and if the rest of the house were goodly, this was goodlier, and a marvel, so that it seemed wrought rather by goldsmiths and jewellers than by masons and carvers. Yet indeed many had said with Clement that the Queen who sat there was the goodliest part thereof. (XVIII, 267-8)

Yet, when Ralph looks on the Queen, his feeling is strangely indifferent: "he saw her face how fair and lovely she was, yet was there little longing in his heart for her, more than for one of the painted women on the wall, for as kind and as dear as he deemed her" (XVIII, 268-9). What is striking about Ralph's indifference is that he regards the Queen as like to a work of art, a painted image. She is not quite real and hence can arouse no desire within him. In this way the Queen is like her town, for Goldburg's splendor is that of the Palace of Art built only for the sake of Art.

Goldburg is an isolated and wasted endeavor; its beauty has no social benefit. The condition of its people is, for the most part, little better than that of the Cheaping Knowe thralls:

> Again said Clement that though the tillers and toilers of Goldburg were not for the most part mere thralls and chattels, as in the land beyond the mountains behind them, yet were they little more thriving for that cause; whereas they belonged not to a master, who must at worst feed them, and to no manor, whose acres they might till for their livelihood, and on whose pastures they might feed their cattle; nor had they any to help or sustain them against the oppressor and the violent man; so that they toiled and swinked and died with none heeding them, save that they had the work of their hands good cheap; and they forsooth heeded them less than their draught beasts whom they must needs buy with money, and whose bellies they must needs fill; whereas these poor wretches were slaves without a price, and if one died another took his place on the chance that thereby he might escape present death by hunger, for there was a great many of them. (XVIII, 261-2)

Considering Morris' Socialist activities, it would be difficult to feel that Clement's description was not somehow inspired by the condition of the laborer in Morris' time when trade unions had only recently achieved a degree of political representation. Morris consistently felt that it was popular art--"art made by the people, for the people"[16]--which would improve the nature of society, particularly the lot of the laborer who in a society of mass-production had no individualized task to perform

and thus was simply another commodity to be abandoned and replaced at will. The machine must be cared for, like the draught beasts above, but the unskilled laborer in a surplus market would be lucky to escape "death by hunger." Indeed, Charles Booth in his study of London in the period 1892-1897 stated: "The result of all our inquiries make [sic] it reasonably sure that one-third of the population are on or about the line of poverty or below it."[17]

The High House of the Queen of Goldburg, when contrasted to the High House of Upmeads appears stiflingly luxurious. Actually the High House of Upmeads is never described in any detail; one simply gets the impression that it is a long and rude, though comfortable, timber hall. And, when King Peter is first introduced, he appears in a setting utterly different from that of the Queen of Goldburg: "on a fair and hot afternoon of June King Peter rose up from the carpet which the Prior of St. John's by the Bridge had given him (for he had been sleeping thereon amidst the grass of his orchard after his dinner) and he went up into the hall of his house, which was called the High House of Upmeads" (XVIII, 2). King Peter does not dwell in luxury nor are the people whom he serves anything but prosperous and proud.

In Goldburg, Ralph hears of Ursula from Morfinn the Minstrel who offers to guide him to Utterbol, though Morfinn is actually in the service of the Lord of Utterbol and leads Ralph into thralldom. Utterbol is the most evil of the eastern

realms and, as might be expected, the men of Utterbol appear less than human. Ralph "deemed when he looked on them that they would scarce have the souls of men in their bodies, but that they were utterly vile through and through, like the shapes of an evil dream" (XVIII, 289). Redhead, whose life Ralph has saved, later confirms these feelings, describing Utterbol as Hell and himself as one of its devils. He warns Ralph not to go to Utterbol itself but to take advantage of an opportunity to escape. Redhead explains that Ralph is to be "a toy and minion" of the Queen and that when she wearies of him Gandolf will take his manhood from him and make of him "a mock of all men" (XVIII, 322). Redhead is particularly insistent upon learning that Ralph desires to go to Utterbol to free Ursula: "'the Lord shall at once see that there is love betwixt you two, and then there will be an end of the story.' 'How so?' quoth Ralph. Said Redhead: 'At Utterbol all do the will of the Lord of Utterbol, and he is so lustful and cruel, and so false withal, that his will shall be to torment the damsel to death, and to geld and maim thee; so that none hereafter shall know how goodly and gallant thou hast been'" (XVIII, 325).

The following conversation between Ralph and Otter, captain of the Utterbol men-at-arms, brings to light a singular connection between Utterbol and Goldburg. When Ralph speaks of "robbery and confusion," he is referring to the activities of the Lord of Utterbol's paid men-stealers:

Ralph kept silence awhile and then said: "Why doth the Goldburg folk suffer all this felony, robbery and confusion, so near their borders, and the land debatable?"

Said the captain, and again he grinned: "Passing for thy hard words, sir knight, why dost thou suffer me to lead thee along whither thou wouldest not?"

"Because I cannot help myself," said Ralph.

Said the captain: "Even so it is with the Goldburg folk: if they raise hand against some of these stong-thieves or man-stealers, he has but to send the war-arrow round about these deserts . . . and he will presently have as rough a company of carles for his fellows as need be, say ten hundred of them. And the Goldburg folk are not very handy at a fray without their walls. Forsooth within them it is another matter, and beside not even our Lord of Utterbol would see Goldburg broken down, no, not for all that he might win there."

"Is it deemed a holy place in the land, then?" said Ralph.

"I wot not the meaning of holy" said the other: "but all we deem that when Goldburg shall fall, the world shall change, so that living therein shall be hard to them that have not drunk of the Well at the World's End."

(XVIII, 293-4)

That Goldburg can be regarded as negatively luxurious can be seen not only in its contrast to Upmeads but also in Morris'

words to Yeats when he remarked, "dispraising houses decorated by himself: 'Do you suppose I like that kind of a house? I would like a house like a big barn, where one ate in one corner, cooked in another corner, slept in the third corner, and in the fourth received one's friends.'"[18] If Goldburg is seen to be a Palace of Art, then its art can be regarded as that which caters to the "swinish luxury of the rich."[19] Therefore, if Goldburg were to fall, an utter materialist like Gandolf would have nothing for which to live, the Palace of luxury having been destroyed.[20]

As it happens, Ralph and Ursula both escape the clutches of Utterbol. At this point, a new unity occurs. Ralph finds that the damsel's name is not Dorothea but Ursula. This bewilders him and he wonders how his dream could have betrayed him. Actually, Ralph has not been betrayed, for Ursula and Dorothy are the same in appearance. What has happened is that he has seen two different aspects of the damsel. The visionary aspect was Dorothy; the bodily Ursula. But the two are one. Ursula is a unity of her visionary and physical selves. There is no duality to her beauty. That visionary beauty which Ralph has been pursuing has been found to exist in the world.

At this point, the journey to the Well is capable of being completed, for now the active principle of strength has united with the passive principle of beauty. If the earth is to become fertile, if it is to blossom, it must be acted upon.

The sky god must rain his seed upon the earth goddess if her goodness is to be manifest. Just so must Ursula's goodness be brought into the world through Ralph's strength. He must bring his ideal of beauty--its physical manifestation found in Ursula--to the world, must make it blossom by fertilizing it with blood. Only with the death of its enslaving forces can beauty come to bloom, just as can the earth only with winter's passing. The reason for the infertility of the Lady of Abundance was that she lacked a counterpart in strength, but Ralph and Ursula together form a whole.

That Ursula can be seen to be the passive principle is demonstrated primarily by two things: first, her token is in itself powerless; secondly, she has been a thrall throughout most of the journey to the Well. It is true that she escaped Utterbol by herself, but this was accomplished through cunning and deception rather than by main strength. Ralph, on the other hand, possesses the token of power and won his freedom--though freedom in name only--through his knightly prowess. Ralph's strength need not necessarily be thought of literally as battle-strength, though Morris' artist-warrior may be thought of as a violent revolutionary. On Bloody Sunday, November 13, 1887, Morris would obviously have welcomed the leadership of one who could organize men in a military fashion. He wrote of his experience in The Commonweal:

> It was all over in a few minutes: our comrades fought valiantly, but they had not learned how to stand and

> turn their column into a line, or to march on to the front. . . . The police struck right and left like what they were, soldiers attacking an enemy . . . . There was no rallying point and no possibility of rallying, and all the people composing our strong column could do was to struggle into the Square as helpless units. I confess I was astounded at the rapidity of the thing and the ease with which military organization got its victory. I could see that numbers were of no avail unless led by a band of men acting in concert and each knowing his part.[21]

At the same time, however, the artist-warrior may just as well be thought of as the individual who does not isolate his concept of beauty from the world, but seeks rather to make it a part of his general environment by its very nature as a work of art.

Now that Ralph and Ursula are together they must, if they are to have the wisdom and strength to renew and remake the world, be renewed and remade themselves. They must become demi-gods, creators. That faculty which renews and remakes reality is the Imagination. Hence, they must drink of the Waters of the Imagination, of the eternal creative source. But, before doing so, they must be purified, must become clean receptacles for this water. And so, they now meet the agent of their purification: the priest of the Imagination, or the Sage of Swevenhem.

Ralph and Ursula have escaped the darkest realm of the material world. Their thralldom under Gandolf might almost be seen as their experience of the complete passivity of Yeats' moon-in-eclipse. But all this while they have been nearing the Well, and once beyond Utterbol the Imagination reasserts its strength. It might be said that they pass from the extreme darkness of the primary phase of the moon into the antithetical; in effect the tinctures have reached that absolute point at which they must change. Or, they can be seen to have passed from Experience into the realm of Higher Innocence.

When Ralph and Ursula meet in the Wood, they frequently refer to their new situation as dream-like, and these references indicate that the Imagination has begun to reassert itself. Ursula fears that their passage into light may prove but a dream and says: "Help me, my friend, that we may gather sticks to feed our fire, lest it die and the dark come again so that we see not each other's faces, and think that we have but met in a dream" (XIX, 12). Of course, there have been many references to sleep and dream throughout The Well at the World's End which should not be readily dismissed. For instance, when Ralph feels that the men of Utterbol are like something out of an evil dream, he is in a sense entirely correct. All these men are Gandolf's tools and hence merely the instruments through which Gandolf's will--the active faculty of his perverse imagination--manifests itself in the world. In this sense, it is true that for Morris the dream is of utmost importance but

it would be a great mistake to believe that he divorces the dream from its external manifestation.

The presence of the Sage of Swevenham, the wizard who is himself able to manipulate the reality of others, insures the dominance of light over darkness. The Sage is an extension of the Wise-Woman, just as Utterbol is of the Witch. He teaches Ralph and Ursula lore from an ancient book, the wisdom of which came from folk who "did worship to the Gods of the Earth as they imagined them" (XIX, 29). Though pagan, this book is highly sacred and, fittingly, dwelt long in Swevenham:

> Then he went unto an ark, and took thence a book wrapped in a piece of precious web of silk and gold and bound in cuir-bouilly wrought in strange devices. Then said he: "This book was mine heritage at Swevenham or ever I became wise, and it came from my father's grandsire: and my father bade me look on it as the dearest of possessions . . . . Yet were it not well to read in this book under a roof, nay, though it be as humble and innocent as this. Moreover, it is not meet that ye should hearken to this wisdom of old times clad as ye are; thou, knight, in the raiment of the man-slayer, with the rod of wrath hanging at thy side; and thou, maiden, attired in the garments of the tyrant, which were won of him by lying and guile." (XIX, 27-8)

They must purge themselves of worldly conflicts, for the book contains the lore of the way to ultimate harmony with Nature.

As their worldly trappings fall from them, so fall their ties with the realms of decadence, and they don the garments of rebirth--long gowns of white linen.

The Sage guides the Seekers to the Gate of the Wall of the World and leaves them at the Rock of the Fighting Man. Consequently, now they pass beyond the lands of human strife. They manage to find their way through the wilderness and come the Vale of Sweet Chestnuts where they spend the winter. In this Vale occurs the bear-incident. Norman Talbot calls attention to this adventure, pointing out that Ursula's name reminds one of "little bear" and that she "can reveal her naked passion for Ralph only in a state of shock and relief after being pursued, naked, by a bear."[27] This is true, but it does not really establish any inherent significance in the incident.

Actually, the incident has its parallel in the death of the Lady of Abundance. When Ralph is bathing, she is slain by the insanely jealous Sun-Knight. Ralph could not prevent her death. It is when Ursula is bathing that she is attacked by the bear: a creature used by Morris to represent pure physical strength. This time, however, Ralph successfully defends his love. Ralph's slaying of the bear indicates that he is able to defend beauty by destroying the destructive worldly appetites which would attack it. Only after this is done can beauty be awakened to it full expression, as Ursula is fully awakened sensually that very evening when the two are married by the Innocent Folk. The Innocent Folk know no strife; hence they

appear soon after the slaying of the bear.

If events in the world are examined, it can be seen that the bear appears there as well. Bull Shockhead brings justice to Utterbol by killing its Lord, whose armory is a black bear on a castle wall on a field of gold. This armory suggests destructive physical energies: the bear of war allied to material desires. And, there is another bear armory which represents creative physical energies, or strength united with natural fertility, and that is the sign on Bear-Hill of the shepherds of the downs: a bear ramping against either side of a tree with leaves. The Bear of Utterbol confronts Ralph before he reaches the Well, while the Bear of the Downsmen helps Ralph regain Upmeads on his return journey.

The Seekers now enter the final Waste Land: the Thirsty Desert. Here they come upon one dead body after another. Death becomes so plentiful that the weary Seekers must lie down to sleep "amongst those dead folk" (XIX, 71). The next morning Ralph almost despairs as he says to himself: "Will it end at all then? Surely all this people of the days gone by were Seekers of the Well as we be; and have they belike turned back from somewhere further on, and might not escape the desert despite of all? Shall we turn now: shall we turn? surely we might get into the kindly wood from here" (XIX, 71). But Ursula encourages him to go on and they come at last to the Dry Tree. The Dry Tree stands in a valley of death surrounded by those who have quenched their thirst in its poisonous waters.

These dead lie with a curious aspect: "each of the dead leathery faces was drawn up in a grin, as though they had died in pain, and yet beguiled, so that all those visages looked somewhat alike" (II, 74). The Thirsty Desert is the desert of Despair. Its name possesses a terrible irony, for many who thirst for the Well drink the waters of death. The grin of the dead expresses that irony, for what they must have taken to be the Well at the World's End brought only the end of the world. Or, perhaps, they knowingly chose death and grinned to think that death alone could bring an end to sorrow.

Earlier Ralph said, in effect: "Look how many have despaired; shall we not also despair?" But Ursula realizes that at the very bottom of despair lies hope. It is she, whose beauty is allied to the beauty of the earth, not of death, who lures Ralph away from the Dry Tree. She cries out: "O Ralph, Ralph! look up yonder to the ridge whereby we left our horses; look, look! there glitters a spear and stirreth! and lo a helm underneath the spear: tarry not, let us save our horses!" (XIX, 75). She says, in other words: "Do not despair, for look--there is still battle to be done!" But it is a ruse. There is no glittering spear. The battle in the desert is a battle of the self. One chooses either to die or to hope. Death leads to the ironic grin, but hope leads to and must precede strength. This is the final test. The Well is only for the strong of heart: only the strong of heart can bear the burden of days it imposes upon them.

Yet, the Well also confers bliss upon its drinkers.

This bliss comes from that which lies beyond death and is the ultimate source of hope. That source is the Creative Imagination: that faculty which lies behind all perception of Beauty, that which enables the artist to perceive those principles of Beauty that permeate Nature and which must be preserved or made newly manifest in the world of living men. To partake of this source is to be reborn, for it recreates even the image of the self as Ralph and Ursula are literally transfigured into complete harmony with Nature. They lose all scars of past conflict with man or beast and afterwards experience what Yeats called Unity of Being:

> It was the fairest and softest of summer evenings; and the deer of that place, both little and great, had no fear of man, but the hart and hind came to Ursula's hand; and the thrushes perched upon her shoulder, and the hares gambolled together close to the feet of the twain; so that it seemed to them that they had come into the very Garden of God; and they forgot all the many miles of the waste and the mountain that lay before them, and they had no thought for the strife of foemen and the thwarting of kindred, that belike awaited them in their own land, but they thought of the love and happiness of the hour that was passing. So sweetly they wore through the last minutes of the day, and when it was dark as it would be in that fair season, they lay down by the green knoll

at the ending of the land, and were lulled to sleep by the bubbling of the Well at the World's End. (XIX, 87)

But they must tell men of this marvel (XIX, 82); they must re-enter the world. On the journey to the Well, Ralph's dream was invaded by its enemies; now, he must destroy those enemies with the power derived from communion with that dream, that it may become manifest. Thus immediately after they drink, Ralph dreams of Upmeads and his return thereto, for he feels it is calling him to deeds.

On their return journey, the Friends of the Well find the world of men, like themselves, greatly changed. Bull Shockhead has brought justice to Utterbol; the Queen of Goldburg has fled into the wilderness. The King of Cheaping Knowe is killed in battle by the Folk of the Fells. The wicked Queen of the Dry Tree has been slain. The Dry Tree has allied with the Wheat-wearers and together they have driven the Burg-men out of the Burg of the Four Friths. However, the expelled Burg-devils have gathered force and are planning to attack Upmeads.

It is in the final destruction of the Burg-devils that the Dry Tree blossoms. Only when the valleys run red with the waters of blood will the Dry Tree be green (XIX, 195-6). A rhyme of the shepherds of the Downs speaks of the blooming of the Dry Tree:

The Dry Tree shall be seen
On the green earth, and green
The Well-spring shall arise
For the hope of the wise.
They are one which were twain,

The Tree bloometh again,
And the Well-spring hath come
From the waste to the home.
(XIX, 196)

The "twain that now are one" rather clearly refers to Ralph and Ursula. Ralph can now be regarded as the artist-warrior. His concern is to protect Ursula, and in doing so he must destroy all forms of ugliness, of physical strength directed by the will of an imagination out of harmony with Nature. He must destroy all such forces as would hold beauty a thrall to their lusts. Ralph's prowess cannot help but be creative, for only through such destruction can beauty flourish. Ralph and Ursula become the rulers of Hampton because only through the guiding will of the artist-warrior, only through creative destruction can the Dry Tree be watered with its required blood.

If the armories of the alliance that destroys the Burg-devils are looked at collectively, they can be seen to represent the seasonal cycle:

The Dry Tree: Wrought in gold on green a tree leafless (XVIII, 18)--signifying the death of Nature in the Winter with the potential of rebirth.

The Shepherds: A tree with leaves and on either side of it a bear ramping up against the tree (XVIII, 19) --signifying strength allied to life; the winter tree possessed of life in the Spring.

Upmeads: On a gold ground an apple-tree fruited, standing by a river-side (XVIII, 101)--signifying the fulfillment of the cycle in summer.

Surely, a more fitting alliance against the last manifestation of the Witch cannot be imagined.

Come the final battle, the mere appearance of the artist-warrior in his War-god aspect is terrifying to his enemies. Just as the Dusky Men fled in confusion before Gold-mane, so now do the Burg-devils flee before Ralph, the "glorious wolf" of war:

> Now at the hanging of the hill, whenas either side could see the whites of the foemen's eyes, the robbers stayed a little to gather breath; and in that nick of time Ralph strode forth into the midst between the two lines and up on to a little mound on the hill-side (which well he knew), and he lifted up the ancient guisarme, and cried on high: "Home now! Home to Upmeads!"
>
> Then befell a marvel, for even, as all eyes of the foemen were turned on him, straightway their shouts and jeering and laughter fell dead, and then gave place to shrieks and wailing, as all they who beheld him cast down their weapons and fled wildly down the hill, overturning whatever stood in their way, till the whole mass of them was broken to pieces, and the hill was covered with naught but cravens and the light-footed Shepherds slaughtering them in the chase. (XIX, 232-3)

After this victory, Ralph and Ursula come to rule Upmeads and their strength goes forth to transform the surrounding lands into realms of peace and prosperity.

POSTSCRIPT

THE WATER OF THE WONDROUS ISLES AND THE SUNDERING FLOOD

Throughout the course of my discussion and especially in its first chapter, I have spoken of The Water of the Wondrous Isles. The Witch, Maiden, and Wise-woman relationship becomes so fully developed in this work that its central character is not the hero but the heroine, Birdalone. The witch's power over Birdalone does not end with her escape from Evilshaw but continues implicitly throughout her quest, and that quest is not complete until the witch is utterly destroyed. Moreover, as the human reflection of Habundia, the pagan High Faery or goddess of the Wood, Birdalone explicitly manifests the beauty of the earth. While the passage in which Habundia describes Birdalone's beauty has already been cited, it is interesting to note that Birdalone's reply, wherein she describes Habundia's beauty, uses as its standard of comparison not the beauty of other women but the beauty of Nature, for Habundia is the essence of that beauty (18-19).

While the other late romances deal largely with the hero's freeing of the maiden and their final union, The Water of the Wondrous Isles contains another quest which is related to Birdalone's final union with Arthur. For, part of Birdalone's quest after she escapes the Witch Under the Wood is to aid in

the freeing of three damsels who are thralls to the Witch-queen of the Wondrous Isles. When Birdalone first escapes the Witch Under the Wood, the Sending Boat takes her to the Isle of Increase Unsought where she is made prisoner to the Witch-queen. As it happens, she is freed by the Witch-queen's servants--Aurea, Viridis, and Atra--who charge her to find their lovers--the Golden Knight, the Green Knight, and the Black Squire--that the men may come to free them from the witch. As a sign to their lovers, each damsel gives Birdalone an article of clothing and a piece of jewellery. Thus arrayed, Birdalone continues her journey through the Wondrous Isles. Before coming to the mainland and the three knights aforesaid, she must try the adventure of four isles, each of which is curiously barren. These isles are as follows: the Isle of the Young and the Old, wherein the old die and the young never grow; the Isle of the Queens, in which dead queens sit at table gazing upon a dead king; the Isle of the Kings, which is the mirror-reflection of the Isle of the Queens; and the Isle of Nothing, wherein nothing lives and dies. When Birdalone again wends the Water of the Wondrous Isles, these isles have each come to life: the Isle of Nothing has become complete in itself and the others possess the potentiality of growth.

Birdalone's journey through the Wondrous Isles is clearly one through the Imagination, for not only are these isles wonderful, they can be reached only by means of the spell-bound Sending Boat. The Isle of Increase Unsought is the key to all the other

realms. It resembles the Glittering Plain in that it is magically fertile and perpetually so. This fertility has its source in the Wonder Coffer of the Witch-queen, whose strength is dependent upon her possession of the Water of Might. A sip of the Water of Might momentarily confers upon the drinker threefold strength and the ability to see through all enchantment. By drinking the Water of Might, the three knights are able finally to free their lovers and destroy the Witch-queen.

In a sense, the Water of the Wondrous Isles is not only the lake separating those islands; it is also the Water of Might. This Water of Might cannot help but remind one of the water of the Well at the World's End, for it is the water of life, of the creative source, of the Imagination. But this water of the Wondrous Isles, as long as it is possessed by the Witch-queen serves only her perversity. In her the Imagination is corrupted and enslaved, for she applies its strength only to the service of her selfish desires. Thus, the Witch-queen's realm, despite its superficial fairness, is actually nothing more than that of stagnant luxury which manifests its true impotence in that of the other Wondrous Isles, those changeless realms of the Imagination whose source of life is imprisoned in the Wonder Coffer.

That the Witch-queen's strength depends upon her imprisonment of the imagination is also illustrated in the thralldom of the three damsels. Norman Talbot in his essay referred to in my discussion of <u>The Well at the World's End</u>

speaks of the relationship between Viridis, Aurea, and Atra and the seasonal cycle, equating them respectively with Summer, Autumn, and Winter. His discussion is valuable, and rather than expand on it here I will simply add to it a complementary interpretation of the three damsels' significance. When Birdalone arrives at the Isle of Increase Unsought, she first meets Aurea, then Viridis, and finally Atra. Aurea says to her: "Thou shalt call me Aurea, . . . and my next sister is Viridis, and the third, Atra; for that is according to the hues of our raiment, and other names we have not now" (56). The order in which Birdalone meets these damsels and the colors they wear suggest that they correspond to aspects of the Imagination. Aurea wears gold and is met first, like the light of dawn; she symbolizes the divine inspiration, the emanation of the creative light. Viridis is clothed in green and symbolizes the manifestation of the Imagination in the world, like that earthly fertility brought forth by the sun. Finally, Atra's raiment is black, for she symbolizes death leading to new life, not merely physical death but the death of an idea after its full embodiment which leads to a rebirth of thought from its mystical source. Thus, unlike Aurea and Viridis, Atra possesses hidden wisdom and is foreseeing.

One striking indication of Atra's character comes when Viridis says to Birdalone: "'Dear sister, . . . fear not; such as thou shall not fail of the love of some man whom thou must needs love. Is it not so, sister Atra?' Said Atra: 'Yea, such love shall come unto her as surely as death'" (66). This rather

grim statement illustrates how Atra's perspective centers itself around death. Viridis looks forward from life, while Atra looks forward, strangely enough, from death. Perhaps Arthur's love goes from Atra to Birdalone because of love's need to orient itself towards earthly fertility rather than mystical death. Birdalone is in herself a totality of the three sisters. She partakes of each of them, as can be seen in their clothing of her nakedness, and is more beautiful than they.

The Witch-queen's death is ensured once Aurea, Viridis, and Atra are freed and the Water of Might taken from her, for she no longer controls the dominating principle of the Imagination. Her palace crashes down upon her. Her realm becomes utterly desolate, as it always truly was, being that of death-in-life, while those other Wondrous Isles, freed from her spell, begin to come to life. The hidden, magical connection between the Witch-queen's possession of the three damsels and the Water of Might, and the state of the Wondrous Isles portrays perhaps more fully than any of Morris' prose romances his conviction that all beauty, fertility, and creativity is dependent upon the freeing of the Imagination.

I will write only a few words concerning The Sundering Flood. This is due not to any lack of merit in the work itself, but rather to the limitations of time more so than space.

The Sundering Flood tells of a warrior-hero, a maiden, and an old carline who may be seen as the wise-woman who frees

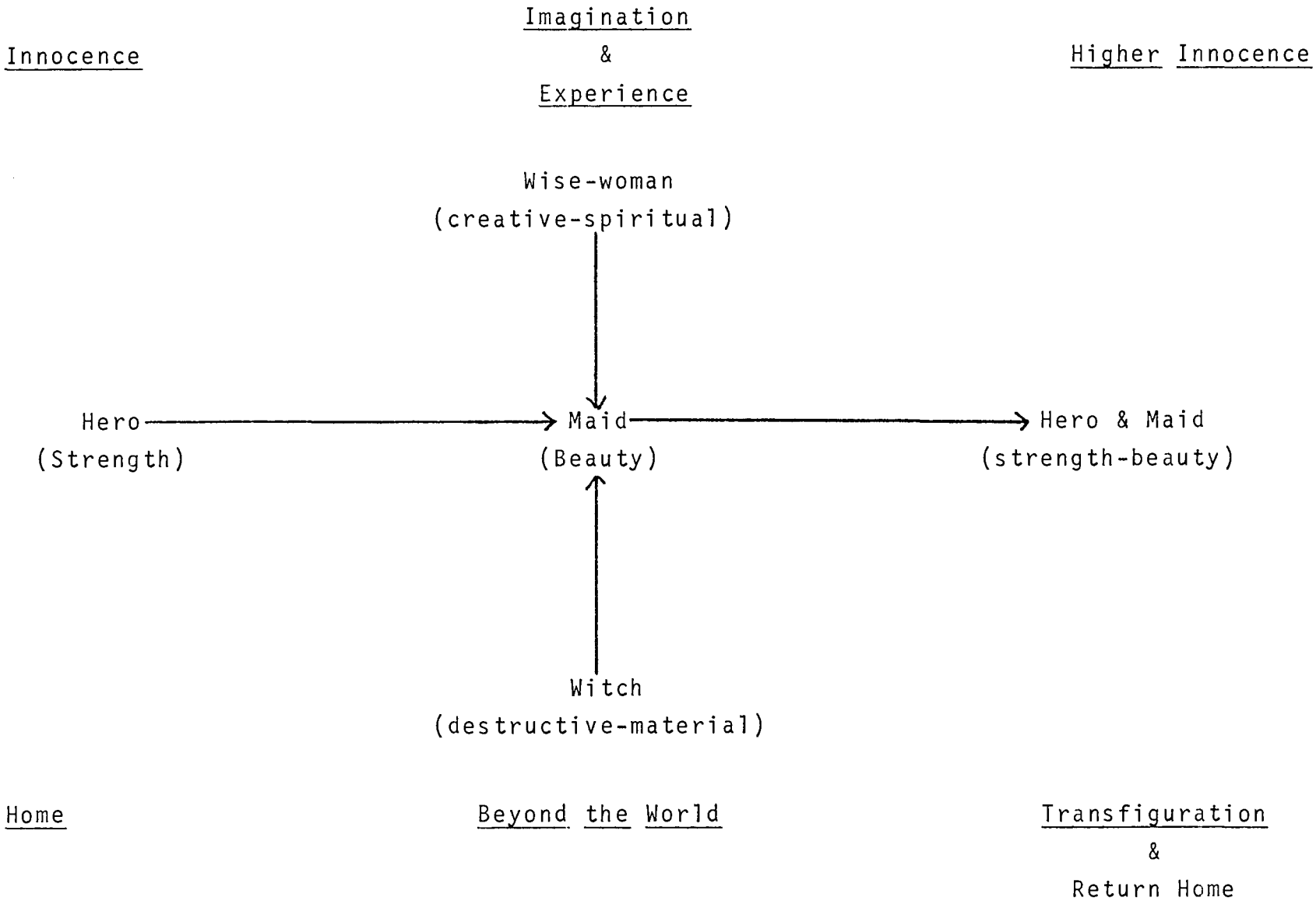
and protects the maiden. There is no witch figure, but her place is taken by churlish chapmen and strong-thieves who hold the maid, Elfhild, in thrall. In a sense, The Sundering Flood might be seen as the culmination of the basic pattern. For, its hero, Osberne, is, from his early youth, directly aided by the powers of the earth, such as the dwarfs and Steelhead. Steelhead resembles greatly those gods of the *Tain* who are sometimes fathers to the mortal heroes and aid them in their need. Steelhead does, in effect, become Osberne's foster-father, just as the wise carline becomes Elfhild's foster-mother. Elfhild, of course, possesses outstanding beauty, and Osberne is truly an artist-warrior inasmuch as he possesses not only super-human strength given him by the land-wights, the gods of the earth, but also the gift of spontaneous verse-making.

Significantly, Osberne's career as a warrior includes not only the freeing of Elfhild, but also the freeing of the Lesser Crafts from the dominion of the King and Porte of the City of the Sundering Flood. His strength is directly allied to social change as he fights for the Lesser Crafts under Sir Godrick's banner. It is perhaps possible to regard the battle in the City of the Sundering Flood in which "the men of the Small Crafts and the lesser commons" (171) take the city square as Morris' Bloody Sunday experience recast and given an entirely different ending. Morris' desire for the rebirth and freedom of the Lesser Crafts has been mentioned above and his expression of this desire may be found in any number of his lectures in the

volume of the collected works entitled Hopes and Fears for Art.

It might be added that The Sundering Flood has something of an Icelandic air about it in the setting and people of the Dale but not in its emotional tone, that its use of verse is more extensive than in The Well at the World's End, for instance, though it is by no means obtrusive, and that, though Osberne as a child may appear somewhat "big wordy," as Surly John calls him, his love for Elfhild and their quest for one another possesses such strength that the reader feels Osberne's sorrow and hope as his own. For, the Sundering Flood is not merely the river which separates Elfhild and Osberne so much as it is that barrier of the world which must be overcome by all those who would truly love. And, it should not be overlooked that the barrier sundering Osberne from Elfhild, or creative-strength from its ultimate marriage to beauty, cannot be overcome until Osberne, in striving always to find his love, changes for the better the lot of his fellow man.

Perhaps the best way in which to portray in general terms the main considerations of my discussion would be by means of a diagram. This diagram is not meant to be strictly accurate in relation to each individual work but should be regarded as valuable only insomuch as individual variations come into greater prominence when viewed against the background it provides. The accompanying chart makes apparent both individual variations and general pattern development.


Innocence
Imagination
&
Experience
Higher Innocence
Wise-woman
(creative-spiritual)
Hero
(Strength)
Maid
(Beauty)
Hero & Maid
(strength-beauty)
Witch
(destructive-material)
Home
Beyond the World
Transfiguration
&
Return Home

		Hero	Maid	Wise-Woman	Witch
The Roots of the Mountains		Gold-mane	Sun-beam	Gods of the Earth	Dusky Men
The Wood beyond the World		Walter	Maid	Unknown	Mistress
The Well at the World's End	(1.)	_____	Lady of Abundance	Lore-mistress	Sorceress
	(2.)	Ralph	Ursula	Lady of Abundance	Utterbol & Burg-devils
The Water of the Wondrous Isles	(1.)	Arthur	Birdalone	Habundia	Witch-wife
	(2.)	Three Knights	Three Damsels	Water of Might	Witch-queen
The Sundering Flood		Osberne	Elfhild	Old Carline & Steelhead	Merchant

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INTRODUCTION

[1]Paul Thompson, The Work of William Morris (London: William Heinemann, 1967), p. 158.

[2]Jessie Kocmonova, "The Aesthetic Purpose of William Morris in the Context of his Late Prose Romances," Brno Studies in English, 6 (1966), 139.

[3]Norman Talbot, "Women and Goddesses in the Romances of William Morris," Southern Review, 3 (1969), 339-57.

[4]William Morris, Hopes and Fears for Art, Collected Works, XXII (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), xiii-xvi.

[5]Ibid., xiii.

[6]William Butler Yeats, Essays and Introductions (New York: Collier Books, 1968), p. 176.

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CHAPTER I

[1]William Morris, The Well at the World's End, Collected Works, XVIII, 150.

[2]William Morris, The Water of the Wondrous Isles, Collected Works, XX, 10.

[3]Ibid., 11.

[4]Morris, The Well, Collected Works, XVIII, 150-1.

[5]Morris, The Water, Collected Works, XX, 10.

[6]William Morris, The Wood beyond the World, Collected Works, XVII, 86.

[7]Morris, The Well, Collected Works, XVIII, 157.

[7a]Ibid., 158.

[8]Morris, The Water, Collected Works, XX, 15.

[9]Ibid., 42.

[10]Morris, The Well, Collected Works, XVIII, 150.

[11]When one engages in an explanatory discussion as the above, not only is it difficult to know how much to explain and at what point to stop; it is more difficult to know where to re-connect. I call the above an "explanatory discussion" rather than a digression because of my feeling that in a world of wizards, enchantresses, sages, goddesses, land-wights, faeries and sorceresses both good and evil, some knowledge of the principles of magic is called for.

[12]Philip Henderson, ed., The Letters of William Morris to his Family and Friends (London: Longmans, Green, 1950), p. 371.

[13]Henderson, p. lxii.

[14]Paul Thompson, The Work of William Morris, p. 158.

[15]William Butler Yeats, Essays and Introductions (New York: Collier Books, 1968), p. 59.

[16]Dorothy M. Hoare, The Works of Morris and Yeats in Relation to Early Saga Literature (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1937), p. 44.

[17]Yeats, p. 116.

[18]Morris, The Wood, Collected Works, XVII, 4.

[19]Morris, The Water, Collected Works, xx, 17-8.

[20]Ibid., 320.

[21]Yeats, p. 59.

[22]William Morris, Hopes and Fears for Art, Collected Works, XXII, 51.

[23]Ibid., 51-2.

[24]Ibid., 53.

[25]Morris, The Well, Collected Works, XVIII, 152.

[26]Morris, The Wood, Collected Works, XVII, 87.

[27]Morris, Hopes, Collected Works, XXII, 56.

[28]Ibid., 66-7.

[29]Morris, The Wood, Collected Works, XVII, 48.

[30]Morris, The Wood, Collected Works, XVII, 54.

[31]Ibid., 106.

[32]Ibid.

[33]The Oxford English Dictionary.

[34]Yeats, pp. 62-4.

[35]Morris, Hopes, Collected Works, XXII, 56-7.

[36]Ibid., 57.

[37]Ibid., 54.

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CHAPTER II

[1]William Morris, The Hollow Land and other contributions to the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, Collected Works, I.

[2]Ibid., 149.

[3]Ibid., 289.

[4]Ibid., 162.

[5]Ibid., 289.

[6]Ibid., 176.

[7]Ibid., 133.

[8]Ibid., 223.

[9]Ibid., 252.

[10]Ibid., 138.

[11]Ibid., 309.

NOTES

CHAPTER III

[1]Henderson, The Letters of William Morris, p. 302.

[2]William Morris, The House of the Wolfings, Collected Works, 49.

[3]E.O.G. Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion of the North (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), p. 168.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Turville-Petre, p. 280.

[6]Ibid., p. 281.

[7]Ibid., p. 280.

[8]Ibid., pp. 180-181.

[9]Morris, The House of the Wolfings, Collected Works, XIV, 66; 183.

[10]Turville-Petre, p. 281.

[11]Thompson, The Work of William Morris, p. 158.

[12]Morris, The House, Collected Works, XIV, 15.

[13]Ibid., 42.

[14]William Morris, The Roots of the Mountains, Collected Works, XV, 1.

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CHAPTER IV

[1]William Morris, The Story of the Glittering Plain, Collected Works, XIV.

[2]Philip Henderson, William Morris: His Life, Work and Friends (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967), p. 327.

[3]Henderson, William Morris, p. 328.

[4]Henderson, William Morris, p. 163.

[5]William Morris, Hopes and Fears for Art, Collected Works, XXII, 56-7.

[6]Ibid., 53.

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CHAPTER V

[1]William Morris, The Wood beyond the World, Collected Works, XVII, 3-4.

[2]Yeats, Essays and Introductions, p. 59.

[3]William Morris, Hopes and Fears for Art, Collected Works, XXII, 77-8.

[4]William Morris, The Water of the Wondrous Isles, Collected Works, XX, p. 17.

[5]Morris, Hopes, Collected Works, XXII, 75-6.

[6]Morris, The Wood, Collected Works, XVII, 35; 91.

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CHAPTER VI

[1]Norman Talbot, "Women and Goddesses in the Romances of William Morris," Southern Review, 3 (1969), 339-57.

[2]F.A.C. Wilson, Yeats's Iconography (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p. 54.

[3]Wilson, p. 54.

[4]Talbot, p. 345.

[5]Talbot, pp. 346-7.

[6]Philip Henderson, William Morris: His Life, Work and Friends, color plate VIII.

[7]William Morris, The Well at the World's End, Collected Works, XVIII & XIX.

[8]Ray Watkinson, William Morris as Designer (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1967), p. 53.

[9]Henderson, William Morris, p. 192.

[10]William Morris, Hopes and Fears for Art, Collected Works, XXII, 4.

[11]Ibid., 6.

[12]Talbot, p. 351.

[13]William Butler Yeats, Essays and Introductions, p. 63.

[14]Morris, Hopes, Collected Works, XXII, 24-7.

[15]J.W. Mackail, The Life of William Morris, 2 vols. (London: Benjamin Blom, 1968), II, 144.

[16]Morris, Hopes, Collected Works, XXII, 73.

[17]Karl de Schweinitz, England's Road to Social Security (New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, Inc., 1961), p. 178.

[18]William Butler Yeats, The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats (New York: Collier Books, 1965), pp. 97-8.

[19]Henderson, William Morris, p. 153.

[20]Jessie Kocmonova takes a curious approach to the connection between Goldburg and Utterbol. In an essay entitled, "The Aesthetic Purpose of William Morris in the context of his Late Prose Romances," Kocmonova writes the following:

> When Ralph asks the old counsellor why the Goldburg folk suffer all the evil of their masters, he is told they cannot help themselves: the robbers can always raise enough men to fight, and the Goldburg folk are not good fighters. Yet even the Lord of Utterbol would not like to see Goldburg destroyed: "'All we deem that when Goldburg shall fall, the world shall change, so that living therein shall be hard to them that have not drunk of the Well at the World's End.'" In other words, Goldburg is a wealthy city whose inhabitants prefer to endure their imperfect lives because they fear to lose what they imagine to be the advantages of wealth; and not having drunk of the Well, they can imagine no other values in life but wealth.

Kocmonova is rather confusing here. To begin with, Ralph is not speaking to David, the old counsellor, but to Otter. Secondly, Ralph does not ask why the Goldburg folk suffer the evil of their masters. The master of Goldburg is, of course, the Queen, and she is not evil. Thirdly, the vast number of the Goldburg folk share no advantages whatever of wealth. Finally, Kocmonova appears to be saying that the Goldburg folk, because wealthy, do not wish to destroy their own city because living "therein" would then be difficult. Why any people should destroy their own non-existent wealth is indeed a puzzle; also, when Otter says living "therein" he is obviously referring to the world as a whole, not merely to Goldburg. Jessie Kocmonova, "The Aesthetic Purpose of William Morris in the Context of his Late Prose Romances," Brno Studies in English, 6 (1966), 128.

[21]Henderson, William Morris, p. 309.

[22]Talbot, p. 351.

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