Literary Pre-Raphaelitism of William Morris as Exemplified in the Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems and Scenes from the Fall of Troy

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LITERARY PRE-RAPHAELITISM OF WILLIAM MORRIS AS EXEMPLIFIED

IN THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE AND OTHER POEMS

AND SCENES FROM THE FALL OF TROY

By

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VITA

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INTRODUCTION

Pre-Raphaelitism is a phase of art and literature upon which critics have never fully agreed. Critiques range all the way from expressions of utter and complete condemnation to those of extravagant praise of the work effected by the small group of men who set out to revolutionize English art and letters during the nineteenth century. Each member or associate of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood likewise becomes a bone of contention, sharing in the praise or blame of the movement as a whole.

Thus, in considering critical opinion on that jack-of-all-trades among the Pre-Raphaelites, William Morris, we find critics such as Drinkwater\(^1\) and Noyes,\(^2\) who rank him high among the English poets, and others, such as Beers,\(^3\) who would class him as a too highly glorified "second-rater"; those\(^4\) who would class his early works, The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems, and Scenes from the Fall of Troy as some

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Mackail, Life of William Morris, London, Longmans, 1899, 321
of the greatest poetry of the period, worthy to be ranked with the best of Tennyson and Browning; those\(^5\) who claim that his middle works, *The Earthly Paradise* and *The Life and Death of Jason*, are comparable to Chaucer; those\(^6\) who would place his epic reworking of the Volsungasaga, *Sigurd, the Volsung*, as one of the topmost achievements of the nineteenth century; and finally, those\(^7\) who feel that Morris wasted time on "second-rate" poetry, was a far better artisan and socialist, and would have been far happier had he never written at all.

Now it is only a matter of justice that we judge the success of an artist, literary or pictorial, at least to some extent, in the light of the aims he set out to achieve, and the principles he advocated. In the case of William Morris, where connections with a definite school of artistic thought exist, we must attempt to determine what principles and methods the particular school advocated, how far the author agreed with these principles and methods, what works of the author under consideration exemplify these aims and principles, and in which works he departed from them in whole or in part. If then, we would give to William Morris his correct place in the history of literature, we must find out his debt to the Pre-Raphaelite school of thought.

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\(^5\) Compton, Rickett, *William Morris, a Study in Personality*, London, H. Jenkins, 1913, 69

\(^6\) Colwell, P., *Poems of William Morris*, N. Y., Crowell, 1904, 30

Hearn, Lafcadio, *Pre-Raphaelite and Other Poets*, N. Y., Dodd, Mead & Co., 1922, 293


Our first task, then, in investigating the literary debt owed by William Morris to the Pre-Raphaelite school, is to study the origin, purpose, and aims which characterize the artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and to determine the fundamental principles governing their art and the special methods and techniques they adopted to accomplish their ends. Since literary Pre-Raphaelitism emerged from Dante Gabriel Rossetti's part in the artistic brotherhood, it becomes imperative to make a special study of his ideals and methods of art. Chapter one of this thesis, therefore, attempts to summarize the origin and development of literary Pre-Raphaelitism from the artistic phase of the movement, to enumerate the aims, purposes, and techniques which were proper to the school and which were carried over to literature from Pre-Raphaelite art by the founder of the literary phase of the movement, Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

After studying the principles and methods of the school with which an artist is associated, we must next turn to the author himself and attempt to learn whether he adopted that particular literary creed as a result of his character, his early environment, and his education, or whether his hobbies, his reading habits, or the influence of some man or a group of men tempted his pen into those particular channels. Hence, in chapter two of this thesis we will examine the life of William Morris, his personality, his early environment, his educational surroundings, his reading tastes and interests, as well as his associations with Ruskin, his friendship with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, his formation of the Oxford-Cambridge Brotherhood, his part in the Pre-Raphaelite debacle of the
Oxford Debating Hall murals, his marriage and the commercial company which sprang from his attempts to make the "Red House" a palace of art, his quarrel with Rossetti, the gradual breaking away from the latter's influence, and the resultant following of his own line of art and literature. By the time Morris left the Red House, the two works under consideration in this thesis, The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems and Scenes from the Fall of Troy, were either completed or abandoned. Since his later life as decorative artist, as printer, as narrative poet, as translator, and as socialist do not effect his early work, reference to it will be omitted in this thesis.

After discovering, then, the meaning of Pre-Raphaelitism, the natural attractions it had for the artist, and the connections the artist had with the movement, we turn to a careful analysis of the early poetry of William Morris to determine whether the principles espoused were ever put into practice. In chapter three of this thesis, The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems and Scenes from the Fall of Troy will be examined to determine the extent and virility of the Pre-Raphaelite influence on both the content and the techniques of Morris's early poetry. Interwoven with quotations from the poetry mentioned above, will be material gleaned from a survey of critical material, that personal findings may be substantiated in the light of established criticism.

Chapter four will be one of summary and conclusion. It will include a brief restatement of Pre-Raphaelite principles, aims, and methods, of the influences inducing Morris to adopt them, and of the influences exerted by them upon Morris's early poetry.
In regard to the bibliography, the information in chapter two is based generally upon the *Life of William Morris*, the definitive biography by John Mackail, a work frequently quoted by all subsequent biographers of the poet. However, contrasting ideas of other biographers such as Noyes and Compton-Rickett are included.
CHAPTER I

ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM, ITS CONTENT, PRINCIPLES, AND TECHNIQUES

Because the Pre-Raphaelite movement in art and literature was fathered forth by such individualists as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, and John Everet Millais and included other individualists such as William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, each of whom eventually walked his own path in his own way, Pre-Raphaelitism has come to mean a great number of diverse things to a confused public. The issue has been even more beclouded by well-meaning critics who refer to the Pre-Raphaelite movement variously as romantic, realistic, influenced by Pre-Renaissance art, influenced by Renaissance art, a comedy, a tragedy --all with some degree of truth.

What then was the Pre-Raphaelite movement? Laurence Housman gives an excellent definition of it in Pre-Raphaelitism in Art and Poetry as

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1 Housman, Laurence, Pre-Raphaelitism in Art and Poetry, London, Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom, 1933, 3rd ed. ser. vol. xii, 1-29
2 Beers, Henry, History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century, N. Y., Henry Holt, 1901
3 Rossetti Miscellanies, "Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites", L. J. Swinburne from the New Englander, viii, July, 1885, 3
5 Bickley, Francis L., The Pre-Raphaelite Comedy, N. Y., Holt, 1932
"an endeavor to express romance in terms of nature with great intensity of individual feeling and with a strong sense of character . . . an attempt to put romance into modern life," and "natural feeling into the medieval." Here, then, we have the three Pre-Raphaelite key words, "romance," nature," and "emotional intensity." The truth of Housman's definition becomes apparent when we study the history of the foundation of the Brotherhood. In the first half of the nineteenth century English art was slowly but surely deteriorating. Artists, for the most part, relied completely on precedent and convention, and, losing touch with nature and life, became mere imitators, as Pythian calls them, "creatures of orthodox rule, line, and system." However, even then, Ford Maddox Brown, a young individualistic painter, was in revolt against this artistic slavery, and, by his art, anticipated the principles of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Although he never formally joined the movement, Brown, nevertheless, worked parallel with it and exerted more or less influence upon most of its members.

The Brotherhood itself, according to Pythian, grew out of the friendship of three young students at the Royal Academy--William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and John Everett Millais. Rossetti had been a student of Ford Maddox Brown, but his impetuous nature had revolted at being set to painting bottles, and he had attached himself to Hunt.

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7 Housman, op. cit., 12
8 Pythian, op. cit., viii
9 Ibid., ix
10 Ibid., xv
11 Ibid., xiii
As the three young artists were engaged in a study of Lasino's engravings of the frescoes in Campo Santo at Pisa, they discovered during the course of the conversation, that they held a number of uniform artistic views. All of them loved the early Florentine painters--Giotto, Ghiberti, and Fra Angelico. These, they felt, far surpassed the Renaissance artists in sweetness, depth, and sincerity of devotion. True, the trained eyes of these young artists detected flaws in workmanship--awkward figure painting, faulty perspective, incorrect anatomy, and imperfect lights and shades--but the enthusiastic trio also found there their own ideal of art--art seeking to interpret nature and human life. Out of the common ground of artistic tastes and interest in the medieval past, then, grew a little organization which they termed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.¹²

By their title, the artists did not mean to deny the genius of Raphael, or that good painting had been done after his time; they merely wished to protest against slavish imitations of Raphael's "grand manner", which had atrophied rather than helped art, and against the ladder of set rules which art schools had established to aid the embryonic artist in climbing to the heights of the master rules such as that of preparing the canvas by rubbing it with bitumen and the other of laying on it a background of brown, gray, or a neutral tint, to attain a semblance of the golden glory of Raphael.¹³

¹² Ibid., xiv
¹³ Beers, Henry Augustin, op. cit.
Each of the original painters agreed to paint a picture for the fall exhibition in the style and manner befitting their ideal, and to place the symbolic letters, PRB, after the signature. The letters aroused no comment at first, but when their meaning was divulged, probably through Dante Gabriel Rossetti's proverbial indiscretion, the storm descended, a storm which mounted in fury until Ruskin turned his pen into a cudgel to do valiant battle for the young artists.

Largely because of the impetuosity of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the little group of three was soon enlarged to seven--Thomas Woolner, F. S. Stephens, James Collinson (whose conversion to the Roman Catholic faith darkened the life of Christina Rossetti), and William Michael Rossetti, brother of Dante Gabriel and historian and chronicler of the movement, being added. None of these, however, attained noted distinction in either art or literature. Dante Gabriel Rossetti was much in favor of inviting Ford Maddox Brown to membership in the Brotherhood, but not even his fiery zeal for his old teacher could induce the others to agree.  

Here the question naturally arises: "How did this group of artists differ from the established school of English art?" Speaking of both artistic and literary Pre-Raphaelitism, Stopford Brooke states:

The air is different, the landscape is different, the manner of thinking

14 Pythian, op. cit., xv
15 Ibid., xiv
16 Ibid., xiv
and feeling is different, the subject is different, the methods and aims of art are different, the inspiration is drawn from different sources, and the material is different. 17

The Pre-Raphaelite artist rarely presented a scene of happiness. His air was distinctly the melancholy resulting from sin—an intense heimweh for the "snows of yesteryear." William Gaunt in his Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy refers to the appropriate way in which the unhappy, adulterous love theme of the Guenevere-Launcelot legend fitted Pre-Raphaelite ideals. 18 Any survey of Pre-Raphaelite pictures must point out the emphasis on sin and disillusionment. Holman Hunt's beautiful work, "The Awakened Conscience," picturing an adulterous woman's horror-stricken face as she rises from her lover's lap, a horror more accentuated by the detailed splendor of her surroundings, celebrates the realization, even in the midst of pleasure, that "all this shall pass." Then there is Rossetti’s painting of the farmer finding his former love, a prostitute, crouching beside the city wall; Hunt's "Scapegoat," driven out into a dreary wilderness; "The Hireling Shepherd" wasting his time in frivolous pleasures while "the wolf catches and scatters the sheep"; and Millais' condemned Royalist, concealed in a decaying tree trunk by his beloved. Even in Hunt's religious masterpiece, "Light of the World," the face of Christ is tenderly sad, and the door at which He knocks is overgrown

17 Brooke, Stopford, Four Victorian Poets, G. P. Putnam's, London, 1908, 154
18 Gaunt, William, op. cit., 80
with weeds and briars and mounted on rusty hinges as though the heart had frequently refused to open to the Light, preferring instead "to walk in darkness and in the shadow of death."

Pre-Raphaelite literature, too, shows this fascination of sin, repentance, and disillusionment, as for example in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Jenny" or some of the sonnets from The House of Life of which sonnet 86, frequently titled "Lost Days" is typical.

I do not see them here: my lost days but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
'I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?'
'And I—and I—thyself' (lo! each one saith),
'And thou thyself to all eternity!'\(^{19}\)

Pre-Raphaelite "landscape" was different, particularly in its insistence upon the natural. Every section of a picture must be painted from reality, "rejecting nothing, choosing nothing," as Ruskin maintains.\(^{20}\) Even lights and shadows must be painted from reality. Hence we have Holman Hunt painting The Light of the World in the orchard at night in order to get the lights and shades from the moon and from the lantern Christ holds in His Hand exactly according to nature. It was also this urge to paint from reality that sent Dante Gabriel Rossetti

\(^{19}\) Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, "Lost Days" in Library of the World's Best Literature, N. Y., International Society, 1897, 12417
\(^{20}\) Pythian, op. cit., xii (requoted from Ruskin's Modern Painters)
scouring the countryside of England for a red wall which would correspond to the kind he wanted to paint in the picture, "Found."  

Figures, also, were to be painted from reality—"St. George was to be St. George, not a symbol of fortitude." Because of this fetish for reality, members of the Pre-Raphaelite group constantly sat for each other as models. Christina Rossetti served as the Virgin, and brother Michael as the Archangel Gabriel in Rossetti's "Annunciation," Morris' wife, Jane, and Rossetti's Lizzie served constantly as Dante Gabriel Rossetti's models, now lying for hours in water to be painted as Ophelia, now sitting in uncomfortable postures as Beatrice.

Fidelity to nature, the urge "to conceive of things as they are--to think and feel them quite out" necessitated not only painting from real objects, but painting in great detail. The detail in Millais' " Caller Herrin'" is so perfect that Ruskin remarks, "The herrings are painted as well as the girl, yet the author is not afraid you will look at the herrings first." In Hunt's painting, "The Hireling Shepherd," he executed the floral detail with such perfection that naturalists were able to distinguish and classify the various species of flowers and even of butterflies, both of which Hunt had painted, according to the Pre-Raphaelite creed, from nature. In his criticism of Millais' "Dove

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21 Beers, op. cit., 286
22 Swinburne, op. cit., 8
24 Ibid., 46
25 Ibid., 46
Returning to the Ark," Ruskin remarks 26 that although he cannot defend the choice of figure, the natural ruffling of the dove's plume is excellent, and the painting of the hay is perfect. In fact, no detail was overlooked, "no flower or scroll, or bit of carving was too insignificant for them; being like the old saints in the service of the church, they wrought it out with the grace and vigor of minutest detail." 27 This extreme stressing of detail is one of the chief criticisms of Pre-Raphaelitism on the ground that too many details detract from the whole.

The Pre-Raphaelites differed from contemporary conventional artists in their manner of thinking and feeling. Esther Wood in her Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement cites Ruskin's differentiation between the Dutch School and the Pre-Raphaelite School of art. Ruskin's thesis is that the Dutch painters emphasized "thought"; the Dutch painters stressed form—the "how" to paint things; the Pre-Raphaelites, ideas—the "what" of painting. 28 L. J. Swinburne, moreover, points out a difference in thought and feeling between Pre-Raphaelite art and Italian Renaissance art, a difference rooted in a Germanic element "always present in the best English achievement" which must appeal to chords in every Anglo-Saxon nature which the Italian is powerless to vibrate," an emphasis on exactness, color, and design." 29 When, however, we recall the importance

26 Ruskin, John, Arrows of Chance, N. Y. Lovell Co., 1884, 70
27 L. J. Swinburne, op. cit., 9
29 Swinburne, op. cit., 5
Italian Renaissance artists attached to the study of anatomy because it enabled them to reproduce the human figure more exactly, or when we consider the magnificent detail of the Renaissance masters, we are tempted to question the validity of this comment.

Pre-Raphaelite art is tense with high-powered emotion. Rejecting the rhetorical movement and conventional gesture for the rendering of passion, it emphasized the quiet attitudes and the exchange of glances. The figures seem to be arrested--halted in the intensity of their feeling--and the deep emotional conflict has passed into their faces. One of the clearest examples of this is Hunt's "Awakened Conscience," mentioned above. The horror of the realization that guilty joy is only transitory, that it will flee with youth, that long years ahead lie blank and empty--all these are stamped on the face of the young girl caught in the process of a startled rising from her lover's knees, while he continues idly stroking the keys of the piano, with the smirk of smug self-satisfaction upon his face. Rossetti's unusual "How They Met Themselves" is another outstanding example of arrested emotion in which facial expression plays a dominant part. Almost, one could call it dramatic painting, a romantic drama "of emotion, of flesh and blood--sincere, human, intense." 30

Pre-Raphaelite art invariably tells a story in line and colour exquisitely, but the appeal is only to a few, for the literary and religious

30 Housman, op. cit., 12, also, Brawley, Benjamin, "Pre-Raphaelitism and Its Literary Relations", South Atlantic Quarterly, 15;68-81, Jan. 1916, 77
subject matter and the prolific use of symbol, preclude general popularity and understanding. In illustrating this exclusiveness of Pre-Raphaelite art, Brawley tells a humorous episode of Hunt's "Scapegoat."31 The old Hebrew symbolic custom of placing the sins of the people upon a goat, and driving it into the desert regions of the Trans-Jordan district is known, of course, to students of the Bible and of Hebrew history. In order to develop the theme in true-to-nature details according to the Pre-Raphaelite creed, Hunt travelled to Palestine and made an intensive study of the Trans-Jordanic regions. After painting the picture—a goat, cast off into the solitary wasteland—came the business of securing a buyer. However, missing the Biblical reference and unaware of the symbolism of the picture, prospective buyers paid no heed to it. Hunt, in need of money, haunted a dealer's shop, arguing against the owner's laconic reason that nobody knew what he meant. In desperation, the dealer promised to prove his statement before Hunt with the next buyers that turned up. To Hunt's complete amazement, no one saw in the picture anything more than a goat—a goat painted in magnificent detail, of course, but just a goat—and no one wanted it. May Morris, in speaking of the stained glass windows of the artistic company of which her father was the head also refers to this importance of storied incidents. She says, "Story-telling goes on breathlessly all the time, spreads into every corner of the window, one incident tumbles over another."32

31 Brawley, op. cit., 71
Frequently the Pre-Raphaelites used literary and biblical subject matter for their "artistic stories." Both Keats and Shakespeare, as well as their own contemporary, Tennyson, were prolific sources of inspiration. From Keat's influence we have Millais' "Lorenzo at the House of Isabel," and Hunt's "Isabella and the Pot of Basil" from Keats' Isabella, and Hunt's "Eve of St. Agnes" from Keats' poem of that name. Was the attraction of Keats due to the fact that they found in him "their own conception of situation, powerful motives of passion, and chivalrous view of women, in a framework of detail, lavish and precise"?33 Clarice Short would agree with this view when she quotes from Claude Finney's *Evolution of Keats' Poetry*: "Pre-Raphaelite artists admired and imitated the simple story, the intense passion, the concise and concrete imagery and the bright colours of Keats' metrical romances."34

Shakespeare's contribution to Pre-Raphaelite subject matter was also great. This is exemplified in Hunt's beautiful "Valentine Defending Sylvia" painted in typical Pre-Raphaelite manner with truth of detail, splendor of color, the arrested action of Valentine and the doubt and distress in the face of Julia.35 Also along the literary line were the Pre-Raphaelite illustrations for Tennyson undertaken in the year 1857,36 and the work of Rossetti in relation to Dante. The preoccupation of the

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34 Ruskin, John, *Arrow of Chance*, op. cit., 69
35 Beers, H., op. cit., 303
The entire Rossetti family with the Divina Comedia of Dante is well-known. Named for Dante and brought up on his writings, Dante Gabriel Rossetti let the images and conceptions, built up in his mind through years of association with the great masterpiece, spill over onto canvas, and we have a series of Dante pictures climaxed by the beautiful "Beata Beatrix." Although Hunt made the most prolific use of biblical subject matter, Rossetti also employed it, chiefly in the "Annunciation" and the "Girlhood of Mary the Virgin."

Closely akin to the literary and biblical subject matter was the frequent use of symbolism on the part of all Pre-Raphaelites, but particularly Hunt and Rossetti. Everything about Hunt's masterly "Light of the World" is symbolic—the sad-eyed Christ, haloed by the Paschal moon, wearing the white seamless robe, symbolic of Christian unity; the crown of thorns and the kingly mantle with its double clasp, one oval, the other oblong, symbolic of the old and the new testaments; the door, symbolic of the heart overgrown with the weeds and briars of worldliness, and lacking a latch, for heart doors can be opened only from within; the orchards gay with springtime, the lanthorn with its ornamental symbolic settings, itself symbolic of the Savior who called Himself "The Light of the World." No doubt this extensive use of symbolism is partly responsible for the lack of sympathetic understanding of Pre-Raphaelite works on the part of the public.

The aims and methods of the Pre-Raphaelite school of art differed largely from those of the conventional artistic schools of the day.
William Michael Rossetti, historian of the movement, lists four great aims of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. First, the artist must have originality, "genuine ideas to express"; secondly, he must carefully study nature that he may be able to determine how best to express his thought; thirdly, he must be in sympathy with "whatever is direct and heartfelt in previous art, excluding everything conventional, self-parading, and learned by rote"; finally, and all inclusively, "he must produce good pictures and statues."37 L. J. Swinburne condenses these four aims into two all inclusive ones: "to conceive nobly of life and mind and to choose elevated subjects and embody them with the utmost fidelity to nature."38

In regard to method, the Pre-Raphaelite group was lavish in scarping many of the methods of the schools, a natural enough thing, since many methods in use were atrophied methods resulting in slavish imitation of Renaissance art. One such method was the process of "preparing the canvas" for the picture. Academicians insisted on using a canvas treated with bitumen and painted over with brown or grey or some neutral tint; the Pre-Raphaelites, however, preferred an untreated and unprepared canvas.39 The old rule of four parts of shadow to one part of white was also superseded by the favorite Pre-Raphaelite canon of "truth to nature." As for "transparency," the Pre-Raphaelites attempted to attain

37 Requoted from Bate, Percy, The English Pre-Raphaelite Painters, Their Associates and Successors, London, G. Bell, 1899, 8
38 L. J. Swinburne, op. cit., 8
39 "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood", Quarterly Review, 204:352-74, 354
it through juxtaposition. The Pre-Raphaelites painted their pictures as mosaics, bit by bit, spending as much loving attention on the above the door in the "Light of the World," or the tangle of weeds and flowers at the feet of the sad-faced Christ as upon the central figure itself.

Finally, the inspiration and material of Pre-Raphaelite art is different from the conventional art of its own day. The Pre-Raphaelites were romantic mediaevalists, emphasizing the two Romantic characteristics of naturalism and Gothicism. Their interest in the mediaeval, inspired by Ruskin, and defended by him as a search for truth rather than an escape from contemporary life, is an unchallenged fact. This strain of mediaevalism runs through both groups of Pre-Raphaelites—the original circle of Hunt, Rossetti, and Millais, and the neo-Pre-Raphaelites composed of followers of the versatile Rossetti such as William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. Inspired by their love of Pre-Renaissance art, they turned to the religious sentiment of the middle ages, for "in medieval times they found the noblest embodiment of religious ideals, tender dreaming on divine things, aspirations, holiness." Newman and the Tracts, Pugin and Rickman as well as Ruskin, contributed to the formation of this "Gothicism in art" with its nobility of aim and elaborateness of detail. Yet it seems strange that enthusiastic as they were in recognizing the religious inspiration which produced the art, it never entered

40 Beers, op. cit., 286
41 Ward and Waller, Cambridge History of English Literature, New York Macmillan, 1939, xiii, Nineteenth Century, Part II, 123
42 Swinburne, op. cit., 8
43 Ibid., 9
their minds to investigate the credentials of the Church which had fostered for them this treasure house of artistry. Brawley aptly comments about this fact, calling their religion "pseudo-religion," a "mistaking of form for spirit, 'a clinging to religious aesthetics" under the mistaken notion that they possessed religious morals. 44

After weathering the storm of artistic disapproval, the first Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood gradually drifted apart into individual paths. Hunt, most faithful to the creed of nature and detail, became wrapped up in his studies of the life and work of Christ; Millais, who later renounced Pre-Raphaelitism, began his work of interpreting English life with its instincts and habits; Rossetti betook himself to his idealistic and romantic watercolors, pictures produced in an imaginative world, "luxuriantly beautiful, rich in color, with heavily scented air—a land like the land of the lotus-eaters where we fear lest the moral fibre be relaxed." 45

The Pre-Raphaelite movement formally ended with Rossetti's undertaking to paint the murals on the walls and ceiling of the Oxford Debating Union. 46 But the death of the old Pre-Raphaelite Movement heralded the dawn of the Neo-Pre-Raphaelite Movement, a movement which was to be as famous in literature as in art. Around Rossetti had been gathering a group of younger men, men who looked up to him and hung upon his every

44 Brawley, op. cit., 79
45 Pythian, op. cit., xix
46 "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood", Quarterly Review, 204:352-374, 354, Aug., 1906
word, literary men as well as artists. Morris, Burne-Jones, and their Oxford and Cambridge friends, therefore, formed the nucleus out of which grew the literary phase of the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

Rossetti, then, brought together for the first time Pre-Raphaelite ideals and young William Morris; but it was a Morris already prepared for those ideals through a careful reading and absorption of Ruskin's Gothic mediaevalism. Ruskin and Rossetti, these two according to Compton-Rickett constitute the important influences in Morris's life; Rossetti's influence the more dominant, Ruskin's the more permanent. Although, from the first, Rossetti seemed interested in Morris's poetry inquiring about it from Burne-Jones, he believed everyone who felt the creative urge should become the servant of art, for everything worth saying had already been well said, yet it had hardly begun to be painted. Thus, under Rossetti's tutorship, Morris began his artistic career, a career which started with painting and ended with decorative art.

Since Morris's brand of Pre-Raphaelitism stems from the Rossetti branch of the great trio, it would be well to consider briefly just what were the peculiarities of the Rossetti branch of artistic and literary Pre-Raphaelitism. Rossetti believed that it was possible to express the identical thoughts and feelings similarly in the various fields of artistic

47 Compton-Rickett, Arthur, William Morris, A Study in Personality, London, H. Jenkins, 1913, 49
48 Mackail, John, Life of William Morris, London, Longmans, 1899, 102
49 Ibid., 105
endeavor—music, poetry, painting. Hence his advice to Morris, mentioned above. Hence also the close similarity between his painting and his poetry. 50 Morris, also, believed that there was a close kinship between the arts. His oft-quoted saying, "If a chap can't compose an epic poem while he's weaving tapestry, he had better shut up; he'll never do any good at all," 51 illustrates his belief at least that poetry and handi- craft were closely related. 52

The qualities of realistic detail and fidelity to nature in its presentation, 53 the use of the story and the symbol, 54 and the preoccu- pation with the mediaeval, 55 mentioned above, were all characteristic of Rossetti. Writers are almost unanimous in adding to these Rossetti's use of color; Pythian remarking about its richness, Swinburne referring to it as "livid tints," 56 most others contrasting its rich brightness with the conventional soft tones used by so many artists of the period. Ruskin, in speaking of Rossetti's use of color and pattern, traces its inspiration to the illuminated mediaeval manuscripts and the stained-glass windows of the great cathedrals. 57

50 Payne, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti", Library of the World's Best Literature, 21, 12411
51 Colwell, Percy (editor), The Poems of William Morris, N. Y., Crowell, 1904, xxviii
53 Swinburne, op. cit., 9, and Ward & Waller, op. cit., 127
54 Welby, Thomas, The Victorian Romantics, London, G. Howe, 1929, 17
55 Swinburne, op. cit., 14 & Ward, op. cit., 127 & Welby, op. cit., 17
56 Compton-Rickett, op. cit., 72 & Swinburne, op. cit., 8
57 Swinburne, op. cit., 3
A great deal is made in almost all commentaries of Rossetti's "mysticism." Yeats speaks of him as catching glimpses of supernatural beauty when "drunk with natural beauty." It is this mysticism which constitutes the ground of defence against the charge of poetic sensuality laid against him as leader of "The Fleshly School of Poetry." Brooke argues from this point of view when he differentiates between Italian and English love poetry: "When it is sensuous, which is rare, it is for the most part unmixed with any spiritual feeling, and when it is spiritualized, which is common, it is kept apart from the elements of sense." Italian poetry, however, admits of such a combination; and even in frankly sensual Italian poetry, the spiritual element enters. In Rossetti, then

the fusion of the spirit and the sense is expressed more intimately than in Italian poetry, because he was partly English, and England gave him more reticence; and more intensely than in any English poetry, because he was three-fourths Italian. Those times in love between man and woman when the sensuous element is lifted by pure joy and emotion into the spiritual world and there transfigured; and when the spiritual element is brought into the sensuous till it is made, as it were, palpable, embodied, incarnated—when both sense and spirit are fused into one fire—in those love is best known, best

58 Yeats, W. B. "Happiest of Poets", Fortnightly Review, 79:536, March 1903
59 Brooke, op. cit., 165
felt, and best expressed, and they are of love's finest, purest, most exalted power. No one in England has shaped them into words like Rossetti; and he, feeling their clear purity and beauty, thought himself licensed to express them. They are a thousand years away from sensualism . . . I am not, however, sure that this revelation of the central heart of love is not too intimate for words. It is there, if anywhere, that I should challenge the love poetry of Rossetti.60

Stopford Brooke also analyzes the nature element in Rossetti's poetry. He knew that Rossetti "felt deeply the beauty and the terror of the world of nature," but he felt that "the beautiful and terrible landscape of the soul in its questioning, its experience, and its passions, above all its passion of love" was a hundred times more poetically important. Hence nature enters into his poetry only to describe the actions and feelings of man's soul, not for the pure sake of its own beauty.61 His power of catching some passing aspect of nature in unusual and vital expressions, rich in color, is evidently the result of his artistic training. "Deep and opulent in color, careful and true in detail, resolute in symbolism" is his reference to nature. He loved sunlight in all its ways and moonlight even more. Both appear frequently in his poetry.62

It seems important to ask here, "What was Morris's opinion of the original Pre-Raphaelites?" We know the answer the young Morris would

60 Brooke, op. cit., 160
61 Ibid., 201
62 Ibid., 203
have given about Rossetti. "I want to imitate Gabriel as much as I can," he told Burne-Jones when the latter complained to him that he (Burne-Jones) was too imitative of Rossetti. 63 On October 24, 1891, Morris addressed a group at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery on the "Painting of the Pre-Raphaelite School." He defined Pre-Raphaelitism as a revolt against Academicism in situation as well as in art, 64 and pointed to naturalism as their "special and particular doctrine." This naturalism was shocking to the public of the times. It had always insisted that art was uninteresting to the layman and not understandable by him. When the Pre-Raphaelite art appeared, the public ridiculed the ideal of truth to nature. "These are not like nature," they said; "these things are monsters." What they really meant, however, was, "These things are not like pictures," for, Morris goes on to say, "They were not like pictures, but they were like nature." 65

Ever observant in the matter of art, however, Morris realized that fact was not enough; a mere statement of fact becomes flat and uninteresting. Something more was needed, and the Pre-Raphaelites found that something more in the "conscious presentment of incident." 66 "Granted you have something to say, and can say it well by means of the art of

63 Evans, Benjamin, William Morris and His Poetry, London, Harrap, 1925, 25
65 Ibid., 298-299
66 Ibid., 300
painting," says Morris, "you are then, and then only, a naturalistic painter." 67

Another characteristic of Pre-Raphaelite art, according to Morris, was the search for definite, harmonious, conscious beauty. All art must fulfill the ornamental function of art. 68 During the Renaissance, art had become "academical, inorganic," hence had atrophied in this important aim.

Regarding the three leaders, Morris believed Millais to be the leader in natural form, while Rossetti, Hunt, and Brown's strong point was the "conscious presentment of incident." "They knocked the nail hard on this point," he comments. 69 They strove to convince the spectator that the incident could have happened in no other way. This was "dramatic, epical" art.

In summary, then, let us glance at what made the Pre-Raphaelite school of art and poetry different. Since Rossetti considered painting and poetry as different modes of expressing the same ideas, the content and techniques of Pre-Raphaelite poetry will not differ intrinsically from that of Pre-Raphaelite art. In content, Pre-Raphaelite poetry was romantic, an escape from the ugly or seemingly drab elements of Victorian life. Like Miniver Cheevy, it looked to the medieval, to the days, "when swords were bright and steeds were prancing"; in art, to the days

67 Ibid., 300
68 Ibid., 302
69 Ibid., 304
of Giotto, Ghiberti, and Fra Angelico; in poetry, to the times of Malory and Froissart. Strong and passionate love--love frequently leading to sin--a preoccupation with failure, disillusionment, and the sense of the passing of time and the shortness of life were topics dear to all Pre-Raphaelite hearts. The Pre-Raphaelites were "story poets," ever conscious of incident, and with a leaning toward the religious and literary as well as the sensuous and passionate. Their attempt, especially in the case of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, to unite the sensuous and the spiritual resulted in the derogatory title, "The Fleshly School of Poetry," a strange name, indeed, for a group which aimed "to conceive nobly of life and mind."

In technique, the Pre-Raphaelites emphasized the natural, striving for simplicity, and an exact and truthful rendering of incident. This exactness of natural rendering necessitated great attention to details, the artist almost overburdening the work with them. Yet the natural detail to them was frequently more--was symbolic of something more noble and spiritual.

Incidents were often treated dramatically. High-powered emotion was expressed in arrested gesture and, in art, in the strong facial expression. Color, fresh, "vivid color," dominated Pre-Raphaelite works.

All these Pre-Raphaelite characteristics, especially the love of naturalism and the use of incident played their part in the life and poetry of William Morris, partly through early environment, education, and interests, partly through the influence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
and John Ruskin. In chapter two we will examine Morris's life, tracing the influences that ripened him for the doctrines of Pre-Raphaelitism, and his contacts with the leader of the literary Pre-Raphaelite school, Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
CHAPTER II
WILLIAM MORRIS, A PRE-RAPHAELITE
BY ENVIRONMENT, EDUCATION,
AND ASSOCIATIONS

In the preface to his life of William Morris, Alfred Noyes relates an interesting anecdote about the "illogical, impetuous, idealistic, sensuous, and fiery being" whom the world knew as William Morris. A minister had invited Morris to look at his church. As the husky, blue-clad figure with the look and swing of a Viking seaman passed him, a Scotch verger caught at the minister's sleeve, demanding to know; "Who's yon? Who's yon? Canna ye tell me? Yon's not an ordinary man."1 And, indeed, William Morris was not an ordinary man.

At Elm House, Clay Hill, Walthamstow, on the twenty-fourth of March, 1834, William Morris, eldest son of William Morris and Emma Shelton, was born into an ordinary middle-class family of Welsh descent. The Sheltons, indeed, were musically inclined, counting "singing canons" and music teachers among their number, but beyond that, there seems to be nothing in Morris's ancestry indicative of his future love of and appreciation for art and literature.2

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1 Noyes, Alfred, William Morris, London, Macmillan, 1908, vi
2 Mackail, John, Life of William Morris, London, Longmans, 1899, I, 3
Morris's early environment undoubtedly bred the romantic interests that flowered in later years. Because of his delicate health, he spent much time indoors, and learned to read at a very early age. His biographer, John Mackail, states that he read the Waverly Novels when he was four years old, and early formed the habit of reading with "extraordinary swiftness" and with a prodigious grasp of memory.\(^3\) As authority for this statement, he quotes Morris's older sisters. Noyes,\(^4\) commenting on this statement of Mackail's, avers that his interest in the Waverly Novels probably meant no more than "hours spent looking at the pictures under the mulberry tree that leaned along the lawn at Elm House," and wonders whether the "printed words or the leaf shadows that dappled the page made the deeper additional impression on his mind." Citing his notoriously poor spelling and his boyhood interest and delight in ghost stories, Noyes regards Morris but as an "imaginative child who happened among other adventures to follow some enchanting title like Redgauntlet or The Black Dwarf through a polysyllabic wilderness," filling in with his imagination and with the help of the natural beauty that surrounded him the spaces of the story beyond his comprehension. Yet, no doubt he found in these early adventures in Scott some "monosyllabic clash of swords or sudden flash of armor" to awaken his child's interest in the chivalry of the Middle Ages.

\(^3\) Ibid., 5
\(^4\) Noyes, op. cit., 3
When Morris was six years old, the family moved to Woodford Hall near Epping Forest. Here environment played a large part in preparing him for his future career as Pre-Raphaelite.\(^5\) Redolent with the atmosphere of the middle ages was this new home next to the great hornbeam forest where the old festivals such as Twelfth Night were observed, where the Masque of St. George was presented with the ancient, due solemnity, where fourteenth-century customs such as mid-morning lunch of cake, cheese, and ale were still observed. The flair for the mediaeval, so early developed by Scott, continued, no longer imaginatively, but actually; for William, dressed in a toy suit of armor, spent many happy hours riding his pony through the forests and hunting wood pigeons with bow and arrow.\(^6\)

It was at Woodford Hall that Morris first developed that passionate love of the earth, of the things of nature, observing with almost scrupulous exactitude each detail of beauty. Here he became an out-of-doors boy, riding about the park with his brothers or adventuring with them through the forest learning the names of birds and flowers.\(^7\) A close and careful perusal of Gerard's Herbal gave him the basic knowledge needed for his life as a young naturalist. Blessed with a potent memory, Morris retained vividly and distinctly many sense impressions of the days

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\(^5\) Noyes, op. cit., 3  
\(^6\) Mackail, op. cit., 9  
\(^7\) Ibid., 8
"when he was a little chap." Hence the vivid delineation of natural
detail in all his literary work.

Another phase of life in the mediaeval times was brought home to
Norris by the stocks and the cage on Epping Green. These instruments
of punishment inspired the youngster with dread and even terror so that
he "decidedly preferred to walk on the other side of the road," even
though to his knowledge miscreants were no longer punished there. Noyes
ascribes to this experience Morris's realistic description of such
weapons and the sense of horror that pervades such descriptions in "Sir
Peter Harpdon's End" and other poems of The Defence of Guenevere.9

Even more potent in the formation of a future Pre-Raphaelite were
the frequent excursions with his father to the old churches of the
neighborhood "with their monuments and brasses,"10 their stained-glass
windows, dark aisles, great pillars, and elaborately carved tombstones.
Here, again, Morris's notably powerful memory made experiences, such as
the trip to Canterbury when he was eight years old, vastly important.
Sense impressions gleaned from the "curious inscription and strange
recumbent figures in eternal armor with frozen swords and stark, upturned
feet," are responsible for the realistic mediaeval atmosphere of The
Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems. In commenting on the importance
of this early-formed love of the Gothic, Noyes says:

8 Ibid., 6
9 Noyes, op. cit., 8
10 Ibid., 4
It is curious, for instance, how the dumb stone of King Arthur’s tomb seems to make almost a third character in that wonderful interview between Lancelot and Guenevere. The tomb itself is hardly mentioned, but the reader gradually gets an almost physical realization of its palpable and stony presence. To write some of the poems in that book, it was certainly necessary for the author to be one who had realized what stone surfaces and tombs are, as children realize them, and make friends with them, physically, by wandering amongst them, touching them, and finding here that they are ice cold in the shadows, or that there they are warm in the sun.

Blent with other and later influences, too, there are distinct traces throughout that book of the influence of these early scenes in a certain lapidary quality in the style. There is no poem in English—many as there are dealing directly with the subject—that gives what one may call the sense of tombs in the way that "The Chapel of Lyoness" gives it, though here the subject is not directly mentioned at all. And though it was in later years that Morris acquired this knowledge, it was probably his childhood’s vivid sense impressions that gave the glamour to the images passing through his mind when he wrote: "Edward the king is dead at Westminster. The carvers smooth the curl of his long beard."11

As the family fortunes increased, Mr. Morris asked for and obtained a grant of arms from the Herald’s College: "Azure, a horse’s head erased argent between three horseshoes, and for crest, on a wreath of the colors, a horse’s head couped argent, charged with three horseshoes in chevron sable."12 William, of course, was interested, and coupled this heraldic

11 Ibid., 5
12 Mackail, op. cit., 11
episode with the White Horse of Berkshire Downs to which he made a regular yearly pilgrimage.

Besides the environment of the home, Morris's formal education contributed much to the romantic tendencies which later distinguished him.

At the age of nine he entered the Misses Arundale's preparatory school and after the death of his father in 1847, Marlborough College. Although Marlborough was a recently-founded school, lacking in tradition and funds, and seriously mismanaged, its beautiful location and historic setting had a great deal to offer to the romantically inclined youth. The boys at Marlborough were allowed much more freedom than is ordinarily granted at public schools, and since the natural beauty of the countryside beckoned, Morris spent much of his time in long and often solitary walks to places of historic interest, such as the stone circles of Avebury, the Roman villas at Kennet, or the royal castle, or rambled through Savernake Forest and across the Downs. Spare time at school was spent chiefly in browsing through the Marlborough library, well-stocked as it was with works on archaeology and church architecture, thus nourishing the interest in the Gothic awakened by his father in Morris's early youth.  

Interest in old churches, led to interest in the liturgy, in chant, and in church art. Marlborough, decidedly Anglo-Catholic in tone, boasted

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13 Mackail, op. cit., 16
a boys' choir in which Morris took an aesthetic interest. "The older church music," comments Mackail, "appealed to him with a force only less than that of mediaeval architecture." However, Noyes is careful to note that the interest is more in the structural beauty of the music than in the subject. Then, as later at Oxford, Morris's Anglo-Catholicism was but one of his "many foot-bridges to beauty."16

In December, 1851, Morris left Marlborough to read with Reverend F. B. Guy in preparation for his coming entrance into Oxford. Under able direction, he developed into a "fair classical scholar"; and, since Mr. Guy possessed a knowledge of and a taste for painting and architecture, Morris's artistic interests were strengthened and increased.17

June, 1852, found Morris taking the matriculation examinations at Exeter College, Oxford. Both he and his friend, Edward Burne-Jones, whom he first met on this occasion, passed the tests, and took up residence at Exeter in January.

The Oxford into which William Morris entered was a mediaeval city still—"a vision of grey-roofed houses; and a long, winding street, and the sound of many bells, an ideal nursery for dreams," yet, it was no less a city wakening to modern life. The peak of the Tractarian movement

14 Ibid., 17
15 Noyes, op. cit., 9
16 Ibid., II
17 Mackail, op. cit., 27
18 Noyes, op. cit., 11
at Oxford had been passed with Newman's conversion to Catholicism in 1845, and liberalism with its broad-church tendencies and its "higher" criticism of the Bible had set in. Congreve at Wadham, Jowett at Balliol, and the younger fellows of Oriel, all were tainted with the liberalism of the times. Above all, there was Ruskin, prophet and high priest of a new religion, the religion of beauty, the beauty of the visible world as revealed and made enduring in art. Here alone was security while the atomic bombs of the ascendancy of Science and the Darwinian theory rocked the intellectual world. Here was something real in a world of skepticism, a world about which the oft-quoted "Prayer of an Oxford Don," "O God, if there is a God, save my soul--if I have a soul," was written.

Morris, under the influence of his sister, Emma, had determined to study for the ministry. His new-found friend, Burne-Jones, entertained the same ambition, and the two of them spent long hours in each other's company, or in company with their little set of Fulford, Faulkner, Price, MacDonald, the two Lushingtons, Heeley, and Canon R. W. Dixon, later the intimate friend of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Morris early began to read aloud to Burne-Jones. Together they shared Latin Christianity, the Acta Sanctorum and the Tracts for the Times, and together took a common interest in Digby's Mores Catholici and Bishop Wilberforce's works on the sacraments. Indeed, according to Mackail, both were

19 Ibid., 15
20 Mackail, op. cit., 38
very close to following Wilberforce into the Catholic church. Noyes, however, comments that it was the aesthetic in the church rather than dogmatic truth which appealed to Morris \(^\text{21}\) and with this opinion Clutton-Brook is in complete agreement. \(^\text{22}\) "Morris," he claims,

had been drawn into the High Church movement because it was a part of the general reaction against modern materialism and ugliness. But the beliefs that were forming in his mind were not religious, however harmonious with the true Christian faith. He changed his purpose, not in any strong reaction against it, but because he had a stronger desire to do something else. \(^\text{23}\)

Indeed, as late as 1854, Morris's Catholic taste expressed itself in a plan for a conventual Brotherhood devoted to art and religion.

All of Morris's reading, however, was not religious in nature. Carlyle, Kingsley, and Tennyson were read enthusiastically. Morris seems to have introduced Burne-Jones to Ruskin, whose Modern Painters was familiar to him, while Burne-Jones' fascination for Keats and for Celtic and Scandinavian mythology opened a new world for Morris.

Canon Dixon says of Ruskin's influence that The Seven Lamps, Modern Painters, and The Stones of Venice gave an impetus to a true vocation \(^\text{24}\) several years before Rossetti had entered the scene. "The Stones of Venice taught Morris," says Clutton-Brock, "that there was

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\(^\text{21}\) Noyes, op. cit., 15
\(^\text{23}\) Mackail, op. cit., 62
\(^\text{24}\) Ibid., 46
reason in his own love of Gothic and dislike of Renaissance architecture."25 In the Gothic every workman could express himself; in the Renaissance he could do only what the architect bade him do. This fact gave the Gothic its "eager life and growth," a quality not possessed by the studied perfection of the Renaissance. From this freedom of self-expression grew Morris's own theory of art as, "Follow nature, study antiquity, make your own art and do not steal it, grudge no expense of trouble, patience, or courage in the striving to accomplish the hard thing you have set yourself to do."26 Work is a human art, not an act of man, and because it is adapted to his nature as a rational animal, man finds it pleasant. Over and over again he insists on, "art made by the people as a joy for the maker and user."27 Thus art was founded on hope of creation, self-respect from a sense of usefulness, and pleasure in the deft exercises of the body. The influence of Ruskin, then, the ethical influence which co-related art and reform and was on the whole, more permanent ante-dated by a year or two the more dominant influence of Rossetti.28

When he was twenty-two years old, William Morris first took to writing poetry. Canon Dixon tells the story as29 he remembered it.

25 Clutton-Brock, op. cit., 37
27 Ibid., 59
28 Compton-Rickett, Arthur, William Morris, A Study in Personality, H. Jenkins, London, 1913, 49
29 Mackail, op. cit., 51
Crom Price and Dixon had gone over to Burne-Jones's rooms at Exeter. They found Morris there, too. As they entered, Burne-Jones in a state of great excitement exclaimed, "He's a great poet!" "Who?" they questioned. "Topsy," he responded, after which they both sat down to listen to Morris's first poem, "The Willow and the Red Cliff" which Dixon, himself a poet, considered "perfectly original, striking, beautiful, and powerful in execution." "Well, if this is poetry," Morris is recorded as saying, "it's very easy to write." Almost every day after that, for a term or two, he brought Dixon a new poem. Only a few of these early poems are extant, however, for Morris burned his juvenalia after the publication of The Defence of Guenevere.

Between the years 1855 and 1856 definite plans for the Oxford-Cambridge Brotherhood took shape. As an outlet for their enthusiasms and beliefs, they determined to found a magazine "The Oxford-Cambridge Magazine," dedicated to the new ideas of art, literature, and life so ably propounded by Carlyle, Ruskin and Tennyson. Heeley, then at Cambridge, had kept in close contact with his Oxford friends; but although he had gathered together a set of similar-minded and capable Cambridge men, and although Morris and Burne-Jones journeyed to Cambridge to discuss the magazine, the group at Cambridge did little else but share the name while the Oxford group did the work. Morris, of course, being the only "rich" man of the group, undertook to finance the enterprise.

Under the influence of Ruskin, Burne-Jones and Morris had begun to learn of and to take an interest in artists such as Dürer, over whose
wood-cut copy of "The Knight and Death" in a French translation of Fouque's Sintram they pored with fiery enthusiasm. Now, through Ruskin, again, they became acquainted with the English Pre-Raphaelite painters. In 1855, Morris visited the Exhibition of the Royal Academy and wrote enthusiastically to Price about the Pre-Raphaelite pictures there, quoting opinions from the pamphlet of Ruskin's he had read. In the same letter he comments on an impression of Albert Dürer's Hubert which he nearly purchased, and on some engravings from Fra Angelico's pictures in the Louvre which he was sending to Price. Holman Hunt's pictures and Rossetti's water colors had become known to Morris during the summer term through Mr. Coombe's collection at the Clarendon Press; and although he had never met either, Morris and his set had paid Rossetti an enthusiastic hero worship ever since a stray copy of The Germ containing "The Blessed Damozel" and "Hand and the Soul" had fallen into their hands. After Burne-Jones had met Rossetti late in 1856, and the two had talked about Morris's poetry, and about "The Oxford-Cambridge Magazine" Rossetti consented to have a version of "The Blessed Damozel" reprinted there and also contributed "The Burden of Nineveh" and "The Staff and Scrip." "The Oxford-Cambridge Magazine" died a natural death when Morris's

30 Mackail, op. cit., 69-71
31 Ibid., 71
32 Ibid., 102
33 Ibid., 92
interest turned to architecture. He had contributed to the magazine eight prose stories, five poems, articles on art and engraving, and a review of Robert Browning's poetry. In fact, the importance of the magazine is due chiefly to Morris's and Rossetti's contributions.

Both Morris and Burne-Jones definitely gave up the idea of a church career during the July of 1855 while they were on a walking tour through northern France. Both determined to devote themselves to art—Morris to architecture, Burne-Jones to painting. The spring of 1857 then, found Burne-Jones painting under the guidance of Rossetti in London while Morris took up architecture with Street at Oxford. Their week-ends they spent together, usually, too, in the company of Rossetti. Morris would arrive on Saturday and long were the conversations in Burne-Jones's little room fronting the Embankment overlooking Blackfriars Bridge. Sundays too were spent in talking and in reading together from Malory's Morte d'Arthur, a book which Burne-Jones had discovered, Morris had purchased, and Rossetti had ranked next to the Bible. Monday morning, Morris would return to Oxford.

No one could be so much in the company of the magnetic Rossetti without being influenced by him. Month by month Morris's admiration for Rossetti grew, and Rossetti's influence over his willing disciple became stronger. Rossetti believed everyone should learn to be a painter, and

34 Welby, Thomas, The Victorian Romantics, London, G. Howe, 1929, 21
35 Mackail, op. cit., 78
since Rossetti "spoke with authority and not as the scribes," Morris
determined to try. He did not give up architecture immediately, however,
but tried to get in six hours of drawing daily besides his work with
Street. The "via media" failed, Morris quit architecture, and took up
lodging with Burne-Jones in "the quaintest room in all London," hung
with brasses of old knights and drawings of Albert Dürer. There with
the friendly interest of Rossetti to guide him he attempted to learn
painting. He also wrote "several poems, highly dramatic," one of which,
Rapunzel, Rossetti ranked with the best of Tennyson. Rossetti was deeply
interested in the poetry, of course, but he felt that Keats represented
the ultimate achievement in the poetic, that everything had been said
in poetry, that little had as yet been said in art, and that if a man
had something to say, he must therefore become an artist. This, coupled
with the old Oxford feeling that Tennyson represented the climactic point
of poetry, influenced Morris's own idea of later life that poetry was a
recreation to be sandwiched between hours of manual work in the crafts.

Furnishing the room in Red Lion square gave Morris his first taste
of furniture design, a taste which led later to the foundation of Morris
and Company. Solid, medieval furniture it was, a table, chairs, a settle
with a long seat below, and three cupboards with swing doors above. The
three artistic men, seeming to think that all blank space existed only
to be painted, proceeded to decorate cupboards and chairs with pictures

36 Mackail, op. cit., 107
of Dante and Beatrice, illustrations of Chaucer's "Prioress' Tale" and illustrations of two of Morris's poems, "Gwendolen" and "The Christmas Mystery." 37

Life at Red Lion Square went smoothly enough, Morris showing remarkable talent in design, coloring, and manuscript illuminating, but making failure after failure in his attempts to draw birds, animals, and men. 38 A sudden interruption gave Morris his first chance at decorative design. Rossetti was commissioned by his friend, Benjamin Woodward, to paint the walls and ceiling of the new Oxford Union Debating Hall. Morris and Burne-Jones were summoned immediately; and Arthur Hughes, Spencer Stanhope, Val Prinsep, and Hungerford Pollen each undertook to decorate one of the bays with a picture from the "Morte d'Arthur." The choice of subject here appears significant, and William Gaunt remarks:

LaMorte d'Arthur fulfilled the Pre-Raphaelite conditions. It was a dreamlike evocation of the past--of the middle ages... It had unhappy love for the theme--the adulterous attraction of Queen Guenevere for Sir Launcelot. It contained also a mystical search, the Holy Grail, emotions, and sex conflict overlaid by archaic forms of language. Through this wood of legend the Knights of the Round Table

37 Ibid., 114
38 Ibid., 114
flaunted with their sounding names, and sharp heraldic colour. 39

The whole scheme seems impractical when viewed in the perspective of a past adventure. None of the artists had any practical experience in wall decoration, the damp mortar was an utterly unsuited canvas for the tempora, and as a result the life of the pictures was ephemeral, indeed. It is characteristic of Morris, however, that he was first on the scene, had completed his picture of "How Sir Palomydes loved LaBelle Isult with exceeding great love out of measure, and how she loved not him again, but rather Sir Tristram" before the others were well started, and had begun work on the ceiling which he decorated beautifully. 40

Morris's picture started the sunflower on its career as an aesthetic symbol. Much to Rossetti's amusement, he had filled the foreground of his picture with sunflowers, and Rossetti in joke suggested that he fill another with scarlet runners. 41

Failure as the scheme to paint the Debate Hall was, it had two good results. The really fine work Morris had done on the roof gave him his first taste of an art which he could do really well—decorative art—and could love in the doing. Secondly, work shared in common knit together in the bonds of sincere affection a group of men, who, under the leadership of Rossetti, were to do much for English art and literature. Good fellowship prevailed. Mackail relates the pranks they pulled on Morris,

39 Gaunt, William, Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy, London, Jonathan Cape, 1942, 80
40 Mackail, op. cit., 119
41 Clutton-Brock, op. cit., 53
painting little portraits of him, straddle-legged in dark angles of the roof, for Morris's increasing fatness made him a natural subject for teasing. During this period of artistic adventure and under the spell of the dynamic Rossetti, Morris composed many of the poems of *The Defence of Guenevere*. Clutton-Brook, quoting from Val Prinsep gives a glimpse of the good times they had together, of glorious evenings of chatter when Swinburne came up from Balliol, Swinburne who had been drawn to the group by the common love of Malory. Dinner over, Rossetti would call to Morris, "Top, read me one of your grinds." Morris would refuse on the plea that they all had heard his poems before. Rossetti, however, would insist until Morris gave in. Then in his odd sing-song chant with accented rhyme, Morris, fidgeting with his watch-chain the while, would read to Rossetti who watched from his perch on the sofa and to Burne-Jones bent over a pen-and-ink drawing, such colorful verses as:

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Gold on her hair and gold on her feet,
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
And a golden girdle round my sweet
Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite!
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from "The Eve of Crecy" or such thrilling battle songs as:

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"Swerve to the left, son Roger," he said,
"When you catch his eyes through the helmet slit.
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42 Mackail, op. cit., 129
43 Clutton-Brook, op. cit., 55-56
Swerve to the left, then out at his head,  
And the Lord God give you the joy of it."  

from the "Judgment of God."  

Late 1857 and early 1858 were important months of Morris's life of accomplishment. He began work in crafts—embroidering, dyeing, stone carving, clay-modelling, drawing and coloring for stained-glass windows. In early 1858, he published his first book of poems, The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems. The book was received coldly, both by reviewers who viewed it as a piece of Pre-Raphaelite nonsense, and by readers, who, perhaps intimidated by the reviewers, refused to buy it. Faulty, the poems certainly are, but charmingly fascinating in their frank, strongly realistic, mediaeval spirit, and the high emotionality of its subject matter, a book certainly worthy of more note than that which it received. The book contained four Arthurian poems which antedate all of Tennyson's Arthurian cycle except "The Death of Arthur," and which, with all their faults, according to some critics' present the life of the middle ages more clearly and with greater truth of detail than the idealistic Tennyson. While realizing fully that the youthful Morris's Arthurian cycle cannot compare with the polished artistry of Tennyson's Idylls of the King, one is forced to admit that

45 Ibid., 96  
46 Clutton-Brock, op. cit., 56  
47 Payne, Morton, "William Morris" in Library of the World's Best Literature, xxvi, N. Y. International Society, 1897, 10338
the passionate emotionalism of Morris's "Guenevere" is closer to Malory than Tennyson's cold idealism. At this time Morris also planned and probably began execution of a series of poems on the Trojan War. Work on these poems was continued during the era of "the house that Top built," but Morris dropped them completely when he turned to Chaucerian narrative poetry. Thus they were never published until May Morris printed them in volume twenty-four of her Collected Works.

One more big influence in Morris's Pre-Raphaelitism is the formation of Morris and Company. Influenced by his impending marriage with Jane Burden, Morris set about erecting and furnishing an ideal house, a palace of art, in an ideal location. Thus the Red House facetiously nicknamed "Towers for Topsy", built by Philip Webb came into existence. The furnishing of it launched Morris well into the great work of his life, craftsmanship, and established the highly successful firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company which did so much to beautify the homes of England. It was over the work of the firm, a work financed almost completely by Morris, that the direct dynamic influence of Rossetti was stemmed, though not completely cut off, as a result of a quarrel.

With Morris's later life as a Chaucerian narrative poet, as a lover of the Eddic literature, as a translator, as a decorative artist, as a printer, and as a socialist we have little concern in this thesis.

In summary then, what are the influences that affected Pre-Raphaelitism in the early poetry of Morris?

They are: 1. home and environmental interests such as interest
in nature and in the mediaeval and Gothic; 2. educational interests, such as Gothic manuscripts in the library at Marlborough, the formation of the Oxford set with the constant reading of Ruskin, and Malory, and mediaeval works of poetry and prose; and 3. the influence of Rossetti, the Debating Hall Project, and the work of the company in building and furnishing "Towers for Topsy." We turn in the next chapter to a study of how Pre-Raphaelitism was displayed in the early works of Morris.
A STUDY OF PRE-RAPHAELITE CONTENT AND TECHNIQUE

IN THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE AND OTHER POEMS
AND SCENES FROM THE FALL OF TROY

In March, 1858, the first thin volume of Pre-Raphaelite poetry, THE Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems, came from the press of Messrs. Bell and Daldy. Much of it had been conceived and executed during the two preceding years when Morris had been very closely associated with Dante Gabriel Rossetti as a result of his attempt to study the art of painting, and his part in the painting of the murals on the walls of the Oxford Debating Union. Alfred Noyes, indeed, states that the wonderful atmosphere and color of The Defence of Guenevere is due largely to the frescoes, to Morris's pre-occupation with the Arthurian legends during the course of the project and to Rossetti's enthusiastic medievalism.

Like all Pre-Raphaelite works, the book was coldly received by the public at first—not that it ever received wide acclaim. Mackail says of it:

It was one of those books which, without ever reading a wide circulation or a large popularity, have acted with great intensity.

2 Noyes, Alfred, William Morris, London, Macmillan, 1908, 18
on a small circle of minds, and, to those on whom they struck fully home, given a new color to the art of poetry and the whole imaginative aspect of things. Yet, when it first appeared, it caused hardly a ripple of interest, eliciting only a few contemporary reviews, one of which, that of the Athenaeum, regarded it as a piece of Pre-Raphaelite eccentricity "which shows how far affectation may mislead an earnest man toward the bogland of art." Even later, when Morris had attained fame with The Life and Death of Jason, and his early work had begun to arouse controversy, there was not a much greater sale of The Defence of Guenevere.

It seems to have been now lauded and now decried as the result and expression of a school, rather than a man, of a theory or tradition, rather than a poet or student. Those who so judged were blind guides. Such things as were in this book are taught and learned in no school but that of instinct. Upon no piece of work in the world was the impress of native character ever more distinctly stamped, more deeply branded. It needed no exceptional acuteness of ear or eye to see or hear that this poet held of none, stole from none, clung to none, as tenant, or as beggar, or as thief. Not yet a master, he was assuredly no longer a pupil.

so ran Swinburne's comment on Morris's The Defence of Guenevere.

3 Mackail, op. cit., 129
4 Ibid., 130
5 Requested from Brooks, Stopford, Four Victorian Poets, New York G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908, 235
If by this quotation, he meant to deny Morris's debt to Pre-Raphaelitism, he has an entire phalanx of critics, even of those highly favorable to Morris and to The Defence of Guenevere—against him. Housman calls the book "Morris's greatest Pre-Raphaelite work"; Nowell Smith claims it to be like Rossetti in "subject, spirit, and form," Morton Zabel classes "esthetic Pre-Raphaelitism" as one of the strong influences of Morris's early manhood, the period in which The Defence of Guenevere was written. Compton-Rickett traces the influence of Pre-Raphaelite art in general, and of Rossetti's painting in particular in the early poetry of Morris; Percy Colwell, Lafoadio Hearn, William Morton Payne,—all would agree that Morris attempted to accomplish in his early poetry what Rossetti had been doing in painting. Beers, treating of Rossetti's influence upon the work of William Morris cites the fact that Rossetti's poetry as well as his painting is echoed in The Defence of Guenevere. Rossetti's

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6 Housman, L., Pre-Raphaelitism in Art and Poetry, London, Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom, 3rd ed., xii, 18
9 Compton-Rickett, Arthur, William Morris, A Study in Personality, London, H. Jenkins, 1913, 71
10 Colwell, Percy, (editor), Poems of William Morris, New York, Crowell, 1904, Introduction, xviii and xxix
11 Hearn, Lafoadio, Pre-Raphaelite and Other Poets, New York, Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1922, 264
unpublished ballads had circulated among his friends years before their publication in 1870. Thus it could happen that Morris's *Defence of Guenevere* which appeared in 1858, could rightly be able to be called "his most intensely Pre-Raphaelite work and that one most evidently done in the spirit of Rossetti's teachings."¹³

*The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*, claimed by Rossetti to be "Morris's best as poetry"¹⁴ is divided by Stopford Brooke into three classes of poems; those that concern the Arthurian legend, those which belong to a thirteenth of fourteenth century cycle of events and find their source in Froissart, and those lyrics which "belong to no century on earth, but are sent down to us out of the woods and lands beyond the world."¹⁵ After considering the Pre-Raphaelite qualities attributed to the work as a whole by the various critics, we will examine each of the three classes mentioned above to discover in how far their content and techniques are Pre-Raphaelite.

In chapter two, romanticism, mediaevalism, passionate, sensuous, and sometimes sinful love, failure, disillusionment, death, the passing of time and the shortness of life were enumerated as typical Pre-Raphaelite topics; and the consious presentment of incident with a leaning toward the religious and literary, as well as toward the sensuous and passionate, were mentioned. In tech-

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¹⁵ Brooke, *op. cit.*, 239
unique, naturalness, simplicity, exact and truthful detail, symbolism, dramatic expression of emotion in gesture and facial expression, and the use of vivid coloring were listed as characteristics.

It will be noticed here that the content is romantic, the technique, realistic. Just this combination of realism and romance is typical of Morris's Defence of Guenevere. Always there are knights and ladies, horses, banners, ringing swords, castles, feuds, death, love, adventure, all of which spell mediaeval romance. Yet this "remarkable combination of an ideal subject, imaginatively conceived in complete apartness from the life of his own century" is developed "with that close realism observable in Rossetti's work."16 Morris actually recreated for us the world of the middle ages, its loves, its joys, as well as the battles, the cruelty, and the ruthlessness of the fourteenth century. Lubbock, in speaking of the mediaeval detail of these poems states: "Ornamentation of these poems, their lances and pennons and moated castles is not a piece of fanciful ingenuity, but a purely natural means of expression,"17 for Morris was at home in the middle ages--more at home than he was in Victorian England.18 In regard to the external trappings of chivalry, and to the art of the period, it is undoubtedly true that Morris was in complete sympathy with the Middle Ages. His sympathy and interest, however, never penetrated below the surface to the

16 Ibid., 236
18 Brooke, op. cit., 214-215
philosophy of life stemming directly from the Church which gave the Middle ages its aesthetic appeal. Aymer Vallance in summarizing the contemporary criticism of The Defence of Guenevere quotes William Bell Scott as saying, "May of the poems represent the medieval spirit in a new way, not by a sentimental-nineteenth-century-revival-medievalism, but they give a poetical sense of a barbaric age strongly and sharply real." 19 Saintsbury is quoted as saying that the mediaevalism of William Morris and his Pre-Raphaelite friends was something new to English literature. "Only one or two smatches of Coleridge and Keats had caught the peculiar medie­

val tone which the Pre-Raphaelites in poetry, following the Pre-­

Raphaelites in art were now about to sound." 20 Keats had done it in "LaBelle Dame Sans Merci" and Coleridge had struck the note of true mediaevalism in "Christabel" but neither of them had been able to "follow it up consistently." With Morris, the opposite was the case. The first four poems of The Defence of Guenevere are "saturated through and through with the true and vital essence of Arthurian romance; while the remaining poems savored not less thorough­ly of the very atmosphere of the Middle Ages." There was nothing "sporadic" about the book, nothing that had found its way haphazardly into its pages, but "the whole book from end to end was alive with the antique spirit of the days of chivalry, recreated and quick­ened by the hand of genius." 21

19 Requoted from Vallance, Aymer, William Morris, His Art, His Writings, and His Public Life, London, G. Bell, 1909, 27
20 Ibid., 28
21 Ibid., 28
Throughout The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems, Morris plays the chord of love—love, passionate, sensuous and sinful, in the title poem and in "King Arthur's Tomb"—love passionate and despairing in other poems such as "Sir Peter Harpdon's End," love in distress and fear in such poems as "The Eve of Creoy." Failure and disillusionment are the theme for many of his poems, as knights with noble ideals and lofty purpose are treacherously slain, leaving unfinished the good they might have done.

Throughout life Morris was haunted by the idea of death and failure, and the sense of the transitoriness of time. This preoccupation with death is noticeable also in Rossetti whom Beers charges with "a tincture of morbidness" in both taste and temperament. In Morris, however, the melancholy preoccupation was a continual source of mirth and teasing to his friends who taunted him with the fear of going to hell. "They may not have been far from wrong," one is tempted to assert after reading the Guenevere volume with its several graphic descriptions of hell and the constant reference to it in the mouths of Morris's characters. As for death, almost every poem in the volume deals with it—deaths relatively quiet and tranquil such as the death

22 Mackail, John, Studies of English Poets, New York, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1926, 180
23 Compton-Rickett, op. cit., 98
24 Beers, op. cit., 300
of Azama in "The Chapel in Lyoness," deaths vibrant with the lust for fighting and the thirst for revenge as those pictured in "Haystack in the Floods" and "Concerning Geoffray Teste Noire," where from two skeletons, the romantic story of a man's fight to save his beloved from death is reconstructed. In fact Benjamin Ifor Evans lists preoccupation with death and the desire to portray horror as the two dominant moods of the book. 26

In regard to technique, Morris is so realistic, he softens no harsh detail of Froissart, but presents the uncompromising cruelty, the ugly passion, the heat and the blood of the days of hard fighting without the slightest mitigation. 27 Jehane's lover is murdered before her eyes; she sees his head kicked to pieces by the enemy soldiery because she refuses to satisfy the lust of his enemy and rival, and she laughs madly. Because they slew an innocent man, three knights are sought out and pitilessly slain by the man's family. A noble and otherwise high-minded man thinks little of shaving off his enemy's ears and thus releasing him. Not pretty subjects for poetry, of course, but the realist, Morris, bent on giving a living and human picture of the middle ages did not suppress them.

Nor was the quiet, melancholy pain, lacking in the poetry

26 Evans, Benjamin, William Morris and His Poetry, London, Harrap, 1925, 52
27 Ibid., 67
of Morris, for:

Echoes of pain and suffering of the outside world are never silent in his enchanted world of fable; they are the disturbing force of that tender and resigned melancholy in which his personages, acutely conscious of the shortness of life and the transitoriness of beauty, move to their appointed end. 28

The moan of "The Good Knight in Prison" for the days when he did valiant combat for God and right, and the painful disillusionment—the feeling that "love is a cheap thing after all"—found in "Old Love" are examples we may note in passing. This "quiet pain," however, is more characteristic of Tales from the Fall of Troy.

Realism and truth of detail are dominant also in Morris's incidents of mediaeval fighting of which there are no better examples than "The Gilliflower of Gold" and the two fighting scenes of "The Defence of Guenevere." Guenevere, on trial for her life, narrates the trial by combat in which Launcelot saved her life when Mellyagraunoe had laid bare her relations to Launcelot.

Glorying in the ringing challenge of her knight:

Setter of traps, I pray you, guard your head
By God I am so glad to fight with you,
Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels lead

For driving weight; hurrah now:
draw and do,
For all my wounds are moving in
my breast,
And I am getting mad with waiting
so.29

proud of his offer to equalize the combat by fighting with one
side unprotected, rejoicing in the inevitable outcome—the spurt
of Mellyangraunce's blood upon the sand—she contrives to awaken
in us the mediaeval battle lust. This thrill of battle is even
stronger in the description of the tournament given in "King
Arthur's Tomb." Almost as though she were a radio announcer
giving a play-by-play account, she calls:

The thrushes sang in the lone garden
there—
But where you were the birds were
scared I trow—
Clanging of arms about pavilions
fair,
Mixed with knights' laughs; there,
as I well know

Rode Launcelot, the king of all the
band,
And scowling Gauwine, like the
night in day,
And handsome Gareth with his great
white hand
Curl'd round the helm-crest, ere he
joined the fray.
And merry Dinadan with sharp dark face
All true knights love to see......

One after another they step into the lists as Guenevere describes
them. Then we hear her cry:

O God, let me be there
A little time as I was long ago.

Because stout Gareth lets his spear fall low,
Gawaine and Launcelot and Dinadan
Are helm'd and waiting; let the trumpets go!
Bend over, ladies, to see all you can!

Clench teeth, dames, yea, clasp hands for Gareth's spear
Throws Kay from out his saddle, like a stone
From a castle window when the foe draws near--
"Isault!" Sir Dinadan rolleth overthrown

"Isault!"--again--the pieces of each spear
Fly fathoms up, and both the great steeds reel;
"Tristram for Isault!" "Isault!" and "Guenever!"
The ladies' names bite verily like steel.30

Perhaps the only comparable piece so a thrill with the joy and the
lust of fighting are the stanzas from the "Gillyflower of Gold"
where the refrain is like the sharp clash of sword on sword.

Crash! how the swords met: "giroflee!"
The fierce tune in my helm would play.
La belle! la belle! jaune giroflee!
Hahl! Hahl! la belle jaune giroflee.31

30 Morris, Collected Works, I, 22-23
31 Ibid, 9
The situation of many of the poems of The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems is dramatic in content, and at least one important poem, "Sir Peter Harpdon's End" is dramatic also in form. Guenevere as she is described facing her accusers, and Launcest, denounced by Guenevere at the tomb of Arthur, would fit well one of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's paintings. Benjamin Ifor Evans, speaking of the poems in The Defence of Guenevere refers to all the Malory and Froissart poems as being in method, "narrative and dramatic, the aim a swift, analytic presentation of minds as in Browning." Beers speaks of some of the poems as being "in the manner of the medieval mystery playss".

Color was always one of William Morris's strong points. May Morris tells us that it was he who was the last word on color during the manufacture of stained-glass windows by Morris and Company. Again we are informed that Morris loved and used vivid, vital colors--colors really Pre-Raphaelite in the strict sense of the term. Compton Rickett relates an incident of a man who called on Morris at his dye works and made some remark to him about "subdued colors." Customer or no customer, Morris flew into a fine rage, roaring that if he wanted dirt, he could find plenty of it in the street. Certainly the colors of The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems are vivid, the red and blue of the angel

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32 Lubbock, op. cit., 486
33 Evans, op. cit., 26
34 Beers, op. cit., 327
35 Compton-Rickett, op. cit., 142
parable in "The Defence of Guenevere," the burnished gold, one of Morris's favorite colors, of "The Eve of Crecy." In speaking of the color of The Defence of Guenevere, Peter remarks that Morris has diffused through the Arthurian poems the maddening white glare of the sun, "the tyranny of the moon, not tender and far off, but close down—the sorcerer's moon, large and feverish."

"The coloring," he says, "is intricate and delirious, as of scarlet lilies. The influence of summer is like a poison in one's blood, with a sudden bewildered sickening of life and all things." Beers, likewise, remarks about the coloring. "There is no other collection of poems so saturated with Pre-Raphaelitism," he says; "the flowers are all orchids, strange in shape, violent in coloring"; and scattered throughout the volume in various places we have gold and scarlet and white, the gold of Rapunzel's hair and of Marguerite

Gold at her head and gold at her feet
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet
And a golden girdle about my sweet
Ahi! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.—

the profusion of scarlet lilies, and the scarlet and white of Christ, and the angels and the virgins of "Galahad: A Christmas Mystery." 37

36 Vallance, op. cit., 37
37 Beers, op. cit., 327
There was one Pre-Raphaelite characteristic, however, with which Morris was completely out of sympathy—symbolism. His preference was for the simple and direct mode of expression as is indicated by his emphasis on simplicity in the essays, "The Art of the People" and "The Beauty of Life." In the latter, we find the following illuminating comment on simplicity in English poetry:

In good earnest poetry was born again, and the English language, which under the hands of sycophantic verse-makers had been reduced to a miserable jargon, whose meaning, if it had a meaning, cannot be made out without translation, flowed clear, pure and simple, along with the music.

Yet, even in the matter of symbolism, Morris occasionally found himself in the Pre-Raphaelite camp. The ballad refrain of the poem, "Two Red Roses across the Moon," is symbolic of the coat of arms of the knight hero. One wonders, too, whether there was anything symbolic in the choice of red and blue for the cloths of Guenevere's parable.

One of these cloths is heaven, and one is hell, Now choose one cloth forever; which they be, I will not tell you, you must somehow tell Of your own strength and mightiness; here, see! Yea, yea, my Lord, and you to ope your eyes, At foot of your familiar bed to see A God's great angel standing, with such dyes, Not known on earth, on his great wings, and hands Held out two ways, light from the innder skies

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38 Morris, May, op. cit., 102
39 Morris, William, Collected Works, XXII, 59
Showing him well, and making his commands
Seem to be God’s commands, moreover, too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands;

And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red;
No man could tell the better of the two.

After a shivering half-hour you said:
"God’s help! Heaven’s colour, the blue";
and he said: "hell."
Perhaps you would then roll upon your bed,

And cry to all good men who loved you well,
"Ah Christ!" if only I had known, known, known;
Launcelot went away, than I could tell

Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown.

Could the red symbolize passion, Guenever’s adulterous love for Launcelot, and the blue stand for fidelity, the duty she owed to her husband, Arthur? Guenever chose the blue, and found hell in her separation from Launcelot.

Two or three other touches of symbolism are worth noting.
Wherever passionate love comes to the fore as in "King Arthur’s Tomb," it is summertime—midsummer when the two lovers would walk

Through fresh wet woods and the wheat that morn
Touching her hair and hand and mouth, and talk
Of love we held, nigh hid among the corn.

or summer drawing to a close on that "hot August noon" when Launcelot, passion-plagued, pressed on toward Glastonbury to keep a last tryst with Guenever. Where the chastity of Galahad is the theme,

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40 Morris, William, Collected Works, I, 1-2
41 Ibid., 13
42 Ibid., 24
However, we have the whiteness of winter, for

It is the longest night in all the year, 42
Near on the day when the Lord Christ was born.

Some reference should also be made here of the direct relationship between some of Rossetti's pictures and some of Morris's poems. Many of them, for example "The Blue Closet" and "The Tune of the Seven Towers" have the same name, and it is often difficult to tell which came first, picture or poem. That question, however, is of little import here since either way would point to Pre-Raphaelite influence. Either Morris found in Rossetti's pictures an impulse which impelled him to poetry, or Rossetti, seeing the scope for Pre-Raphaelite art in Morris's word pictures, was moved to paint. Beers says of these poems that they "are interpretations in language of pictorial suggestions—"word paintings' in a truer meaning than that much abused piece of critical slang commonly bears."43 In Rossetti's "Blue Closet," a water-color "study in color and mystic symbolism" we see four maidens in black and purple, white and green, scarlet and white, and crimson singing and playing on a lute and clavichord in a blue-tiled room. In front of them the favorite Pre-Raphaelite red lily grows up through the floor. Morris adds to the picture the barest hint of a love story, the death-bell booming in the tower overhead, wind sounds and sea sounds, and the snows of December. Rossetti's "King Arthur's Tomb" and "How Sir Galahad, Sir Bors, and Sir Percival Were Fed with the Sacred Grail; but Sir Percival's Sister Died by the Way" are based on Morris's "King

43 Beers, op. cit., 300
Arthur’s Tomb” and “Sir Galahad: A Christmas Mystery.” The latter picture is particularly colorful with its red, green, and white robes, its aureoled lily, and its white-clad angels with crossed flame-colored wings. 44

Let us examine minutely the three classes of poems found in Morris’s early volume, The Defence of Guenevere. In the first class, those based on Malory, we have four important poems: “The Defence of Guenevere,” “King Arthur’s Tomb,” “Sir Galahad: A Christmas Mystery,” and “The Chapel in Lyoness.” The title poem itself opens with a typical Pre-Raphaelite picture—Guenevere, torn by passion for Launceolot, burning with the shame of an open accusation of that passion, conscious of her beauty and dignity and the outrage done it. Her hair is wet, and she is pictured in the act of tossing it back across her shoulders. How well Morris has caught the feeling of intense emotion and expressed it in arrested action is evident in the little gesture of the hand to the burning cheek.

But knowing now that they would have her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her brow,
Her hand close to her mouth, touching her cheek.

As though she had had there a shameful blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel aught but shame,

44 Ibid., 305-6
All through her heart, yet felt
her cheek burned so.

She must a little touch it; like one
lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with
her head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of
flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at
last and said: 45

Guenewere's following speech is partly an intensely passionate
confession of her love for Launcelot, partly a wild denunciation
of Gauwaine, partly a completely illogical attempt at exoneration.
In beautifully symbolic language, she pleads her ignorance, "Ah
Christ, if only I had known," 46 and proposes a colorful parable
of "heaven and of hell." "Supposing," she says to her accusers,"you are lying upon your deathbed. Close by, you hear the voice
of "God's great angel" demanding:

One of these cloths is heaven, and
one is hell,
Now choose one cloth forever; which
they be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow
tell
Of your own strength and mightiness

For half an hour you waver in your choice between the blue cloth,
"wavy and long" and the short red. Finally, a choice: "God's
help! Heaven's color, the blue"; and he (the angel) says, "Hell!" 47
So likewise, when Launcelot went away, "then could I tell!" There
follows a disjointed confession of a love both passionate and sen-
suous--Launcelot's first coming to the court, when the bells chimed

45 Morris, May (editor), Collected Works of William Morris, I, 1
46 Ibid., 2
his name to her all day, the white flame of love that came with summer, the realization of her unworthy love that made her "grow careless, let the clock tick, tick to (her) unhappy pulse, that beat right through (her) eager body," the contrast of Arthur's "great name and little love" with the splendid passion of Launcelot, the rationalization which made her believe that if she crushed the love of Launcelot in her heart, she would crush all love, even the love of God. Nature itself,—the thrushes, the flowers, the leaves, the wind, the whole garden—conspired against her self-control; and when Launcelot entered, he won the coveted kiss. When even this fails to move Gauwaine, she narrates the story of Mellyagraunce's finding Launcelot in her room, and describes with splendid realism the fight between Launcelot and the spy. Morris is seldom outdone in his battle scenes. One thrills to the vivid phrasing of details that intensify the picture:

......Did you see Mellyagraunce
When Launcelot stood by him? what
white fear
Curdled his blood, and how his teeth
did dance,
His hide sink in? as my knight cried
and said:
"Slayer of traps, I pray you, guard
your head!"

Realistically, too, Guenévere recalls the spout of blood on the sand, and how the hotness of the summer day made her suffer in imagination then, the doom that lies before her now—death at the

48 Ibid., 4
49 Ibid., 5
50 Ibid., 6
51 Ibid., 7
stake. "I wondered how the fire, while I should stand, and burn, against the heat, would quiver so, yards above my head." It could well have been the Pre-Raphaelitism of this poem of which Symons was thinking when he claimed for Morris's poetry "pictured emotion" seen in the "uplifted arm, the tear-stained cheek and the mouth curving to a smile," words happily chosen for their color with no subtlety of light and shade; fragrant and colorful mediaevalism. 52 Evans speaks of the poem as "tense and piteous" with its abrupt opening. "The queen is portrayed dignified and defiant, dizzy and fevered with the strain of the inquisition, and uncontrolled at times in passion and grief."53

The second of the Malory poems, "King Arthur's Tomb," is considered by some critics to be the finest of the four poems of the first group. Brooke says this of it and adds:

The unwearied succession of pictures and passions fitted to each other, kindles and deepens the kindling of our pleasurable pain, as we read of the riding of Launcelot to his last tryst with Guenevere, and of all the memories of his past love with which he fills the ride; and then of Guenevere dreaming into repentance and prayer, and of her last speech to him in which she saves his soul..... Morris, like a young man, and like one who loved--as he always loved--full ornament and minute detail, fills his story with an opulence of description, and with a complexity

53 Evans, op. cit., 27
of feelings, which, as they are richly colored with imagery let loose to wander where it will, we pardon with pleasure. 54

Drinkwater comments likewise on the mingling of the spiritual and the sensuous in the poem, 55 and "the dramatic opposition of Guenevere's love, which is all the while troubled by the half-consciousness of sin, to Launcelot's," claiming these as proofs of the "poet's power to set the elemental passions in action at once simple and convincing."

Here, too, we have Morris, painting word pictures the intense, colorfully dramatic, Pre-Raphaelite way--Guenevere, letting Launcelot twine her hair around his neck--so that "it fell upon (his) red robe, strange in the twilight with unnamed colours." 56 Guenevere standing before Launcelot with the scarlet lilies, so dear to Rossetti, in her hand, 57 Guenevere lashing Launcelot with the fury of her words, he noting "her thin hand, that on the carven stone (could) not keep still because she (loved him) against God's command," Guenevere at Mass where "Launcelot's red-golden hair would play, instead of sunlight on the painted wall," these and many others crowd the pages in incident upon incident.

Rossetti's blending of the spiritual with the sensuous passion of Guenevere, is here too (yet not in the blended unity of

54 Brooke, op. cit., 240
56 Morris, May (editor), Collected Works, op. cit., 12
57 Ibid., 17
Rossetti's style) in Guenevere's prayer for strength before meeting Launcelot at the tomb, a prayer she utters at the foot of the crucifix:

Unless you pardon, what shall I do, Lord,  
But go to hell? and there see day by day  
Foul deed on deed, hear foulest word on word  
Forever and ever, such as on the way  
To Camelot I heard once from a churl,  
That curled me up upon my jinnet's neck  
With bitter shame; how then, Lord, should I curl  
For age and for ages? dost thou reck  
Than I am beautiful, Lord, even as you  
And your dear Mother? why did I forget  
You were so beautiful; and good, and true,  
That you loved me so, Guenevere? O yet  
Even if I go to hell, I cannot choose  
But love you, Christ, yea, though I cannot keep  
From loving Launcelot; O Christ! must I lose  
My own heart's love? See, though I cannot weep,  
Yet am I very sorry for my sin;  
Moreover, Christ, I cannot bear that hell,  
I am most fain to love you, and to win  
A place in heaven sometime--I cannot tell--  
Speak to me, Christ: 58

Morris was close enough to the heart of the middle ages to comprehend one part of its religion, the act of contrition. Yet, for Morris, the romanticist, we notice the contrition seems based on feeling rather than reason and will. "Ah, now I weep!"

Guenevere adds as though that were to her a sign of supernatural

58 Ibid., 16
contrition. Morris is like Rossetti, here, in the unusual and happy choice of the word "curl" to describe the feeling of intense shame and embarrassment felt by noble-minded people, a feeling, the realization of which, is typically human in Guenevere who, brought up in an atmosphere of refinement and delicacy, feels it will be one of the cruelest sufferings of hell.

Evans contrasts the heightened drama of Morris's last meeting of Launcelot and Guenevere with the quiet ending of Malory where Launcelot accepts his fate and decides to be monk when Guenevere tells him she will live the rest of her days in penance and prayer. The very place of meeting, Glastonbury at King Arthur's Tomb instead of the convent at Almesbury, makes for dramatic interest. In Morris, Launcelot rides to meet Guenevere on a hot August day, tormented by memories of the past and by the passion of his love for Guenevere. Guenevere is a strange combination of passionate love and passionate repentance, "a woman fearful and distraught, maddened by the memory of passion and tragedy, bitter in painful repentance." 59 Calmly she greets Launcelot at first, "Well done, to pray for Arthur, my dear Lord, the greatest king that ever lived"; but when Launcelot seeks "the woman under the habit," she begins to recall old tourneys and battles and her first meeting with Launcelot when Arthur commands: "This is the knight whom all the land calls Arthur's banner, sword, and shield today. Cherish him, love." With wonderful tragic force Morris pictures the breakdown

59 Evans, op. cit., 29
of Guenevere's hard-fought-for defence as she "pours forth her simple, naked agony across the tomb to Launcelot." Catching at Arthur's phrase, she twists it into a weapon of abuse.

Banner of Arthur—with black bended shield

Sinister-wise across the fair gold ground!
Here let me tell you what a knight you are,
O sword and shield of Arthur! you are found
A crooked sword, I think that leaves a scar

On the bearer's arm, so be he thinks it straight,
Twisted Malay's crease beautiful blue-grey,
Poison'd with sweet fruit; as he found too late,
My husband Arthur, on some bitter day

Louder and more terrible, almost hysterical grows the queen's denunciation:

Banner and sword and shield, you dare not pray to die
Lest you meet Arthur in the other world,
And, knowing who you are, he pass you by,
Taking short turns that he may watch you curl'd,

Body and face and limbs in agony,
Lest he weep presently and go away,
Saying, "I loved him one," with a sad sigh... 61

As Launcelot, unable to bear the agony of her accusation falls

60 Noyes, op. cit., 27
61 Morris, Collected Works. I, 22
to the ground in a swoon, Guenevere, tortured by passion runs away praying for death yet strong in her resolve never to see Launcelot again. "Never, never again! not even when I die."

The third of Malory poems, "Sir Galahad: a Christmas Mystery" pictures Sir Galahad, half-regretful that the love of woman has never entered his life. He contrasts his lot with that of Palomydes who rides on his quest with thoughts of Isuelt--of Launcelot, securely happy in his knowledge of Guenevere's love. He, Galahad, walks alone; and when some carle finds his dead body still clothed in armor in the half melted snow, "no maid will talk of sitting on (his) tomb, until the leaves grow big upon the bushes of the walk." As he muses on love, he has a vision of Christ sitting on the altar as a throne, a Christ clothed in vivid colors, "half blood-red, half snow-white." Prostrate in dread, he adores until the vision bids him rise. Calling him "Galahad, good knight of God," it pours consolation into his troubled heart--Christ will be with him; he will be cared for, "though no maiden moan above (his) empty tomb"; Launcelot and Palomydes will one day serve Christ in penitence; earthly love is short-lived; Christ's love, eternal.

\[\text{Would you for a little time be glad}\\ \text{To make me sorry long day after day?}\\ \text{Her warm arms round his neck half}\\ \text{throttle Me}\\ \text{The hot love-tears burn deep like}\\ \text{spots of lead,}\]

\[\text{Ibid., 26}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 26}\]
Yea, and the years pass quick. 64

After the vision disappears, angels, white with scarlet wings, and saints in gowns of red and green, Margaret, Cecilia, Lucy, and Katherine, approach to arm him in white and scarlet and to direct him in his search for the Sangreal. The second vision vanishing, Sir Bors, Sir Percival and Sir Percival's sister arrive with bad news from Arthur's court of the failure and death of Arthur's knights in their quest for the Grail. 65 The poem is a fresh presentation of the old Pre-Raphaelite idea of romantic mediaevalism, with a theme of love, of failure, and of disillusionment with the transitoriness of the things of time—all of which are presented in colorful detail of incident and natural landscape. 66

Critics have much to say about this poem of Morris's. Most of them consider Morris's viewpoint on Galahad original and most realistic. Certainly Galahad must have had moments of temptation when, as Evans says, the quest of the ideal and spiritual exemplified by the Holy Grail has grown burdensome. 67 Beers also comments on the realistic presentation of Morris's mediaevalism.

Morris endeavors to render the genuine Catholic medieval temper as it appears in Malory... His Galahad is not the rapt seer of the vision beatific, but a more flesh and blood character who sometimes has cold fits in which

65 Ibid., 29-30
66 Brooke, op. cit., 242
67 Evans, op. cit., 51
he doubts whether the quest is not a fool's errand. 68

Mr. Henry G. Hewlett, certainly no friend of Morris's early work, states that "the saint knight is painted with a truthfulness that atones for whatever clumsiness of handling may at first repel us." Morris, according to him, has caught the spirit of the middle ages—the spirit of "Catholic Mythology," he chooses to call it—in the closing scenes of the poem where Christ assures Galahad that his quest is attainable, and that his life will not be lived in vain. 69

In "The Chapel in Lyoness" we find the merest thread of narrative, but the poem is rich in colorful incident. A wounded knight covered with a cloth of red and white samite, Galahad plucking

... a faint wild rose,
Hard by where the linden grows,
Sighing over silver rows
Of the lilies tall...

Galahad's quaint closing phrases:

Osana, shall I pray for thee?
Her cheek is laid to thine;
No long time hence, also I see
Thy wasted fingers twine

Within the tresses of her hair
That shineth gloriously,
Thinly outspread in the clear air
Against the jasper sea. 70

68 Beers, op. cit., 326
70 Collected Works, op. cit., 34
One other poem fits well into the Malory cycle. "The Good Knight in Prison" is a piece of true romance, full of pictures and fine colour, of tender humanity, and in a charming melody."\(^71\) An imprisoned knight paints pictures of the days of combat against the heathen until he is rescued by Launcelot "with fine stirring, and clamor of verse."\(^72\)

We notice that in all of the Malory poems, the theme is romantic love, the setting is mediaeval, the expression is detailed, colorful and dramatic.

The second group of poems, those founded on Froissart's chronicles or those imbibing the spirit of the chronicles, includes, "Sir Peter Harpdon's End," "Concerning Geffray Teste Noire," "Shameful Death," "The Judgment of God," "The Haystack in the floods," "Riding Together," and "The Little Tower." Brooke speaks of these as being of Morris's own "impassioned temper, alive with colour and the tumult of war, savage in their realism, clear-eyed in their imagination."\(^73\)

Written in dramatic form, "Sir Peter Harpdon's End" deals with the cruelty and brutality of war during the middle ages. Sir Peter, a Gascon knight in the English service, is holding his castle against the powers of Guesolin. The walls are weak and can readily be destroyed. Besides this, Sir Peter's mental anguish is great,

\(^71\) Brooke, op. cit., 242
\(^72\) Ibid., 243
\(^73\) Ibid., 243
for he fears his cousin Lambert has convinced his wife that he is a coward. Lambert seeks an interview with Sir Peter ostensibly to try to convince him to change sides, really to slay him with a battle axe treacherously concealed in his flowing sleeves. Peter guesses his scheme, and outwits it, taking Lambert prisoner. Lambert cowers and begs for mercy. In cruel justice Sir Peter offers him the choice of "head sans ears or trunk sans head." Peter's castle falls. After he is brought before Guesclin and condemned to death, Lambert appears on the scene to taunt him, attempting to make him turn coward. Pretending he is Alice, Peter's wife, he says

Do not go just yet,
For I am Alice, am right like her now
Will you nit kiss me on the lips, my love? 74

Clisson, a French knight, stops him and promises to send word to his wife of Sir Peter's heroic death. In a scene of poignantly impassioned sorrow, Lady Alice hears the news. She has been soothing her fears of Lambert's treachery by thinking of the old days. If Peter should die, she, too, would like to lie

Among the poppies and the yellow flowers;
And they should brush my cheek, my hair being spread
Far out among the stems; soft mice and small
Eating and creeping all about my feet,
Red shod and tired; and the flies should come

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74 Morris, Collected Works, I. 51
Creeping o'er my broad eyelids
unafraid;
And there should be a noise of
water going,
Clear blue, fresh water breaking
on the slates
Likewise the flies should creep—

In this melancholy reflection which is typical of the author's preoccupation with death, and is given with all the realistic detail that Morris can muster, she is interrupted by the Squire of Clisson. Dramatically he narrates the story of Sir Peter's defeat and of his brave but shameful death, adding the message

He waits
Still loving you, within the little church
Whose windows, with the one eye of the light
Over the altar every night behold
The great dim broken walls he strove to keep.

Morris's sense of the spiritual here leads him to show us Lady Alice's broken-hearted plea to Christ:

Today I wish to pray another way,
come face to face,
O Christ, that I may clasp your knees and pray
I know not what; at any rate, come now
From one of many places where you are,
Either in heaven amid thick angel wings,
Or sitting on the altar strange with gems,
Or high up in the dustiness of the

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75 Ibid., 55
76 Ibid., 59
They would go, Christ and she, to Sir Peter's grave. There at the feet of Christ and her beloved, she would win His pity. Then the spirit of revenge wells up and she pictures Guesclin, caught off guard by a group of her knights, taken prisoner, kneeling before her, and then

What could I do but let you go again,
Being pitiful woman? I get no revenge
Whatever happens.78

The little drama ends with a quaint mediaeval song of Launcelot.

This poem, the most powerful of the Froissart group,79 contains a very interesting incident showing Morris's attitude toward failure. When Lambert cannot convince Peter to espouse the cause of France, he asks the reason for what to him seems hard-headed stubbornness. After all, the French are strong; the English weak. To fight for England may mean the loss of his life. Peter laughs and asks whether his cousin knows the story of Troy? Upon his cousin's affirmative, Peter answers that the Trojans were wrong and knew it, but because they fought bravely though the odds were against them, all men admired them. So

... men will talk, you know,
(We talk of Hector, dead so long ago,)
When I am dead, of how this Peter clung
To what he thought the right, of

77 Ibid., 59
78 Ibid., 60
79 Noyes, op. cit., 29
how he died,  
Perchance, at last, doing some  
desperate deed  
Few men would care do now . . . 
Moreover I like the straining game  
Of striving well to hold up things  
that fall;  
So one becomes great. 80 
Failure to Morris, then, was worth the price if it gained fame. 81 
In "Sir Peter Harpdon's End" we find love thwarted and  
weighted down with sorrow, battle scenes stark in their realistic  
detail, a sense of the spiritual, a concentration on natural de-  
tail portrayed with dramatic power. 81 
Comparable to "Sir Peter Harpdon's End" is the starkly and  
passionately realistic "Haystack in the Floods" closely in touch  
with the brutality of the fourteenth century, even to the savage  
ruthlessness to women. 82 The picture suggested here is not the  
pleasant love of Malory. The heroine rides through the rain,  
assured that if she rejects Godmar, he will kill her lover, and  
deliver her to the mob to be burned at the stake as a witch. Yet  
it, too, is Pre-Raphaelite in its naturalness and its attention  
to detail.  
Along the dripping, leafless woods,  
The stirrup touching either shoe,  
She rode astride as troopers do;  
With kirtle kilted to her knee,  
To which the mud splashed wretchedly; 

80 Morris, op. cit., 31  
81 Evans, op. cit., 35  
82 Drinkwater, op. cit., 78
And the wet dripped from every tree
Upon her head and heavy hair,
And on her eyelids broad and fair;
The tears and rain ran down her face. 84

Little natural touches such as, "for cold, her slender fingers
scarce could hold the wet rains," and the "three red running
lions" grinning dismally from Godmar's pennon show Morris's close
attention to the detail that creates the atmosphere of the poem.
Like Guenevere, Jehane conjures up images of the future--
court-prison--

The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by
And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.
All this, or else a life with him, 85
For which I should be damned at last.

A horrible choice, certainly, but one which will show the timbre
of her soul. In recording her answer to Godmar, Morris catches
her emotion in a typically Pre-Raphaelite way--a gesture.

She laid her hand upon her brow,
Then gazed upon the palm as though
She thought her forehead bled, and--
"No!"
She said, and turned her head away. 86

Godmar taunts her. He will take her against her will. What would
prevent it?

A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin:
"You know that I should strangle you

84 Morris, May, Collected Works, op. cit., 124
85 Ibid., 125
86 Ibid., 126
While you were sleeping; or bite through
Your throat, by God's help—ahi!" she
said
"Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!
For in such wise they hem me in, 87
I cannot choose but sin and sin.

The picture is brutal, but clear cut, the emotion aroused—pity, and admiration for her courage. Housman, commenting on "A long way out she thrust her chin," says that it was a part of the Pre-Raphaelite revolt against the conventions of the time. Victorian ladies would not thrust their chins out but tuck them away, attempting to sway men by depth of dimple, not strength of character. An out-thrust chin to a Victorian woman was an improper attitude savoring of unwomanly self-assertiveness. 88 The final picture is almost too horrible, but terrifyingly realistic—Jehane sees:

The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out from Godmar's sheath, his hand
In Robert's hair; she saw him bend
Back Robert's head; she saw him send
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,
And moaned as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem: so then
Godmar turn'd grinning to his men,
Who ran some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet. 89

When Godmar, making brutal use of an old word, tells her the "first fitte (canto) is read" and warns her that "her way leads backward

87 Ibid., 126
88 Houseman, op. cit., 21
89 Ibid., 128
to the Chatelet! where the second fitte must run its course, she has "supped full of horrors."

She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile 90
As though this thing had made her mad.

Details like this, according to Hearn, "make us understand the feeling of persons in particular moments of pain or terror or heroic effort. 91"

"The Haystack in the Floods" is a splendid example of Pre-Raphaelite poetry. Dawson calls it one of the most realistic poems of modern literature and says:

All the troubled terror of the Middle Ages, the fierce passions and hasty vengeances, the barbaric strength and virility of love, the popular ignorance and cruelty, are brought home to us with an intense vividness in this brief poem. Every line of the poem is simple and direct, and it is by a score or so of natural touches of description that the whole scene is put before us. It is a piece of grim tragedy, painted rather than told, with realistic fidelity and force. The landscape is as clear to us as the figures of the actors. We can see the whole episode in its tragic misery and rudeness when we read the opening lines. 92

One other poem of this group deserves our special attention because of its element of drama done in the style of Browning. 93

90 Ibid., 128
91 Hearn, op. cit., 284
93 Brooke, op. cit., 244
That poem is called "The Judgment of God" and is based on the old mediaeval custom of trial by combat. Roger fights for his father in what he knows is an unjust cause. As he enters the lists, he hears the sea lisping like the aspens where the wrong was done.

All the wrong is gathered now
Into the circle of these lists—
Yea, howl out, butchers! tell me how
His hands were cut off at the wrists;

And how Lord Roger bore his face
A league above his spear-point, high
Above the owls, (the emblem on his father's hood) to that strong place
Among the waters.94

"A thoroughly immoral poem," comments Housman, "for we want Roger to win."95 We hope his father's crafty advice will be successfully followed.

"Swerve to the left, son Roger," he said,
"When you catch his eyes through the helmet slit,
Swerve to the left, then, out at his head,
And the Lord God give you the joy of it."95

In spite of the brutal and harsh details, the picture is softened somewhat by the little glimpses of nature with which Morris filled the spots between the action, the place of the aspens when the air "blows cool on any passer's face," the ordered garden with its biggest roses. One could go on and on pointing out pictures, for like most of The Defence of Guenevere, the poem is little more

94 Morris, May (editor), Collected Works, I, 96
95 Housman, op. cit., 14
96 Morris, May (editor), Collected Works, 96
than a series of them bound together by a mediaeval atmosphere which grows out of the carefully chosen details thus unifying the whole, somewhat like the stained glass windows of Morris's company where "story telling goes on breathlessly all the time" and one incident tumbles over another.97

Other Froissart tales, too, The Defence of Guenevere holds, tales of hard-headed, realistic mediaevalism such as "The Little Tower," or ringing with deeds of war and tales of love and death as "Concerning Geffray Teste Noire" and "Welland River," or of disillusionment as in "Old Love" where Sir Giles ends his comments upon his former "lady fair" with, "This love is not so hard to smutch."98 Most of them boast of snatches of nature pictures put in not so much for symbolism or contrast as in other authors, but merely because Morris thought them beautiful and ornamental. "A yellow primrose to Morris was but a yellow primrose, but he loved it all the more because of this."99

As some medieval knight might have told it around an evening fire with his friends of a campaign, is Morris's tale, "Concerning Geffray Teste Noire." The poem, of course, is not about Geffray at all. The teller had been sent out to entrap that lusty thief, we learn between details which Morris's sympathy with the medieval knight would notice—the heat that made the knights sweat under

98 Morris, Collected Works, I. 85
99 Compton-Rickett, op. cit., 26
their weight of armor, the red lion pennon flapping on the spear-head, the dragon flies that shone "in brighter arms than ever I put on"—and little touches of natural beauty so characteristic of Morris:

... the highway runs
'Twixt copses of green hazel, very thick,
And underneath, with glimmering of suns,
The primroses are happy; the dews lick
The soft green moss.

As the men at arms prepared the ambush they found the corpse of a knight. "Strange," they thought, "that he wears no plate or leg armour, only fold on fold on 'ancient, rusted mail.' Rather small, too, compared with the skeleton beside him, isn't he?"

Finally one of the men suggested that the figure was a women's. After a digression in which the leader gave all the horrible details of death and slaughter at Beauvais, the curious company examined the skeletons and reconstructed a story of medieval gallantry. The knight realizing the danger of being waylaid, had decked his lady in mail, before the fight in which he received his mortal wound and his lady an arrow through the neck. "After all these years the flowers forget their blood."— While waiting for Geffray, the narrator strangely enough, conjured up pictures of the slain lady, pictures in the long Pre-Raphaelite lines,

100 Morris, *Collected Works*, I, 77
which so entranced him that he had their bodies buried and an image of them carved by "Jaques Picard" placed above their graves. After telling his highly romantic tale, the knight matter-of-factly remarks that they never did catch Geffray. 101

The outstanding features of the Froissart poems, then, are hard-headed, detailed and realistic descriptions of the harsh side of life in the fourteenth century, told in a dramatic way. There is an emphasis on cruelty, on death, on love, on failure interspersed with the little descriptive natural touches that Morris loved so well.


"Rapunzel" and "The Wind" are a wealth of imagery and verbal

101 Ibid., 75,–81
102 Evans, Op. cit., 53
color" unified by "thin threads of suggestion," yet, for all their decorativeness, "fresh as the windy moolands or green stalks of lilies."\textsuperscript{104} The ballads, with their stirring battle cries, and their flaming colors of red and gold and yellow are strangely moving.

\begin{quote}
Crash! how the swords met: 'giroflee!'
The fierce tune in my helm would play,
'La belle! la belle! jaune giroflee!'
Hah! Hah! la belle jaune firoflee.'
\end{quote}

I almost saw your quiet head
Bowed o'er the gilliflower bed.
The yellow flowers tained with red--\textsuperscript{105}
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.

Most of the poems of this group give evidence of Morris's admiration for and love of Rossetti's art. There is his "Two Red Roses across the Moon," the heroine of which is straight from a Pre-Raphaelite picture--"large of her eyes, and slim and tall."\textsuperscript{106} Who does not recognize the lady "of ivory" in "Praise of My Lady"? Rossetti's pictures have made her very familiar to us, "cheeks hollowed a little mournfully," wavy dark hair, long lashes over large dark eyes, full lips, round, firm chin, long, graceful neck, long sensitive hands. She was Rossetti's ideal of melancholy beauty; but she was wife to William Morris, and he set her down as beautifully in word pictures as Rossetti had done on canvas.

"The Blue Closet" and "The Tune of the Seven Towers" are poems of color, and have their only meaning in the colors they suggest.\textsuperscript{107}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 65
  \item \textsuperscript{105} Morris, Collected Works, op. cit., 91, "The Gilliflower of Gold"
  \item \textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 129
  \item \textsuperscript{107} Drinkwater, op. cit., 66
\end{itemize}
They are ballads in purple, green, blue, gold, and red.

In summarizing the Pre-Raphaelite influences noticeable in

The Defence of Guenevere, which Morris appropriately dedicated "To

My Friend, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Painter," Drinkwater says;

Morris places his figures upon
a background which is not unrelated
to life, but unrelated to the in-
essential circumstances of life.
Through a changing year of daffodil
tufts and roses, cornfields and
autumn woods and the frozen twigs
of winter, passes a pageant of
knights in armor of silver and
blue steel, with bright devices
on their tabards and shields
strewed with stars or flashing
back gold to the sunlight, and
queens and ladies, passionate and
beautiful. But they move on an
earth that is the real earth of
Morris's experiences, and the en-
chantment of his forests is that
of the hornbeam twilight of his
Essex homeland. And they, them-
selves, are people of flesh and
blood, stirred by the common
emotions of humanity. The passion,
the glamour, and the poignancy of
love and life all find mature ex-
pression in these pages.108

In the year 1936, May Morris, daughter of the poet, gathered
together some unpublished fragments of her father's poetry, and
published them as Scenes from the Fall of Troy and Other Poems.
The title poems were written by Morris close to the time of the

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108 Ibid., 67
publication of *The Defence of Guenevere*, and while Morris was still strongly under the influence of Rossetti. Hence they must be considered in an account of the Pre-Raphaelitism of Morris's early poetry. There were to have been twelve poems in the series, we learn from a manuscript book of Morris which dates back to 1857. Of these, six were completed; and there are imperfect drafts of two more, but no trace of the other four. Work on them was abandoned for some unknown reason sometime between Morris's moving into the Red House and the beginning of his work on *The Earthly Paradise*.110

Bush in speaking of this series of poems remarks that it is a mediaeval Troy, Morris paints,111 a Troy "like Bruges or Chartres: spired and gabled, red-roofed, filled with towers and swinging bells."112 The warriors are mediaeval knights who leave their walled city to tilt with the Greeks for all the world like knights from Froissart. The tone throughout the entire poem is one of extreme sadness. "The characters are endowed with Morris's own self-conscious devotion to beauty, and his own poignant sense of its impermanence."113 Today quickly becomes yesterday, and the future brings old age, and death, and nothingness. There is nothing to do but remember happier days.

*Scenes from the Fall of Troy* opens with the poem, "Helen

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109 Mackail, *op. cit.*, 166
110 Ibid., 167
112 Mackail, *op. cit.*, 168
113 Bush, *op. cit.*, 300
Arming Paris. Somewhere on a lonely part of the walls of Troy, Helen is fitting the greaves on the legs of Paris while he explains to her that they must be tight lest some haphazard blow drive the steel edge into his foot. Helen, in replying, strikes the dominant note of languor and sadness together with the fear of death and defeat.

Shall I say, Paris, that my heart is faint, And my head sick? I grow afraid of death. The Gods are all against us, and some day The long black ships rowed equal on each side Shall throng the Trojan bay, and I shall walk From off the green earth to the straining ships; Cold Agamemnon with his sickly smile Shall go before me, and behind shall go My old chain, Menelaus; we shall sit Under the deck amid the oars, and hear From day to day their wretched measured beat Against the washing surges; they shall sit There in the twilight, with their faces turned Away from mine, and we shall say no word; And I shall be too sick at heart to sing.

Just as Guenevere felt in premonition the death at the stake, so Helen sees the contumely and shame of her return to Greece, and prescient with foreboding, feels the pain of Troy in flames and the Trojans dead or in slavery. Morbidly she muses, half to herself, half to her lover:

In what way, love Paris, Will they slay you, I wonder? will they call, "Come Helen, come to this our sacrifice, For Paris shall be slain at the sea's foot"? Or will they wake me from my weeping sleep Dangling your head above me by the hair,---

114 Morris, William, Collected Works, XXIV, 3
115 Ibid., I, 7
116 Ibid., XXIV, 5
In protest to her melancholy, Paris boasts that Troy is strong and that every Trojan would be glad to die for her; but Helen's intuition brushes his protest aside.

Do not believe it, Paris: bitterly
Death comes to all, and they have their own wives,
Own loves or children; Paris, you know not
What death can do: pray God you curse me not
When you leave off being happy—do you think
We can be happy in the end, Paris?

Catastrophe is at hand. Helen knows it, for she knows the Greeks.

Unspoken vows lie coiled about their hearts,
Unspoken wrath is in their heavy hands,—
Whatever happens, doubt not they will win
Their dreadful slow revenge at last, Paris.\(^{118}\)

Even heroic Hector will be unable to prevent Troy's doom; "sometime shall Achilles have his day."\(^{119}\)

Throughout the poem we find this melancholy foreboding. Happiness is transient, sorrow is inevitable, no one can escape fate. Morris's preoccupation with mediaeval warfare is evident, but the zest for fighting, the play-by-play battle accounts of The Defence of Guenevere are absent. Even Paris, seemingly secure within "that great belt of Priam's sons, buckled by Hector, the great clasp of all," cannot really glory in warfare, for

Look you, my love, it is not well to boast
Of anything one has, for fear the Gods
Should take it from us.\(^{120}\)

Since each poem of the series was intended to present a separate

\(^{117}\) Ibid., 7
\(^{118}\) Ibid., 7
\(^{119}\) Ibid., 7
\(^{120}\) Ibid., 7
scene in the great drama of Troy, the end of "Helen Arming Paris" provides a transition to the second poem, "The Defiance of the Greeks." Paris and Hector are called to attend the conference in Priam's hall where one of the Greeks is giving a challenge. In the opening speech of the poem, Priam describes in retrospect the coming of the Greek armada and the opening battle of the war. Again we miss the splendid crash of arms and the vivid personal reactions of combatants and spectators that sparkle through similar passages in The Defence of Guenevere. Compare, for example,

There came a mighty armament of Greeks,
Whom we met straighway; all my knights who fought
That morning on the sands are here, but those
Who fell asleep amid the melody
Of meeting swords; --121

with a fighting scene from "The Gilliflower of Gold."

Our tough spears crackled up like straw;
He was the first to turn and draw
His sword that had nor speck nor flaw,--
Hahl Hahl la belle jaune giroflee.

Crash! how the swords met: "giroflee!"
The fierce tune in my helm would play,
"La belle! la belle! jaune giroflee!"
Hahl Hahl la belle jaune giroflee.122

The former still has Morris's facility of expression, but the flaming battle lust so characteristic of his more Pre-Raphaelite poetry is absent. However, in this poem as well as in the other poems of Scenes from the Fall of Troy, Morris did not forget the detailed little natural touches that are typical of Pre-Raphaelitism and

121 Ibid., 9
122 Ibid., I, 91
typical, too, of his own deep-seated love of the earth. In describing the besieging Greeks, he lets us see how

Within the cedar presses the gold fades
Upon the garments they were wont to wear;
Red poppies grow now where their apple trees
Began to redden in late summer days;
Wheat grows upon their water-meadows now
And wains pass over where the water ran.

Here also, amid the stirring words of Hector, urging his men on to battle, the weariness with life and the sense of impending disaster makes itself heard as Cassandra begs her brother to refrain from conflict lest he die. Andromache adds her pleas, but Hector advances the argument of fate.

Go back, Andromache and weep, if I
Must die today, as like enough I must;
But may not the Greek arrow find me here
Skulking and recreant; who knows what may chance
If I stay from the field? The walls are strong
The Gods are stronger.

The poem closes with this acute sense of failure. They will lose, of course, and Hector must fall before Achilles' spear, but they will fight well.

When we meet the title of the next poem, "Hector's Last Battle" we are again drawn to expect the stirring conflict of the Guenevere volume; but again the fire, the dash, the passion of the earlier work are missing, and the action is sluggish and slow. One or the other well-chosen detail intrudes to show that the Pre-

123 Ibid., 16
124 Ibid., 16
Raphaelite tendencies in Morris are not yet entirely suppressed. In the heat of battle Hector calls, "Spears here for Hector!" A little later he asks Helenus whether the latter can see the Scaean Gates, and Helenus responds, "Nay, shield me, Hector, while I turn my back."  

We find a natural touch, too, in Troilus' continual attempts to engage Diomedes in single conflict.

At the climax of the poem, the meeting between Hector and Achilles, we find Morris gone completely mediaeval in his treatment of Trojans and Greeks, Homer would surely not recognize his Achilles in the base coward who plots to trap Hector.

So, our headstrong kings are being well beat
As they might well have thought to be; but I
No stroke have struck, nor any of my men,
Nor will we till I meet my foe alone
Or worsted somewhat by mere numbers—ah
What din and shouts! by God! I just half doubt
I might (have) done a wiser thing and helped.
They'll burn the ships and if he should come back
Why I must run or die. Go we aside
And lurk behind the hawthorne bushes thick
Where the fight has not been today as yet.  

As Achilles and his men conceal themselves, Hector enters, removing helmet, hawberk, and wambeson, determined to snatch a little rest while he is waiting for Troilus. Seeing his enemy disarmed, Achilles commands his men to surround Hector, who pleads at first for his life. Realizing the hopelessness of seeking knightly conduct from one who fights from ambush, however, Hector gives a speech.

125 Ibid., 16
126 Ibid., 17
in which we find a little of Morris's old fire.

Nay I will not dance
To this man's piping, nay I will not wait
Till slowly he shall come and out my
throat,
Unhelmed, unfenced: yet have I my good
sword.127

Again lines pulse with the lust of warfare as Hector stands at bay,
eying the circle of his attackers.

Ho! Hector for the sons of Priamus!
Who will be the first of you—what, not
a man
But ye behind who finger your bowstrings!2
O Jove I thank thee that I die hot blood.
Ho! Hector for the sons of Priamus.128

"Hector Brought Dead to Troy" is penetrated with gloom and
despair. Troilus fights that he may die; Paris is crazed with grief;
sorrow and confusion hang over Troy. A few Trojans even go so far
as to suggest sending Helen back to the Greeks, so demoralized are
they. Troilus attempts to quell the crowd, while Paris, thinking
he still opposes the Greeks, struggles wearily with Deiphobus and
Aeneas. Hector has not died unavenged. Menon attacked Achilles
so fiercely that the haughty Greek had to call for aid, "This man
is two, each side of me he comes."130 Here Aeneas breaks into the
tale to extol the deeds of Troilus in combat against Diomedes. The
Pre-Raphaelite vigor of the early poetry of Morris is, however, com-
pletely missing; nor are there many of those clear-cut details,

127 Ibid., 19
128 Ibid., 20
129 Ibid., 20
130 Ibid., 24
striking word pictures, or brilliant colours found so frequently in The Defence of Guenevere.

"Achilles' Love Letter" is somewhat more Pre-Raphaelite in execution. There is a little more colour, the red and gold Morris loved so well. There are stirring descriptions, too, such as, "The yellow sands ran red with blood," and that of Hecuba's song:

Days ago I wore but gold,  
Like a light town across the wold  
Seen by stars, I shone out bright.--132

or that vivid description of Paris swearing the death of Achilles for daring to love Polyxena,

And in Apollo's temple her white feet  
Shall creep and curdle as Achilles' blood  
Across the marble glides to make them red. 133

The general tone of the poem, moreover is Pre-Raphaelite. Life is short, pleasure fleeting, death only is swift and sure. Even the goodly earth, the fields of Troy, are sick with Grecian heels upon their hearts. Hecuba tries to sing to Paris, but her song is of the joys that are past; and even from this theme she is drawn away by the premonition of impending disaster and ends on a note of despair.

Now have I but one poor gown  
Woven of black wool and brown.  
I draw water from the well,  
I bind wood that the men fell;  
Whoso willeth striketh me,  
An old woman by the sea. 134

131 Ibid., 30  
132 Ibid., 32  
133 Ibid., 27  
134 Ibid., 29
Honor itself is dead, for Paris consents to assassinate Achilles, though if

but one year ago
It had been said: Meet not this man in arms
But smite him unawares--I had spat out.
But no--alas! my honor is all gone.

The mood of failure which is the outstanding Pre-Raphaelite characteristic of Scenes from the Fall of Troy continues through the poem, "Helen's Chamber," two versions of which appear in May Morris's edition of her father's works. In striking contrast to the opening poem of the series, it presents a despairing Paris who sees the dust of Troytown "blown across the bitter waters by the cold East wind." A premonition of his death haunts him. Helen realizes it, too, but counsels him,

Forget it, love, and as in winter cold
Folk sit about the fire and shut out
The bitter blustering east wind and the frost,
So here within my arms be merry now
A little while the last hours of your life.

It is but a paraphrase of the age-old pagan plea, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you must die," and it receives the answer of the old pagan heart-break,

Helen,
You were my life and you would be my life,
But life and all is going.

135 Ibid., 30
136 Ibid., 34
137 Ibid., 39
138 Ibid., 39
The same hopeless wistfulness for happiness which can never be fulfilled is evident in the short lyric, sung by Helen in arming Paris in the first version and merely appended to the second one.

Love, within the hawthorn brake
Pray you be merry for my sake
While I last, for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death.

Sweet be long in growing old,
Love and Life in age grow cold;
Hold fast to life, for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death.

Trouble must be kept afar
Therefore go I to the war.
Less trouble is there among spears
Than mid hard words about your ears.

Love me then my sweet and fair
And curse the folk that drive me there,
Kiss me, sweet! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death.139

The brief sketches of the Trojan War end with two poems that recall the Froissart cycle of The Defence of Guenevere, "The Descent from the Wooden Horse," and "Helen and Menelaus." The former burns with the vengeful lust of the Greek heroes, at last successful. Pyrrhus comments that no doubt the Trojans dream of walking through the meadows, and then questions, "Shall we slay them? I long to begin killing."140 Agamemnon is rejoicing in the fame that will come to them, but Menelaus is the most grim as he goes to keep a tryst with Helen.

139 Ibid., 40
140 Ibid., 42
There is a certain one in this doomed town
Who thinks the worst is over, and fears
now
Nothing but coming eld and death at last:
I shall be as a ghost to her tonight.
Brother, fear not for me, I must away
To talk with Helen--maybe to unclasp
Her arm from round the neck of Priam's
son.
O faithful friends who now so long have fought
For me and my dear right, I pray to Zeus
Your swords be sharp on this wild rainy
night. 141

The horror becomes accentuated in the last poem, "Helen and
Menelaus." Helen cannot sleep now that she thinks the Greeks are
gone. She rises from the side of Deiphobus and goes to the window,
drinking in the peace and calm of the cool, rainy night, thinking
long thoughts about growing old here in Troytown, wistful for past
happiness with Paris, now just a dream. From this quiet reverie
Menelaus awakens her. At this point in the poem Morris becomes the
old Morris of the Froissart group, piling detail upon ghastly de-
tail in painting the picture of an orgy of cruelty.

"Give me a sword," demands Menelaus. "Quick, reach across the
bed--Who is it wallows there?" 142

Helen, almost in a daze, reaches the sword across the bed and
responds, "Deiphobus." Upon hearing the name, Menelaus compels
her to assist in slaying the Trojan.

141 Ibid., 44
142 Ibid., 46
The hound—
Give me the sword. Ah, so was that the
hilt?
I tell your fingers by their being soft,
They are no warmer than the shapen brass:
What, your teeth chatter? I must hasten
then,
Go to his feet, Helen, and hold them fast—
This head is mine now. Clasp the foot,
Helen,
In the name of God I do myself this right.
Paris is dead, and you are dead also—143

Pulling the headless body from the bed, Menelaus bids Helen come to bed. "I am that Menelaus that you know, come back to fetch a thing I left behind."144 When Helen protests that she cannot lie in the blood, he forces her to do his will.

Ah struggle, Helen, naught shall it avail.
Yea but I am the stronger in the wrists:
Feel the steel-point cold against your skin
And so lie quiet—ah but you hate me—
-- I loved you once—145

In the ensuing battle, Menelaus forces Helen to the window where the Trojans can aim arrows at her. Then, as they shout for Deiphobus, he tosses the headless trunk from the window just as Pyrrhus and Teucer enter, fresh from the slaughter of Priam and of the women and children who had sought sanctuary in Apollo's temple. Morris, in the spirit of the medieval, paints all Greeks as villains, and all Trojans as brave knights. While Agamemnon drags Cassandra away to his tent, Aeneas reorganizes Trojan resistance. The poem ends abruptly with the command of Menelaus:

143 Ibid., 47
144 Ibid., 47
145 Ibid., 48
Take Helen to the ships—Now Sirs go we
I have but slain one man yet, big though
he was. 146

Bush, ably summarizes the comparison and contrasts between
Scenes from the Fall of Troy and The Defence of Guenevere. 147 The
whole story as Morris tells it, the characters with their words and
actions are neither classical nor truly medizeval, but modern
dressed in the outward trappings of chivalry. Morris’s habitual ro-
manticising, idealizing, and softening shows up in the treatment of
the characters of Helen and Paris who are parallel characters to
Launcelot and Guenevere. Helen is a fatal woman but good; she gets
our sympathy. 148 In the Scenes from the Fall of Troy we find the
note of bitterness and self-pity which is not present in The De-
fence of Guenevere. Like the Guenevere volume, however, Morris’s
story of Troy is intensely alive, though not with the "immediacy
and intensity" of its predecessor. Like the Guenevere volume, too,
it has detail and pictorial instinct, 149 but without the magic
and fantasy. Pictorial color and the style of tapestry is observa-
ble in the verse, the key to the poem being, pale green, blue, gray,
white and gold. 150

In Prophets of the Century, Arthur Rickett summarizes beauti-
fully the Pre-Raphaelite atmosphere of these two poems:

146 Ibid., 51
147 Bush, op. cit., 301
148 Ibid., 302
149 Ibid., 305
150 Ibid., 306
William Morris's genius left him stranded to begin with. There is a wistfulness about the genuine disciple of the aesthetic movement which hangs around him like the atmosphere which Dante took with him from the shades. It is a wistfulness of the days that are gone—their imagined freedoms, their imagined beauty, their imagined romance—a sighing that life has now become intelligent and serious... Turn whithersoever they may, the shadow of death is upon everything, and the foot of hurrying time echoes everywhere. Moreover, the maker of man is Fate. Love alone compensates and consoles, and yet Love, too, passes. "'Tis for a little while," this was the social and moral note of Pre-Raphaelitism, the beauty of weariness, of sadness of a hope that had never truly come. In The Defence of Guenevere, dedicated very appropriately, "To my friend, Dante Gabriel Rossett," he put into literature the spirit and technique that Rossetti and Millais were putting on canvas.\(^\text{151}\)

We notice then that Morris kept the detail, and the color; (Colwell asserts that in these two characteristics only did Morris remain Pre-Raphaelite even in his later poetry)\(^\text{152}\) but that the vivid intensity, the drama, the high-powered emotion of the early volume was already vanishing.

\(^{152}\) Colwell, (editor), op. cit., xxix
CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Pre-Raphaelite Movement began with an attempt by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, and John Millais to re-capture the artistic spirit of Giotto, Fra Angelico, Ghiberti, and other artists of the Medieval, Pre-Renaissance ages. To accomplish their purpose, they rejected the conventional rules of the academicians, painting romantic subjects in a realistically natural way with great stress on actual detail and emotional intensity.

The art of the Pre-Raphaelites is characterized by a spirit of melancholy, a sense of all things passing, by disillusionment, failure, and death. Much of the content is biblical or literary in its origin, being based on incidents from the Bible, from Keats and from Shakespeare. These incidents are usually highly dramatic so that an entire story may be told in line and color.

It was part of the Pre-Raphaelite creed that all subjects should be painted directly from nature, with greatest exactitude of natural detail. Passion was to be expressed in arrested action and in the highly emotional facial expressions rather than in rhetorical movement and conventional gesture. The attitudes of the figures were quiet ones, as though they had been halted in the intensity of their feeling and were betraying their emotional con-
lict in an exchange of glances or an intense facial expression. The use of fresh, vivid colors, and of symbolism was also characteristic of artistic Pre-Raphaelitism.

The three founders of the artistic Pre-Raphaelite school gradually drifted apart. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, however, gathered about him a group of young men interested in art and literature among whom was William Morris. This group initiated a movement variously named—The Aesthetic Movement, The Fleshly School of Poetry, and Pre-Raphaelites; but to distinguish it from the early group of Pre-Raphaelite movement, and to draw attention to its emphasis on literature rather than art, it is here designated as Literary Pre-Raphaelitism.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti applied the original Pre-Raphaelite creed to literature as well as art; and after adding, through his own poetry, a few original touches, passed it on through the influence of his vibrant personality, to his devoted and willing disciple, William Morris.

The mixture of English and Italian in Rossetti brought him very close to the spiritual and moral side of man and at the same time close to an appreciation of sensuous beauty. Both of these elements he brings out in his poetry particularly in *The House of Life*. Moreover he is able to unite the two in his love poetry, and this fusion of the two elements is his strongest line of defence against the charge of poetic sensuality. Add to this poetic "mysticism" his love of the bright colors of medie-
val manuscripts, his love of nature, his medievalism, and his vivid and striking phraseology, and we have the Rossetti brand of literary Pre-Raphaelitism. Of all the Pre-Raphaelite qualities mentioned above, Morris was particularly interested in three: naturalism, presentation of incident, and the decorative function of art.

William Morris's Pre-Raphaelite characteristics stem from many sources. Among these are environment, education, reading, and friendships.

Morris's early environment taught him to love nature and the great out-of-doors. His early interest in Scott's romances led him to the romance of the medieval. The trips with his father to famous cathedrals and churches developed his interest in medieval architecture. Could it be that the coat of arms granted his father when Morris was still quite young spurred Morris's intellectual curiosity down the paths of heraldry?

Morris's education did much to further his romantic interests. Left to his own devices at Marlborough, he spent his time reading works on archaeology and church architecture and taking long walks to places of literary and historic interest. He also developed an interest in liturgy, chant, and church art. Mr. Guy, who tutored him for Oxford, strengthened his artistic interests besides giving him a fair knowledge of the classics.

Reading was another great influence toward Pre-Raphaelitism in Morris's life. At first this reading was strongly Anglo-
Catholic in tone since Morris intended to study for the ministry. Later Ruskin lured him to the new religion of beauty through his works on the Gothic for which Morris already had such a keen appreciation.

Morris's first association with Rossetti came through reading The Germ, the Pre-Raphaelite magazine. An interest in Pre-Raphaelite art, initiated by Ruskin's defence, became an enthusiasm and Morris paid Rossetti the compliment of here worship before they ever met.

After meeting Rossetti, Morris determined to become a painter; nevertheless, he continued to write poetry. The Arthurian legends, dear to him from the days of reading Le Morte D'Arthur, became more dear as a result of the attempt to paint the walls and ceiling of the Oxford Debating Union.

Shortly after the failure of this attempt, during the early days of comradeship attendant upon the second Pre-Raphaelite circle of which he was an important member, he published The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems most of which had been written during the two years' friendship with Rossetti. During this time, too, and during the days when the Rossetti-Morris circle were hard at work on "Towers for Topsy," Morris began and abandoned Scenes from the Fall of Troy.

The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems is generally admitted to be Morris's most frankly Pre-Raphaelite work. Indeed, Rossetti claimed it to be the best of Morris's work. Roughly it can
be divided into three classes of poems, the poems based on Malory, the poems based on Froissart, and the poems based on fairy tales and on Rossetti water colors.

The Malory poems are Pre-Raphaelite in their realistic and human presentation of the romantic side of medieval life, in their occupation with sensuous and passionate love, in their natural touches, and especially in their choice of highly emotional incidents, related with a wealth of color and detail.

The Froissart poems present the darker side of medieval life—its wars, its horrors, its cruelties. These, too, are presented intensely, dramatically, with vivid and colorful detail.

The third type of poems found in The Defence of Guenevere emphasises color. They are word pictures in red, and white, and gold. A number of these latter were written after careful study of Rossetti's water colors, and others, as Rapunzel were so typical of Rossetti art, that he drew illustrations for them.

The unfinished Scenes from the Fall of Troy, written also at the height of the Rossetti influence show too a great many Pre-Raphaelite characteristics. As always, Morris is rich in color and detail and genuinely mediaeval in spirit. However, in place of the vivid intensity of passion found in the earlier volume, we have preoccupation with languid melancholy, the shortness of life and love, the beauty of weariness and sad hopes.
Rossetti's influence, then, dominated the early poetry of William Morris, bringing it very close, in a literary way, to the work of the artistic Pre-Raphaelite.
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**Magazines**


APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Sister Mary Dorothy Klaers, S.S.N.D., has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

[Signature]

Date: January 17th, 1948

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