There has always been some disagreement as to the common ground of William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. Julia Cartwright, writing in 1894 of the deferred illustrated edition of *The Earthly Paradise*, thought that

Seldom, indeed, has so close a community of thought existed as that which is revealed in the poetry and painting of these two friends, ... 

Consideration of this poem always seems to have drawn from critics comments as to the convergence or divergence of the two men. Yet while Julia Cartwright supported a convergence view of Morris and Burne-Jones, others have not. For example, Philip Henderson seems to waver before falling to the side of divergence; he appears (like many others) to be a biased scholar of Morris who has not devoted the same depth of investigation to Burne-Jones. Morris often, and forcefully, defended Burne-Jones’ work against adverse criticism of the type reflected in exposés such as Henderson’s. Why? One widely accepted answer has been because of the very deep friendship between the two men and I cannot argue with this response. Yet I have always felt that Morris’ defence was based on something other than simply friendship, that Burne-Jones’ paintings in some way touched a sympathetic chord in Morris. This is a feeling only, for which this article proposes some support. I have chosen as a context the vision of an ‘Earthly Paradise’ as presented by both men and I will pro-
ceed with my discussion by reference to three subdivisions within that context — Nature, Beauty and Transience.

NATURE

Burne-Jones’ painting Pan and Psyche (1872-1874) was based upon Morris’ version of the story in The Earthly Paradise:

... she leapt into the stream,
But the kind river even yet did deem
That she should live, and with all gentle care
Cast her ashore within a meadow fair
Upon the other side where Shepherd Pan
Sat looking down upon the water wan.

The setting of the “meadow fair” was interpreted by Burne-Jones with a flat, virtually treeless expanse enclosed by rugged cliffs; the banks of the meandering river are thick with rushes and rocky ledges. Were the visions of the two men at variance here? The figures in the painting are shown, and are intended, to dominate the picture-plane. One tends not to see much further than the image suggested by David Cecil of Pan “bending in sympathy over the suffering Psyche”. Human interaction is direct — it needs very little assistance from nature. The natural elements included by Burne-Jones in the work are obviously there to highlight one’s visual perception of the figures, but they well could have taken almost any form. I doubt if Morris would have been satisfied with this plan. If one considers carefully the words from The Earthly Paradise upon which the painting was based, the prominent image is the kind river, endowed with human qualities of emotion such that it should “deem that she should live” and in consequence casts Psyche ashore “with all gentle care”. These qualities which Morris ascribed to the natural features are those which Burne-Jones transferred to his Pan. For Morris the natural setting was decisively bound to the human interest; for Burne-Jones it was not.

In Love Among the Ruins (1893), unlike Pan and Psyche, the setting provided by Burne-Jones envelops the figures to
form an integrated image. Inherent in the architecture is a statement of universal cultural history which, I believe, was intended by Burne-Jones and received as such by Morris. The figures lend to those surroundings that sense of 'living history' which Morris saw as basic to the understanding of nature. Yet with this work, I feel there is still a difference of viewpoint between Burne-Jones' intention and Morris' interpretation: something of that transference of human qualities onto objects not human. In Love Among the Ruins, Burne-Jones still may be seen to place the emphasis of the work on the figures. It is the emotional state of the lovers which serves as the raison d'être of the painting and here the setting is bound forcefully to emphasise that state. Of Morris, Mackail claimed him to be "strangely incurious of individuals" and in Love Among the Ruins it would have been the universal statement which appealed to him rather than Burne-Jones' more personal level of presentation.

Strict portraiture by Burne-Jones was somewhat restricted in number and was usually of a very personal nature. Moving in the same social circles and having such an intimate relationship with the Burne-Jones family, Morris could not but view the portraits with the same emotions which Burne-Jones injected into them. Beyond the traditional confines of portrait painting, however, Burne-Jones offered many personal portrait images in disguise: King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid (1884) is one instance. Bill Waters has offered the following comments on the work:

...It represents a king who has...found his ideal,
a beautiful soulful maiden who hovers between life
and the spirit world. . . .
... In 1883 [Morris] joined the Social Democratic Federation.
Although it caused some concern to Burne-Jones it is not inconceivable that during their many conversations they touched upon the subject and that Cophetua, with its implied negation of social barriers, was inspired by his friend's exploits. . . .

Waters' premise is interesting, but I cannot accept it. I believe the 'narrative' element of the work simply to be a visual shell for an emotional statement of an extremely personal nature. Penelope Fitzgerald succinctly points this out:
The beggar maid's gaze is without question Georgie's own, ... the king is, just as unquestionably, Burne-Jones himself. ... The work adheres neatly to Morris' definition of the realization of nature: for the careless observer the painting presents a moment in the story of Cophetua and the beggar maid; for the careful observer there is that "reserve of more intimate facts". Morris would have been fully aware of the underlying motive of the painting; he could not but recognise "those grey eyes and clear" which "Truer than truth pierce through my weal and woe". I cannot accept that Morris or Burne-Jones interpreted or intended this painting as a general social comment.

BEAUTY

Did the imagery of Burne-Jones and Morris reside in a "world of beauty removed from life"? A lead to what constituted beauty to them is given, I think, in these words of Morris written in 1888:

... if I may prophesy ever so little, I should say that both art and literature, and especially art, will appeal to the senses directly, just as the art of the past has done. ... [They will be] at once sensuous and human.

Sensuous and human. Julia Cartwright claimed *The Mirror of Venus* (1873-1877) to be "one of those dreams of pure beauty with which the painter loves to delight his soul", yet was this work of a dream to Burne-Jones? Bill Waters has suggested that the artist's relationships with young women "were of a tender, platonic nature, encouraging them in their youthful whims". I cannot agree. Burne-Jones as the sensitive innocent has been somewhat overplayed. Sensuality held powerful sway over the artist; what he expresses in his work, in paintings like *The Mirror of Venus, The Tree of Forgiveness* (1882) and the *Pygmalion series* (1869-1879), is an affinity for pure physical sensuality. Morris was just as susceptible, however his defensive emotional mechanism compelled him to express sensuality in forms other than the direct method utilised by Burne-Jones. His humanisation of nature is one instance. Blue Calhoun, in *The Pastoral Vision of William Morris*, has suggested that the primary motive of *News from Nowhere* is "a sensuous love of the earth", strongly
marked by these words of Old Hammond:

... The spirit of the new days, of our days, was to be delight in the life of the world; intense and overweening love of the very skin and surface of the earth on which man dwells, such as a lover has in the fair flesh of the woman he loves; ... 

Morris also expressed sensuality through his designs. There is no doubt that nearly all of them satisfy his definition of the realisation of beauty as “the creation of some lovely combination of colour and form”. In the expression of beauty, Morris and Burne-Jones concurred.

**TRANSIENCE**

Of *Love Among the Ruins* David Cecil wrote:

... The ruins ... are very pretty ruins. But as a result, we do not feel the required contrast between young love bravely blooming and the decay and wreckage amid which it blooms. ...

Are we really intended to feel this way? In the work Burne-Jones is projecting emotional states not bound by times or place. Morris defined the same in the October verses of The Earthly Paradise:

And we too — will it not be soft and kind,
That rest from life, from patience and from pain;
That rest from bliss we know not when we find;
That rest from Love which ne'er the end can gain? —
—Hark, how the tune swells, that erewhile did wane!
Look up, love! - ah, cling close and never move!
How can I have enough of life and love?
These lines sum up, I think, the tenor of *Love Among the Ruins*. The work does not reflect morbidity, but it does have a melancholic air. This, according to Cecil, was, on Burne-Jones’ part,

... evidence of a troubled spirit. Troubled because uncertain; passionately he had said that he believed in beauty as an ultimate value. But he had no sure grounds for his belief. It remained a mystery. ... 

Nevertheless, Burne-Jones and Morris were to present final statements which indicate a surety in their position. First, at
the conclusion of *News from Nowhere*, Morris claimed “if others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream”. Then, with *Arthur in Avalon* (1881-1898) Burne-Jones presented a conclusive statement of convergence with Morris. On this work Bill Waters remarked:

The similarity between *Arthur* and the artist is obvious, and the parting is autobiographical in nature. Both have battled against an alien world, both cherished an ideal and remained true to it; . . .

Yet most important to the Arthurian legend, and not mentioned by Waters, was Arthur’s promised return to lead his country when in peril. The king was not dead; his station was but transient. Penelope Fitzgerald commented on the painting, including Burne-Jones’ own words,

... What mattered was that *Avalon* should not ‘turn out no more than a piece of decoration with no meaning in it at all and what’s the good of that?’

Was it worthy of the dead king? ... the likeness of Morris was good. . . .

Is it Morris or Burne-Jones in the painting? I think both, destined, in the eyes of Burne-Jones, to come when needed to the aid of those who strive “to build up little by little the new day of fellowship, and rest, and happiness”.

**The Journal**

Contributions are welcomed from all who are interested in Morris. They should be typewritten on one side of (preferably A4) paper and doubled spaced, with a one and a half inch left margin. A length of around two thousand words will help to maintain variety within each issue: footnotes should be few, sources of possible illustration indicated and a short biographical note would be appreciated. The views of contributors are not to be taken as those of the Society.

Under the heading, *Twenty Years of the Journal*, we printed a summary of main articles which have appeared during that time: it was in no way meant as an exhaustive index: many short notes, and all illustrations, necessarily escaped its limited net.