

# A Moment for Morris. & More

## Norman Talbot

Thames skids by . bearing some scullers.  
Its tide & time . take the traffic.

Yet square-rigged Morris . moors in his moment  
among those diaphanous . days & folk,  
more in his own time . tumultuous & tender  
than most, & more . now, moving for us.

But there are full many . Socialist martyrs.  
Millions that marched . were murdered, maimed --  
& maybe, too, murdered . in the mire of their anger.  
Many have thought . & thrilled to their thinking,  
have humbly led . or heroically followed,  
worked, & worked out . the worry & wonder  
of stern brotherhood . of breaks & reverses  
ironstained tears . & tempting white papers.

& millions more . have murmured in dreaming  
of Increase Unsought . on ingenious islands  
of rest from dreaming . under Dry Trees  
of the arcane throb . of a throat like Janey's --  
oh, plenty have longed . for what led to nowhere,  
plenty were plangent . for the Glittering Plain.

So why mark this man . his mind & making?  
Why do we see . his sail, long furled,  
yet fill & fling back . the full sunlight,  
not thunderous dawns . only darting one ray  
or vaguespread dyes . of declining sunsets?

Because his making . marches with our minds.  
The fellowship hope . is held in his worlds  
high so we know . what our nerving is for.  
Not just how it is . or who is the enemy  
hardens our mood . as our might lessens  
or warms the blood . as we blend with our work  
but the sureness & stir . of his stories & shapings  
of good days that men . may match & are made for.

Earth's dirt is clean . the clouds are sweet water,  
earth's colours are proud . primary things  
& love is clear . & its claspings glad  
as the shape of a tree . is true to its season  
the country full . of what's fair to its season –  
the good days that men . match & are made for.

What William Wordsworth . piously wanted  
“the mind of man” . married to moorland  
mere, main . & mountainshoulders  
or dizzied with dwimmercrag . dark over Simplon  
or firm & ripe . with rounded filberts  
or wild & reckless . with a running hare –  
pious Willie's . wish is answered  
by island & mainland . of Morris' worlds  
& days that his men . match & are made for

& Keats had caught . the kind & calling  
of human love . & high discontent,  
the toil of living . the loss & swift dying,  
the fair attitudes . of arts mistranslated  
as gloom or as gush . Gallant he gave them  
as unfrenzied freedoms . of “friends to man”,  
as his time ebbed . urged us to floodtide,  
said genius alone . was an oak amid heather,  
voted firmly . for forest trees.  
Where is he answered . & amplified stoutly  
more than in Morris' . maidens & men,  
abundance hardhanded . & heedless of shame?  
Just as Madeline's mate . was a match for her dreams  
so bedecked Birdalone . her bed of desire  
for the good days & nights . we know & are made for.  
Near to the source . but near to the seasalt  
Morris remains . the maker of stories  
that time cannot take . . Thames keeps only the shadow  
of the good days that man . can make & was made for.

With acknowledgements to the *Southern Review* (Adelaide) XVIII 1 (1981), 76-7.