‘Honorable and Noble Aventures’

Courtly and Chivalric Idealism in Morris’s Froissartian Poems

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William Morris was a dreamer and an idealist. He himself acknowledged this fact both early and late. In a letter of 1856, he described his work as ‘the embodiment of dreams’; in the ‘Apology’ to The Earthly Paradise (1868) he called himself a ‘dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time’; and in 1890 he chose to cast his highly political projection of the future, News from Nowhere, into the medieval form of a dream vision.2 Morris was also, of course, much more than a dreamer: as Clive Wilmer has remarked, ‘it is perhaps the secret of his genius that he could usually find a practical outlet for his dreams’.3 He put his nostalgia for the artistic and social forms of the past into action by making things: poems, romances, patterns, tapestries, fine books; and during the last two decades of his life he threw himself into trying to create a better society for the future through political activism. News from Nowhere is a vision of the world towards which he was working through his daily toil of socialist education and agitation. Yet he always valued the dream for its own sake, rather than simply as a catalyst for action.

Morris’s most famous poetic works, however, tend to be praised today for their rejection of dreams. These works are the short poems making up his first published volume, The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems (1858). They have often been praised during the last century for their gritty realism, their eschewal of sentimental romance, and their refusal to glorify the Middle Ages in which they are set. This tendency has been seen most clearly in responses to those poems based on Morris’s reading of
Froissart's *Chronicles*, principally 'Sir Peter Harpdon's End', 'Concerning Geoffray Teste Noire', and 'The Haystack in the floods'. Amanda Hodgson, thinking primarily of the Froissartian works, contends that 'many of the poems are concerned with the unpleasant realities behind the romantic façade of medieval legend'; while according to Carole Silver they deal with 'a world of the grimmest reality'. Whilst critics such as Hodgson and Silver are clearly responding to certain qualities in the poems, however, statements such as these must also be seen in the context of the concern during the last few decades to clear Morris of the charge of mere literary escapism. That project was certainly a valid one; but the result has been that the ironic and anti-romantic elements of the early poems have been emphasized at the expense of other aspects. In particular, I believe, their tendency to idealism, so characteristic of Morris's work as a whole, has been underplayed. As in Morris generally, that idealism is neither unthinking nor unqualified; but it is nevertheless unashamed and sincere. In this article I will attempt to recover the substantial elements of the ideal in the Froissartian poems. I will do this first by examining three important contexts for them: Morris's early prose romances; Froissart's *Chronicles* themselves; and the chivalric visual art of Rossetti and Burne-Jones. I will then go on to consider the poems in more detail, and to suggest some of the ways in which the ideal infiltrates Morris's undeniably brutal vision of the medieval world.

In 1856 Morris contributed eight short prose stories or romances to *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, the youthful journal which he founded in collaboration with Burne-Jones and other friends, and which ran from January to December of that year. Though separated from the *Defence of Guenevere* volume by only two years, there is a wide gulf in quality between the romances and the best of the poems. The romances do, however, embody, in an immature and simplified form, many of Morris's emergent ideas about subjects including heroism, sexuality, and the Middle Ages. The story on which I wish to focus for a moment, 'Gertha's Lovers', is perhaps, with the exception of the modern-dress 'Frank's Sealed Letter',
the least successful of them all, but it is also one of the most pregnant. Like most of the early romances (and, indeed, the late romances as well), it is set in a vague, historically indeterminate medieval world. Olaf, king of a land ‘never mind where or when’, and his friend Leuchnar, both fall in love with Gertha, a peasant’s daughter. Gertha loves Olaf, but when Leuchnar selflessly attempts to woo her for his friend, she refuses. Then Olaf’s kingdom is beset by an alliance of three of its enemies. Olaf is slain in battle, and his dying wish is that Gertha succeed him. The kingdom’s ‘mother city’ is besieged by the evil King Borrace. Leuchnar leads a night sortie against the enemy camp, which proves to be decisive in defeating the assailants, but Leuchnar himself is mortally wounded. He dies with his love for Gertha still unrequited, but content to have been killed in her service and that of the city. Once the kingdom is secure, Gertha walks out to the spot where Olaff fell, and lies down there to die.

One of the most striking features of ‘Gertha’s Lovers’ is the way in which it prefigures Morris’s later works based on the Icelandic sagas. These became a powerful influence on his writing in the years following their discovery by Morris in the original language in 1868. He praised their ‘worship of Courage’, which he identified as ‘the religion of the Northmen’, and strove to embody the same qualities of courage and stoicism in his own works – lived as well as written. During the 1850s, Morris knew the sagas only through bald summaries in works such as Benjamin Thorpe’s compendium Northern Mythology (1851–52); yet similar emphases are clearly discernible in the youthful prose romance. For example, in a long passage early in the tale describing the character of the land and its people, the narrator states that ‘this people were so drawn together, that through the love they bore to one another sprung terrible deeds of heroism, any one of which would be enough for a life-time’s thought; [...] and the glory of their fathers, and how themselves might do deeds that would not shame them, were the things that the men thought of always’. Later, during the onslaught, the old warrior Barulf reminds his fellows of ‘how glorious [it is] to die in a great battle, borne down by over-many foes, to lie, never dead, but a living terror for all time to God’s enemies and ours’. Passages such as these reflect a heroic ideal which seems to have been a deep-seated imperative in Morris’s psyche, and which only wanted the bracing influence of the sagas to make it spring up into full flower.
On the whole, however, despite the Nordic names and vaguely Northern settings (both probably influenced by Thorpe), 'Gertha's Lovers' savours more of chivalric romance than of saga narrative. In this story, the 'worship of Courage' usually takes the form of a slightly callow glorification of chivalric warfare. As one might expect, the love of women provides one of the principal motives for the tale's heroic deeds. Olaf fights and dies bravely, inspired by the knowledge that Gertha loves him, even though she has declined to be his consort. Later, as Queen, Gertha exerts a distinctly Elizabethan influence on her male subjects, such as the young Sir Richard, who is 'quite bewildered with his happiness' when Gertha asks him to lead a division of the night sortie. Leuchnar, who has gladly channelled his erotic love for Gertha into the performance of a subject's loyal service to his mistress, finally proclaims himself 'happy Leuchnar' on his deathbed, explaining to Gertha that 'in the time to come it may be that lovers, when they have not all they wish for, will say: Oh that we might be as Leuchnar, who died for Queen Gertha in the old time'.

Yet the story's treatment of medieval warfare is not quite as idealized as these somewhat trite sentiments might suggest. For example, when Borrace is killed the narrator tells us that 'the brains were fairly knocked out of his smashed head by the great horsehoofs'. Morris never shies away from the gruesome messiness of battle. The gore and violence are not morally complicated, and are reported with something akin to youthful gusto; but the implication appears to be that although the frequent brutality of medieval warfare must be recognized and not eschewed, it in no way detracts from the glory of dying for the sake of love and brotherhood.

It is possible that Morris may have acquired such an attitude partly from reading Froissart himself. We do not know exactly when Morris began studying the Chronicles in Lord Berners's forceful sixteenth-century translation, but the detailed descriptions of siege warfare in 'Gertha's Lovers', of strengthening city walls and setting fire to cat-towers, would appear to suggest a degree of familiarity. (By the time he came to write poems such as 'Concerning Geoffray Teste Noire', less than two years later, that familiarity had become intimate.) The Chronicles record events of sometimes appalling violence, and Froissart must, as a contemporary, have been aware of the terrible suffering which they caused; yet he nevertheless announces his subject at the beginning of the first chapter as 'the
honorable and noble adventures of feats of armes, done and acchyued by ye warres of Frace and Inglande, and prays for divine help so that 'who so this proces redeth, or hereth, may take pastace, pleasure, and ensample'. To look on the reality of warfare with eyes not blind to its harshness, but still able to see something admirable in it; this attitude, familiar to the Middle Ages but less so to the modern world (and even less to the twentieth century than to the nineteenth), is also essentially that which Morris adopts in his poems derived from Froissart.

As well as these literary contexts, Morris's Froissartian poems possess an important visual context. During the mid- to late 1850s, two artists of Morris's intimate circle, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones, produced a group of related pictures on chivalric themes. Amongst the results are Rossetti's *Before the Battle* (Figure 1), and Burne-Jones's *Going to the Battle* (Figure 2), both executed during 1858, the year which also saw the publication of Morris's poems. Rossetti's picture is particularly significant for my purposes. In a letter of July 1858 to the American literary man Charles Eliot Norton, for whom the watercolour was intended, Rossetti remarks: 'these chivalric Froissartian themes are quite a passion of mine'. It is difficult, however, to judge the precision with which Rossetti is using the term 'Froissartian'. This is his only known reference to Froissart, and his interest in chivalric themes was relatively short-lived, whereas with Morris it lasted a lifetime. Neither Rossetti's picture nor indeed Burne-Jones's bears more than a tangential relation to the *Chronicles*. Rossetti's watercolour depicts 'a castle full of ladies who have been embroidering banners which are now being fastened to the spears by the Lady of the castle'. In Burne-Jones's drawing three ladies are shown seeing off an army - and one knight in particular - as it departs for the wars. In both compositions the women are the dominant figures, creating a feminine, almost domestic atmosphere far removed from the patriarchal and political world of the *Chronicles*. They are both, moreover, blatantly idealized images. Neither gives any real sense of the bloodiness of warfare as do Morris's Froissartian poems, and both depict rather stylized, fantastical castles (the exterior in Burne-Jones, the interior in Rossetti) clearly derived from images in medieval illuminated manuscripts. Perhaps most significantly of all, both pictures draw on the ideology which came to be known to the twentieth century as the code of courtly love - a medi-
eval idealism to which the Pre-Raphaelites were profoundly attracted. In Burne-Jones’s drawing, for example, we are clearly intended to surmise that the knight whose face is turned toward us is the beloved of one of the three maidens – probably the one on the right, whose face is also visible, and who appears to be wearing an engagement ring. The knight’s small stature, owing to his position in the background of the picture, suggests his subservient role in the courtly relationship. Froissart, it need hardly be said, has no time for such romantic niceties in his unvaryingly earthy narrative.

On the evidence of the pictures, then, a reader might well conclude that Rossetti, in his letter, is simply using the word ‘Froissartian’ casually, as a synonym for the word that he has already used, ‘chivalric’. From a biographical perspective, however, the fact that he uses the word at all, and in such a familiar, even offhand way, is significant. It suggests that the term was in familiar use between Rossetti, Morris, and Burne-Jones during the late 1850s, and implies a set of ideas associated with it that was the common currency of the three men, even if only Morris was actually a devoted reader of Froissart. The Froissartian poems and the chivalric pictures issued from the same artistic milieu just as surely as did the Oxford Union murals and Morris’s Arthurian poetry. (In the latter case, the element of creative collaboration has never been doubted.) Rossetti’s visual works, and Burne-Jones’s, must therefore be taken seriously as part of the context for Morris’s poems, and, as I argue in the second part of this article, they can be shown to share important elements in common. At the very least, the pictures remind us that the Pre-Raphaelite mode in which Morris was working at this period was fundamentally an idealizing one, and that if the Froissartian poems do indeed eschew romance and idealism to the degree that has often been claimed, they are highly atypical not only of his own work as a whole, but also of that of his circle at the time.

Figure 1: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Before the Battle (1858, retouched 1862). Transparent and opaque watercolour on paper, mounted on canvas. 41.4 x 27.5 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Picture Fund, 12.1164. Photograph © 2007 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
HONOURABLE AND NOBLE ADVENTURES
Notwithstanding all this, however, it is undeniable that the Froissartian poems convey a sense of the messiness, hypocrisy, and brutality of medi-

Figure 2: Edward Burne-Jones, Going to the Battle (1858). Pen and ink wash on vellum. 22.5 x 19.5 cm. Reproduction by permission of the Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
eval warfare which is utterly absent from the chivalric pictures of Rossetti and Burne-Jones, which is merely hinted at in Morris's Malorian poems, and which is realized only in a juvenile way in 'Gertha's Lovers'. 'Sir Peter Harpdon's End', for example, relates in semi-dramatic form a typically minor incident from the Hundred Years' War: 'the death of an expendable young captain, left unrelieved in a crumbling fortress'.

The poem is a small tragedy. Sir Peter, 'a Gascon knight in the English service', is young—only twenty-five years old, as we learn—and handsome; he is affectionate towards his slightly slow-witted lieutenant John Curzon, and devoted to his lady Alice. As the poem opens, he is vexed that rumours have reached Alice's ears that he is preparing to defect and join his cousin Lambert on the French side. Touchingly, he imagines what he would have said to assuage her doubts if he could have seen her before being sent off on his thankless commission to the castle at Poictou:

To find her sitting there,

In the window-seat, not looking well at all,

Crying perhaps, and I say quietly:

'Alice!' she looks up, chokes a sob, looks grave,

Changes from pale to red; but ere she speaks,

Straightway I kneel down there on both my knees,

And say: 'O lady, have I sinn'd, your knight?'

Far from being guilty of the treachery of which he is suspected, Peter is determined to die loyal to the English cause. Clearly there is much to admire about such a character. Yet when he succeeds in taking Lambert prisoner, he punishes him for his 'treachery' by having his ears cut off. Such apparently uncharacteristic cruelty comes as a shock, even if, as Peter suggests, he is being merciful in sparing Lambert's life. Lambert has his revenge in the second half of the poem, when the castle at Poictou is finally, inevitably, taken. Peter pleads for his life with dignity, but Lambert can scarcely be expected to forego revenge for the insult done him, and Peter is hanged, in spite of the protestations of the sympathetic Clisson.

Sir Peter Harpdon, then, is an insignificant player in the Hundred Years' War, and a man not untainted by the brutalities of his time. With his last words, too, he confesses to being 'hopelessly afraid to die'. Yet what remains with us is his dignity and his tenderness towards his Alice,
who is the subject of his final request:

I pray you, O kind Clisson, send some man,
Some good man, mind you, to say how I died,
And take my last love to her: fare-you-well,
And may God keep you; I must go now, lest
I grow too sick with thinking on these things;

Likewise my feet are wearied of the earth,
From whence I shall be lifted up right soon.\(^\text{18}\)

Peter is able to face death with a note of gallows humour. The final section of the poem follows Clisson's squire on his errand to Alice. In her agonized uncertainty before his arrival, and her near-hysterical grief after he has left, we realize that any anxiety Peter may have had over her was totally unfounded. Finally, Alice hears men outside singing of 'Launcelot, and love and fate and death', and remarks bitterly that 'they ought to sing of him who was as wight | As Launcelot or Wade, and yet availed | Just nothing, but to fail and fail and fail'; but she also wonders whether 'they will, | When many years are past, make songs of us'.\(^\text{19}\) Launcelot is not the only legendary hero invoked in the poem: explaining to Lambert his refusal to change sides, Peter cites 'the siege of Troy' and remarks 'how almost all men, reading that sad siege, | Hold for the Trojans; as I did at least, | Thought Hector the best knight a long way'. (This is, of course, the standard medieval response to the story.) He claims that when he is dead 'men will talk [...] of how this Peter clung | To what he thought the right', admiring him as they do Hector.\(^\text{20}\) Some readers have seen these heroic references as ironic: Frederick Kirchhoff, for example, argues that 'the code of male fame, which would seem to compensate for personal loss, is in fact irrelevant to the persons represented'.\(^\text{21}\) But while there is clearly irony in that Peter and Alice are in fact forgotten figures, not actually included in Froissart's chronicle and only belatedly recovered in Morris's nineteenth-century poem, there seems no compelling reason to conclude that Peter is fundamentally undercut. When he exhorts Curzon to die with 'brave sword in your hand, thoughts in your heart | Of all the deeds we have done here in France', or tells Lambert of how he hopes to be remembered for having died 'doing some desperate deed', he is echo-
ing a sentiment found throughout Morris’s imaginative writing; and his assertions of the glory of death in battle are not really undermined by his subsequent execution, since he dies with a dignity which is made, from one point of view, even more impressive by his frank confession of fear. Most telling of all, perhaps, is the pastiche fragment of the ballad about Launcelot which is allowed to stand, significantly, as the final word of Morris’s poem. Launcelot, it says, was

Right valiant to move,
But for his sad love,
The high God above
Stinted his praise. […]

Sing we therefore then
Launcelot’s praise again,
For he wan crownès ten,
If he wan not twelve.

To his death from his birth
He was muckle of worth,
Lay him in the cold earth,
A long grave ye may delve. 23

Launcelot is a failure because he could not win the Grail owing to his sinful love for Guenevere. Yet, as readers of medieval romance, and of the Arthurian poems of The Defence of Guenevere, we know that Launcelot was regarded as ‘muckle of worth’ not only for his feats of arms, but also for the very ‘sad love’ which prevented him from gaining the ultimate prize. He is the more beloved of posterity for his ‘crownès ten’ than he would have been had he won the full complement. Sir Peter is like Launcelot in kind if not in degree: worthy of admiration as a brave knight and a true courtly lover, despite his ultimate failure.

It may be seen, then, that Morris’s poem includes idealizing material of at least two different, though related, kinds. Peter’s emphasis on the glory of dying heroically is, as I have indicated, a statement of a heroic ideal which had been part of Morris’s emotional makeup since at least the time of ‘Gertha’s Lovers’, and probably long before. This ideal was to re-emerge
in an even more emphatic form following Morris's discovery of the Icelandic sagas, and eventually found its fullest expression in his great heroic epic *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876). The romantic treatment of the love of Peter and Alice, on the other hand, is actually rather remote from the world of Froissart, belonging more to the courtly realm of medieval romance. As in Rossetti's pictures, and Burne-Jones's, the idea of courtly love is central to Morris's treatment of chivalry in all of the major Froissartian poems. Moreover, the presence of the figure of Launcelot as the embodiment of both of these types of ideal — the heroic and the courtly — shows that Morris is working within an idealizing tradition, in spite of the harsh realism of the medieval world with which he presents us.

The case is similar with 'The Haystack in the floods', another story of failure. Robert, an English knight, and Jehane, his French beloved, are fleeing to safety across the 'Gascon frontier' through a dismal landscape of mud and rain. Jehane is numb with cold, and 'made giddy in the head by the swift riding'. When they are at length ambushed by 'that Judas, Godmar', Jehane guesses immediately the choice awaiting her: a return to Paris followed by imprisonment in the Chatelet and trial for witchcraft, 'or else a life with him, for which I should be damned at last'.24 Robert attempts resistance, but is betrayed by his own men, who bind him and hand him over to the enemy. Jehane is indeed offered the choice which she had anticipated, and refuses to consent to become Godmar's mistress. When her captor threatens to take her by force, she replies that she would murder him in his sleep, before realizing that this too would condemn her before God. The options open to Jehane all seem equally bad; she 'cannot choose but sin and sin'.25

There is certainly little that is conventionally admirable about this picture of the Middle Ages, which seems to consist mostly of violence, cruelty, superstition, and religious dogmatism. Godmar gives Jehane an hour to change her decision, but at the end of this she simply reiterates her refusal. Morris does not spare his readers the consequences of her choice, which is described in one of the most shocking passages in the volume:

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she saw him bend  
Back Robert's head; she saw him send  
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
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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.26

Yet, in spite of such brutality, the world described by the poem is not one of utter, unrelieved horror. Robert is an admirable figure, and his response to Godmar's attack ('He answer'd not, but cried his cry, | "St. George for Marny!" cheerily')27 is impressive, even though it quickly becomes pathetic when his men fail to respond. And although Jehane's choice is morally complex, we feel that the decision she makes, to sacrifice her own life and that of her lover rather than accept ignominy and humiliation for them both, is the more heroic and therefore the 'right' one. Certainly the poem does not suggest that Robert holds her responsible for his approaching death: in one of the strokes of psychological realism that make the best poems of The Defence of Guenevere so compelling, the narrator describes how

he tried once more
To touch her lips; she reach'd out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor grey lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brush'd them.28

This final, desperate attempt at physical contact, thwarted when Godmar 'thrust them apart', confirms Robert and Jehane as tragic lovers, in spite of the thoroughly unidealized tone in which their story is told. Again, courtly love and chivalric warfare are shown to be admirable in spite of the complicated and sometimes brutal realities of medieval life.

I would not wish to argue that Morris's attitude towards the Middle Ages is the same in all of the poems in the volume. The third of the major Froissartian poems, 'Concerning Geffray Teste Noire', takes a far more cynical view, as many critics have pointed out, and moreover draws a very clear line between romance and reality. The speaker of this dramatic monologue, John of Castel Neuf, starts out by relating another highly unro-
romantic incident from the Hundred Years' War – an attempt to ambush the 'Gascon thief' Geffray Teste Noire – but soon digresses into describing the bones of two skeletons which he finds in the grass whilst lying in wait for Geffray. He decides that one of these skeletons is that of a lady, and imagines that she and her knight were ambushed and killed whilst in the act of fleeing together – a story not dissimilar to that of 'The Haystack in the floods'. He sits staring at the skeleton until he loses sight of 'the small white bones that lay upon the flowers', and sees only the lady 'with her dear gentle walking leading in, | By a chain of silver twined about her wrists, | Her loving knight'. The narrative then dissolves for a while into a bizarre courtly apostrophe to the long-dead 'lady', whom he addresses as though she were a living beloved. John of Castel Neuf is evidently constructing for himself an elaborate romantic fiction to distract him from the harsh actuality of his own life; this is made even plainer by his further digression into the recollection of a horrifying, traumatizing boyhood memory of a heap of dead bodies burning in a church, piled up there by the murderous Jacquerie. This poem appears to be intended by Morris as a caution, possibly self-directed, against the temptation to romanticize the past, and to use medievalism as a form of escape. Yet it clearly does not follow that Morris is condemning all romance or all enthusiasm for the age of chivalry. Although the story of the invented lovers is in some respects similar to that of Robert and Jehane in 'The Haystack in the floods', Morris refuses to idealize the latter uncritically, as John of Castel Neuf does the former, and for this reason the love and courage of Robert and Jehane remains valid as an object of admiration.

Morris's qualified admiration for the Middle Ages is evident in many of the shorter, mostly earlier, poems of The Defence of Guenevere, some of which also inhabit a vaguely Froissartian world. Only a few of these poems (such as 'Two Red Roses across the Moon', 'Sir Giles' War Song', and perhaps 'The Little Tower') relate martial or amorous successes, but the fragmentary tales of violence and failure also frequently reflect a sympathetic attitude towards chivalric heroism. In 'Shameful Death', for example, we are expected to be shocked at the dishonourable capture and execution of the speaker's brother, Lord Hugh, but happy at his revenge; whilst in 'Riding Together', the preternatural brightness of the summer landscape through which the two friends ride to the Crusades, even though it is con-
trasted with the implied darkness and entrapment of the prison to which
the speaker is finally consigned, seems to represent a vividness which has
vanished from the modern world. Perhaps the most arresting single image
in the volume is to be found in ‘The Gilliflower of Gold’, in which the
speaker relates being worsted by a formidable opponent at a tournament
until he remembers his (apparently) dead beloved ‘bow’d to the gilliflower
bed, | The yellow flowers stain’d with red’.32 These lines seem almost
emblematic of the juxtaposition of beauty and brutality which character­
izes the Middle Ages in Morris’s early poems. The gilliflowers are natural,
colourful, and delicate in their transience, and the blood that stains them
actually serves to accentuate their beauty.

Peter Faulkner has remarked of the Froissartian poems that they ‘rec­
create successfully an atmosphere of violence in which chivalry is a high
ideal only occasionally achieved’.33 I would not wish to dissent from this
statement; but what, I think, has sometimes been missed, is the extent
to which that ‘high ideal’ constitutes one of Morris’s main interests in
the poems. Throughout his life, whether he was concerned with stained
glass, the guild system, or the Icelandic sagas, Morris admired the Middle
Ages intensely and sincerely, though never uncritically; and it is worth
remembering that Froissart remained one of the chief foci of Morris’s
medievalism right to the end.34 In the Froissartian poems of the Defence
of Guenevere volume, the most admirable aspects of the period are shown
to be the knightly attitude toward heroism, and the code of courtly love;
but, typically, Morris never shrinks from representing the ugliness against
which these positive elements are revealed. To read these grittily realistic
poems in this way is to understand them to be less different than they may
initially appear from Morris’s other work, or from that of his fellow Pre­
Raphaelites during the late 1850s. Like theirs, his work was, as he said, ‘the
embodiment of dreams’; but Morris’s dreams always possessed a vitality
and an earthy sense of reality which allowed them eventually to bear fruit
in action.
NOTES

1 An earlier version of this article was published in *Leeds Centre Working Papers in Victorian Studies* 7, 2004, pp. 112–25.


5 *Collected Works*, 1, p. 176.


7 *Collected Works*, 1, p. 178.

8 *Collected Works*, 1, p. 195.


10 *Collected Works*, 1, p. 222.

11 *Collected Works*, 1, p. 214.


15 *Collected Works*, 1, p. 35.

16 *Collected Works*, 1, p. 38.

17 *Collected Works*, 1, p. 53.

18 *Collected Works*, 1, p. 53.

19 *Collected Works*, 1, p. 60.

20 *Collected Works*, 1, pp. 42–43.


22. *Collected Works*, 1, pp. 37, 43.
30. *Collected Works*, 1, p. 79.
34. In 1895 Morris told an enquirer about his literary influences that ‘the Icelandic sagas, our own border ballads, and Froissart (through Berner’s [sic] translation of about 1520) have had as much influence over me as, or more than, anything else’. (Kelvin, *Collected Letters*, iv, p. 338).