PAPERS ON LANGUAGE & LITERATURE

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL FOR SCHOLARS AND CRITICS OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

PLL

$12. individuals, $20. institutions, $20. foreign plus $2 postage.
Single and back issues $5. Subscriptions begin in January of each year.

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *PLL*, Box 43-A, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Edwardsville, IL 62026-1001.

US ISSN 0031-1294

Papers on Language & Literature

A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 4, FALL 1984

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Vanity of Human Wishes the poet provides an answer, unfortunately overlooked by many readers, in words reminiscent of the subject and theme of *Levet*:

> For love, which scarce collective man can fill;
> For patience sov'reign o'er transmuted ill;
> For faith, that panting for a happier seat,
> Counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat:
> These goods for man the laws of heav'n ordain,
> These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to gain;
> With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,
> And makes the happiness she does not find.[7]

In *Levet* Johnson reinforces the position he took in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, but in the former he wished to conclude with a more uplifting coda. In *The Vanity of Human Wishes* the poet leaves us with his conviction that resignation to the will of God and cultivation of virtue "makes the happiness" we have been unable to find elsewhere and implies that true and lasting reward is only possible in heaven. *Levet* demonstrates those virtues in action and shows the soul ascending to its reward. In both poems the bleakness of the world remains the same, but in *Levet* the escape from misery, confusion, and despair is more graphically portrayed in the old doctor and the light of inspiration he exudes.

Genuine human emotions permeate *On the Death of Dr. Robert Levet* and transcend literary form and convention, but the emotions are those of unrestrained joy, rather than of suppressed grief. Our knowledge of Johnson's life has only obscured the real emphases in and tenor of the poem; we must see that the Levet of Bolt Court is not the Levet of Johnson's tribute. Through the example of the poem's Levet—the epitome of the selfless man free from the stain of pride, avarice, and ambition—we discover the best way to apply our talents in this incomprehensible and hostile world. We find, instead of a grieving poet, a jubilant moralist informing his readers that they need not despair. More than a figure whom he deeply loved and respected, Robert Levet was, in this poetic environment, Johnson's symbol of hope.

[7] *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, ll. 361–68.

The Evolution of "The Wanderers' Prologue"

Florence S. Boos

In the early 1860s, William Morris wrote a narrative ballad about medieval mariners in search of a deathless kingdom. He intended to use this narrative as a prologue for a projected collection of verse tales, but in 1867 he completely recast it, and used the new version to preface the first volume of *The Earthly Paradise*, published in 1868.[1] May Morris later published the early version of the prologue as "The Wanderers" in volume 24 of the *Collected Works*.[2] The later version, called "Prologue: the Wanderers," and indeed the entire style, sensibility, and intention of *The Earthly Paradise* diverge radically from this early narrative—in fact, the shift is as striking as the transitions from Morris' juvenilia to the *Defence*, from *The Earthly Paradise* to the political essays, and from the essays to the prose romances.

[1] The early "Wanderers" postdates the *Defence of Guenevere* by about eight years, and is roughly contemporaneous with *Scenes from the Fall of Troy*, which it resembles in its medievalism, elegiac lyrics, and abrupt descriptions of violence and war. Both were transitional works, never completed during Morris' lifetime, though Morris at one point considered "The Wanderers" sufficiently finished to prepare notes in the margin for illustrations Burne-Jones was to insert in their never-realized project of a joint edition of *The Earthly Paradise*.

In fact, "The Wanderers" was one of Morris' better unpolished ballad drafts, and exhibits enough features of his early style to have found an occasional defender. His daughter and editor May remarked that "one might wonder why the poet put aside so vivid and picturesque a piece of work. It is a complete story, full of movement and incident, full of strangeness and of almost Eastern imagination—once more, the narrative of a man who saw what he recounted." May Morris, ed., *The Collected Works of William Morris* (London, 1910–15), 24: xxix. More recently, E. P. Thompson, influenced by his hostility toward an alleged "degeneration of the English Romantic movement," finds no significant merits in the second version, and is struck with the first version's immediacy and effective portrayal of the confusions of battle. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, 2d ed. (New York, 1977), pp. 114–17.

[2] It is discussed by May Morris in *Collected Works*, 3:xiii-xiv and 24:xxviii-ix, and reprinted in 24:87–170.

Somewhere between the early 1860s and 1867, Morris seems to have evolved certain major features of the narrative manner of most of his later poetic work, and defenders as well as detractors of the "middle" style which followed seem to agree that the shift was both drastic and consciously imposed.[3] This abrupt transition is often cited by the detractors of Morris' long narrative poetry as evidence of dilettantism. A fairer observation would be that the *Defence* was intense, immediate, and melodramatic; *The Earthly Paradise* reflective, expansive, and elegiac.The revision of "The Wanderers" thus provides a particularly clear reflection of this transition; careful study of this miniature test case may suggest some useful conclusions about the wider intentions and motives of Morris' Great Style Shift.

The first prologue opens *in medias res* with an abrupt question:

> Oho! oho! whence come ye, Sirs,
> Drifted to usward in such guise,
> In ship unfit for mariners,
> Such heavy sorrow in your eyes?[4]

Seventy-eight pages later we learn the questioners' identity: "The People of the Shore," who have been listening sympathetically all the while. The "mariners" are many, but their lines are apparently uttered by one spokesman. In the later version, the Wanderers' principal narrator, Rolf, is highly individuated, and his comments suggest that he is farsighted, visionary, and brave. The first prologue begins its straightforward, sequential account with the lines, "When first we hoisted up our sails" (87); the second provides careful introductions of specific Wanderers, an account of their ancestry and history, and the Wanderers' own comments on the harrowing frustrations of their voyage. The first version is more consciously allegorical, but this quality is not apparent in its opening pages. The protagonists of the first version also describe themselves as plundering "mariners," a term which, apart from its obvious suggestion of Coleridge's "Rime," evokes less than "Wanderers" the second version's sense of forlorn search and metaphysical uncertainty.

[3] See, for example, Jessie Kocmanova, *The Poetic Maturing of William Morris* (1964; rpt. New York, 1970), pp. 19–20; Ralph Stallman, *The Quest of William Morris* (Diss., University of Oregon, 1966), pp. 152–61; Blue Calhoun, *The Pastoral Vision of William Morris* (Athens, Ga., 1975), p. 100; and Frederick Kirchhoff, *William Morris* (Boston, 1979), p. 59. All of these prefer the final version, though Blue Calhoun finds it diminished in "narrative force."

[4] Henceforth, all citations from "The Wanderers" are from volume 24 of the *Collected Works*, and are cited by page numbers in parentheses after the text; citations from "Prologue: The Wanderers" are from volume 3, and similarly indicated; references to other volumes of the *Collected Works* list the volume number before that of the page, e.g. "(6:20)."

The first prologue might be a tale in itself, rather than a prologue, and it is conceivable that Morris started the mariners' account as an independent project. By contrast, the second version clearly foreshadows the psychological journeys which follow. In the first version, the narrative view of the mariners often shifts unevenly from disapproval to sympathy. At first the mariners may, in fact, be pirates; references to ocean plunder only fade as the poem progresses:

> A summer cruise we went that tide
> To take of merchants toll and tax . . .
> [87]

> We swept both narrow seas and sound
> Of all the ships that came our way.
>
> Our holds were full of bales of goods
> Worth many a florin, so perdie
> Homeward we turned, counting the roods
> Of land we should buy presently.
> [88]

The mariners who later follow their captain in search of a deathless kingdom are chiefly motivated by their desire for novelty, ease, and luxury. The first voyagers heed an external omen in the service of vague desires for greater comfort and longevity. The Wanderers travel to see if there is any escape from human misery and death, a search which they finally realize is futile and misconceived. By contrast, their predecessors, the mariners, are driven first by material greed, then by an equally unreflective craving for extended physical life. The narrator of the first version describes his desire for "joyous tilts and ladies' love" (111) and "worldly bliss / In some sweet isle with games and play" (109), a marked contrast to the sober, well-documented fantasies which inspire Nicholas and Rolf, the youthful visionaries in "The Wanderers' Prologue."

Even in their present happiness, the mariners' simple-minded belief that they have found the perfect land contrasts with the Wanderers' complex and retrospective hopes. The mariners respond wholeheartedly but simplistically to the beauty of landscape, the excitement of adventure, and the pursuit of their dreams, but are otherwise callous adventurers—in a way, a significant part of what the Wanderers have tried with desperate tenacity to escape. They react with racist contempt to the alien peoples they encounter, burn statues of native gods,

and desecrate their temples. Without provocation, they burn and pillage villages, murder many of the first tribe they encounter, and show surprise when their victims counterattack. Unlike the second Wanderers, the mariners express no interest in native customs or even sympathy with any lives but their own. They also show relatively little honor-among-pirates. At one point, three scouts fail to return before the others plan to sail, and the latter matter-of-factly desert them. They also leave helpless on the shore a fourth scout, who is in shock from having witnessed the beheading of two of his comrades.

Unlike the skeptical and learned Swabian priest Laurence of the second version, the mariners' "mass-priest" counsels crudely undifferentiated fears of the Devil and damnation; the rest of the mariners erratically dismiss and follow his exhortations, but increase their references to God and prayer towards journey's end. At their most pious, their flatly moralistic approach to religion is credulously literal and calculating. In Morris' poetic world, the desire to christianize others is never admirable, though occasional good protagonists (Kiartan in "The Lovers of Gudrun") do convert. The mariners clumsily try to convert inhabitants of a land of women, whose Queen offers to listen to the mariners' descriptions, and "believe all that I can."

The mariners likewise see themselves as fighters and heroes. The Wanderers have also fought, but they know their opponents have not been as well armed. Nor has their ability to impress credulous and simple people made more bearable their own failures of nerve and hope.

The sketchy treatment of the characters of the earlier mariners also makes it more difficult to interpret the effect of their journey. What they have learned remains unclear, except for the obvious moral spoken by the People of the Shore:

> Your hope was but a rotten reed.
> What! and are not our fathers dead. . . .
> Yet these also the earth has hid,
> No man among them but found death.
>
> [165]

The very immediacy of their account suggests they have gained little distance from what they relate. The Wanderers' much more complex efforts to evaluate their earlier efforts—and by extension, those of other would-be "heroes" of history and legend—make them more plausible narrators for other tales, whose meanings they seriously try to examine and interpret. Their self-conscious character helps to bind

together the prologue, frame, connective lyrics, and tales of *The Earthly Paradise*.

The descriptions of the two voyages differ along similar lines: the incidents of the first are episodic and fragmented; those of the second are subordinated to the narrator's construction of a miniature *Bildungsroman* in verse. The first mariners encounter assorted Coleridgean marvels—a city in perpetual flames, a land of life-in-death where dead persons appear living, and material objects which crumble into insubstantiality at the touch. The mariners' "captain" (the Wanderers by contrast have no "captain") expresses a hasty wish that he might die becalmed on the ocean, and the winds suddenly die away. The first version's incidents, descriptions, and locales are more colorful, but less convincing. For example, the mariners visit a pseudo-matriarchy called "Ladies' Land," whose Queen immediately offers to transfer authority to them, and wholesale marriages follow. The conclusion is no less patronizing. The mariners eventually decide to continue their voyage, and their deserted spouses

> little moaning did . . . make,
> Though certainly none wished us ill
> And we were sorry for their sake.
>
> [142]

Morris' later commitment as a socialist to minimal feminist tenets was more dutiful than intense, but it is not surprising that he abandoned the episode of the "Ladies' Land" from his later version.

Chivalric rescue from the stake had been an important motif to the young Morris, and the first prologue presents sympathetically the mariners' rescue of naked maidens chained to a rock. By contrast, the second version gives a straightforward account of human sacrifices, in which both youths and maidens are victims. Further, the Wanderers' stance as onlookers is less complacent, for their own gullibility has caused their complicity in these murders.

The first prologue also provides a brief précis of *The Earthly Paradise*, as Morris originally envisioned it:

> . . . then in answer will we tell
> Of countries that ye never knew,
> Of towns, that having long stood well,
> The Gods in anger overthrew;
>
> Of kings, who in their tyranny
> Were mighty once, but fell at last;

Of merchants rich as men could be,
And yet one day their wealth was past,

The voyage for the Golden Fleece,
The Doom of King Acrisius
And how the Gods gave Psyche peace—
These stories shall ye hear from us. . . .

[170]

No such synopsis appears in "Prologue: The Wanderers"; the tales are more individually anticipated in the prologue's motifs and language, and explicitly introduced in narrative passages throughout the poem. The earlier prospectus' simplistic moralism reflects a heavy didactic quality in the early medieval tales, especially "The Man Born to Be King," "The Proud King," and "The Lady of the Land." The early prologue's mariners were unnamed Scandinavians who sailed south; the second version provides elaborate tangential voyages for several protagonists, and a narrator whose complex origins make more plausible its cosmopolitan conclusion.

The first prologue's voyage also ends with little affirmation. The "People of the Shore" offer prosaic promises of distraction, but by contrast the Elders' proposal of a systematic exchange of tales offers the Wanderers a chance to represent and understand their experience, as well as transmit and refine the traditional tales of their peoples. The mariners are much more truculent and even threaten "The People of the Shore" at one point, in almost ludicrous contrast to the Wanderers' and Elders' mutuality and kindred feeling. Only at the end of the first version have the mariners warmed somewhat to the possibility of narration:

But tales of many lands we know,
And if some poor bread these be worth,
Gladly these pastimes would we show
As long as we may live on earth.

[165]

At the second prologue's conclusion, the Greek Elders, moved by Rolf's account, earnestly beseech their guests to honor them with more tales.

As suggested earlier, the first prologue is much more derivative of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." In no other poem is Morris' indebtedness to Coleridge so evident, though it is perhaps not surprising that the work which inspired Morris' imitation was Coleridge's only voyage narrative. The parallels are many and unsubtle: they range from the choice of topic—an ancient mariner's account of a semimythic voyage—to the use of specific words, rimes, and stanza patterns. In both poems, the narrator travels with two hundred companions, is temporarily becalmed, watches companions fall into a state of life-in-death, and sees brightly colored water animals. Both narrators are archetypically unreflective, and express belated acceptance of a moral order by exhortations to prayer, religious rites, and pious interpretations. The narrators of both poems confront former companions who suffer an eerie life-in-death. Common to both poems are a sense of automatism and alienation, and a weird intermingling of living and dead, natural and supernatural, piety and terror.

Ultimately Morris' intentions were radically different from Coleridge's in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." An inscrutable, all-determining supernatural intervention dominates Coleridge's poem, while the interventions of Morris' prologue are episodic and lack "The Rime" 's obsessive preoccupation with psychological fixation and personal sin. Even in the first prologue, Morris' voyage is communal, not solitary; his heroes trespass against societies and cultures of human beings, not a lone bird; the mariners do not find redemption by being "shriven," but by sharing stories with hosts of another culture. Perhaps at some point Morris simply realized that his best image of the medieval world was historically and psychologically richer than his earlier attempt to recreate the stark primitivism of Coleridge's ballad.

The echoes of Tennyson in Morris' first prologue are also quite direct. The resemblances between Morris' pseudo-matriarchy and Tennyson's women's college in *The Princess* are striking. Both are male nineteenth century fantasies of a female kingdom, not serious considerations of the matriarchy; in both poems, the matriarch's absurd pretenses soon yield to "rescue" and marriage. One interspersed lyric, "Song" (24:137), directly recalls Tennyson's lyric from *The Princess*, "Tears, Idle Tears." The mariners visit a palace of enchanted sleepers which suggests the subjects of Tennyson's "The Day-Dream" and Burne-Jones' later series of paintings, "The Briar Rose."[5] A more important analogue with a Tennysonian motif may be the first prologue's "Earthly Paradise," which appears to the captain in a dream as a fair city filled with costly artifacts, sheltered from

[5] Although it was not completed until 1890, Burne-Jones began the Briar Rose series about 1868, during the period in which Morris was writing the first volume of *The Earthly Paradise*: see plates 43, 43a, 43b, and 44, following page 154, in Martin Harrison and Bill Waters, *Burne-Jones* (London, 1973). It hangs in the Faringdon Collection Trust, Buscot Park, Faringdon, Berkshire.

the elements, and indeed from all change, including death. This illusory paradise seems clearly indebted to Tennyson's "Palace of Art," though its reigning divinity is Venus rather than the "Soul." No such etiolate ideal realm is enshrined in *The Earthly Paradise* itself.

These assimilations of Coleridge and Tennyson in the first prologue remain oddly incomplete. Trances, voyages, illusory cities, and exotic kingdoms are disjoint marvels not subsumed by the mariners or their spokesman into a larger pattern. They also compete with many reminders of Morris' juvenilia, early prose romances, and *The Defence of Guenevere*. The first prologue's nightmares of isolation, desertion, and entrapment recall the juvenilia and the *Defence*, and descriptions of combat and ill treatment are reminiscent of "Sir Peter Harpdon's End." Chivalric trappings, maidens in need of rescue, besieged cities, and grovelling tyrants recall the Froissartian poems of the *Defence* and *Scenes from the Fall of Troy*. Sexual desire, as in *Scenes from the Fall of Troy*, is closely associated with the fear of death, and the decayed palace of the enchanted sleepers resembles the deserted courtly environment of the *Defence*'s "Golden Wings." Finally, the narrator's account of nightmare within nightmare suggests the interconnecting dream frames and fragmentary quality of early prose romances, such as "Lindenborg Pool" or "A Dream."

The first prologue, "The Wanderers," is a last effort to revive the rugged, chivalric, sexually charged poetic world which had attracted Morris for over a decade. As he drafted it, he was already in transition toward his later use of larger narrative frames to interpret doubt and reflection, as well as *prouesse*. The mariners are all "ancient men," but the Wanderers are more mature: they seek significance in their past and their narratives, and some self-conscious interplay between the two. The psychological distance between themselves and their creator has narrowed, and their voyage acquires personal as well as allegorical significance. The audience for the tales also evolves, as the naive credulity, rudimentary fears, and near-shamanistic supernaturalism of both "The People of the Shore" and the mariners yield to the cosmopolitan sophistication of Greek Elders and polyglot Wanderers.

Most of *The Earthly Paradise*'s tales of simple failed quests, like that of the first prologue, tend to be early didactic tales. By the time he wrote the second prologue, Morris had come to define extended journeys as "heroic" accomplishments in their own right, with or without trophies of success. The second prologue's wider and more varied inclusion of motifs, incidents, and descriptions better represents *The Earthly Paradise*'s meditations on human effort and renewal. The subsequent tales' many degrees of immediacy and detachment

form a reflecting chamber for their familiar heroic gestures, and mirror the ardent electicism of the Elders and the Wanderers, their "narrators." The second Wanderers' prologue, *Jason*, and the early classical tales offered a corresponding new style, which later became the psychologically consistent symbolic instrument of Morris' best poetic writing.

The great shift between the two prologues is illustrated in the opening passage of its second version, "Prologue: The Wanderers." In a direct address to the contemporary reader, the "singer" contrasts medieval and Victorian England, and attempts, like the introductory lyric which precedes it, to set the narrative in a concrete historical context. The reader is asked to envision a kind of aerial view of an idealized medieval London:

> Forget six counties overhung with smoke, . . .
> Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
> And dream of London, small and white and clean,
> The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green. . . .
>
> [3]

This is one of Morris' favorite visions, most fully embodied in *News from Nowhere*.

The subsequent descriptions echo Keats' enumerations of exotic, foreign merchandise, but also evince Morris' greater interest in the historical, geographical, political, and economic reality of "Florence gold cloth, and Ypres napery, / And cloth of Bruges, and hogsheads of Guienne." The narrator's aerial view dissolves, first to a "nameless city in a distant sea," then to its temple, and finally to the temple's council chamber. The reader/viewer enters the chamber as a physical person, one in whom viewpoints merge:

> Pass now between them, push the brazen door,
> And standing on the polished marble floor
> Leave all the noises of the square behind;
> Most calm that reverent chamber shall ye find,
> Silent at first, but for the noise you made
> When on the brazen door your hand you laid
> To shut it after you. . . .
>
> [4]

The first prologue's "People of the Shore" are now Greek Elders, whose opinions merit notice, and whose age forms a bond with the eponymous "Wanderers":

a little band
Who bear such arms as guard the English land,
But battered, rent and rusted sore, and they,
The men themselves, are shrivelled, bent and grey;
And as they lean with pain upon their spears
Their brows seem furrowed deep with more than years;
For sorrow dulls their heavy sunken eyes;
Bent are they less with time than miseries.

[4–5]

The second prologue is here more "realistic," and it is easier to understand the reasons for the Elders' deference and kindliness. The "singer" has adroitly drawn the reader's attention from "bills of lading" to the "miseries" of these dogged strangers and narrowed the poem's scope from distant lands to "pity for [these] poor souls."

To the Elders' delight, a few of the Wanderers speak Greek. Their principal Greek-speaking representative is Rolf (not "Sir Rolf," as in the first version), a Norwegian who spent his childhood at the Greek court in Byzantium. Rolf facilitates the cultural exchange which follows, and his political concurrence in the new faith does not foreclose a deeper emotional response to the old tales. Presumably it is he who later narrates the story of Sigurd's daughter in "The Fostering of Aslaug," and reverently describes Sigurd as "his people's best beloved man" (6:20).

Lest Rolf's antecedents seem implausible, Morris' narrative carefully cites the presence of the Vaering warriors in the Byzantine court. Rolf recalls his bleak return to Norway:

But when I reached one dying autumn-tide
My uncle's dwelling near the forest side,
And saw the land so scanty and so bare,
And all the hard things men contend with there,
A little and unworthy land it seemed,
And all the more of Asgard's days I dreamed,
And worthier seemed the ancient faith of praise.

[6]

Rolf's sense of loss—introduced almost immediately, as he looks back over an enormous temporal, geographical, and psychological gulf to his lost youth—pervades the narrative account which follows.

Fondly, he recalls two of his closest companions of the route: Nicholas, a Breton squire, had once told Rolf "much lore of many lands," including the story of Sir John Maundevile, who once sought

an Earthly Paradise;[6] and Laurence, a Swabian priest, healer, and astrologer, told him similar tales of Kaiser Redbeard, a hero who has put on immortality but may yet return. Once, many years earlier, the three friends sat in their home, the Norwegian city of Drontheim, and listened as distant bells tolled more deaths from the plague, and a little nearby bell signaled receipt of extreme unction. Nicholas asks Rolf and Laurence if they wished to begin their long-discussed quest in emulation of Maundevile and Redbeard, and Rolf's reply is immediate:

rather would I depart
Now while thou speakest; never has my heart
Been set on anything within this land.

[10]

They lack not will, but means, and when Nicholas later marries Kirstin Erhling, heir of the recently deceased Marcus Erhling's "fair long ship," this barrier is removed. In good time, the three men pledge to follow their quest "till death or life have set our hearts at rest" (11), and Kirstin joins them and a crew of like-minded spirits for the voyage.

Notice the second version's new motivations—the imminence of the Black Death, the innocent idealism with which Rolf, Nicholas, and Laurence study old tales, and the close bond between them. Gently, the aged Rolf mocks his earlier self:

for all of one kind seemed to be
The Vineland voyage o'er the unknown sea
And Swegdir's search for Godhome, when he found
The entrance to a new world underground. . . .

[12–13]

[6] Morris remarked on the provenance of the English Knight in a letter to O. F. Adams: "I meant Sir John Mandeville, but I have not his book by me, so I cannot be sure if he really does say that he did as my lines tell: I think he does. You may remember that he spins a long yarn about the sham Earthly Paradise of the sheikh of Alamont." O. F. Adams and W. J. Rolfe, eds., *Atalanta's Race and Other Tales from "The Earthly Paradise"* (Boston, 1888), p. 197. The elusive paradise appears in *The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Maundevile*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (London, 1839), reprinted by Morris' friend F. S. Ellis in 1866. In his introduction Halliwell had called the passage "most singular," and rendered it into modern English for the "general reader." There is some resemblance between Morris' Apology and Maundevile's introduction: "Of Paradys ne can not I speken propurly; for I was not there. It is fer bezonde; and that forthinkethe me: and also I was not worthi. But as I have herd seye of wyse men bezonde, I schalle telle zou with gode wille" (chap. 30, p. 303). The "sham paradise" appears in chapter 27.

It is characteristic of this second version of the Prologue that Morris has provided a careful *encadrement* for the three principal Wanderers, as well as the journey itself. Even supporting characters such as Nicholas and Laurence are assigned definite, rather complex identities and relationships to recorded history.

Young Rolf takes only his sword, his father's Byzantine axe, and a few jewels on his journey, and meets the others at "King Tryggvi's hill."[7] Carefully, they now debate their route. Nicholas has read the only available account of a transatlantic voyage, Leif Erikson's trip to Greenland, and suggests that they seek perfection in a warmer land.

Later, on the high seas, the youthful Wanderers encounter the fleet which bears the armies of Edward I of England against the French.[8] Rolf is strongly attracted by military glory, and to him Edward's ship at dawn is a vision of heraldic beauty. He even feels a brief surge of wayward desire for such exploits, but his thoughts are cut short when he and his companions are hailed and ordered to board the king's ship. Morris' description of Edward is complex:

> Broad-browed he was, hook-nosed, with wide grey eyes
> No longer eager for the coming prize,
> But keen and steadfast; many an ageing line,
> Half hidden by his sweeping beard and fine,
> Ploughed his thin cheeks, his hair was more than grey,
> And like to one he seemed whose better day
> Is over to himself, though foolish fame
> Shouts louder year by year his empty name.
>
> [16]

The king serves as an early prototype of one of the Prologue's weary, experienced old men: like the Wanderers themselves in old age, he pursues his goals with little illusion of success. He and his chief knight

[7] According to vol. 1 of Laing's translation of the *Heimskringla*, King Tryggve Olafsson was "buried at a place called Tryggve's Cairn" (p. 359). For the Prologue's other Scandinavian references, see Oscar Maurer's "Some Sources of William Morris' 'The Wanderers,'" *University of Texas Studies in English* 29 (1950): 222–30; and Karl Litzenberg's "William Morris and the Heimskringla," *Scandinavian Studies and Notes* 14, no. 3 (1936): 35–39, and "Allusions to the *Elder Edda* in the 'Non-Norse' Poems of William Morris," *Scandinavian Studies and Notes* 14, no. 2 (1936): 17–18.

[8] The account of Edward III's journey in vol. 1, chap. 120 of Froissart's *Chronicles* is discussed by Maurer and by Ralph Bellas, *William Morris' Treatment of Sources in The Earthly Paradise* (Diss., University of Kansas, 1960). Morris has aged Edward III from a vigorous king of 34 to a war-weary old man, and Froissart's list of Edward's vassals and preparations for war conveys nothing of Morris' elegiac detachment.

(perhaps Godfrey de Harcourt) are impressive figures, but his son Edward II, the future forfeiter of his father's lands, is imperious and vain.[9] The king notices Rolf's ill-concealed interest in the campaign, and pointedly asks, "Wouldst thou say me no / If underneath my banner thou should'st go?" (17).

Before Rolf can speak, Nicholas courageously intervenes. His father, Loys of Dinan, was killed in combat with the French, and his earliest memory is of entrapment in a sudden attack:

> we ran with the rest,
> I wailing loud who know not why at all;
> But ere we reached the gates my nurse did fall,
> I with her, and I wondered much that she
> Just as she fell should still lie quietly;
> Nor did the coloured feathers that I found
> Stuck in her side, as frightened I crawled round,
> Tell me the tale, though I was sore afeard
> At all the cries and wailing that I heard.
>
> [19]

He has since witnessed many other scenes of death, and fervently yearns to find a different shore:

> Well, blame me then,
> If I who love this changing life of men,
> And every minute of whose life were bliss
> Too great to long for greater, but for this—. . .
> Mock me, but let us go, for I am fain
> Our restless road, the landless sea, to gain.
>
> [20]

Rolf is shaken from his heroic fantasies by his friend's impassioned defense of the search for an earthly paradise. More improbably, so is Edward, who acknowledges that the young Wanderers may win a more significant victory than his own. He is imprisoned by his rank and martial role:

[9] Froissart's description of Edward III's voyage mentions that he was accompanied by his son (aged 13, according to Froissart, but the translator's note corrects this to 16), and by Sir Godfrey de Harcourt (*The Chronicles of England, France, and Spain* . . . , trans. Thomas Johnes, London: Smith, Elder, 1839, vol. 1, chap. 121. p. 151). Among other "knight-bachelors" appears the name of Sir John Chandos, mentioned in Morris' early "Sir Peter Harpdon's End." Nicholas' remembrance of his father's death (18) recalls Froissart's chronicle of the sieges of Vannes and Dinant in chapters 92, 93, 95, 96, and 98.

the world is wide
For you I say, for me a narrow space
Betwixt the four walls of a fighting place.

[20]

He gives Nicholas a ring, and releases the Wanderers, but memories of the encounter linger, as its three participants turn to their respective fates. The Wanderers' subsequent voyages of discovery do not fulfill Nicholas' hopes, but neither do they belie them. The Wanderers come to understand that the basic constraints of their lives are common to all, but their growing sophistication and clarity of mind never betray the spirit of Nicholas' impassioned apologue.

The second prologue's voyages draw on earlier travel narratives, but also form *The Earthly Paradise*'s only original plot, and Morris successfully imposes psychological and thematic unity on the Wanderers' subsequent encounters with several other cultures. Many details of these cultures seem plausible, and the Wanderers' reactions recall actual settlers' diaries and explorers' logs. Imaginative structure is not achieved by falsifying or heightening events, but evaluating their probable effects on the Wanderers, who are credulously impressed at first by the scenery, customs, and fables they encounter. At first they even attribute some of these exotic experiences to supernatural origins, but later they become disillusioned, even bored. Gradually, the exotic peoples they meet cease to be objects of wonder and sources of conflict, and become practitioners of a variety of customs which make varying degrees of sense, and evoke varying degrees of animosity, tenderness, and even obligation. Unlike the first prologue's mariners, the Wanderers often reflect on the meaning of what they see and its relation to their own values. Eventually the growth of this reflective self-consciousness becomes the narrative's main driving force.

The first sea voyage of the young Wanderers is extraordinarily protracted, and Laurence's *pro forma* warnings cannot temper their hopes when they sight land at last:

All hearts were melted, and with happy tears,
Born of the death of all our doubts and fears,
Yea, with loud weeping, each did each embrace
For joy that we had gained the glorious place.

[28]

In a sense, this brief moment of early hope is the emotional height of their voyage. On land, they find jungle and exotic animals, and yearn

for "some signs of man," a wish soon granted them when they enter a shrine to a god of yellow metal, surrounded by richly dressed dried corpses. Shaken, the Wanderers strain to find some saving interpretation of this bizarre sight:

although they brought us fear
They did but seem to show our heaven anigh
Because we deemed these might have come to die
In seeking it, being slain for fatal sin.

[32–33]

At the hill's summit they find a dying man, richly dressed like the dead they have just seen, but crowned, and accompanied by corpses dressed and positioned as his attendants. The wretched monarch expires from terror at their entrance, and they struggle again to reconcile the tableau with their naive hopes:

For doubts had risen in our hearts at last
If yet the bitterness of death were past.

[34]

They finally leave this miniature necropolis and encounter living, friendly people at last, but ironically, these kindly people worship the Wanderers as deathless gods. In the night which follows, the Wanderers and their hosts are brutally attacked by a neighboring tribe. The Wanderers' superior weapons enable them to repel the attack, but Nicholas' beloved Kirstin is killed; other members of the crew lead the inconsolable Nicholas to the ship, and again they set sail.

At their next landfall, they encounter people, who are "nigh void of arts, but harmless, good and mild, / Nor fearing us. . ." (44). Their expectations this time are more practical, and they split ranks, into groups of explorers and settlers. Some of the voyagers argue that their ultimate quest has been futile, and they will take what solace they can from their colony. Rolf exhorts the rest in words which echo Tennyson's Ulysses:

Your lives are wasted all the more for this,
That ye in this world thought to garner bliss?
Unless indeed ye chance to think it well
With this unclad and barbarous folk to dwell,
Deedless and hopeless; ye, to whom the land
That o'er the world has sent so many a band
Of conquering men, was yet not good enough.

[46]

It might have been "good enough" without the plague. Rolf's imperative remains his restive search for an earthly "paradise":

> Lo now, if but the half will come with me,
> The summit of those mountains will I see,
> Or else die first . . .
> What do I say? alone, O friends, will I
> Seek for my life, for no man can die twice,
> And death or life may give me Paradise!
>
> [47]

Laurence and Nicholas are among the Wanderers who choose to tagonists, monthly lyrics, and transitional passages. The moral apology accompany Rolf. Unfortunately, their arduous trek across mountains brings them into conflict with indigenous cannibals, and the ensuing struggles bring unwanted self-knowledge.

> So with the failing of our hoped delight
> We grew to be like devils: then I knew
> At my own cost, what each man cometh to
> When every pleasure from his life is gone,
> And hunger and desire of life alone,
> That still beget dull rage and bestial fears,
> Like gnawing serpents through the world he bears.
>
> [49]

At last they escape, and rejoin their fellows in the littoral colony. Some of the latter decide to remain in their settlement; some, weary of the quest, attempt to return homeward. Others—including Nicholas and Laurence—continue.

> And now we few,
> Thus left alone, each unto other grew
> The dearer friends, and less accursed we seemed
> As still the less of 'scaping death we dreamed. . . .
>
> [51]

The remaining Wanderers are more grateful for life itself, reconciled to its failures, and drawn to each other in their isolation. The motif of loyal friendship, completely absent from the first prologue, remains a unifying feature of the second.

Evidence of the variety of human cruelty gradually mounts. A neighboring tribe explains the tableau of death the Wanderers encountered in their first landing: the dying king's servants and family were

> slain,
> By a wild root that killed with little pain,
> His servants and his wives like as we saw,
> Thinking that thence the Gods his soul would draw
> To heaven; but the King being dead at last,
> The servants dead being taken down, they cast
> Into the river, but the King they hung
> Embalmed within that chapel. . . .
>
> [52]

This grisly parody of their own desire for immortality is appropriately chilling, and they grow "weary of the world" (52).

Suddenly, however, they reach the most hospitable and cosmopolitan of all the cities they have discovered. The inhabitants are beautiful and generous, and the Wanderers experience a surge of new hope: "A little nigher now seemed our heaven to be" (66). Their ability as seasoned fighters to aid their new-found friends makes them valued settlers, and they enjoy a number of years of relative tranquility, until

> Once more the stories of the past we weighed
> With what we hitherto had found; once more
> We longed to be by some unknown far shore;
> Once more our life seemed trivial, poor and vain,
> Till we our lost fool's paradise might gain.
>
> [60]

Rolf consults with Nicholas, and finds him of like mind. Less confident than before, they set forth again with only a few companions, those who still share their apparently indestructible credulity and hope.

At one landfall they encounter a "rejuvenated" young man and his "aged brother," and agree to sail on with the former to his native land. On arrival, their guide instructs them to remain for a night on board, while he prepares a welcome ashore. During the night, they tremble with new hope, and recall sadly the youthful joy and solidarity of their first landfall, now many years past:

> Old faces still reproached us: "We are gone,
> And ye are entering into bliss alone;
> And can ye now forget?"
>
> [68]

Their kindly regrets are bitterly and touchingly premature. The next day, the middle-aged Wanderers are taken to a suspiciously sensuous, Keatsian palace, where they agree to doff their armor. Their guide

then asks them to approach a dais, and they amiably comply. Only Rolf notices a curious smile on the guide's face, and feels sudden apprehension. In a moment, the Wanderers are surrounded and taken captive, and only now notice that their new captors are *old men.* One elderly soldier addresses their treacherous guide as "O fair Son!" (71). Rolf recalls his shame and self-disgust:

> Yet I can scarce remember in good truth
> What then I felt: I should have felt as he
> Who, waking after some festivity
> Sees a dim land, and things unspeakable,
> And comes to know at last that it is hell. . . .
>
> [72]

Rolf rushes the guide and manages to kill him barehanded before the guards drag him away. A bizarre ceremony follows in which the humiliated Wanderers are "deified," crowned with flowers, and forced to witness the "sacrificial" murders of several of their forest allies. Later, their captors are attacked by a neighboring tribe, and the Wanderers eagerly join forces with the invaders to make good their escape. Simple release from shame is an overwhelming relief:

> Though we no longer hoped for our fair shore,
> Our past disgrace, worse than the very hell,
> Though hope was dead, made things seem more than well,
> For if we died that night, yet were we free.
>
> [76]

Plain life in freedom is a great gain over tyranny, imprisonment, and cultic murder.

Their next landfall, after a final shipwreck, is their present refuge, the land of the Greek Elders. Not an earthly paradise, it is nevertheless a "ray of comfort and sweet hope," and the venue of *The Earthly Paradise.* Unfortunately, Rolf's beloved friend Nicholas, the once-visionary young pacifist, has not survived the disaster, and Rolf mourns:

> I can scarce tell how
> I bear to live, since he could live no more.
>
> [77]

Rolf concludes his narrative with qualified relief, however, for their arrival at "such a place that seemed a blissful home" (78), and in turn

the Elders' response expresses their own respect for history and experience:

> Such, sirs, are ye, our living chronicle,
> And . . . it shall bring us wealth of happy hours
> Whiles that we live, and to our sons, delight,
> And their sons' sons.
>
> [80]

Both Wanderers and Elders look forward to the mutual instruction and consolation of their tales, gathered from their disparate personal experiences and cultural traditions.

Several features of Morris' second portrayal of the Wanderers merit notice. Brief, concrete scenes or situations often have an unexpected resonance and intensity. Here, for example, is a description of the ship's motion underway:

> onward did we sail,
> But slowly, through the moonlit night and fair, . . .
> And rolling heavily at first; for still
> Each wave came on a glittering rippled hill,
> And lifting us aloft, showed from its height
> The waste of waves, and then to lightless night
> Dropped us adown, and much ado had we
> To ride unspilt the wallow of the sea.
>
> [25]

Small epiphanies of their sort recur from time to time during the voyage.

The narrative also includes several arresting portraits of human effort and loss: captured tribespeople commit suicide rather than remain in slavery; a female prisoner tremblingly seeks refuge from her tribe, who will punish her for exchanging a few words with her captors. Such psychological authenticity is an immense improvement over the earlier prologue's picaresque "realism." Morris is here preoccupied with the pathos of the Wanderers' misplaced hopes, and the ironies of desperate ventures which hover between success and failure.

The Wanderers' reflections on age, memory, and regret form another, related motif. They are all old now, and sudden flashes of oblique insight shadow their recollections. Rolf has gradually become a representative human being—not a representative Norwegian, sailor, lover, poet, or an otherwise differentiated self; but a dispassionate, rather modest person, whose responses to his highly individual expe-

riences have become more and more generic. Wryly, he remembers his garrulous ardor on the eve of their landfall:

> Well, the next morn unto our land we came,
> And even now my cheeks grow red with shame,
> To think what words I said to Nicholas, . . .
> Asking him questions, as if he were God,
> Or at the least in that fair land had trod,
> And knew it well, and still he answered me
> As some great doctor in theology
> Might his poor scholar, asking him of heaven.
>
> [28]

His description of the much later "strange troublous night," which precedes their capture in the Keatsian palace, includes a meditation on the complexity of lost, even foolish, hopes:

> no man of us could say
> The burning words upon his lips that lay;
> . . . then it was indeed when first I knew,
> When all our wildest dreams seemed coming true,
> And we had reached the gates of Paradise
> And endless bliss, at what unmeasured price
> Man sets his life, and drawing happy breath,
> I shuddered at the once familiar death.
>
> [28]

Even his rationale for the seemingly gratuitous resumption of the search in middle age becomes a reflection on time and death:

> How shall he weigh his life? slow goes the time
> The while the fresh dew-sprinkled hill we climb,
> Thinking of what shall be the other side;
> Slow pass perchance the minutes we abide
> On the gained summit, blinking at the sun;
> But when the downward journey is begun
> No more our feet may loiter; past our ears
> Shrieks the harsh wind scarce noted midst our fears,
> And battling with the hostile things we meet
> Till, ere we know it, our weak shrinking feet
> Have brought us to the end and all is done.
>
> [60]

The bravest and second-most visionary Wanderer may in some respects be the most self-effacing. In the end, his identity is submerged

in the causes he represents, and the poem's most significant "actions" are its lyric meditations. Within the Prologue, these serve something of the function performed by the Apology and lyrics of the months in the large structure of *The Earthly Paradise*.

Beneath the Prologue's exotic surface, Morris has thus attempted to invoke aspects of human experience confronted by all strong or decent persons, and suggest that these common experiences—including, perhaps, "the harsh wind scarce noted midst our fears"—are what matter. The Wanderers find no utopia, but instead a new land of cultural and emotional kinspeople. Readers who—like Rolf himself—have expected something more dramatic, eventually realize that the cyclical nature of disappointment, hope, and desire is the Prologue's real subject. Only through their loss, disillusionment, and persistence do the Wanderers become—gradually and unevenly—more sophisticated. They do attempt to maintain throughout a humane response, towards each other and those they encounter, and are rewarded with an emergent perception that a life of human fellowship without shame is its own value. This is the only form of happiness which Morris ultimately seems to consider worth mention: understanding of our shared vulnerability, an appreciation which is confirmed, not abrogated by death.

Although one of *The Earthly Paradise*'s first completed tales, "Prologue: The Wanderers" is in its way one of the best. Its praise of persistence, modesty, and self-abnegation anticipates the conclusion of several other *Earthly Paradise* tales and many of its connecting narratives and lyrics. It also has the only plot which was Morris' own from first to last. The most realistic and concrete of any *Earthly Paradise* tale, it is one of the most brooding and abstract in its concern for the passage of time, and the intricate ironies of hope and despair. Refracted in the other tales by their more obvious preoccupation with youthful heterosexual love, these lingering on human consciousness reappear again and again in the mental states of *Earthly Paradise* protagonists, monthly lyrics, and transitional passages. The moral apology of "The Wanderers' Prologue" underlies much of Morris' later heroic and social poetry, and, in more self-conscious and analytical form, his artistic, historical, and political essays of the next two decades as well.