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The Structure of Morris's Tales for the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*

Florence S. Boos

A casual reader of the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine in 1856 might well conclude that its two most promising writers of short fiction were Edward Burne-Jones and R.W. Dixon, yet admire William Morris' eight prose tales for their narrative invention, stark emotion, and complex motifs. These early writings have a coherent psychological structure and employ techniques which served Morris well in his later work. For example, he experimented here, for the first time, with narrators and protagonists who survive normal processes of death and change, and sometimes leave their 'proper' narrative frames.

These early tales have been variously interpreted as searches for religious certainty, romantic love, active vocation, and social community, and as an expression of failure to create an integrated, confident identity.(1) At times, they clearly express apprehensions of Morris's late adolescence and early maturity, and fears that he will fail to achieve worthy ends and inspire love.(2) They reflect the efforts of a complex and multiply-gifted personality to harmonize several conflicting aspirations and confront an unclear future.

Characteristically, Morris wrote these first published works in support of a cooperative project, to which he contributed more than most others in the group.(3) Originally, he also planned to write a series of impressionistic essays on the churches of North France, after the manner of The Seven Lamps of Architecture and The Stones of Venice. Ruskin's influence may also be seen in the tale's moving-camera effects and intense mixture of empathy and detachment, but Morris's narrator identifies more directly with what he sees. Morris's essay for the February issue of the Magazine, "The

Churches of North France: Shadows of Amiens," testifies to his ardent enjoyment of Amiens' decorative artwork and statuary, and the essay's detached-but-loving narrative mode is closely paralleled in his first-published fictional tale, "The Story of the Unknown Church."

In general, Morris's early prose works hover between fiction, descriptive essay, and stylized autobiography. Their language approaches the cadence and imagery of his best poetry, and as a result they are ill-served by conventional plot-summary. At best, their psychological authenticity rivals that of the poems of The Defence of Guenevere, and their temporally dislocated narrative frames are strangely haunting and remote. I will examine these qualities in three works: the essay, "Shadow of Amiens," Morris's first contribution to the Magazine; "The Story of the Unknown Church," narrated by a fictional craftsman of the sort celebrated in "Shadow of Amiens;" and "A Dream," the first of Morris's tales to employ a complex community of interrelated protagonists and narrators.

Shadows of Amiens

Morris often remarked in early letters that deep emotions are difficult to express,(4) and the essay begins with a passionate description of what he does not know and cannot say.

And I thought that even if I could say nothing else about these grand churches I could at least tell men how much I loved them: so that though they might laugh at me for my foolish and confused words, they might yet be moved to see what there was to make me speak my love. . . . (349)

Sixteen pages of rhapsodic visual detail follow. The twenty-one-year-old Morris does not pretend to be an antiquarian or architectural historian, and his commentary recalls Blake's epigram that "Imitation is criticism." The essay begins:

Not long ago I saw for the first time some of the churches of North France; still more recently I saw them for the second time; and remembering the love I have for them and the longing that was in me to see them during the time that came between the first and second visit, I thought I should like to tell people of some of those things I felt when I was there, there among the mighty tombs of the long-dead ages. (349)

Notice that he commemorates an earlier emotion, the 'love' and 'longing' felt 'among the mighty tombs.' His evocation of the cathedral's artisans leads to an empathetic leap of Morrisian faith:

. . . those same builders, still surely living, still real men and capable of receiving love, I love no less than the great men, poets and painters and such like, who are on earth now; no less than my breathing friends whom I can see looking kindly on me now. Ah, do I not love them with just cause who certainly loved me, thinking of me sometimes between the strokes of their chisels? (349) (emphasis mine)

Upon reflection, the timeshift seems strangely appropriate: why shouldn't past builders have imagined him, as he imagines them? Similar thought-experiments informed the better-known A Dream of John Ball, written thirty years later. Notice the parallels between the following passage from "Amiens":

And for this love of all men that they had, and moreover for. . . this work of theirs, the upraising of the great Cathedral front. . . ; wrought. . . by the dint of chisel and stroke of hammer into . . . stories of the

faith and love of man that dies not: for their love, and the deeds through which it worked, . . . they will not lose their reward (349-50),

and these from the sermon of John Ball published more than thirty years later:

as though the prison walls opened to me and I was out of Canterbury street and amidst the green meadows of April; and therewithal along with me folk that I have known and who are dead, and folk that are living; yea, and all those of the Fellowship on earth and in heaven; yea, and all that are here this day.

. . . I knew once more that he who doeth well in fellowship, and because of fellowship, shall not fail though he seem to fail today, but in days hereafter shall he and his work yet be alive, and men be holpen by them to strive again and yet again. . . . (5)

Morris was deeply consistent in his desire to vindicate the continuity of human emotion, the "stories of the faith and love of man that die not."

The echoing, symmetrical cadences in "Amiens" are more tempered variants of Ruskin's, and Morris also varied Ruskin's arial-overview, in which a narrator ranges freely over what is seen. In the famous opening passage of "The Nature of Gothic," Ruskin invites the reader to follow the flight-path of a bird from Southern to Northern Europe. In "Amiens," Morris emulates this perspective within humbler human limits:

if you were to mount one of the steeples of the town, or were even to mount up to the roof of one of the houses westward of the Cathedral. . . near the top of the spire the crockets swell till you come to the rose that holds the great spire-cross of metal work. . . . (350-55) (emphasis mine)

Later, the narrator approaches the church more mundanely from "one of the streets

leading out to the Place Royale," and shifts from second to first person: "I felt inclined to shout. . . ." Morris's great set piece of this 'arial' technique, of course, is the idle singer's description of fourteenth-century London at the beginning of The Earthly Paradise:

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. . . (6) (III, 3)

and its subsequent dissolve to an unnamed Aegean city and town hall, where Elders and Wanderers narrate Morris's longest poem:

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. . . . (7) (4)

In "Amiens" Morris not surprisingly takes more interest in the cathedral's carvings, paintings, stained glass, and statuary than its engineering. He praises stalls whose stories are "told in such a gloriously quaint straightforward manner" (352); and he dwells carefully on points of realistic detail: "There they were, a writhing heap [of kine], crushing and crowding one another; drooping heads and starting eyes, and strange angular bodies.

... I never fairly understood Pharaoh's dream till I saw the stalls at Amiens."(352) A burial scene evokes his most intense response: "O those faces so full of all tender yearning and longing that they too . . . might be with the happy dead! There is a wonder on their faces too, when they see. . . the mighty power of death. . . . (364) The bystand-

ers' 'wonder' also suggests the early tale's characteristic use of multiple narrators as eager, reverential witnesses to a central tableau. Ruskin enjoined a careful attention to the colors of stones, and Morris's stained glass was noted for the depth and richness of its colors. Here, he chafes at photographs which tell "nothing about the colour of the building, in fact their brown and yellow is as unlike as possible to the grey of Amiens. So for. . . the facts of colour I have to try and remember the day or two I spent at Amiens. . . ." (354-55) He could, he admits, have looked up full explanations of the church's decorations, but this would undercut his intention: to tell the stories suggested by them, and nothing else.



WILLIAM MORRIS

Morris's medieval reconstructions have been criticized for their distortions and praised for their verisimilitude. Both views are right; he appreciated certain kinds of physical and visual historical detail as precisely as anyone in his time, and he ignored others altogether. He thoroughly researched later works such as The Roots of the Mountains and The Earthly Paradise, but his interest in 'important' figures was minimal: "The next scene is the shrine of some saint, this same bishop, I suppose; dead now after all his building and ruling, and hard fighting, possibly, with the powers that be. . . ." (357) His selective attention to such

generic figures and situations was also prompted by his strong conviction that human emotions are the appropriate measure of the Cathedral's mighty effects:

I think I felt inclined to shout when I first entered Amiens Cathedral. It is so free and vast and noble that I . . . felt . . . intense exultation at the beauty of it. That, and a certain kind of satisfaction in looking on the geometrical tracery of the windows, on the sweep of the huge arches, were my first feelings in Amiens Cathedral (351-52)

Throughout his writings Morris was consistently preoccupied with the difficult retention of past truth, the vagaries and ironies of indirect historical transmission, and the recovery and redefinition of vanishing points at the edge of human record.

Artists, he believed, should piece together their own perceptions, and refrain from conscious fabrication. Other essayists sometimes suppress their source's unreliability; Morris makes it a central rhetorical device, which also complements the ineffability and thus the elusiveness of what he sees. Compare the following description of an angel, for example, with his tribute to Jane Burden that "I cannot paint you, but I love you"(8):

it is rather like a very fair woman's face, but fairer than any woman's face I ever saw or thought of. . . . I am utterly at a loss how to describe it, or to give any idea of the exquisite lines of the cheek and the rippled hair sweeping back from it. . . . (359-60)

Twenty-six more lines of magniloquent farewells precede the essay's conclusion. Later, Morris took great care with fictional leavetaking, and several works, early and late (The Roots of the Mountains, for example, in 1888), end with solemn funerals. "Amiens's" final image is of a bare ruined choir which

still . . . catches through its inter-

lacement of arches the intensest blue of the blue summer sky; . . . sometimes at night you may see the stars shining through it. It is fair still though the gold is gone, the spire that seems to rock when across it in the wild February nights the clouds go westward.(366)

In a letter written January 11, 1856, eleven days after the appearance of the first issue of the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, Morris remarked that "The Shadows of Amiens" was not easy to write: "It has cost me more trouble than anything I have written yet; I ground at it the other night from nine o'clock till half past four a.m., when the lamp went out, and I had to creep upstairs to bed through the great dark house like a thief."(9) In the end, the essay's exposition reflects this care. "Shadows of Amiens" revealed Morris's ability to reshape Ruskin's technique's, sensibility, and rhetoric to his own ends, and it touched registers he often used again: his own emotions, directly reported; narrative reconstructions, suggested by immediate visual details; and extended reflections on the moral significance of what he has seen. It is a surprisingly sophisticated first critical effort, and Mackail was not entirely effusive when he called it "wrought as if with chisel strokes, precise and yet passionate."(10)

Story of the Unknown Church

Dramatically-charged language and fluid narrative structure have created critical interest in "The Story of the Unknown Church." Its dream plot is highly suggestive, and its unusual anachronisms may be disordered, evocative, or both. More significantly, the tale's portrayal of an intensely devoted stonemason also reconsiders an ancient question: is artistic creation a manifestation of inhuman repression, or a fitting reward for a dedicated and humane life? As a conventional narrative of heroism or love, the work is rather slight; as a companion-tale to "The Shadows of Amiens," it is orderly, even transparent, and its narrative structure again adumbrates many patterns which Mor-

ris developed more clearly in his later work.

Walter, the mason, is one of the builders Morris evoked in "Shadows of Amiens," "still surely living, still real men and capable of receiving love" (349), and he lovingly describes his 'unknown church,' exterior first. In "Amiens," Morris responded deeply to a carving of the dead virgin; Walter has carefully carved effigies of his dead sister Margaret and her fiancé Amyot, his closest friend. The narrator of "Amiens" praises an elegiac art which attempts to restore a vanished past; Walter's most lovingly wrought work commemorates his love for two lost lovers.

Like the narrator of "Amiens," Walter also likes iconic complexity, even profusion. The two lovers lie together in death beneath a marble canopy "carved all about with so many flowers and histories," which include some standard Christian icons, but also "the faces of all of those he had known on earth." (!) The Amiens essayist bids cadenced farewell to his church when his homage is done; when Walter completes his last decorative ornament, he bids farewell to life, for he is found "lying dead underneath the last lily of the tomb."

As benefits one of the master-artists Morris admires, Walter thus creates ornamentation of great variety and improvisational range, but his accomplishment is obliterated. The story of his effort somehow survives, but the church itself is gone; compare the cathedral at Amiens, which has fallen into ruin, though its great spire may still be seen on wild February nights. In life, Walter looked forward to "the time when we should all be together again," but now only his spectral narrative voice lingers to record his fidelity. Someone will get the "Amiens" bishop's identity straight, but Walter is the only possible interpreter of his tale. Because his achievement was greater, so also is its loss.

The anachronism of Morris' narrative is direct and immediate. In Walter's words:

I was the master-mason of a church that was built more than six hundred years ago; it is now two hundred years since that church vanished from the face of the earth; it was destroyed utterly,--no fragment of it was left; not even the great pillars. . . . (149)

Like Ruskin, Morris considered Gothic architecture the highest form of art and later described it as "the most completely organic form of . . . Art which the world has seen," . . . (11) "a harmonious cooperative work of art, inclusive of all the serious arts," (12) that is, of craftwork and the decorative arts. Its practitioners, in consequence--among them artisans such as Walter--were "the most useful part of [society's] population." (13)

Morris's English Gothic church, however, falls into a category neglected by Ruskin, who remarked in Seven Lamps of Architecture that "I could have wished to have given more examples from our early English Gothic; but I have always found it impossible to work in the cold interiors of our cathedrals. . . ." (14) Ruskin also comments that "a building cannot be considered as in its prime until four or five centuries have passed over it. . . ." (15) The 'unknown church,' then, is--or was--an English Gothic church destroyed two hundred years ago, in its Ruskinian 'prime,' and any penumbra of it has vanished from recent memory. In later narratives such as "Ogier the Dane," Morris used centuries or 'ages' (saecula) as symbols for a single lifetime. After a lapse of two such 'ages,' what living memory of the church could there be?

Morris also cherished the 'unknown,' for what was 'living not,' (like the legendary figures of The Earthly Paradise) "can n'er be dead." A plausibly idealized but conjectural past can never be impugned, so we can imagine the lineaments of his 'unknown church' as freely as we wish. Morris later refined extensively his use of narrative frames and timeless descriptions of the distant past, for example in his description of the fourteenth-century peasant revolt in A Dream of John Ball. One

of these techniques was to attribute temporal dislocations to the protagonists themselves, as when Ogier the Dane struggles to remember his previous secular 'lives.' Here the disembodied Walter tries with some strain to recover the church's entire Gestalt:

No one knows now even where it stood.
 . . . I do not remember very much
 about the land where my church was; I
have quite forgotten the name of it,
 . . . I almost seem to see it again.
 . . . Only dimly do I see it in
 spring and summer and winter
 I remember the whole of autumn-tide;
the others come in bits to me; I can
think only of parts of them. . . .
 (149, emphasis mine)

What was most important eventually returns, however, even with preternatural vividness: "I see it in autumn-tide clearly now; yes, clearer, clearer, oh! so bright and glorious I can think only of parts of them but all of autumn; and of all days and nights in autumn, I remember one more particularly." (149)

There is something paradoxical and touching in Walter's fierce joy at the transformation of his life-work into waving corn ("the most completely organic form of . . . Art the world has seen?"). Someone who has labored to transmute natural forms and processes into art might regret such an Ecclesiastes-like reversion of art to grass, but Walter takes Morris's own delight in the garden's profusion:

lush green briony, with green-white blossoms, that grows so fast, one could almost think that we see it grow, and deadly nightshade, La bella donna, oh! so beautiful; red berry, and purple, yellow-spiked flower, and deadly, cruel-looking, dark green leaf, all growing together in the glorious days of early autumn. (151)

By contrast, descriptions of the church's golden spires and carved fountains recall Tennyson's "Palace of Art;" even here, though, the passage finally returns to flowers--on graves "of monks and . . . lawyers." Walter's art expresses his

bitter loss, but his ultimate loyalty is to the art's natural source. Thus his deep sadness at the loss of a lifework ("destroyed utterly,--no fragment. . . . No one knows. . . where it stood," (149) is tempered by his love of what has displaced it ("the place where my church used to be is as beautiful now as when it stood in all its splendour" (141). It took Walter the last twenty years of his life to carve his masterwork:

so it happened after I had carved those two whom I loved above their tomb, that I could not yet leave carving it; and so that I might be near them I became a monk, and used to sit in the choir and sing, thinking of the time when we should all be together again.(158)

Approval of an internal audience is essential to Morrisian narratives, and the townspeople's growing interest becomes a testimonial to Walter's ability to transform his sorrow: "as I carved, sometimes the monks and other people too would come and gaze, . . . and sometimes too as they gazed, they would weep for pity, knowing how all had been." (158) Otherwise, Walter's secluded labor is quite monastic indeed: "I was not as one on earth now, but seemed quite away out of the world" (149). He lives to finish the last detail of the tomb, the finest his imagination can conceive, and his last act is the creation of the flower which symbolizes, among other things, mutual love and resurrection. "So my life passed,. . . till one morning, quite early, when they came into the church for matins, they found me lying dead, with my chisel in my hand, underneath the last lily of the tomb." (158) As a final reward, the artist is not forced to outlive his art. Consonant with the tale's praise of art is its preoccupation with a loss of love. Like Thomas Mann's Tonio Kroger, Walter is a lonely observer-memorialist of the happiness of others, but he deeply respects what he observes; and like all of Morris's protagonist-observers, he records the tale's essential emotional events from within.

**A Dream: Multiple Speakers,
Selves, Frames, and Dreams**

"A Dream" appeared in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine for March, the month Morris became twenty-two. It would be hard to find a fourteen-page Victorian prose tale with a more complex structure. Not only does "A Dream" have four internal narrators and witnesses of four inset episodes, but these narrators' interrelations with the inset protagonists are essential to the tale as a whole.

"A Dream"'s narrators tell tales of four incarnations of the same two lovers in four seasons scattered across four centuries--a structure which varies aspects of "The Story of the Unknown Church" and anticipates in miniature the elaborate frames of A Dream of John Ball and The Earthly Paradise. Like The Earthly Paradise, "A Dream"'s narrative has three levels. The first-person outer narrator "dream[s] once, that four men sat by the winter fire talking and telling tales. . . ." and enters the inmost tale in its final paragraph to view the lovers' tomb before he 'awakes' to remark that he has labored "To gather and tell o'er/Each little sound and sight" (175). The tale also takes place in an eclectically European feudal past, and its narrators--Hugh, Giles, Osric, and Herman; English, French, Scandinavian, and German--might be prototypes of The Earthly Paradise's multinational "Wanderers." Hugh narrates two episodes in the extended lives of the lovers Lawrence and Ella; Giles the third; and all four witness the fourth.

The episodes, drawn from four different incarnations of Lawrence and Ella's existence, are apparently separated by the Morrisian saecula mentioned earlier. (The intervals between the last three episodes are explicit in the text) The tale's duration thus matches that of the 'unknown church,' and like the church, both Lawrence and Ella have now ceased to exist. A major Earthly Paradise tale, "Ogier the Dane," similarly follows its protagonist through four life-spans at one hundred year intervals but opens out in the last cycle to infinity. As I have mentioned, configurations of tales-within-tales and

lives-within-lives clearly appealed to Morris, and variants of them reappear throughout his writings. "A Dream"'s inset tales also follow the same seasonal cycle as the much longer one of The Earthly Paradise--beginning in spring. The singer of The Earthly Paradise compares himself to a wizard in a wintry northern clime, who throws open four windows of a feudal castle onto scenes of the four seasons in a warm dwelling on a cold winter night. Finally, the narrators and protagonists seem to hear, prompt, and respond to each other, which not only suggests its own wizardry, but creates some of the strains already encountered in "The Unknown Church."

The four witnesses/narrators are introduced in descending order of age. Hugh, the first and principal speaker, is a white-bearded ancient; Giles black-bearded and younger; Osric is simply one of "the two younger men" (179), and Herman is "the youngest." For the most part, Hugh and Giles speak as Osric and Herman listen, much as The Earthly Paradise's aged Wanderers and Elders tell their tales to younger auditors.

More 'wizardry' is to come. In the third episode Ella remarks that Hugh has died the preceding night, and Giles remembers a time when he became invisible. Osric and Herman are understandably disturbed when Hugh and Giles reappear for the last time, and more so when the more-than-four-hundred-year-old Ella appears at its close. Since Osric and Herman themselves by then are centuries-old, narrators as well as protagonists thus seem to 'exist' in at least two worlds--within the episodes, where death is possible, and in a timeless narrative realm in which they share their tales. In Morris's totum simul, the four narrators form a kind of collective chorus. They shiver at each other's tales, tremble at each other's woes, and join finally to celebrate the lovers' long-awaited union. Again, these patterns strongly suggest Morris's later tendencies to blend different cultures and time periods, memories and dreams, old and young, observers and participants.

More immediate parallels can be found

between "The Story of the Unknown Church" and "A Dream." Both tales open with historical prefaces, close with public funerals, memorialize lost lovers, and involve narrators in their own tales. Walter's dream and memories are accompanied by music and sensuous descriptions of red and gold flowers; "A Dream"'s most sensuous descriptions are of Ella's musical voice, the lovers' golden hair and clothing, and a brilliant crimson sunset. Walter's friend Amyot has a deathlike pallor, and in each reincarnation of "A Dream" the separated lovers are more pallid than in the last. Amyot appears in a dream near a cliff by water; Lawrence must enter a red cavern near a red peak by a river. Each of "The Story"'s four inset scenes describes a body of water (two rivers, a landlocked bay, and a waterfall); in "A Dream" each dissolve of scene is associated with imagery of elements in disorder: wintry winds, a rushing sea, a tempest, and gusts of wind over the snow.

Some aspects of the narrative frame may also be symbolic enough to merit notice. Hugh begins the first tale: "And I have fancied sometimes, that in some way, how I know not, I am mixed up with the strange story I am going to tell you." (159-60) Hugh quotes his father Cuthbert's description of the mysterious red cavern:

many would have explored that cave, either from covetousness (expecting to find gold therein), or from that love of wonders which most young men have, but fear kept them back. Within the memory of man, however, some had entered, and, so men said, were never seen on earth again. . . . (159)

Something about this 'cave' suggests both The Earthly Paradise's "Hill of Venus" and more general emblems of an Unknown toward which successive generations are inexorably drawn--an ambiguity which may account for some of Hugh's tendency to assimilate Lawrence and himself.

The archetypal attraction of the cave is also made more vivid when Cuthbert tells Hugh that his own father once stabbed him in the shoulder to keep him from the cave.

(16) These and other stories only kindle the young Hugh's imagination, however:

My father told me many wondrous tales about the place, whereof for a long time I have been able to remember nothing; yet, by some means or another, a certain story has grown up in my heart, which I will tell you something of: a story which no living creature ever told me, though I do not remember the time when I knew it not. (159)

Notice the syncretic imagery of a tale which "no living creature ever told me," but which "has grown up in his heart." When he finishes the first tale, Osric and Herman are "awed by some vague sense of spirits being very near. . . ," but Giles is not so patient, and he brusquely prompts the hesitant Hugh: "Never? old Hugh, it is not so--Speak! I cannot tell you how it happened, but I know it was not so, not so--speak quick, Hugh! Tell us all, all!" (165) The ruggedly dressed, middle-aged Giles is "black-bearded, with wild grey eyes that. . . great brows hung over far," and his blunt contravention is one of the frame's more interesting passages. Hugh and Giles struggle to continue until the latter's

breast heaved as though it would burst, as though it must be rid of its secret. Suddenly he sprang up, and in a voice that was a solemn chant, began: "In full daylight, long ago, on a slumberously-wrathful, thunderous afternoon of summer. . . (165)

then across his chant ran the old man's shrill voice: "On an October day, packed close with heavy-lying mist, which was more than mere autumn mist,". . . the shrill voice went on; Giles sank down again, and Hugh [remained] standing there, swaying to and fro to the measured ringing of his own shrill voice, his long beard moving with him. . . . (165)

Hugh's second episode records a brief reconciliation between Lawrence and Ella, reincarnated as a wounded knight and hos-

pital nurse during a plague. In a scene perhaps influenced by Kingsley's Two Years After (1855), Hugh serves as a physician to Lawrence as the latter recuperates from his wounds. Lawrence addresses him as "kind master Hugh" as the physician makes his rounds with the reincarnated Ella, who is now a 'holy woman,' presumably a nun, but also still 'peevish-looking' and quick to anger. Her only speech in the episode is an unmerited exhortation and reproof: "Master Physician, this is not time for dreaming: act. . .," but here at least, she enjoins a man to care for the sick, not enter a man-eating cave. The gentle, scrupulous Lawrence responds to all of this "impatiently, as if his mind were on other things, and he turned in his bed away. . . . (167) The scene finally ends when a great healing "WEST WIND" rises up from the sea to blow away the plague's miasmatic clouds,(17) a healing process which Hugh--'kind master' though he may be--cannot effect himself. At the end of his tale he remains poignantly "mixed up with the strange story": "somehow my life changed from the time when I beheld the two lovers, and I grew old quickly. . . . And that was long ago,. . . I know not when it happened."(168) Like Walter, Hugh venerates an ideal which has faded with him into oblivion; in Morris's work narrators too "come and till the fields, and lie beneath."

Giles's episode, the third, begins more quietly than his tempestuous intervention in the second: "I heard suddenly a breath of air rustle through the boughs of the elm. . . . my heart almost stopped beating, I knew not why, as I watched the path of that breeze over the bowing lilies and the rushes by the fountain. . . ." (168-69) Giles's brother and love have recently died, and he is still in mourning when he sees a "clear and distinct" (169) incarnation of Lawrence and Ella, "Those two whom before I had but seen in dreams by night." Ella speaks to Lawrence, for the first time in the tale with open affection--"Love, for this our last true meeting before the end of all, we need a witness; let this man, softened by sorrow, even as we are, go with us"(169)--and her melodious voice so reminds the normally vigorous Giles of his dead love that he is

overwhelmed by inarticulate grief. Her "need [for] a witness" also expresses once again Morris's desire for testimonial recognition of deep emotion. In reply, Lawrence suggests "old Hugh, or Cuthbert his father, [who] have both been witnesses before;" solemnly she replies that "Cuthbert. . . . has been dead twenty years [and] Hugh died last night" (170). At this point in Giles's narration, "a cold sickening shudder" goes through the two younger men, "but he noted it not and went on" (170).

In the tale, Giles then sets forth with Ella and Lawrence "toward the hill by the riverside" (another red cave by a river?), where a queen is to crown the victorious hero of a recent war. As they walk, Giles is overcome by another curious phenomenon: "my nature was changed, and . . . I was invisible. . . for, though the sun was high, I cast no shadow, neither did any man that we passed notice us. . . ." (170) After Ella and Lawrence suddenly depart, "my own right visible nature was returned," but friends at the celebration note his inappropriate attire. With dream-plausibility, the victor now becomes Lawrence and the queen Ella, and Giles also recalls that he has rendered Lawrence a good service: "in that fierce fight. . . another, coming from behind, would have slain him, but. . . my lance bit into his breast."(171) The queen briefly holds the hero's hand to render thanks; only Giles sees that she is Ella, and the formal gesture is in fact a passionate embrace. After this climactic encounter, Giles quickly ends his tale; Osric now asks him how long ago all this happened, and Giles terrifies him with his reply: "More than a hundred years. . . ."

The fourth inset tale briefly reunites everyone involved. A southwest wind howls outside the warm hearth, and Ella enters when Hugh nods to Osric to open the door; Herman later opens it for Lawrence, as the wind howls even louder. Ella's appearance now transcends age; she is dressed in white, as usual, but her golden hair is covered with a long, white veil, both bridal veil and shroud: "her beauty . . . seemed to grow every minute; though she was plainly not young, but rather very,

very old, who could say how old?" (173) She actively seeks the still absent Lawrence and describes him for the first time in terms which emphasize his physical beauty. When he finally enters, he is more luminous presence than human lover: [Herman] "was 'ware of some one in bright armour passing him, for the gleam of it was all about him, for as yet he could not see clearly, being blinded by the hair that had floated about him." (174) The pair now embrace in a last silent tableau then fade into 'a heap of snow-white ashes' before the four awed 'witnesses,' who pray for their souls. They also bear the news to 'the people,' who build a great tomb, and like Walter carve the lovers' story on its sides. Finally, the outermost narrator who has dreamt all this speaks the tale's final image, which is both Keatsian and pre-Raphaelite: "in my dream I saw the moon shining on the tomb, throwing fair colours on it from the painted glass; till a sound of music rose, deepened, and fainted. . . ." (175) The lovers's final state is chill and warm, sensuous and restful, loving and passionate.

In its modest way, "A Dream" is a remarkable tale. Its idealistic melancholy and nostalgia are present in all of Morris's early work, but its demarcation of inner and outer frames renders these qualities more effective, and Ella's complex temperament varies the tale's conventional divisions of sexual and heroic labor. In some respects stylized and conventional, the two lovers also enact a complicated dialectic of alienated consciousness and postponed desire, and the tale anticipates in concentrated form the more complex narrative wavefronts of Morris's later, longer works.

Such shifts in narrator and chronology in Morris's work are often judged as signs of fragmented identity or lack of artistic control, and "A Story" and "A Dream" might seem two of the most difficult test cases for a contrary argument. Yet twentieth-century novelists routinely employ such shifts, and it is considered a mark of philistinism to object to them at least without some ancillary argument. Victorian poetry was also characterized by

widespread experimentation with complex narrative voices, multiple points of view (The Ring and the Book), and narrators alienated from an earlier vision ("Tithonus," "Dover Beach"). Anacoluthic narrative is a flaw only if it lacks a plausible rationale, and absence of such shifts in certain contexts may simply be bland. Morris's book-borders also show roughly analagous patterns of symmetry broken and reestablished again and again, as larger patterns diverge from successive waves of smaller configurations, each slightly different from the next.

Morris's first fictional attempts to express his emotional identification with the role of narrative artist also bear several traits which remained deeply engraved in his mature character: sensuous identification with romantic experience, willingness to endure frustration in fidelity to a disinterested cause, and devotion to an ideal of historical redemption for collective and personal loss. The narrator who is a wry or diffident witness of others' tales likewise remained a basic pattern of Morris's writings. Aspects of this narrative role may be found again and again in the characteristic blend of intense sympathy and narrative distance of Morris's speakers, the restlessly emotive, non-possessive, trans-historical quality of the 'I' and 'we' which move through the early prose tales, The Earthly Paradise, and the essays on art and socialism. Walter, Hugh, Giles, and the narrator of "Shadows of Amiens" express an early form of the complex but coherent fusion of sympathy and detachment which remained throughout William Morris's long career a virtual signature of his literary work.

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NOTES

¹For two such interpretations, see the articles by Frederick Kirchoff and Kenneth Deal in The Golden Chain, edited by Carole Silver, New York: William Morris Society, 1981.

²Among Morris's early medieval tales, only "Lindenberg Pool" lacks an inset romantic plot. Its nineteenth-century narrator, who becomes a thirteenth-century priest, is troubled by this transition: "I have lost my identity. . . . Yet I will be calm. . . . I am resigned, since it is no worse than that. I am a priest, then. . . ." and remarks that his thoughts are "all. . . strangely dou-

ble, ". . ." The previous fall, Morris had abandoned his intention to become an Anglican clergyman. The Collected Works of William Morris, edited by May Morris, London: Longmans, 1910-15, vol. I, pp. 247-48. Quotations in the text are from this volume unless another reference or volume number is given.

³Walter K. Jordon, in A Critical and Selected Edition of William Morris's "Oxford and Cambridge Magazine" (1856) (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1960), comments extensively on the Magazine's history in his general introduction and in the headnotes to each chapter.

⁴Morris commented self-consciously on his earliest poetic efforts in early letters, especially those to Cornell Price in 1855. See The Letters of William Morris, edited by Norman Kelvin, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, pp. 8-11, pp. 12-14, pp. 19-22.

⁵The Collected Works of William Morris, vol. XVI, p. 233.

⁶The Collected Works, vol. III, p. 3.

⁷Ibid., p. 4.

⁸Philip Henderson, William Morris: His Life, Work, and Friends (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), p. 49.

⁹J.W. Mackail, The Life of William Morris, (New York/London: Benjamin Bloom, 1968), vol. I, p. 96.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 97.

¹¹May Morris, William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936), vol. I,

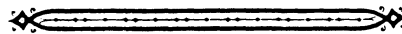
¹²Ibid., vol. I, p. 266. Compare John Ruskin's The Seven Lamps of Architecture, The Complete Works of John Ruskin, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, (London: George Allen, 1903), vol. VIII, p. 224.

¹³Artist, Writer, Socialist, vol. I, p. 267.

¹⁴John Ruskin, Seven Lamps of Architecture, p. 6.

¹⁵Fathers who harm sons are fairly rare in Morris's writings, but several fathers in Earthly Paradise tales confine or imprison marriageable daughters, and one daughter (Rhodope) spurns a devoted father.

¹⁶The scenario in which a queen crowns a heroic soldier is quite Morrisian; it may also have been influenced by contemporary reports of ceremonies in which Queen Victoria honored veterans of the Crimean War.



“This is my theory”: Macaulay on Periodical Style

William A. Davis, Jr.

In 1879, Matthew Arnold wrote "Lord Macaulay had, as we know, his own heightened and telling way of putting things, and we must always make allowance for it."⁽¹⁾ By the time Arnold offered this advice, Thomas Babington Macaulay's way of putting things had already become legend to two generations of readers raised on the History of England and the Critical and Historical Essays Contributed to the Edinburgh Review. The trend among Macaulay's more recent readers has been not to make allowances for his way of putting things but to attempt to explain his method in terms of his theories of historiography and composition in general. Several discussions of the History, for example, begin by piecing together Macaulay's scattered statements on theory and proceed to show that Macaulay borrowed freely from

the techniques of the novelist, the biographer, and the dramatist to create his unique style as a historian.⁽²⁾ These and other discussions have not suggested that Macaulay's original style in any way impedes an understanding of the History. Likewise, those critics who argue that Macaulay's style as an Edinburgh Review contributor was unremarkable have not questioned the substance of the Edinburgh essays or the relationship between their style and meaning.⁽³⁾ The present study examines Macaulay's theories of periodical style and shows that readers of Macaulay's Edinburgh Review essays should keep these theories in mind before ascribing to Macaulay all of the ideas and literary opinions contained in the essays.

By examining first Macaulay's letters to