

Kocmanová, Jessie

## **An experiment in communication: Love is enough**

In: Kocmanová, Jessie. *The poetic maturing of William Morris : from earthly paradise to the pilgrims of hope*. Vyd. 1. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1964, pp. 118-135

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/103975>

Access Date: 29. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

## AN EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNICATION: LOVE IS ENOUGH

Morris's first visit to Iceland in 1871 was one of the decisive events of his whole development. The mere fact that he insisted on seeing at first hand the actual scene of the saga tales, which were at that moment his overriding literary interest, was symptomatic of a strong turn towards reality. It was the realism of the sagas, their vivid presentation of life, which so attracted Morris, and he wanted nothing to be lacking in his own equipment for interpreting this realism to the modern world. The most important fruit of his visits to Iceland was his epic *Sigurd the Volsung*, and certain features in the late prose romances. But, strange to say, the poem which he began to write immediately on his return from Iceland, has very little indeed to do with the world of the sagas.

It would seem that a contributory reason for Morris's visit to Iceland in 1871, and again in 1873, may have been the desire to be absent from England for some time, in order to allow the situation between Janey Morris and D. G. Rossetti to crystallise in some way. It was in 1871, before Morris left for Iceland, that he and Rossetti became joint tenants of Kelmscott Manor, the remote and peaceful old house on the upper Thames above Oxford, whose name and atmosphere is so associated with Morris's later work. Perhaps the original intention was to provide a peaceful background, where the complicated relationships and reactions could develop, isolated from curiosity and speculation. Doughty, the most thorough biographer of Rossetti, relates Rossetti's poetry of this period very closely to the development and eventual disappointment of his love for Janey.<sup>96</sup> Like most recent writers, including Thompson and Lindsay, who have written of Morris at this period, Doughty too attributes to him growing "disillusionment", while paying tribute to his civilised behaviour in this difficult situation. Doughty is not only convinced that this theme of lost love is the dominant one in Morris's poetry of *The Earthly Paradise* period, but also that even *L'Envoi* refers to his own personal situation:

"The Envoi yet more fully reflected the disillusion of this 'poor singer of an empty day' . . . And in the Envoi he openly proclaimed the solace he had found in fashioning *The Earthly*

Paradise... It was also in this Envoi that surely for one moment his bitterness towards Rossetti overflowed in somewhat tremulous but ironical humour, for in the light of their relation, Morris could scarcely have been blind to the double-entendre in his exhortation to his book as he sends it forth on its pilgrimage, declaring:

Surely no book of verse I ever knew  
But ever was the heart within him hot  
To gain the Land of Matters Unforgot —  
— There, now we both laugh — as the whole world may,  
At us poor singers of an empty day.

Nay, let it pass, and hearken! Hast thou heard  
That therein I believe I have a friend  
Of whom for love I may not be afraid?

For poor Morris it was a bitter jest! His poem and himself he described as 'children... late made wise in love', and his final consolation, even if The Earthly Paradise should fail to reach the House of Fame, was, that it was not ill done to strive to lay  
The ghosts that crowd about life's empty day—  
surely a clear revelation of the *causa causans* of The Earthly Paradise"<sup>97</sup>

It is however perfectly obvious that Morris here refers to Chaucer<sup>98</sup> and that he is expressing in L'Envoi not, or not merely, a personal attitude to the "empty day" of his own life, but above all his considered outlook on the modern world. While Doughty's interpretation of the autobiographical verse in *The Earthly Paradise* is perceptive, he nevertheless completely fails to grasp the great objectivity of Morris's whole attitude, his historical perspective even with reference to his own life, the fact that Morris was incapable of making the usual special pleadings with regard to his own personal life and the usual differences and exceptions between his own private actions and his world outlook, whatever it was at any particular time. This is of course the great difference between Morris, the sane man, the dialectical materialist as he came to be, and Rossetti, the neurotic, who in spite of his strong though fluctuating grasp of reality, was in philosophical outlook a transcendental mystic.

Morris's first journey to Iceland was a profound spiritual experience, testified to in his *Journal* and in several poems of the period.<sup>99</sup> When he returned at the end of summer, 1871, he began to write *Love Is Enough*. Doughty quotes an illuminating letter of Burne-Jones to the American man of letters, Charles Eliot Norton, of autumn 1871:

"He (i.e. Morris) makes a poem these days, in dismal Queen Square in black old filthy London, in dull end of October, he makes a pretty poem that is to be wondrously happy; and it has four sets of lovers in it and THEY ARE ALL HAPPY and it ends well, and will come out some time next summer and I shall make little ornaments on it — such is Top (Morris) in these days. As for Gabriel, I have seen him but little; for he glooms

much and dulls himself and gets ill and better and is restless and wants and wants, and I can't amuse him. But he writes too, pretty constantly, sets of lovers, unhappy. — so Top and he are exhausting all poetry between them you see."<sup>100</sup>

In spite of the off-hand tone which was common to Burne-Jones and Morris when they spoke of their work among intimates, and whatever may be the "inner meaning" with which for Doughty this letter "seems to echo", there can be no doubt about the relief of Burne-Jones — who had adored Rossetti as his master in painting, but was of course Morris's most intimate friend — that Morris had settled down to work on his poem.

*Love Is Enough* has perhaps given rise to more different judgments than any other of Morris's works. Rossetti's remark on it at the period while it was being composed has often been quoted: "The poem is, I think, at a higher point of execution perhaps than anything he has done, having a passionate lyric quality such as one found in his earliest work, and of course much more mature balance in carrying out."<sup>101</sup> Mackail devotes to it several pages of close analysis of the poem's structure and metre, pointing out that "it reconstitutes, under modern conditions, forms of later mediaeval poetry which had long fallen into disuse", and asserting that. "The architectural instinct, the faculty of design in its highest form, which was the quality in which Morris's unique strength lay, was never applied by him with more certain and delicate a touch."<sup>102</sup> John Drinkwater, one of the most appreciative critics of Morris's poetry, while criticising Morris's application of the Morality form of drama as not sufficiently dramatic, as deficient in the swift action necessary for the simple allegory of the Morality, proclaims that in the poem "there is love-poetry that is scarcely to be surpassed in its depth and tenderness."<sup>103</sup> Most critics, and especially May Morris herself, have seen in the poem a mystical expression of some vague transcendental faith, distinctly out of key with Morris's usual apparent avoidance of philosophical questions. And most critics, too, have acknowledged that the poem holds some place in the history of the return of English poetry to dramatic form, if not so strikingly dramatic as his early attempt at this form, *Sir Peter Harpdon's End*.<sup>104</sup> Eshleman makes an interesting point about *Love Is Enough* (which, he considers, represents "symbolically, a spiritual autobiography of Morris himself") when he chooses quotations from this poem to introduce the various sections of his study, thus demonstrating the autobiographical and contemporary application of the poem.<sup>105</sup> Bernard Show objected to the title, "that irritating nineteenth century cliché", but pointed out that it was not the moral of the poem.<sup>106</sup> This hint by a very penetrating critic does not seem to have been followed up, and certainly some trouble is required to disentangle the "moral" of the poem from the usual mystical interpretation, which Morris's typical use of language and image gives rise to. The most categorical dismissal of the poem is that of Edward Thompson, who considers that the "technical intricacies" are "largely mechani-

cal", the characters "mere shadows of the shadows in the Earthly Paradise", and that "the poetry of mood, divorced from any particularities of events, situations or relationships, and lacking the stiffening fibre of the intellect, relapses again and again into either rhetoric or platitude." The poem, he thinks "might as well be forgotten — the lowest ebb of Morris's creative life."<sup>107</sup> While dismissing it as poetry, Thompson however considers the poem (though he does not analyse it) as an expression of Morris's "restless yearning" for love as "a refuge from life", and the offspring of what Thompson considers to have been Morris's unsatisfactory relationship with his wife. A. A. Elistratova in the *History of English Literature* published by the Soviet Academy of Sciences also considers that the poem is one of the weakest examples of Morris's work.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, since it belongs to such a critical period and certainly marks another stage in Morris's development, we are bound to consider it in some detail.

A full analysis of the poem from the technical, formal point of view is given by Mackail in the passage referred to. The years of the early seventies were years in which Morris was experimenting in various forms, in dramatic verse (a further "experiment in drama" of this period is referred to by May Morris<sup>109</sup>), in the modern novel<sup>110</sup>, in direct translation.<sup>111</sup> Not all the attempts of this period have been published. The culmination of this time of experiment was his epic, *Sigurd the Volsung*, a complete contrast to *Love Is Enough* in every way — though Morris's rediscovery in *Love Is Enough* of the unrhymed accentual dramatic metre may have helped him to find his way to the rolling metre of *Sigurd*, with its equally marked caesura.

In examining the poem, I intend to consider it mainly from the view-point of the development of Morris's thought, and of his growing determination to relate literature to life.

One of the tacit assumption of much nineteenth-and twentieth-century criticism of poetry is that it is something to be read, absorbed by the eye. To some extent readings of poetry on radio, and radio verse drama, as well as the verse plays of Eliot, Fry and others, have redressed this balance, but probably too many critics of poetry still think of it as something to be recreated silently within the critic's own mind. The inadequacy of this approach is clearest in the case of poetic drama, though it is really the case with all poetry. We should note in this connection that Morris's poetry usually reached its first audience — his own immediate circle of friends — by being read aloud, and that one of his most consistent proletarian disciples, Tom Mann, considered Morris's poetry as preeminently intended for oral delivery, and would declaim long passages by heart.<sup>112</sup>

Whether or not anyone has ever attempted to stage *Love Is Enough*, I do not know, but our approach to the poem can only gain if we assume that we are

watching a drama or rather masque unfold before our eyes. If we suppose that the prologue is acted lightly and rapidly, the characterisation of the two peasant lovers comes out as something other than the "sentimentalised rustics" whom Thompson dismisses. This outer framework of the play is not without an under-current of humour and psychological observation. And interesting point is the way in which the simplicity and directness of their love for each other is underlined as it were first by the admiration of Joan for the Emperor, Giles for the Empress, and later by the transference of their interest to the player-king and player-maiden respectively, whom, unlike the Emperor and Empress, they can contemplate as entering their lives. There can be no doubt that the purpose of the framework of the peasants is to emphasise that the questions of love and human relationships which are going to be dealt with have only significance if we can apply them to the life of every day. It is also important for the development of Morris's thought that the protagonists of his poem, with whom it begins and ends, are no longer knights and ladies of romance, but people of the working world. Looking at the sumptuous Emperor and Empress in their wedding pomp, Joan and Giles have no conception that the emotions of these fine people should be nobler than their own:

Joan: And does she think as I thought, when  
Betwixt the dancing maids and men,  
'Twixt the porch rose-bough blossomed red  
I saw the roses on my bed?

Giles: Hath he such fear within his heart  
As I had, when the wind did part  
The jasmine-leaves, and there within  
The new-lit taper glimmered thin?

(Vol.IX, p.4)

The transition from the commonplace yet attractive world of Giles and Joan to the transformed world of the play is carried out by the "Music" interludes, pure lyrics which introduce and comment the action. Objection has often been taken to the theme-phrase of the poem, with which the "Music" starts. As with the famous "dreamer of dreams", it has been accepted too much at its face value. So far from recommending a retreat from or denial of life, Morris plans to show in his poem that it is love which provides the true meaning of life and its main support:

Yet their hands shall not tremble, their feet shall not falter;  
The void shall not weary, the fear shall not alter  
These lips and these eyes of the loved and the lover.

(p.5)

The characters of the Emperor and Empress, who now move across the scene

in procession, are considerably stylised and decorative, tapestry figures. Morris sees them as bound by the pomp and circumstance of their life, unable to react as frankly and naturally to the tale of Pharamond as do Giles and Joan. At the close of the poem, we shall see that the Emperor and Empress realise that they can never meet Pharamond in person, that they are "lonelier than these twain" (Pharamond and Azalais) and are condemned to the isolation of their state.

The prologue continues with a further relating of the inner drama to the life of reality, when Giles recognises the actor who is to play Pharamond as one "Who wandering but a while ago Stumbled upon our harvest-home." The dialogue of Giles and Joan is appropriately in the rapid four-beat romance couplet, calling up a fairy-tale mood and expressing emotion that is direct, simple, but not shallow.

The passages of dialogue between the Emperor and Empress express the meaning of love for men and women limited by the demands of life, the Emperor bound "in war's hopeless tangle", the Empress, expected to be "proud and cold of mien", who are yet enabled by their love to "be alone amid the babbling street." The metre used for this dialogue is a dragging and haunting four-line stanza of iambic five-stress metre, almost without substitution, the first three of which rhyme and the last of which forms a refrain — the refrain alternating for Emperor and for Empress. The "public" as distinct from the "private" utterances of Emperor and Empress are in enjambed iambic five-stress rhyming couplets, so that their speeches are distinctly differentiated from those of Joan and Giles, as from those of the Mayor. We may note that it is the Emperor and Empress, not Giles and Joan, who seek in their love a refuge and escape from the world, whereas Giles and Joan hasten back at the end from the show they have witnessed to real life.

The presentation of the poem as a medieval wandering players' drama is given further colour in these introductory scenes by the intentionally "genre" figure of the Mayor, who speaks in a robust four-stress alliterative metre, which, though it is formally the same as that of the main drama, is in this case more rugged and conversational. Perhaps the most notable feature of Morris's use of the metre is the ease with which he adapts it to the sweep of the paragraph and sentence, to the whole speech-rhythm, making it in fact an effective dramatic instrument.

Once more, before the drama itself, the Music lyric intervenes. The rather elaborate stanza form of these lyrics provides the greatest contrast to the alliterative stress metre. The rhymes are interlinked, many of them two-syllabled. The basic rhythm is dactylic, smooth and sweeping, yet at times sharing the irregular interrupted beat or "substitution" of the alliterative stress metre.

In later life Morris, in the letter to *The Spectator* already referred to, made clear his negative attitude to the reading of "allegory" into his prose romances.

"If I have to write or speak on social problems, I always try to be as direct as I possibly can be. On the other hand, I should consider it bad art in anyone writing an allegory not to make it clear from the start that this was his intention, and not to take care throughout that the allegory and the story should interpenetrate, as does the great master of allegory, Bunyan."<sup>113</sup> Thus we must not make the opposite mistake of considering too literally a drama which Morris clearly tells us is a "morality" (*The Argument*, p. 3). He still further stresses this by characterising vividly the actors themselves, as distinct from the characters they play. The actors are more real than the persons of the drama.\* The player-maiden is admired by the Emperor, with "her wide soft eyes cast down at whiles", and the Empress describes the player-maiden and the player-king in one of the most realistic of Morris's characterisations:

Most faithful eyes indeed look from the head  
The sun has burnt, and wind and rain has beat,  
Well may he find her slim brown fingers sweet.  
And he — methinks he trembles, lest he find  
That song of his not wholly to her mind.  
Note how his grey eyes look askance to see  
Her bosom heaving with the melody  
His heart loves well: rough with the wind and rain  
His cheek is, hollow with some ancient pain;  
The sun has burnt and blanched his crispy hair,  
And over him hath swept a world of care  
And left him careless, rugged, and her own;  
Still fresh desired, still strange and new, though known.  
(p.11)

Finally, the purpose of the poem is indicated by the prologue and commentaries to the *Morality* itself, spoken by the figure of Love.

When Morris tells us so clearly that this figure is allegorical, we shall be well-advised not to consider it as a mystical, transcendental abstraction. Morris's thought, which had always been concrete<sup>114</sup>, at this period was becoming more, not less materialistic. That Love in this poem is a dramatic figment, an allegorical figure from the machinery of 15th-century moralities, is clear from the typical changes of costume — "Enter Love crowned as a King", "Love as a maker of pictured cloths", "Love holding a crown and palm-branch", etc., and this is again stressed in the closing scene of the epilogue, when Joan says:

---

\* ) An almost Brechtian touch, which suggests that Shaw was not wildly exaggerating when he claimed that had Morris turned to reforming the English theatre and the English drama, he would have made his mark there as in every field he approached. (cf. G. B. Shaw, *Pen Portraits and Reviews*. London, 1931. "William Morris as Actor and Playwright.")

At Love's voice did I tremble too,  
And his bright wings, for all I knew  
He was a comely minstrel-lad,  
In dainty golden raiment clad.

(p.82)

According to Love's prologue, the present action is not one of the tragic tales of love, but a "wavering tune, 'Twixt joy and sadness" — "caught up at hazard." (p. 13)

The first scene of the drama of Pharamond the Freed introduces the main issue: Pharamond the King has become a prey to gloom and despair, his once-loved pursuits — huntings, sailing, the tournament — even the law-court where he has been wont to give righteous judgment — fail to hold his interest. His counsellor and friend, Master Oliver, describes vividly how all these remedies have been tried, and in the very moment when the king has seemed about to return to his usual behaviour, he suddenly becomes listless, forgets what he is doing, sinks once more into despair, and "Unkingly, unhappy, he went his ways homeward." Among the crowd of lords and councillors an abrupt "Northern Lord" addresses the king:

A great name I have held thee;  
Rough hand in the field, ready righter of wrong,  
Reckless of danger, but recking of pity.  
But now — is it false what the chapmen have told us,  
And are thy fair robes all thou hast of a king?

(p.19)

The king is roused for a moment out of his daze, long enough to realise "such a measure of pain as my soul is oppressed with", and retires with Oliver to seek a solution for his state.

The Music which follows this scene stresses the imperfectly known nature of love:

It sprang without sowing, it grew without heeding,  
Ye knew not its name and ye knew not its measure,  
Ye noted it not mid your hope and your pleasure;  
There was pain in its blossom, despair in its seeding,  
But daylong your bosom now nurseth its treasure.

(p.21)

The next speech of Love clad as an image-maker, is, for Morris, a curiously rhetorical passage. Love asks which of the Gods is it that ensures immortality (which here means merely "immortal memory"):

But which of all the Gods think ye it needs  
 To shape the mist of Rumour's wavering breath  
 Into a golden dream that fears no death?  
 Red Mars belike? — since through his field is thrust  
 The polished plough-share o'er the helmets' rust! —  
 Apollo's beauty? — surely eld shall spare  
 Smooth skin, and flashing eyes, and crispy hair? —  
 Nay, Jove himself? — the pride that holds the low  
 Apart, despised, to mighty tales must grow!  
 Or Pallas? — for the world that knoweth nought,  
 By that great wisdom to the wicket brought,  
 Clear through the tangle evermore shall see!  
 — O Faithful, O Beloved, turn to ME!  
 I am the Ancient of the Days that were,  
 I am the Newborn that To-day brings here,  
 I am the Life of all that dieth not,  
 Through me alone is sorrow unforget.

(p.22)

Led by his choice of dramatic form and the use of the heroic couplet, Morris gives us this somewhat mannered outburst which echoes rather the Restoration dramatists than the pre-Shakespearean drama, reminding us again that there were really few modes of expression in English poetry which were foreign to Morris, or which he could not use if he thought them appropriate.

We are told in this speech of Love that Pharamond, the mighty and fierce king, "The stayer of falling folks, the bane of fear", is destined to reach immortality, i.e. not to be forgotten on earth, through the power of Love, and therefore Love has given him gifts

Unmeet belike for rulers of the earth;  
 As sorrowful yearning in the midst of mirth,  
 Pity midst anger, hope midst scorn and hate,  
 Languor midst labour, lest the day wax late,  
 And all be wrong, and all be to begin . . .

(p.22)

in other words, the power of self-questioning. Pharamond will be saved by the pain that will "pierce his last coat of content", by the recognition that his life so far has been aimless and fruitless and that he must now fight to achieve his longing.

The second scene shows us Pharamond and Oliver in the king's garden. Moved by Oliver's faithful love, Pharamond begins to tell of his strange experience, beginning his tale with a description that foreshadows the scenery of the later prose romances, of the valley "Girthed about . . . by a grey wall of mountains, Rent apart in three places and tumbled together In old times of the world when the earth-fires flowed forth." (p.25)

But though Pharamond can describe the scene of his dream minutely he does not know how to reach it, and begs for Oliver's help. The only tokens he has from that country are the blue milk-wort, some grey stones, and a lock of white wool gathered from a thornbush — tokens it might be from the ballad-world — but they "had gone when I wakened." He first dreamed of the country as he lay exhausted on the field of battle. Now he can only dream of the voice he has heard singing.

Master Oliver sadly contrasts the former Pharamond with what his dream has made of him:

But a night's dream undid him, and he died, and his kingdom  
By unheard-of deeds fashioned, was tumbled together,  
By false men and fools to be fought for and ruined.

(p.27)

Pharamond tells how he first met his love in a vision, and then visited her again, till at the last meeting

... in the winter-tide mid the dark forest  
Side by side did we wend down the pass: the wind tangled  
Mid the trunks and black boughs made wild music about us.

(p.30)

But the vision faded as he woke to find himself in the midst of battle. He has seen the vision only occasionally since, and the last time his love was weeping, so Pharamond, having secured his kingdom, no longer cares for it and has decided to seek his love throughout the world. Oliver will go with him, and the scene closes with Pharamond dreaming of the time when he will meet his love.

The Music now tells us that love cannot be bought; and the man who has known love, will not sell it for all the treasures of the rich man's house, even though the house of Love "is all wasted from threshold to rafter." Love now appears and speaks of the time and searching that must elapse before Pharamond can find his beloved. — "And if at last these hands, these lips shall meet, What matter thorny way and weary feet?" And to the accusation that such a foretelling or foreknowledge of love is purely imaginary, Love replies:

Nay, nay, believe it not! — love lies alone  
In loving hearts like fire within the stone:  
Then strikes my hand, and lo, the flax ablaze!  
— Those tales of empty striving, and lost days  
Folk tell of sometimes — never lit my fire  
Such ruin as this; but Pride and Vain-desire,  
My counterfeits and foes, have done the deed.  
Beware, Beloved! for they sow the weed

Where I the wheat: they meddle where I leave,  
Take what I scorn, cast by what I receive,  
Sunder my yoke, yoke that I would dissever,  
Pull down the house my hands would build for ever.

(p.38)

In other words, the search of true love will be rewarded, the striving will not be empty nor the days lost; but love can be destroyed by its own imitations.

The next scene shows Pharamond and Oliver still on their search, which now seems desperate. Pharamond has little recollection even of his long search, the incidents of which Oliver recalls to him. Pharamond falls into a sleep. The Music now seems to foretell the end of the quest:

For I waked mid a story  
Of a land wherein Love is the light and the lord,  
Where my tale shall be heard, and my wounds gain a glory,  
And my tears be a treasure to add to the hoard  
Of pleasure laid up for his people's reward.

(p.47)

But in contrast to this more soothing strain, Love now enters to announce the climax of the drama "with a cup of bitter drink and his hands bloody", and while he promises the attainment of Earthly Bliss, warns that this is threatened by the wings of Earthly Anguish.

The next scene takes place "On a Highway in a Valley . . . with a Mist over all things." Pharamond lies down to sleep and Oliver departs through the mist in the hope of finding help. The Music now foretells the triumph of love in the very moment of death and despair. The final verse uses imagery which remained valid for Morris throughout his life, though in his later poems he develops different connotations for the images which now serve him for the metaphorical interpretation of human life:

Live on, for Love liveth, and earth shall be shaken  
By the wind of his wings on the triumphing morning,  
When the dead, and the deeds that die not shall awaken,  
And the world's tale shall sound in your trumpet of warning,  
And the sun smite the banner called Scorn of the Scorning,  
And dead pain ye shall trample, dead fruitless desire,  
As ye wend to pluck out the new world from the fire.

(p.51)

This is in fact one of the earliest expressions in poetry of Morris's growing belief that to solve the problems of mankind, whether public or personal, a "new world" must be called into being.

The contradiction inherent in the whole conception of the present poem is that Morris's conviction that only on earth can man find happiness, is in conflict with his means of expressing it. While Morris does not intend to develop a mystical, transcendental symbolism, yet the language and imagery which he uses are so bound up with mystical associations, that it is only on careful reading that we can reach through to the concrete thought beneath. When however these same images and metaphors come in later years to stand for Morris's socialist and Marxist beliefs, they are much more concrete and more easily and immediately comprehensible.\*

Love, clad as a pilgrim, now introduces the final act of the drama. Those whom Love has singled out have suffered and yet "love no less Each furlong of the road of past distress", and none of "Love's Faithful" would "cast by that crown of bitter leaves". As the curtain rises and shows Pharamond lying with the mist clearing, Love himself steps on to the scene and points to "Pharamond the Freed". His beloved is approaching. A dialogue ensues between Love and Pharamond, in which Love bids him awake. The Music too now approaches directly with a delicate song welcoming the coming day of love. Azalais now draws near and tells of her journeying. Seeing Pharamond sleeping, she speaks of the simple pleasures waiting his awakening:

... and then, when thou seest  
How the rose-boughs hang in o'er the little loft window,  
And the blue bowl with roses is close to thine hand,  
And over thy bed is the quilt sewn with lilies,  
And the loft is hung round with the green Southland hangings,  
And all smelleth sweet as the low door is opened,  
And thou turnest to see me there standing, and holding  
Such dainties as may be, thy new hunger to stay —  
(p.61)

and strangely, the surroundings of the fulfilled love of Pharamond and Azalais are not those of the great king, but transfer us to the simple world of Giles and Joan, the peasants.

Azalais now fears that she will seem a stranger to Pharamond when he awakes, and yet she believes that her love will not fail, and addresses him as an equal:

Friend, I may not forbear: we have been here together:  
My hand on thy hand has been laid, and thou tremblest...  
(p.61)

and she wakens him with her kiss.

The Music speaks of the fulfilment of love and of rest. Love, still clad as

---

\*) cf. *infra*, discussion of socialist poems, p. 188, 189, 192.

a Pilgrim, tells us of the ending of the play, and asks the question which Morris so often repeats, especially in *The Earthly Paradise*: What now? What does the happy lover owe to the world? And surely the inconclusiveness of the thought of this passage is a reflection of Morris's own indecision at that time, for, while

Pharamond fulfilled of love must turn  
Unto the folk that still he deemed would yearn  
To see his face,

yet his people have forgotten him, and he himself has lost faith in the righteousness of his actions as a king, and no longer desires the "blood of men to spill, Who once believed him God to heal their ill." So Pharamond renounces his kingdom, and the final scene shows this renouncement. Returning with Oliver unknown to his land, Pharamond finds that he is forgotten, and his place has been taken by King Theobald and his adviser Honorius. The people appear content, a people "who grasping at peace and good days, Careth little who giveth them that which they long for." Pharamond has no desire for power or glory, and when Oliver, disappointed of his hope that Pharamond will once more become a great king, but still faithful to him, asks where they will now go, Pharamond replies:

In the land where my love our returning abideth,  
The poor land and kingless of the shepherding people,  
There is peace there, and all things this land are unlike to.        ¶  
(p.70)

When Theobald and Honorius pass by, not knowing that Pharamond is there, Theobald seems to him blind and "dead-alive", since all that remains for him is the illusion of thinking that he is "God's brother, Till loveless death gripped thee, unloved, unlamented." Honorius, the real wielder of power, is recognised by Pharamond as "the foe the heart hateth For that barren fulfilment of all that it lacketh." He is the typical ruler:

Thou lovest not mercy, yet shalt thou be merciful;  
Thou joy'st not in justice, yet just shall thy dooms be;  
No deep hell thou darest, nor dream'st of high heaven;  
No gleam of love leads thee; no gift men may give thee.  
(p.74)

Theobald and Honorius are in bondage to the authority they wield, but Pharamond is now Freed from the tyranny of the world and power, and can return to his love. Here the drama ends. :

It might seem that Morris is proclaiming the world well lost for love. May Morris sees in the lesson of the Music an expression of religious or at least mystical outlook. This I think is a misinterpretation of Morris's language, which is almost certainly allegorical. In the final Music lyric, in spite of the choice of words, it is surely clear that Morris does not mean some theological God, but love itself personified:

O hearken the words of his voice of compassion:  
'Come cling round about me, ye faithful who sicken  
Of the weary unrest and the world's passing fashion!  
As the rain in mid-morning your troubles shall thicken,  
But surely within you some Godhead doth quicken,  
As ye cry to me heeding, and leading you home.'

(p.76)

Love is the answer to the troubles of the world. And Love, holding a crown and a palm branch, finally appears to ask the question of the meaning of life — "If love be real" — and the answer is that the poet cannot formulate exactly what the reward of love is:

— Reward of what? — Life springing fresh again. —  
Life of delight? — I say it not. — Of pain?  
It may be. — Pain eternal? — Who may tell?  
Yet pain of Heaven, beloved, and not of Hell.  
— What sign, what sign, ye cry, that so it is?

And the only proof that love is the secret of happiness, or rather the secret of life, is life itself, the life of the earth:

The sign of Earth, its sorrow and its bliss,  
Waxing and waning, steadfastness and change.

(p.77)

Life itself is the answer to death. And surely May Morris is reading something which is not there into the lines she quotes, when she sees in them that "The sum of all Love's teaching is Faith."<sup>115</sup> There could be no more concrete expression of an essentially materialist belief than the image:

How shall the bark that girds the winter tree  
Babble about the sap that sleeps beneath,  
And tell the fashion of its life and death?

Surely the significance of such an image is not the mystic assertion that "all leads up to the absorption of self in the Eternal Love"<sup>116</sup> May Morris is right

in contrasting the "frame of mind" of Morris in *Love Is Enough* with his later work in *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains*, in which "we get the absorbing of self in love of kindred." Yet there is no essential difference in outlook, the difference is merely that by the time he wrote these late prose romances Morris had attained and also tested in practice a more adequately thought-out philosophy of history and human society. In *Love Is Enough*, Morris has not yet come to the ideological position of knowing what Pharamond can put in the place of kingship and statecraft — yet he feels that love shows the way to the building of the house that can come only after "that last fight that swalloweth up the sea." All those who have toiled and sorrowed for love have helped to build this house:

It was because of that your care and pain  
A house was building, and your bitter sighs  
Came hither as toil-helping melodies,  
And in the mortar of our gem-built wall  
Your tears were mingled mid the rise and fall  
Of golden trowels tinkling in the hands  
Of builders gathered wide from all the lands.

(p.80)

This house is still unfinished — but all can help to build it. Thus it is on a note of hope, rather than mysticism, that the Morality ends.

The epilogue shows us the effect of the drama on the hearers. Joan feels "somewhat sad" and longs to be back in the busy life of the countryside. Conversing, Giles and Joan move away from the rarefied world of the play to the everyday life where they can contemplate how they would react to an encounter with Pharamond and Azalais. The depth of the experience they have undergone while watching the play is suggested by Joan's question:

Wouldst thou be frightened at the sound  
Of their soft speech?

and Giles's answer:

Maybe: for e'en now when he turned,  
His heart's scorn and his hate outburned,  
And love the more for that ablaze,  
I shuddered, e'en as in the place  
High up the mountains, where men say  
Gods dwelt in time long worn away.

(p.82)

And yet the country lovers are loath to leave the profound experience of the play:

A logging yet about me clings,  
As I had hearkened half-told things;  
And better than the words make plain  
I seem to know these lovers twain.

(p.83)

We are brought back inevitably to the everyday world when the Mayor importantly makes his closing speech to the Emperor and Empress, who reward the players and depart, consoled by the play, to "be alone amid the babbling street". But Giles and Joan, who are not bound by the bonds of state and power which hamper the Emperor and Empress, can look forward, if not to meeting Pharamond and Azalais, to a reunion with the player-king and maiden:

O bid them home with us, and we  
Their scholars for a while will be  
In many a lesson of sweet lore  
To learn love's meaning more and more,

and in the midst of the familiar sights of home and farm labour, they will comprehend the meaning of life and love. And the last words of the poem belong not to the allegorical figure of Love, but to Joan the peasant:

Come, love,  
Noises of river and of grove  
And moving things in field and stall  
And night-birds' whistle shall be all  
Of the world's speech that we shall hear...

— O Love, go with us as we go,  
And from the might of thy fair hand  
Cast wide about the blooming land  
The seed of such-like tales as this!  
— O Day, change round about our bliss,  
Come, restful night, when day is done!  
Come, dawn, and bring a fairer one!

(p.89)

Should this poem be consigned to the oblivion some critics have called for? To some extent, there is a failure to communicate, or at least, to communicate readily. In part this results from the essentially undramatic tale of Pharamond, who is altogether too passive a sufferer for his quest to have much intrinsic interest. The tale is too static, too weak in dramatic incident.\*

---

\*) Though it may be regarded as a prototype for the later spiritual dramas of Yeats, which are largely dialogues of subjective analysis.

Partly the failure to communicate lies in the incomplete state of Morris's philosophical outlook at the time, and his tendency to veil his rather tentative atheism in ambiguous language. We may regard the poem as an experiment, not without significance, in which Morris made a serious attempt to break down the barrier to the communication of a serious message in poetry, but which to some extent at least failed, partly because of the state of English poetry at the time, but certainly even more so because his thought was not yet fully mature.

Nevertheless, the attitude to life expressed in this poem is not the rather weak, defeated melancholy which some critics would have us believe. A typical misreading of Morris's attitude is provided by Doughty: "Morris had certainly been in low mood throughout that late autumn of 1872 and the earlier months of the following year. Late in 1872 he was still singing, in his now habitually plaintive manner, of unhappy love, particularly in *Love's Gleaning Tide*:<sup>117</sup>

Ah when the summer comes again  
How shall we say, we sowed in vain?  
The root was joy, the stem was pain,  
The ear a nameless blending.

The root is dead and gone, my love,  
The stem's a rod our truth to prove;  
The ear is stored for nought to move  
Till heaven and earth have ending."<sup>118</sup>

This poem would, however, seem to be a sober assessment of a human situation, which, if it must have an autobiographical interpretation, might be expressed as follows: our original love, the root, was strong and true; the stem, bringing pain for me, perhaps for you, has in the end proved a "rod", i. e. of punishment — perhaps due to the realisation that a civilised, enlightened, but from the viewpoint of bourgeois morality, "complaisant" attitude towards the course of Rossetti's love for Janey would, with Rossetti's personality, cause only still further suffering for all concerned. The stem, all that has grown from the original love — the growth of married love, friendship and trust between Janey and Morris, blended with her love for Rossetti, no doubt her sorrow and pain for him, Morris's sorrow for his friend, Rossetti's own tragic circumstances, — has proved the truth of the original marriage, which has grown into the fruitful ear of corn, stored for the future and never to be moved. Was this "wishful thinking" on Morris's part? At any rate, it agrees more with the subsequent course of the Morris's life than does Doughty's belief that at this period "insistently, and with a strange delight in pain, Morris continued to sound the note of bitter disillusion." Morris's work, at this as at other times

expresses not disillusion — he always wanted “to live to see the play played out fairly”<sup>119</sup> — but the wisdom, bought by bitterness, but not itself bitter, of experience.

From the formal point of view, the experiment in stressed and alliterative verse is of very great importance in the general history of English poetry, and is the first step towards the verse of Sigurd, which liberated Morris from the fetters of romantic verse and enabled him to give fuller expression to his maturing interpretation of life. In view of this interpretation he could not of course remain satisfied with the achievement of *Love Is Enough*. In a conversation recorded by his son-in-law Halliday Sparling, Morris in later years vigorously condemned the inadequacy of the conception expressed by the title: “There’s a lie for you, though ’twas I that told it! . . . *Work* and love, that’s the life of a man.”<sup>120</sup> And in fact it is the rejection of work as the essential condition of life, the rejection of the human community, and concentration on individual, egocentric emotion, which is the innate thematic weakness of the poem, a weakness which no technical perfection can redeem.