

Sexual Politics, Pomegranates and Production: William Morris's *The Defence of Guenevere* and *La Belle Iseult* in Dialogue

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Abstract: Examining patterns in William Morris's poetry and book art, Isolde Karen Herbert observes that 'Morris's perception is aesthetically and politically dialectical'. Patterns in Morris's texts, she argues, have 'narrative potential'¹. This essay explores the dialectic quality and narrative potential of Morris's early poetry and arts from an intertextual perspective, beginning with his first volume of poetry, *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems* (1858) and his only surviving oil painting, *La Belle Iseult* (1857-58). Through recurrent visual motifs, intertextual allusions and the figurative re-working and re-presentation of Jane Burden (later Jane Morris) in paint and poetry, glass and embroidery, Morris generates a protean figure – both problematic *femme fatale* and martyr to love, whose silent presence points to the uncomfortable disjunction between idealism and commerce in Morris's life and work.

In *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems* (1858) and *La Belle Iseult* (1857-8) (figure 3), William Morris (1834-1896) uses Arthurian myths and Chaucerian dream-visions as a prism through which translate '[t]he straining game' of life² into the 'greatest pleasure [...of...] making'.³ Morris's *Defence* and *La Belle Iseult* – which in many ways acts as its companion piece, are not objects of Romantic escapism but creative expressions of, in Anthony Buxton's words, 'Morris's fascination with the conflicts and difficulties of human relationships':⁴ in particular the *ménage à trois* in which he found himself with Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) and Jane Burden (1839-1914). Jane, 'with her deep mystic eyes, shapely neck, and plenitude of dark hair'⁵ provides Morris with both a wife and problematic creative catalyst, whose illicit desires, projected into medieval Romance, ironically accord with Morris's own principles of Socialist equality and liberty.

Morris's rejection of Victorian sexual politics was as radical as his critique of capitalism. Although deeply influenced by the ideas of John Ruskin (1819-1900), Morris's attitude to women differs profoundly from Ruskin's hegemonic views on the 'separate characters' of men and women expressed in 'Of Queen's Gardens' in *Sesame and Lilies* (1865). Ruskin consigns women to 'sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision' in the home⁶ where wives roam quasi-heavenly gardens with 'steps of virgin liberty' (p.165). Morris, by contrast, suggests that marriage under Socialism, 'would become a matter of simple inclination' in which both men and women would be free to come and go as they pleased.⁷ In his utopian vision *News from Nowhere; or An Epoch of Rest* (1890), Morris goes further still, setting out his unorthodox idea that the concept of female sin is the product of male financial power and greed: 'the ruin of women for following their natural desires in an illegal way [...] was a convention caused by the laws of private property'.⁸

¹ Isolde Karen Herbert, 'The "Sympathetic Translation" of Patterns: William Morris as Singer, Scribe, and Printer', in *Journal of the William Morris Society*, 13.4, pp.26-7.

² Ralph Berry, 'A Defence of Guenevere', in *Victorian Poetry*, 9:3 (Autumn 1971), p.285.

³ Lecture by William Morris: *The Decorative Arts*, (1877) in *News from Nowhere; and Other Writings* ed. by Clive Wilmer (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p.250.

⁴ Lecture: *William Morris*, given by Dr. Antony Buxton, (University of Oxford: Rewley House 16/10/12).

⁵ E.P. Thompson, *William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary* (London: Merlin Press, 1977), p.48.

⁶ *John Ruskin; Selected Writings* ed. by Dinah Birch (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.158-9.

⁷ Thompson, p.740.

⁸ *News from Nowhere*, ed. Clive Wilmer, p.113.

It is against this background of Ruskinian middle-class morality that the young William Morris launches his literary career with the publication of *The Defence of Guenevere*, with its evocation of the legendary King Arthur's adulterous queen as, in James Carley's words, 'a sensuous, highly sexual character':⁹ prompting at least one contemporary critic to accuse Morris of 'coarseness and immorality'.¹⁰ What is perhaps most striking about Morris's titular poem is the eloquent voice it gives to Arthur's condemned wife who remains silent in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* as she stands 'despoylled into her smok' awaiting death, her 'feelings [...] unexplored'.¹¹ The focus of Morris's narrative as it dilates from third to first person is surprisingly modern in its psychological intensity, yet it derives in part from the medieval complaint or confessional which Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1343-1400) employs in his dream-vision *The Legend of Good Women* (c.1380-86). Chaucer's *Legend* was one of Morris's favourite texts¹² which he published at the end of his life in *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1896). Like Morris's 'Defence', Chaucer gives centre stage to powerful adulteress-queens such as Cleopatra and Dido, who are recast as '*martiris*' and redeemed by the God of Love by virtue of their being 'trewe in loving al hire lyve'.¹³

Guenevere's plea is made according to the laws of Chaucer's God of Love for whom passion is condoned even in adultery ('ne shal no trewe lover come in helle').¹⁴ This medieval humanist and chivalric tradition of the abstract virtues of love finds an interesting parallel in Morris's own abhorrence of the Victorian marriage market. In a letter to his friend Charles Faulkner for example, Morris attacks what he terms the 'venal prostitution' of 'the bourgeois property marriage' and calls instead for 'genuine unions of passion and affection'.¹⁵ In 'The Defence', Guenevere claims the reader's sympathy on the same terms: 'I was bought' she asserts simply, 'By Arthur's great name and his little love':¹⁶ a statement that finds uncomfortable parallels in Morris's own marriage.

It was whilst working on a series of murals depicting scenes from Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (1485) for a new neo-medieval debating chamber at the Oxford Union Society that Rossetti discovered Jane Burden, whom he persuaded to model for him at his lodgings in October 1857, taking her over 'as if she were his personal possession'.¹⁷ By the spring of 1858 however, the impoverished Jane had become engaged to the wealthy Morris. As J. B. Bullen succinctly puts it, 'Rossetti may have had charm, but Morris had money'. Morris may well have proposed marriage to Jane 'in a heady mixture of infatuation, sexual attraction and mutual misunderstanding',¹⁸ however a series of intertextual allusions, circulating through embroidered hangings, paintings and studies created in 1857-8, suggest that Morris was acutely aware of the Faustian pact that, like Guenevere, Jane was making for a life of financial security, status and ease.

In Kelmscott Manor, the Oxfordshire home which Morris and Rossetti leased in 1871 (in part as a rural retreat where Jane and Rossetti could live freely as lovers), hangs an unassuming and unfinished hanging, one of a series of embroidered panels designed by Morris depicting heroines from Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*. The three surviving

⁹ *Arthurian Poets, Matthew Arnold and William Morris*, ed. by James Carley (Bury St Edmunds: The Boydell Press, 1990) p.12.

¹⁰ Unsigned notice of *The Defence of Guenevere; and Other Poems*, in *Spectator*, (London: February 1858) xxx, p.238.

¹¹ Carley, ed., p.7.

¹² Ian Zaczek, *Essential William Morris* (London: Dempsey Parr, 1999), p.81.

¹³ *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd edition, ed by F.N. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.493, l.438.

¹⁴ *Dream Visions and Other Poems; Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. by Kathryn L. Lynch (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), p.136, l.544.

¹⁵ Letter written by William Morris, October 16th 1886, in E.P. Thompson, p.708.

¹⁶ Carley, ed., p.53

¹⁷ J.B. Bullen, *Rossetti; Painter and Poet* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2011) p.112.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.117.

figures are of St Catherine, Penelope and most interesting of all, Guenevere¹⁹ – Morris’s idiosyncratic addition to Chaucer’s martyrs to love. ‘The design’, notes John Cherry, ‘derives from an early sketch of Jane as Guenevere or *La Belle Iseult* made before their marriage in 1859’²⁰ (figure 1) and as such provides a material link between *La Belle Iseult*, executed by Morris in 1857-8 under the watchful eye of Rossetti, and Arthur’s queen.



Figure 1. William Morris, *Queen Guenevere*, c.1860
Unfinished embroidered hanging on linen.
Gloucestershire: Kelmscott Manor
(Photo © Society of Antiquaries of London 2013)



Figure 2. William Morris, *Guinevere*, c.1858
Extant study, watercolour and graphite on paper
126.4 x 55.2 cm
London: Tate Britain (Photo © Tate, London 2000)

The extant study for the same embroidered hanging, entitled *Guinevere* (figure 2) is held at Tate Britain, and dated circa 1858 although the similarities in the pose, positioning and drapery of the three figures suggest that this too was derived from the early sketch for *La Belle Iseult* to which Cherry refers.

¹⁹ John Cherry and A.R. Dufty, *Kelmscott Manor* (London: The Society of Antiquaries of London, 1999), p.35.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.17, pl.13 and note.



Figure 3. William Morris, *La Belle Iseult*, 1858 Oil on canvas, 71.8 x 50.2 cm
London: Tate Britain, (Photo © Tate, London 2013)

The contemporaneous translation of Guenevere/Iseult into different media and guises suggests the way in which the love triangle between King Arthur, Queen Guenevere and Sir Lancelot du Lac was interchangeable in Morris's mind and art with the love triangle between Iseult of Ireland, King Mark and Tristram of Lyonesse, whose story had been famously treated by Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) in his verse-Romance 'Tristram and Iseult' (1852). Perhaps in some ways the ongoing critical debate concerning the identity of the figure in *La Belle Iseult* is endemic to Morris's 'portrait in medieval dress'²¹ since Romance, as Nicholas Perkins and Alison Wiggins observe, is a 'radically creative, open, dynamic and unstable' genre,²² one that delights in the subversion of fixed identities and patriarchal norms. By aligning Jane with medieval heroines such as Malory's Guenevere, Chaucer's Cleopatra, and moral shape-shifters such as Lady Bertilak in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* who revel in 'sovereignty' and seduction²³ Morris opens a radical dialectic between the predatory heroines of Romance and high Victorian medievalism; a conflict vocalised in the prosopopoeia of Guenevere's defence as she pitches the aesthetic values of love and beauty against the hypocrisy of Victorian concepts of sin: "With all this wickedness; say no rash word / Against me, being so beautiful".²⁴

²¹ Frances Fowle, *La Belle Iseult* 'Summary' © Tate, London 2000.

²² Nicholas Perkins and Alison Wiggins, *The Romance of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 2012), p.86.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.106-110.

²⁴ Carley, ed., p.57.

It is not the individual characters of Guenevere or Iseult which fascinate Morris, but rather the emotional tension of their love-triangles: a focus suggested by the development between Morris's extant study of Guenevere, and his reworking of the image as *La Belle Iseult*. The subtle reference to Guenevere's girdle in the study, marked by the figure's thumb tucked quietly inside a dropped waist-band, is given dramatic emphasis in the painting where Iseult's angular arms and wrists express some tortuous reluctance to assume its weight: a reluctance emphasised by the contrapuntal sway of her body as she draws the girdle around her.

The statuesque stillness of Guenevere's pose in the study, with eyes cast modestly down and hair largely covered has been replaced in *La Belle Iseult* with Jane's rippling mass of hair loose beneath a garland of rosemary and pomegranates, her face drawn with tension as she is captured *in medias res*, dressing to the song of a troubadour. Although the mood of the portrait is introspective, costume, props and caste imply dialogue: as W. D. Shaw notes of Guenevere in 'The Defence', there is 'scene-stealing theatricality'²⁵ in this performance; whilst book, girdle, and bard form an oblique diagonal plane suggestive of other meta-textual perspectives and narratives.

La Belle Iseult is rich in symbolism and intertextual references both contemporary and medieval. In Mathew Arnold's (1822-1888) famous poem *Dover Beach* (1867) for example, the girdle signifies a lost medieval world of spiritual and cultural riches: 'The Sea of Faith [...] Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled',²⁶ and embodies the redemptive powers of love. As a symbol of classical mythology however, the girdle links Guenevere/Iseult with Venus, the Roman goddess of love and her Greek counterpart Aphrodite, the goddess of Spring.²⁷

The Gods and Goddesses of Classical Mythology, A Short Classical Dictionary (1882), provides an example of the kinds of ideas concerning the girdle's classical symbolism in general circulation at that time. Venus, we are informed 'was famous for her mysterious oestrus, a girdle which, worn by whatever female, had the property of rendering her charms irresistible to the person whose affections she desired to command'.²⁸ Morris's capture of the moment as Jane/Iseult assumes this potent symbol of sexual power is charged with significance. Paradoxically however, Iseult's twisted body, drawn brows and the dark lines beneath her eyes suggest inner conflict and even despair at capturing the observing eye.

Morris's deployment of colour in *La Belle Iseult* also engages the viewer in intertextual discourse with the tortured heroine of 'The Defence', since the brilliant red of Iseult's sleeves, echoed in her lips and the valance of the ruffled bed, parallels Guenevere's 'bright sleeves', her 'crimson' cheeks and her bed-sheets stained with Launcelot's blood that witness her betrayal. Was Morris's persistent association of his future wife with Romance heroines notorious for their unfaithfulness entirely coincidental? I would argue not. In another contemporaneous poem 'In Praise of my Lady', the narrator addresses Jane directly, yet nevertheless acknowledges her capacity for infidelity: "So passionate and swift to move, / To pluck at any flying love".²⁹ Jane's features, 'Curl'd up and pensive', mirror the careless masquerade Guenevere assumes in 'The Defence' to hide her unhappiness in King Arthur's

²⁵ W. David Shaw, 'Arthurian Ghosts; The Phantom Art of "The Defence of Guenevere"' in *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 34, No. 3, *William Morris: 1834-1896*, (Autumn, 1996), p.301.

²⁶ Matthew Arnold, 'Dover Beach', in *New Poems* (1867), ll.21-3.

²⁷ *The Hutchinson Encyclopedia 1999*, ed. by Katie Emblen, Denise Dresner, and others (Oxford: Helicon, 1999) pp.111 & 49.

²⁸ *The Gods and Goddesses of Classical Mythology; Being a Short Classical Dictionary*, ed. by W. Stewart (?), (London: W. Stewart, 1882), p.12 "Venus".

²⁹ Thompson, p.67.

court: ‘And let my lips curl up at false or true’;³⁰ and echo the close observation of illicit love in another poem from *The Defence*, ‘Concerning Geffray Teste Noire’:

‘I saw you kissing once
[...]
Curled gently, slowly, long time could afford
For caught-up breathings’³¹

As Walter Pater (1839-1894) recognised in his retrospective review of Morris’s *Defence* in 1868, it is in the narrator’s oxymoronic mixture of cool impartiality and acute sensitivity, distinctive of the subject position of both ‘The Defence’ and *La Belle Iseult*, that the dramatic intensity of Morris’s art lies. ‘The jealousy of that other lover’ Pater writes, ‘is the secret here of a triumphant colour and heat’.³² ‘that other lover’ in both poem and painting, being the shadowy figure of Arthur and beyond him, Morris himself.

Morris gives symbolic expression to his conflicted view of Jane Burden as both a woman true to love, yet possessed of illicit passion through his use of pomegranates as a decorative device. Pomegranates are associated with the Virgin Mary and Christ in Christian iconography, as employed for example by Sandro Botticelli (c.1445-1510) in his *Madonna of the Pomegranates* (1487); and by Morris & Co. in the decorative border to the tapestry *Angeli Ministrantes* (1894).³³ In the dark, windowless context of *La Belle Iseult*’s bed chamber however, the pomegranates in her floral crown, embroidered on her bedside tablecloth and woven into the tapestry behind her, are suggestive of the myth of Persephone who was tricked by Hades into eating the pomegranate seeds that would bind her to spend six months of every year in the darkness of the underworld. William Holwell’s *A mythological, etymological, and historical dictionary* (1793) identifies Persephone or Proserpine not as a virginal victim, but as the consort of Pluto and ‘reputed queen of hell [...] condemned to the shades below as an infernal inquisitor’.³⁴ a mythology employed in Rossetti’s painting of Jane Morris as *Proserpine* (1874) where she is portrayed as a dark seductress, holding a bitten pomegranate.

It is often pointed out that Pater’s review of Morris’s *Defence*, in which he first articulates his Aesthetic concept of the ‘gem-like flame’³⁵ of a pure, sublimated and amoral passion, is the source of Pater’s seminal final chapter to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873). The spark behind the flame on the other hand is seldom mentioned: yet bodied forth as Iseult, Guenevere and Persephone, Jane’s dialectic figure is germane to the emergent Aestheticism of the 1860s and 1870s.

‘Failure’, as Pater notes, ‘is to form habits’³⁶ and the machine printing of *Pomegranate* (c.1866), a wallpaper designed by Morris around the time he met Jane, is suggestive of other ways in which the struggle to reconcile Socialist ideals with Victorian commercialism was not entirely successful. ‘In consequence of the speed at which they are printed,’ notes a Morris & Co. stand-book, ‘there is merely a film of colour deposited on the surface of the paper: FOR PERMANENT USE we strongly recommended the hand-printed papers’.³⁷ Quality however, came at a price and the medievalist working practices favoured by Morris & Co. meant that far from being freely given (as Morris envisaged in his utopian vision, *News from Nowhere*

³⁰ Carley, p.53.

³¹ Morris, *The Defence of Guenevere*, p.146.

³² Walter Pater, unsigned review of *The Defence of Guenevere; and Other Poems*, in *Westminster Review* (London, October 1868), p.1.

³³ Zaczek, pp.96-7.

³⁴ William Holwell, *A Mythological, etymological, and historical dictionary; extracted from the analysis of ancient mythology* (London: C. Dilly, 1793), p.321-22.

³⁵ Pater, p.5.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Zaczek, p.202.

[1890]), their products often carried a price-tag well beyond the reach of the working man or woman. At the lower end of the scale, Lady Lanerton, chatelaine at Castle Howard, paid £1.18s.6p for seven pieces of wallpaper in 1878,³⁸ which equated to over three weeks wages for an unskilled labourer;³⁹ whilst at the upper end of the scale, Morris's estimate for the pomegranate-embroidered valances for two State Rooms at St. James's Palace, came in at £555: a price even the palace authorities balked at.⁴⁰

Yet perhaps the greatest disjunction between Morris's Socialism and commercial practice was evident in the architectural designs of his patrons, where Morris's desire to create an egalitarian society where labour would be exalted and craftsmanship bring a democracy of beauty to the poor, came into direct conflict with a class-ridden age. Writing in 1880 the Victorian architect J.J. Stevenson rued

our more complicated ways of living [...] Instead of the hall and single chamber of the middle ages, with which even kings were content, every ordinary house must have [...] a complicated arrangement of servants' offices.⁴¹

Despite the reform bills of 1832 and 1867 enfranchisement of the lower classes did not translate into spatial democracy in middle or upper middle-class homes: quite the opposite. '[W]hether in a small house or a large one,' Stevenson advised, 'let the family have free passage-way without encountering the servants' (p.214). Wightwick Hall for example, built near Wolverhampton by Theodore Mander 'a cultivated and progressive manufacturer', contains over 400 items of furnishings by Morris & Co. which meld seamlessly into a medievalist architectural Romance. Yet Wightwick's Great Parlour, with its minstrel's gallery, was designed as a private living space served by 'concealed servant's ways'.⁴² Devised in the spirit of utopian Socialism, Wightwick functioned on a practical level in ideological opposition to Morris's neo-medieval halls in *News from Nowhere*. At home in his castle, Theodore Mander's interest in public service extended to installing central heating in the servants' garrets: not communal living.

The painter Hetherington Emmerson (1831-1895) provides another glimpse of how the medieval great hall had so altered in function as to become the setting for private repose in his portrait of another of William Morris's patrons, the 1st Lord Armstrong of Cragside (figure 4). Lord Armstrong was also a self-made man of the newly rich upper-class, an engineering genius who commissioned the architect Richard Norman Shaw to build Cragside – a neo-medieval retreat supported by the very latest technological innovations such as hydro-electricity⁴³. In Emmerson's portrait Lord Armstrong sits cocooned in a monumental inglenook. Above his head, and distinctly placed in the viewer's focal point, are *Spring* and *Summer*, a pair of striking stained-glass panels from a set depicting the four seasons, commissioned by Shaw from Morris in 1873.

³⁸ Eeyan Hartley, 'Morris & Co. in a Baroque Setting' *Journal of the William Morris Society*, 11.2 (Spring 1995), p.6.

³⁹ Simon Eliot, 'Books and their readers – part 1' in *The Nineteenth-Century Novel; Realisms*, ed. by Delia Da Sousa Correa (London: Routledge, 2004) p.8. Eliot notes that the contemporary wages of an agricultural labourer ranged between twelve and seventeen shillings a week (twenty shillings made up one pound).

⁴⁰ Zaczek, p.70.

⁴¹ Jeremy Mussen, *Up and Down Stairs, The History of the Country House Servant* (London: John Murray, 2010), p.221.

⁴² Nicholas Mander, 'Ranged Against the Machine' in *The World of Interiors*, (London: Condé Nast), July 2011, pp.92-103.

⁴³ *Treasures from the National Trust*, ed. by Adrian Tinniswood (London: National Trust Books, 2007), p.272.

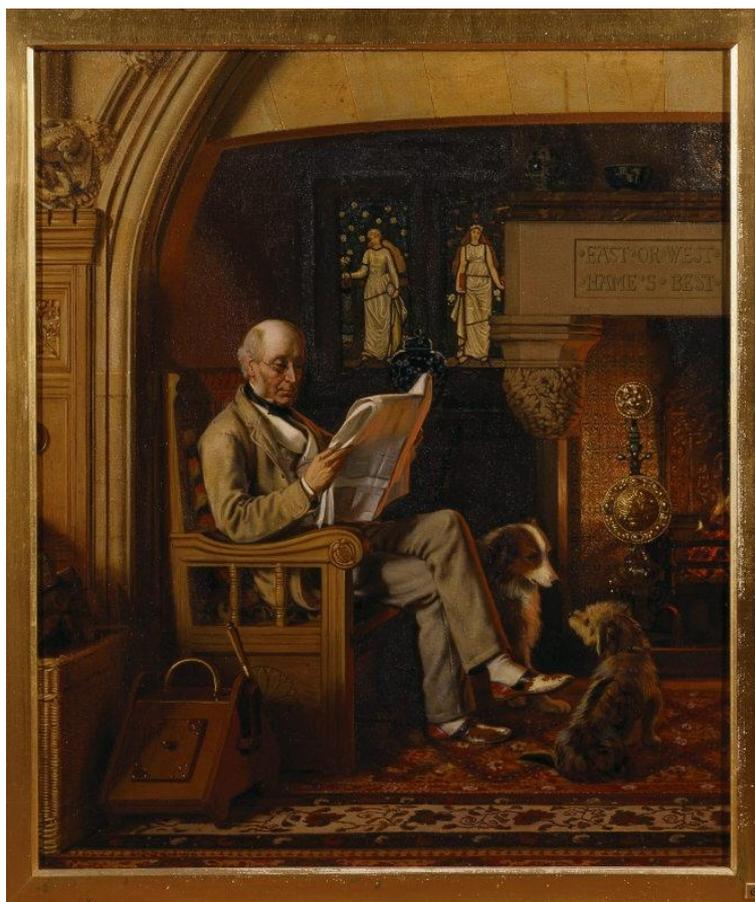


Figure 4: Henry Hetherington Emmerson, *1st Lord Armstrong of Cragside*, c.1880
Oil on canvas, 75 x 63 cm, Cragside: Northumberland
(Photo ©National Trust Images/Derrick E. Witty)

Seated by the fire in his slippers, Lord Armstrong appears to align himself with Morris's ethics by proclaiming indifference to the heroic conventions of Royal Academy portraiture championed by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) and the autocratic values of the British establishment it had come to represent.⁴⁴ Above him *Spring* appears to offer him two daffodils, as if in tribute to her patron. Yet the prominence Emmerson gives to Morris's allegorical figures suggests some subversive Chaucerian commentary is at play. Morris's supremely beautiful glass panels are designed and produced for an exclusive audience of one – a man who finds more of interest in his newspaper. The goddess of Spring, moreover, in Greek mythology is Aphrodite the unfaithful wife of Hephaestus – god of fire.⁴⁵ Perhaps Emmerson's tribute to this Victorian industrialist, aglow with firelight in his neo-baronial hall, is not entirely without censure.

In his notes to the *Manifesto of the Socialist League* (1885), Morris extends his vision of liberty from what he terms 'the monster [...] Commercial Profit' to freedom from 'economical compulsion' in marriage.⁴⁶ Yet as a protean symbol both of fruitfulness and

⁴⁴ See, for example, the hegemonic precepts reflected in the alignment of style with class in the *Art Journal's* review of the Royal Academy exhibition, 1871, which denigrates the 'vulgar naturalism, the common realism' of Pre-Raphaelitism, 'which is applauded by the uneducated multitudes'. Extract in: Allen Staley, *The New Painting of the 1860s; Between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetic Movement* (London: Yale University Press, 2011), p.2.

⁴⁵ *The Hutchinson Encyclopedia*, pp.111 & 49

⁴⁶ Thompson, p.648

faithlessness, Spring gestures to the conflicted commercial, political and private interests of both Morris and his patrons, and bares silent witness to the uncomfortable correlation between the market for luxury goods and the marriage market. She leads us back to Morris's own fireside, to his restless and unfaithful wife portrayed in *La Belle Iseult* and to the circumstances of his marriage to a penniless groom's daughter.

As Guenevere and her sister queen and adulteress Iseult, Jane Burden embodies Morris's Socialist ideology whilst presenting a dialectic challenge not only to the sexual mores of the Victorian age, but to the stability of Morris's own home. Transfigured through glaze and fabric, paint and poetry, through the symbol of the pomegranate and the shifting guises of Aphrodite and Venus, Proserpine and Spring, Morris's muse provides a satiric reminder of his Socialist hopes for a life freed from commercial bondage far removed from Morris & Co.'s market place. In a lecture entitled 'Some Hints on Pattern Designing' Morris notes wryly that 'clever designers [...] Have a great tendency to go mad'.⁴⁷ Yet the sheer complexity of Morris's interdisciplinary discourse, already evident in these early works, speaks of strength not weakness. Seeing the proofs of his illustrations to the *Kelmscott Chaucer* for the first time, Edward Burne-Jones declared of Morris's decorative frames that he 'loved to be snugly cased in boarders and buttressed up by the vast initials [...] if you drag me out of my encasings, it will be like tearing a statue out of its niche'.⁴⁸ Burne-Jones's light-hearted testament to Morris's robust medievalism is illuminating. Ultimately, Morris employs intertextual motifs, Arthurian Romance and medieval dream-visions not merely to analyse and embody but to contain, order and control the world around him: translating loss and betrayal, like Shakespeare's Prospero, into regenerative artistic power.

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⁴⁷ Morris, *News from Nowhere*, p.280, lecture given at the Working Men's College, London 1881

⁴⁸ Zaczek, p.34

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Illustrations

Emmerson, Henry Hetherington, *1st Lord Armstrong of Cragside*, c.1880 Oil on canvas, 75 x 63 cm, Cragside: Northumberland, photo ©National Trust Images/Derrick E. Witty <http://www.nationaltrustimages.org.uk/image/17979> [Accessed 14/02/2013]

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----- *Figure of Guinevere*, c.1858. Extant study, watercolour and graphite on paper, 126.4 x 55.2 cm, London: Tate Britain, photo: © Tate, London 2013 <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/morris-figure-of-guinevere-n05221> [Accessed 5/02/2013]

----- *Queen Guenevere*, c.1860. Unfinished embroidered hanging on linen, Gloucestershire: Kelmscott Manor, photo © The Society of Antiquaries of London, 2013