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Paradise Lost: Morris's Re-Writing of *The Earthly Paradise*

We know that the faculty for speed in his writing allowed Morris to indulge to the full his practice of re-writing, casting aside beginnings that did not work out to his liking. Here is evidence of it in concrete form, in the mass of *Earthly Paradise* MS. —a collection so important, so unique as showing a poet at work at his craft that one can but hope that, unluckily scattered as it now is, it will find its way in time to the British Museum for the benefit of students.¹

So hoped May Morris in 1936, but the manuscripts of the longest poem in English remain scattered around the world. Having tracked down this scattered mass, I wish here to focus on those sections which William Morris chose to omit from *The Earthly Paradise*. First, I attempt to establish the chronology of their composition according to watermarks, numbered notebooks, advertisements for forthcoming tales, and contemporary correspondence. Second, I discuss examples of revisions that demonstrate his careful craftsmanship. Third, I conclude that the poem is a demonstration of those aesthetic principles practised by Morris to define the purpose of art and its relations to society.

Between 1860 and 1870, William Morris considered at least twelve tales for *The Earthly Paradise* in addition to the twenty-four that he eventually published. Three important lists of the tales exist that help determine the chronology in which the tales were written and the order in which Morris intended to present them. The first list is one printed by May Morris from the notebooks numbered by her father:

1. The Prologue.
2. Prologue, continued.
Cupid and Psyche.

3. Cupid and Psyche, concluded.
The Lady of the Land.
The Palace East of the Sun.
The Story of Adrastus.
The Doom of Acrisius.
4. The Doom of Acrisius, continued.
The Proud King.
5. The Proud King, concluded.
The Watching of the Falcon.
The Hill of Venus.
6. Hill of Venus, concluded.
Writing on the Image.
The Story of Dorothea.
The Deeds of Jason.²

All but the second and fifth notebooks have been lost or perhaps fragmented. The second notebook, containing much of the rejected Prologue, is in the British Library and is on paper watermarked with an 1859 date.³ The fifth notebook, also in the British Library, is an account book on unwatermarked paper (Add. MS. 45306). May Morris correctly identifies its date as 1861: "The first draft of 'The Watching of the Falcon' is written in a little kind of note-book of work for the Firm, which begins with the date January 1861. 'The Proud King' is also here" (AWS 1: 392).

Two tales from this list were not included in *The Earthly Paradise*. They are "The Story of Dorothea" and "The Deeds of Jason." ("The Story of Adrastus" was renamed "The Son of Croesus" in *The Earthly Paradise*.) Of the two known copies of "The Story of Dorothea," one is an amanuensis's copy (in the British Library) of the other. This other is a draft which K. L. Goodwin describes as "a lightly corrected holograph in The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, obviously posterior to a lost draft."⁴ This draft may be the copy from the sixth notebook or it may be a transcription of it. If the former, then it has been sepa-