



History and Poetics in the Early Writings of William Morris, 1855-1870

Florence Saunders Boos

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Florence S. Boos's *History and Poetics in the Early Writings of William Morris, 1855–1870* examines Morris's literary development in the context of his Victorian contemporaries, probing the cross-influences of temperament, cultural ambiance, early reader reactions, and his restless search for an authentic poetic voice. Boos argues that to understand this development, we must understand how Morris reinterpreted and transformed medieval history and legend into modern guise. In doing so, Morris preserved a duality of privacy and detachment—the intimacy of personal lyrics and the detachment (and silences) of historical judgment.

Boos's study is the first to utilize surviving original manuscripts, periodical publications, and poems unpublished during Morris's lifetime. *History and Poetics in the Early Writings of William Morris, 1855–1870* traces Morris's literary evolution through his juvenile poems; the essays, poems, and prose romances of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*; the startlingly original verses of *The Defence of Guenevere*; and the ten years of experimentation that preceded his two best-known epics, *The Life and Death of Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise*. This book explores the young poet's successive efforts to find a balancing ethical framework through poetry—a framework that was at once a motivation for action and a template for authentic, shared popular art, one that reemerges forcefully in his later work.

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