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## Document A

He turned into the dark of the wood. All was still, the moon had set. But he was aware of the noises of the night, the engine at Stacks Gate, the traffic on the main road. Slowly he climbed the denuded knoll. And from the top he could see the country, bright rows of lights at Stacks Gates, smaller lights at Tevershall pit, the yellow lights of Tevershall and lights everywhere, here and there, on the dark country, with the distant  
5 blush of furnaces, faint and rosy, since the nights was clear, the rosiness of the outpouring of white-hot metal. Sharp, wicked electric lights at Stacks Gate! An undefinable quick of evil in them! And all the unease, the ever-shifting dread of the industrial night in the Midlands. He could hear the winding-engines at Stacks Gate turning down the seven-o'clock miners. The pit worked three shifts.

10 He went down again into the darkness and seclusion of the wood. But he knew that the seclusion of the wood was illusory. The industrial noises broke the solitude, the sharp lights, though unseen, mocked it. A man could no longer be private and withdrawn. The world allows no hermits. And now he had taken the woman, and brought on himself a new cycle of pain and doom. For he knew by experience what it meant.

15 It was not the woman's fault, nor even love's fault, nor the fault of sex. The fault lay there, out there, in those evil electric lights and diabolical rattlings of engines. There, in the world of the mechanical greed, greedy mechanism and mechanized greed, sparkling with lights and gushing hot metal and roaring with traffic, there lay the vast evil thing, ready to destroy whatever did not conform. Soon it would destroy the wood, and the bluebells would spring no more. All vulnerable things must perish under the rolling and running of iron.

20 He thought with infinite tenderness of the woman. Poor forlorn thing, she was nicer than she knew, and oh! So much too nice for the tough lot she was in contact with. Poor thing, she too had some of the vulnerability of the wild hyacinths, she wasn't all tough rubber-goods and platinum, like the modern girl. And they would do her in! As sure as life, they would do her in, as they do in all naturally tender life. Tender! Somewhere she was tender, tender with a tenderness of the growing hyacinths, something that has gone out of the celluloid women of today. But he would protect her with his heart for a little while. For a little while, before the insentient iron world and the Mammon of mechanized greed did them both in, her as well as him.

25 He went home with his gun and his dog, to the dark cottage, lit the lamp, started the fire, and ate his supper of bread and cheese, young onions and beer. He was alone, in a silence he loved. His room was clean and tidy, but rather stark. Yet the fire was bright, the hearth white, the petroleum lamp hung bright over the table, with its white oil-cloth. He tried to read a book about India, but tonight he could not read. He sat by the fire in his shirt-sleeves, not smoking, but with a mug of beer in reach. And he thought about Connie.

30 To tell the truth, he was sorry for what had happened, perhaps most for her sake. He had a sense of foreboding. No sense of wrong or sin; he was troubled by no conscience in that respect. He knew that conscience was chiefly fear of society, or fear of oneself. He was not afraid of himself. But he was quite consciously afraid of society, which he knew by instinct to be a malevolent, partly-insane beast.

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## Document B

This version of contemporary experience was directly related to the concept of “Beauty” which Rossetti and his friends had taken over, perhaps unconsciously, from Keats: or which, it may be, they had reached independently from the pressure of a similar hatred of their times. Victorian society (they held) was inimical to all “Beauty”, and to the end of his life Morris maintained that the true artist at work within capitalist society must always be forced to “Look back!” In 1891 he delivered a lecture on “The English Pre-Raphaelites” in which he came to the defence of Burne-Jones and Rossetti on this very point, in terms which throw some light upon his views as a young man:

I must just say one word about the fact that both Rossetti and Burne-Jones have very little to do with representing the scenes of ordinary modern life as they go one before your eyes. One has often heard that brought against the ‘Romantic’ artists, as a shortcoming. Now, quite plainly, I must say that I think it *is* a shortcoming. But is the shortcoming due to the individual artist, or is it due to the public at large? For my part I think the latter. When an artist has really a very keen sense of beauty, I venture to think that he cannot literally represent an event that takes place in modern life. He must add something or other to qualify or soften the ugliness and sordidness of the surroundings of life in our generation. That is not only the case with pictures, it is the case also in literature. The difficulty is even greater, perhaps, for the painter. In painting, you cannot get so far away from the facts as you can in literature. By all means, if anyone is really moved by the spirit to treat modern objects, let him do so. But I don’t think he has a right, under the circumstances and considering the evasions he is absolutely bound to make, to lay any blame on his brother artist who turns back again to the life of past times; or who, shall we rather say, since his imagination must have some garb or another, naturally takes the raiment of some period in which the surroundings of life were not ugly but beautiful.

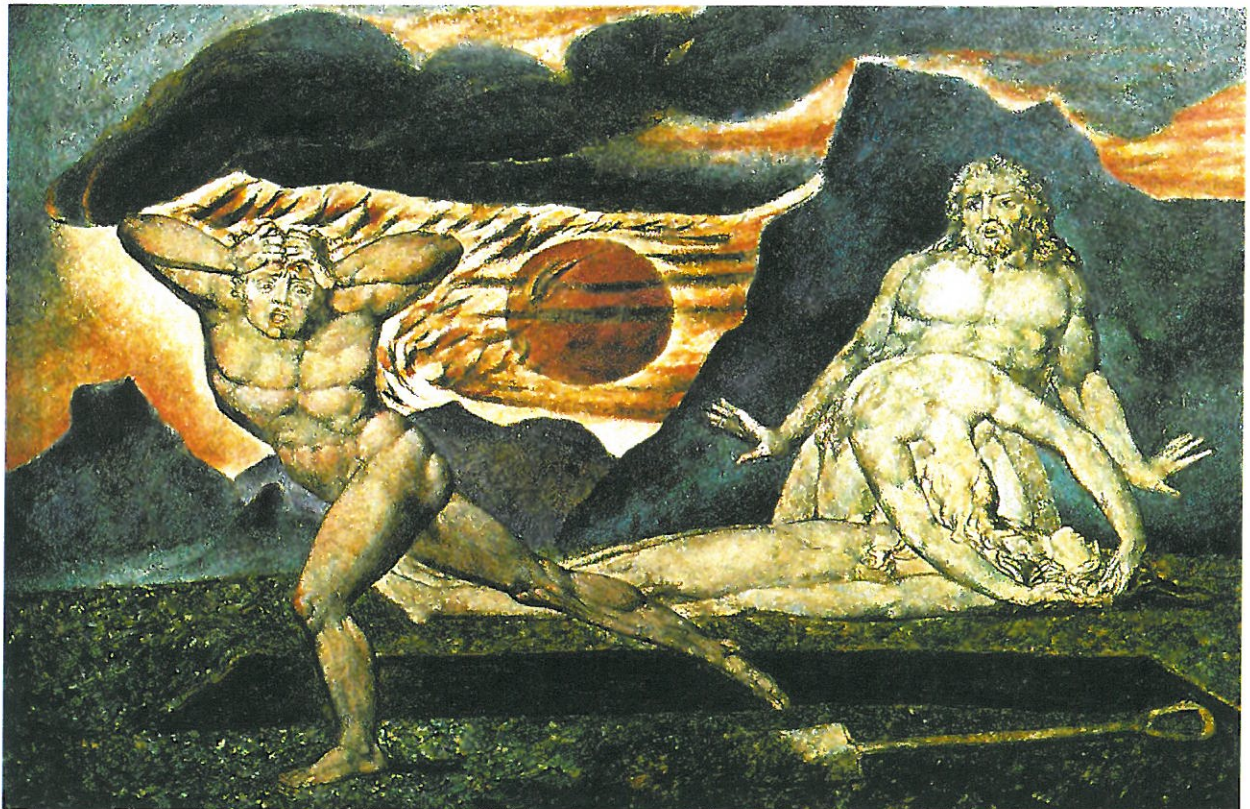
“My work is the embodiment of dreams”. The Tone of the remark is almost aggressive – damn Gradgrind’s age, with all its “practical” men, its cant of progress, its hypocrisies and its ugliness! Morris, in the years of Rossetti’s greatest influence upon him, placed himself firmly in the etherealized extreme of Pre-Raphaelite “romance”. It was, perhaps, here that the most positive aspect of the movement was to be found. “Why is it”, asked Thomas Dixon, a working-man from Sunderland writing to William Michael Rossetti about *The Germ*,

these pictures and essays being so realistic, yet produce on the mind such a vague and dreamy sensation, approaching as it were the Mystic Land of a Bygone Age. There is in them the life which I long for, and which to me never seems realizable in this life.

E.P. Thomson, *William Morris. Romantic to Revolutionary*, London: Merlin Press, 1977 [1955], pp. 56-57.

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**Document C**



William Blake, *The Body of Abel found by Adam and Eve* [1825],  
watercolour on wood, Tate Gallery (London).