

## Preface

William Morris, when he was twenty-two years old, fell in love with Arthur Hughes's painting, *April Love*. The picture shows a young woman turning away from her lover. For Morris, it captured perfectly the feeling of love denied that had overwhelmed him after his favorite sister married. It was the same emotion that made him a poet.

Morris bought the painting in 1856. A year later he met Jane Burden. For a year and a half he struggled with two competing visions of love before choosing the only one permissible. In April 1859 he married Miss Burden; the couple then lived for several years in a beautiful house designed by their friend Philip Webb. It was a very happy time for both of them.

Only after Morris suffered a serious illness did he question the validity of his marriage. He began writing poetry again, which he had virtually abandoned when he wed. For Morris's poetry, indeed all of his artistic expression, remained grounded in his passion for his sister, a passion that began in infancy.

*Art and Forbidden Fruit* explains how Morris's love for his sister evolved, how it destroyed his marriage and how it produced the great achievements of his life. For his sister was a guide to heroic behavior as well as a source of erotic emotion.