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When we consider late-Victorian literature through the lens of the Aesthetic Movement, what do we do with William Morris? Is he the nostalgic neo-medievalist, the "idle singer of an empty day," or is he the socialist artist *par excellence* who, after his 1883 adoption of socialism, forged what Caroline Arscott has called "the first English-language attempt to produce a Marxist theory of art"?[1] We can appeal to chronology to answer this question: the early Morris was a Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthete, whose work deeply influenced Oscar Wilde's articulation of "The House Beautiful" and "The Decorative Arts" on his lecture tour of America, while the later Morris was a radical who spent the last thirteen years of his life formulating a new kind of political aesthetic. But such a distinction ignores the continuities between his early and late career and fails to address the underlying question of whether Aestheticism and revolutionary socialism are indeed oppositional. If Aestheticism is defined conventionally by its insistence on the autonomy of art and the isolation of individual consciousness—"each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of the world," as Walter Pater put it—and, consequently, by inwardness, reflexivity, and detachment from socio-political reality, was Morris its adversary or unwitting proponent?[2] Was he a socialist trapped in the Aesthetic age, or an Aesthete mired down in socialist propaganda?

A theory of Morris's place within Aestheticism, and, more broadly, of the place of the political within Aestheticism, can be derived by considering Morris's response to *fin de siècle* print culture and his two major experiments in socialist print: the *Commonweal* newspaper and the Kelmscott Press. These two print

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projects formally mirror the genres of Aestheticism and utopianism in their conception of the text's relation to political reality. Using Fredric Jameson's recent work on the politics of Utopia, I want to suggest that Morris's print ventures, the *Commonweal* and Kelmscott, construct themselves in relation to mainstream print in the same way that Utopia constructs itself in relation to present-day reality, and that both of these relationships echo Aesthetic theories of art and realism. Recognizing these parallels reframes the debate over Aestheticism's politics—and over Morris's politics—more properly as a debate over evolutionary versus revolutionary socialism, over reformist versus revolutionary approaches to political change, and over progressive versus dialectical theories of history. Positioning Morris and Aestheticism within the *fin de siècle* political moment, a moment riven by these very debates, allows us to identify the operative conceptions of the political and the aesthetic that they share, and the utopian and revolutionary features of Aesthetic form.

Morris, Print, and Utopia

Morris's print ventures in the 1880s and 1890s investigate the nature of print's politics, expose and critique the political effects of mass print culture, and assert the possibility of a break from the foreseeable future of politics and print. They are situated at the intersection of idealist, Marxist, Aesthetic, and modernist discourses; conceptualized in these terms, contradictory elements of these projects mirror the variegated aesthetic landscape of the *fin de siècle*, a milieu newly complicated by critics such as Ann Ardis, who argues that the "competition among emergent aesthetic and political traditions in turn-of-the-century Britain," "the quarreling as well as the voracious borrowing of ideas," requires "a much more detailed and nuanced topographical mapping of the period."[3] In a piece that exemplifies Ardis's vision, Toril Moi has recently excavated the aesthetic category of "idealism"—"the belief that the task of art . . . is to uplift us, to point the way to the Ideal"—and argues that its lingering resonance in the late-nineteenth century has been suppressed by modernist suspicion of idealist art.[4] Her recovery of idealism as a significant aesthetic and political discourse in this era bears strongly on studies of Morris, whose work exhibits features of both an older idealist tradition and an emerging modernist one, as well as on studies of Aestheticism, a movement that opposed the idealist conflation of beauty and morality, but adhered to idealism in its rejection of the ugliness of naturalism, its insistence on the artist's freedom as a necessary condition for the creation of beauty, and its utopian belief in art's potential to create, as Wilde put it, "a new world that will be more marvelous, more enduring, and more true than the world that common eyes look upon, and through which common natures seek to realize their perfection."[5] Morris's print work hearkens back to an idealist tradition in which art occupies a higher plane and serves as an ethical model, but also draws on Aestheticism and Marxism to complicate that tradition by continually insisting on the artificiality of this ideal; in this way, his work reveals Aestheticism's key formal similarities with the utopian genre and the political resonance of its insistence on a schism between art and social reality.[6]

The sense of a division between Morris and other writers of the 1890s is apparent, as Norman Kelvin pointed out in 1996, in that critics "have made less effort to see Morris synchronously with other figures who shaped the decade."[7] Since 1996, Regenia Gagnier has identified continuities among Morris, Ruskin, and Wilde, arguing that all three write for "freedom, equality, and toleration," but while Gagnier conceptualizes Aestheticism as more politically engaged that it is usually considered to be—as a big tent incorporating productivist and consumerist strains—Linda Dowling has likewise brought Morris into line with his Aesthetic contemporaries by identifying an essential conservatism in Morris's thought.[8] She argues that an "ideal of aristocratic sensibility unrecognized as such" lies "at the heart of the vision of aesthetic democracy inspiring Ruskin and Morris," that Morris "repressed" this ideal in his work and his psyche, and that this repressed ideal corresponds with "Pater's emergent and Wilde's wholly developed aesthetic elitism."[9]

Since the 1890s, a great many critics have claimed that Morris failed as a writer and an artist to rise above the inward-looking practices of Aestheticism or the commodity culture that sustained them, and they have seen the Kelmscott Press, which Morris founded in 1891, as crucial evidence of this point. I want to suggest, to the contrary, that we should look precisely to Morris's use of print to understand the concord between his aesthetics and his politics, and more broadly, to elucidate Aestheticism's vision of the political sphere. In so doing, I am not concerned with reclaiming Aestheticism as an engaged discourse, as Gagnier does in *Idylls of the Marketplace*, but rather with understanding the political possibilities afforded by its disengagement.[10] In Morris's two key socialist print ventures—the *Commonweal* newspaper and Kelmscott Press—print is conceived as an autonomous space consciously removed from present-day reality; a detailed examination of Morris's print practices in these forums reveals, however, how he enacts the art-life division as a politicized secession rather than an abrogation of politics.

Establishing Morris's position in *fin de siècle* print culture reveals important parallels between an Aesthetic notion of the ideal art object and his experiments in print, for Morris marks a transitional moment in the history of how left-wing reformers have viewed print's politics, a pause between early-nineteenth-century conceptualizations of print as a progressive social force and twentieth-century skepticism about the political capacity of mass print. By the early twentieth century, such skepticism was as rampant among left-wing writers as among conservative modernists such as Ezra Pound.[11] Writing and printing in the 1880s and 1890s, Morris perceived the failure of liberal notions of print as an agent of progress and tried to reinvent print at the level of *production* as an ideal practice apart from its reception. This inward recoil has been viewed by many as evidence of naiveté or hypocrisy on Morris's part, since it resulted in print products with a very limited audience; certainly, it does align him with a reflexively Aesthetic focus on the work of art as a kind of artificial, manufactured perfection. At the same time, however, Morris's print work was by no means apolitical, but rendered print itself a utopian space in which to imagine post-revolutionary art and politics.

Fredric Jameson's recent book on Utopia suggests how a text can at once be a kind of artificial, manufactured perfection, seemingly freestanding from the social world as such, and yet still be politically revolutionary.[12] Beginning with the long-standing problem of how "works that posit the end of history can offer any usable historical impulses" Jameson observes that Utopias are not universal but are characteristic of certain periods of Western modernity (*AF*, xiv). Associating utopianism with "transitional periods" and with a seemingly contradictory "distance . . . from practical politics," Jameson theorizes that the creation of utopian space involves "the momentary formation of a kind of eddy or self-contained backwater within . . . seemingly irresistible forward momentum" (*AF*, 15). Given Aestheticism's emphasis on how the human mind and body are subject to nonstop change and flux—we are, Pater said, "but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways"—it is no surprise that the age of Aestheticism was also an age of Utopias, an age of eddies within the flux.[13] Jameson goes on to say that the "pocket of stasis" which is Utopia "within the ferment and rushing forces of social change may be thought of as a kind of enclave within which Utopian fantasy can operate" (*AF*, 15). This fantasy work is politically productive, though it remains a "self-contained backwater," since it "allows the imagination to overleap the moment of revolution itself and posit a radically different 'post-revolutionary' society" (*AF*, 16). Paradoxically, this makes utopianism revolutionary rather than reformist:

> One cannot . . . change individual features of current reality. A reform which singles out . . . this or that flaw or error in the system . . . quickly discovers that any given feature entertains a multitude of unexpected yet constitutive links with all the other features in the system. In the area of representation, the symptom of this discovery is to be found in what we have called a representational contradiction . . . in order adequately to represent such changes, the modification of reality must be absolute and totalizing: and this impulsion of the Utopian text is at one with a revolutionary and systemic concept of change rather than a reformist one. (*AF*, 39)

It is no surprise to say that Morris was a utopian thinker, for his 1890 novel *News from Nowhere* is a classic of the genre, and many of his political essays and lectures have a utopian flavor, focusing on what life would be like after the revolution.[14] It is less usual, however, to consider Morris's theory of print as utopian, or his print productions as a kind of utopian space. Morris felt that print in his day was politically incapacitated by capitalism, putting writers like himself at an impasse; this is precisely the sort of condition, according to Jameson, in which utopianism thrives, moments when change seems impracticable and the status quo entrenched. At such moments, Jameson argues, "the very principle of the radical break as such, its possibility . . . is reinforced by the Utopian form. . . . The Utopian form itself is the answer to the universal ideological conviction that no alternative is possible, that there is no alternative to the system" (*AF*, 231–2). Morris's *Commonweal* and Kelmscott enact the utopian strategy that Jameson calls "disruption," and bear a formal similarity to the utopian genre even apart from their content. This formal strategy, in which the print pages are constituted as self-

contained, enclosed spaces that are irrevocably separated from present-day reality, is also characteristic of Aestheticism. While I am not the first critic to suggest that there is an element of utopianism within Aestheticism—Pater claimed that the "basis of all artistic genius lies in the power of conceiving humanity in a new and striking way, of putting a happy world of its own creation in place of the meaner world of our common days"—locating this utopianism within Morris's print practice allows us to see how he articulated the revolutionary rather than progressive politics of Aesthetic literature specifically through medium and production.[15]

Before I turn to Morris's print productions, I want to establish his context within a transitional moment of print, and his intervention into a seemingly inevitable, invulnerable march of print progress. Early-nineteenth-century debates about politics and print tended to be polarized between a radical position that viewed an abundance of print as necessarily democratic and progressive and a conservative position in which abundant print was viewed as an anarchic and dangerous force.[16] This polarity characterized the controversy over Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* and other radical pamphlets of the 1790s, as well as the 1830s debates surrounding the growth of the penny press. Kevin Gilmartin maintains that in the first half of the nineteenth century, "radical protest was at times indistinguishable from its expression in print," and that a "libertarian campaign for the rights of the press" was central to radical thought; Ian Haywood likewise argues that in these years "the fate of popular literature . . . became synonymous with the fate of democracy."[17] Writing in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1833, Henry Brougham argued that the march of print would lay the path for the march of the intellect: that the penny press would allow "hundreds of thousands" to "crowd around the sources whence the streams of pure and useful knowledge flow," which would "surely make the people more capable of judging soundly and charitably upon matters of controversy."[18] This was also the position of radicals like James Mill—as John Stuart Mill recalled, "so complete was my father's reliance on the influence of reason over the minds of mankind . . . that he felt as if all would be gained if the whole population were taught to read, if all sorts of opinions were allowed to be addressed to them by word and in writing"—and of the Chartists in the 1840s.[19] Articulating the conservative position in 1834, Archibald Alison instead contended that the cheap press was dangerous and "pernicious." Just as Brougham and Mill imagined that access to ample print would "surely" improve its readers, Alison argued that it would just as surely deprave them, for "the licentious and depraved character of so large a portion, at least of the lower strata, of the press, is the natural consequence of the inherent corruption of our nature; and of the fatal truth, that the human mind, when left to itself, will take to wickedness as the sparks fly upward."[20]

The nature of this debate changed, however, with the decade spanning 1851–1861, which saw the dissolution of the stamp tax, the newspaper tax, and the paper duty, along with various advances in print production. A surge in cheap print and cheap periodicals followed, and the 1870 legislation of universal education with the Forster Act helped complete a shift to near-universal literacy. The years between 1860 and 1890 thus fomented a genuine mass reading public, which failed to live up to the predictions

of radicals *or* conservatives. By the end of the century, left-wing reformers were less inclined to see plentiful print in and of itself as a progressive social force, and more inclined to see it as an effect of unrestrained capitalism.[21] Rather than free print, "free speech" and "free assembly" were the galvanizing issues of late-nineteenth-century socialism—rare causes around which the Fabians, the Social Democratic Federation, and the Socialist League would unite.[22] The socialist position, expressed in a leaflet advocating the *Commonweal*, was that modern print is undermined by consumer culture and capitalist consolidation within the printing industry:

> Men of Labour! Whenever you show signs of impatience at your present degraded position . . . you are met . . . by the censuring shouts of what is called 'Public Opinion.' But what is that 'Public Opinion' . . . Is it a common, wide-spread, a national feeling? Not at all! Public Opinion, that is, the Press, is, nowadays, like all private enterprise, a profit-mongering, mercenary concern. The Press of to-day is established, in the first instance, to make money. . . . Beware of the Capitalist Press, and look out for and support those few papers that are working for your freedom![23]

Despite his position as editor of the *Commonweal*, Morris at times wondered if print itself was part of the problem: that is, if a reproducible medium intricately tied up with industrial modernity can be expected to produce anything *but* apologies for capitalism. In this way, Morris prefigures Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, who often used images and metaphors associated with printing to express the homogeneity and uniformity of the culture industry—i.e. "culture now impresses the same stamp on everything"—as though the mechanism of removable type determines the conditions of its own cultural realization.[24] In an unpublished essay of 1892 entitled "Some Thoughts on the Ornamented Manuscripts of the Middle Ages," Morris reflected on "the present age of superabundance of books" and argued that "the utilitarian production of makeshifts, which is the especial curse of modern times, has swept away the book producer in its current." He contrasted this condition of modern print with bookmaking in the Middle Ages, when a book was "a palpable work of art, a comely body fit for the habitation of the dead man who was speaking to them: the craftsman, scribe, limner, printer, who had produced it had worked on it directly as an artist, not turned it out as the machine of a tradesman."[25] Morris's horror at the "superabundance" of books echoes Marx and Engels's disgust at the absurd "epidemic of overproduction" that characterizes capitalist modernity—the waste and superfluity that coexist with want and privation—yet books prove a problematic commodity for such analysis, as progressive reformers had long assumed that the widespread desire for books reflected a natural hunger for knowledge rather than a created need or, as Marx and Engels put it, a "new want" summoned forth by capitalism.[26] Advocates of democracy and classlessness had long argued that widespread reading materials were a necessary basis for an equitable society. Under such conditions, how could one object to the overproduction of books?

Morris was often caught on the horns of this dilemma. In an 1891 interview with the *Pall Mall Gazette*, his hostility toward small type prompted the interviewer to ask,

"But, Mr. Morris, is it not better to give [the millions] books with small type, which they can buy cheap, than to prevent them from reading at all, which would be the case if there were no small type and consequent cheap editions?"[27] In many ways, Morris's ambivalent relationship with print and mass print culture reflected his growing sense that books and periodicals are not passive vessels of ideas, as progressive campaigners preceding him had conceived of them, but media commodities subject to the logic of their material conditions. Aesthetic decorated books are informed by a similar recognition, as Nicholas Frankel argues with respect to Oscar Wilde's *The Sphinx* and *Salomé*, but Morris's engagement with active media and textual commodification was more overtly political than that of Wilde.[28] Morris did not believe that movable type, when first invented, served a fundamentally different cultural role than writing: he maintained in an 1895 lecture that "the difference between the printed book and the written one was very little. . . . The results of printing, although considerable, were nothing like so considerable as people tried to make out."[29] As an active collector of fifteenth-century incunabula (the earliest printed books), Morris could even be said to fetishize print produced at this early stage in its history. He believed, however, that the nature of print as a medium allowed for its synthesis with capitalism: in an 1895 interview, he said that print's "history, as a whole, has practically coincided with the growth of the commercial system, the requirements of which have been fatal, so far as beauty is concerned, to anything which has come within its scope."[30] The implicit question here is whether the medium itself might enable the economic or political structures that, in turn, facilitate the circulation and production of print.

Morris's response to this chicken-or-egg scenario was not to abandon print altogether, but to turn inward, in Aesthetic fashion, and reform print at the level of production with two "backwaters" of utopian print: the socialist newspaper *Commonweal* in the 1880s and the Kelmscott Press in the 1890s. These two print enterprises construct themselves as utopian spaces outside the "march of progress" narrative that had long accrued to print and to capitalism, and pointedly remove themselves from the general flow of mainstream print. The last decades of the nineteenth century saw a dramatic rise in the number of printed periodicals and books: Peter Keating, citing the *Newspaper Press Directory*, notes that in "1875 the number of weekly, monthly and quarterly magazines was given as 643," a number that increased "to 1,298 in 1885; 2,081 in 1895, and to 2,531 in 1903," while novels, too, boomed exponentially from 1886 to the first World War.[31] Literary historians often view such numbers as evidence of the developing mass market in publishing, but the numbers also point to the rise of small and specialized publications oriented toward alternative publics: hundreds of British socialist newspapers, for example, emerged in the *fin de siècle* era.[32] As editor and printer, Morris considered that a properly made text might produce its own reality, just as, for the more conventional Aesthetes, small magazines such as the *Yellow Book* or the *Chameleon* offered a utopian space in which to articulate unacceptable desires or unpopular ideas. The *Commonweal* was printed cheaply and in large quantities, whereas the Kelmscott books were printed in limited numbers of handmade materials and were quite expensive—reaching the exorbitant price of £20 for the famous

Kelmscott Chaucer—yet both ventures appealed to small, specialized audiences and are characterized by a utopian impulse to create whole cloth a new print reality outside the existing culture of print.[33]

The *Commonweal*

The *Commonweal*, Morris's first major printing project, was the official journal of the Socialist League; Morris founded the League in 1885 with a group who had left the Social Democratic Federation because it was too autocratic and too compromising in its tactics. Circulating in a crowded field of radical London journals, the *Commonweal* was part of a surge of 1880s activist publishing, but is often singled out as having been the "best" in terms of composition and style.[34] It sold cheaply for one penny and had a circulation of 2,500 to 3,000 a week, which was far less than Morris had hoped, and not enough to cover the paper's costs.[35] "The Manifesto of the Socialist League," which ran in the paper's first issue, explained the mission of the League and its paper: "Fellow Citizens, We come before you as a body advocating the principles of Revolutionary International Socialism; that is, we seek a change in the basis of Society—a change which would destroy the distinctions of classes and nationalities."[36]

As the "Manifesto" indicates, the *Commonweal* had a specific agenda, and in that sense might seem less utopian and more directly engaged in politics, yet the paper's political agenda was itself utopian. Morris and the Socialist Leaguers were anti-parliamentarian socialists who did not believe that running socialist candidates or participating in electoral politics would bring about radical social change. The paper dissuaded readers from voting, or from participating in political activities aimed at incremental change, including trade unionism and labor reform. E. P. Thompson has argued, in fact, that the League's tendency during the miner strikes of the 1880s to exhort the miners to aim at a unified revolution of all workers, rather than accept the small changes promised by local strikes here and there, "was decisive in causing its failure in 1887 and 1888 to organize the opinion in favour of Socialism which was spreading among the workers," for the League never realized the "impossibility of preaching purism to workers engaged in bitter class struggles" (*WM*, 438). While the *Commonweal* regularly reported on strikes and maintained a strike fund, the position of the League and its paper was that only wholesale revolution could eradicate capitalism and pave the way for socialism; policies that slightly improved only *some* workers' lots did nothing to hasten the revolution's advent. Thus the *Commonweal*'s political mission was to educate in preparation for an eventual wholesale revolution, as Morris and E. B. Bax put it in an 1886 editorial: "in few words, our function is to educate the people by criticizing all attempts at so-called reforms . . . and by encouraging the union of the working classes towards Revolution."[37] This all-or-nothing insistence on a complete break from existing social reality mirrors the formal features of Utopia.

Even beyond its political ideology, however, the *Commonweal* constructed itself as a utopian print space. A significant part of the paper's mission was the imaginative creation, through poetry and prose, of a post-revolutionary utopian future. Morris

published *News from Nowhere* serially in the paper, and other of his works published
there, such as *A Dream of John Ball*, have strongly utopian elements. In his essay
"The Worker's Share of Art," printed in the *Commonweal* in 1885, Morris articulated
a political theory of art that perfectly suited the age of Aestheticism: under industrial
capitalism, he said, "artists, the aim of whose lives it is to produce beauty and interest,
are deprived of the materials for their works in real life, since all around them is ugly
and vulgar. They are driven into seeking their materials in the imaginations of past
ages, or into giving the lie to their own sense of beauty . . . by sentimentalizing and
falsifying the life which goes on around them."[38]

In stating the need for a separation between the beauty of art and the ugliness of
life, and in implying that nineteenth-century realism is anything but realistic, Morris
prefigures by several years Wilde's Aesthetic manifesto, articulated in "The Decay of
Lying": "as long as a thing is . . . a vital part of the environment in which we live, it is
outside the proper sphere of art," he maintained. "All bad art comes from returning to
Life and Nature, and elevating them into ideals," he continued. "As a method Realism
is a complete failure."[39] Wilde asserts a political rationale for this rift between art and
life in "The Critic as Artist," in which he wrote, "we are trying at present to stave off
the coming crisis, the coming revolution, as my friends the Fabianists call it, by means
of doles and alms. . . . England will never be civilized till she has added Utopia to her
dominions. . . . What we want are unpractical people who see beyond the moment,
and think beyond the day."[40] Like Morris and the Socialist League, Wilde rejects the
use-value of piecemeal reform—recall his argument against charity in "Soul of Man
under Socialism"—and instead endorses a complete, utopian separation of art and vi-
sion from the political reality of the present. Wilde's interest in Morris's theories and in
the *Commonweal* is evidenced by his 1887 note, held in the Socialist League Archive:
"Please send Mr. Morris's tract on 'Socialism and Art' to Mr. Oscar Wilde, 16 Tite Street,
Chelsea. Also the 'Commonweal' for the year beginning with the November no."[41]

The art of the *Commonweal*, a resolutely socialist journal, is surprisingly faithful to
Wilde's Aesthetic program and yet is not apolitical, as Wilde's work is often accused
of being.[42] The *Commonweal* published at least one poem in nearly every issue, and
typically its poetry's political form was explicitly utopian. Wilde expressed England's
need for people "who think beyond the day," and the *Commonweal* poets did that quite
literally by drawing endlessly on imagery of the dawn and the morning of the day after
the revolution. Of course they did not invent the poetic association between sunrise and
the post-revolutionary future—Algernon Swinburne had employed it quite recently, in
fact, in *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871)—but the effect of this persistent trope within the
pages of the *Commonweal* was to position its textual space in a wholly discrete chronol-
ogy, historically broken from the present day. An obscure poet named C. W. Beckett,
for example, contributed more poems to the *Commonweal* than anyone (writing by my
count about nine percent of the journal's poems to Morris's seven percent) and made
generous use of matutinal imagery. Beckett's poem "It Is the Day" metaphorically
conjoins the sun and Christ to create a secular poem about the dawning of the post-
revolutionary future: "O Son of Man, at last, at last, / over the wide and waiting earth

486 / the herald beams are spreading fast, / glad earnest of the daylight's birth. / The night is spent, the stars are wan, / rose are the peaks that late were grey; / lift up thyself, O Son of Man, / arise, awake, it is the day!"[43] Another Beckett poem in the *Commonweal*, "For Fellowship," uses the image of the dawn to position itself in a utopian chronology: "For we live in the future already, / We live in the ages gone by, / . . . We are one with the world of tomorrow, / We are one with our children unborn, / . . . Come follow the Socialist banner, / Come fight for the Spirit of Time." The final line might more appropriately say "Come fight against the Spirit of Time," since the poem invites readers to "live in the future already."[44] "A New World," another poem by Beckett whose title indicates its utopianism, similarly employs a time-defying refrain: "Hasten we, hasten the happy morn!"[45] Arguing for a utopian collapse of time, a chronological fold that would unite the present and the future, the poetry of the *Commonweal* is riddled with such references to the "hastening" of time.

The visual art of Walter Crane, the "artist of socialism," also renders the *Commonweal* as utopian print space, severed chronologically and spatially from the historical present. The title of his cartoon, "Vive la Commune!" (fig. 1), literally suggests that the past event of the 1871 Paris Commune is still alive. Given away as a supplement with the paper in March 1888 and March 1889, the cartoon celebrates the anniversary of the Commune by depicting victorious workers flanking an abstracted female figure of freedom. The image functions to merge the past and the future, skipping over the present altogether by simultaneously memorializing the Commune and imagining the future revolution. Its abstracted female figure transcends history or exists outside of it: with a vacant expression and a wreath garland in her hair, she is not historically bound to the Commune like the male figures in the picture, but evokes a timeless idea.[46] Brandishing the printed banner, she is the link between pictorial and textual elements in the cartoon, operating in this sense as a figure of print itself, a reminder of the power of printed words to transcend time and represent abstract ideas outside of their historical moment. The cartoon thus positions the print space of the *Commonweal* as a utopian space detached from the present.

Crane's "Solidarity of Labour" cartoon, which ran in the 24 May 1890 issue of the *Commonweal* (during the serialization of *News from Nowhere*) conveys an image set in the future, a world of global harmony after the revolution (fig. 2). Just as the Paris Commune cartoon features an abstracted female figure of freedom atop a base of two workers, this cartoon depicts a female angel of freedom hovering over the workers of the world, a visual image of idealized transcendence (the sphere of art) unified with the world below. While the men in the cartoon are each identified with a particular continent, the angel of freedom is geographically unspecific, and thus embodies an abstract concept apart from geographical or historical contexts. Again, she is the word-holder: the banner she brandishes reads "Fraternity" and "Equality," but also contains the names of all the continents. The globe itself is also festooned with a banner that reads "Solidarity of Labour." In both cartoons, we can read the banners and the women who hold them as figures for the *Commonweal*, word-bearers that transcend national and temporal boundaries in a self-consciously utopian manner.[47]

Fig. 1. Walter Crane cartoon distributed with *Commonweal* in March 1888 and March 1889. Walter Crane, *Cartoons for the Cause*, 1896.
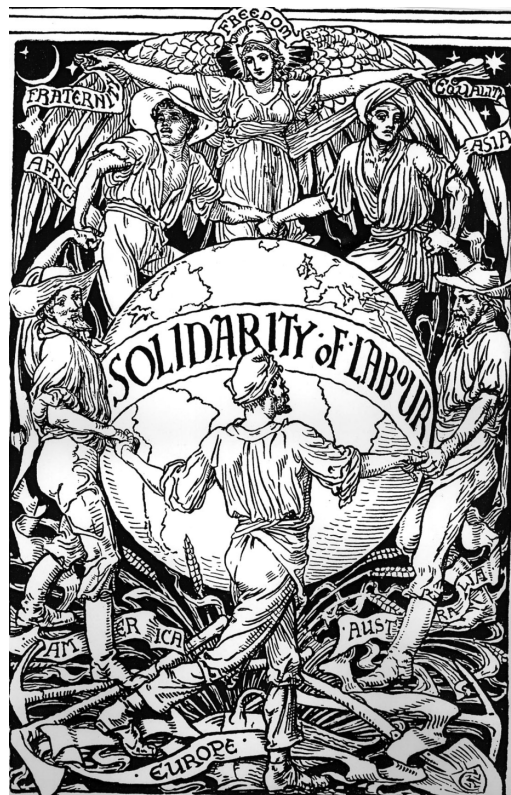

Fig. 2. "Solidarity of Labour," *Commonweal*, 24 May 1890. Walter Crane, *Cartoons for the Cause*, 1896.

Crane was a leader in designing the visual imagery of socialism, and like Morris, his theory of art's relation to political reality was identifiably Aesthetic and utopian. In the 1898 issue of the *Easter Art Annual*, Crane described the "general theory of Art which has influenced my practice, or perhaps has been evolved from it," distinguishing between "art which springs directly out of nature . . . more or less imitative in aim" and "art which is indirectly influenced by nature—the record or re-creation of ideas, which selects or invents only such forms as may express a preconceived idea, as a poet uses words."[48] Crane's cartoons clearly exemplify this second form of art, which strives to represent an abstract idea—or "*inner vision*" as he put it—rather than an outward reality. Such work is still representational, Crane says, but represents "the power of memory and imagination, stimulated, it may be, and enriched by all sorts of direct impressions from nature, but rather used as words and sentences to express certain harmonies of line, or form, or colour, consciously created, and not necessarily founded upon some motive directly observed in nature."[49] For Crane, art deals in abstract signifiers, forms, and categories rather than signified particulars; it constitutes a utopian language that refers to what could be rather than what is.

Despite the negative connotations associated with the idea of "Utopia," the *Commonweal* provides a spirited defense of its political use. Although many of its readers would have been conscious of Friedrich Engels's *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, published in 1880 and translated into English in 1892, Morris's *Commonweal* does not hew to Marx and Engels's anti-utopian line. Engels, living in London at this time, was famously displeased with the British socialist leaders, largely because of their utopian and idealist tendencies. He dubbed Morris "a pure sentimental dreamer" in an 1886 letter, and sarcastically commented in 1887 how "as a poet [he] is above science." The Socialist League, he said, "has no time to take an interest in the living movement going on under its nose." He considered Bax, Morris's close comrade, to be an "armchair philosopher."[50] George Bernard Shaw, writing in the *Commonweal* in June 1886, implied that its readers identified more closely with a utopian socialist tradition—associated in Britain with the legacy of Robert Owen, for example—than a Marxist, scientific one: "one of the disadvantages of being a Socialist is that your friends . . . continually remind you of certain hard facts before which they expect your utopian ideas to wither like roses in the smoke of London."[51] Shaw was a Fabian Socialist, and thus supported socialist participation in electoral politics and advocated reform above revolution, but his contribution nonetheless rebuffs the idea that Utopia is apolitical because it rejects the historical process. Similarly, the *Commonweal* often references Thomas More's classic sixteenth-century *Utopia*, as if to provide historical precedent for its own utopian discontinuity with history. The 27 April 1889 issue contains three pertinent More quotations about wealth and poverty and an 1886 article depicts More as a man out of time, noting how "as a social reformer, More was even in advance of our own times."[52] The formulation was characteristic of Aestheticism too: in *The Renaissance*, Pater acclaimed artists who seem independent of their historical moment. He cites William Blake as having said, "the ages are all equal, but genius is always above its age;" claims that the "thought of Michelangelo" existed "beyond his time in a world not

his own;" and imagines the Renaissance itself as a curiously idealist and ahistorical era, "great rather by what it designed or aspired to do than by what it actually achieved," and inclusive of Winckelmann, who lived in the eighteenth century.[53]

In its efforts to depict its pages as a space apart from and historically discontinuous with present-day society, the *Commonweal* created not so much a subculture as an alternative culture based in the print space of the paper. Ann Ardis describes "how the bourgeois public sphere underwent considerable fracturing at the turn of the twentieth century . . . not only because of new developments in the newspaper publishing industry but also through the emergence of a counter-public sphere of British socialism."[54] While the newspapers Ardis analyzes, the *Clarion* and *New Age*, represent a more moderate socialism, the *Commonweal* preached a radical, revolutionary vision that called for complete disengagement with contemporary politics and a total transformation of society; such a comprehensive rejection demanded the creation of a new culture. Consequently, the League hosted plays, meetings, lectures, musical entertainments, and variety shows, which successfully drew working-class audiences.[55] The paper and events were mutually dependent: the events were advertised and recounted in the *Commonweal*, and music and words for the socialist songs sung at the events regularly appeared in the paper. Figure 3 depicts a flyer advertising a "'Commonweal' Concert," a night of entertainment including musical presentations and a performance of Morris's play *The Tables Turned, or, Nupkins Awakened*, which depicts life after the revolution as a pastoral Utopia. The event instantiates in physical space the utopianism of the *Commonweal* print space. Describing the play's "vision of an idyllic, agrarian, post-revolutionary society achieved without bloodshed and maintained without malice," Pamela Bracken Wiens cites an 1881 letter by Morris, who held that "those who want to make art educational must accept the necessity of showing people things decidedly above their daily life."[56] The letter encapsulates his idea of how an Aesthetic conception of art as a thing above and separate from everyday reality could serve political ends.

Kelmscott Press

Morris left the *Commonweal* in 1890, when the League's anarchist contingent took over, and never again took on a print project of this nature. His next paper, the *Hammersmith Socialist Record* (1891–1893), was a four-page, free, monthly newsletter that had a much smaller circulation and humbler aspirations than the *Commonweal*, serving mainly as a vehicle to announce upcoming lectures at Kelmscott House and to express Morris and Bruce Glasier's thoughts on current events.[57] In December 1890, when H. M. Hyndman asked Morris to write for the Social Democratic Federation's paper *Justice*, Morris replied: "I have come to the conclusion that no form of journalism is suited to me" (*CL*, 3:247). Instead, he went on to establish the Kelmscott Press, a very different kind of print project characterized by pre-industrial methods, handmade materials, and ornate typography and illustration. Although Kelmscott would deeply influence many fine and radical printers that came in its wake, the project was much opposed to the spirit and inclination of the day. As Pat Francis has noted,
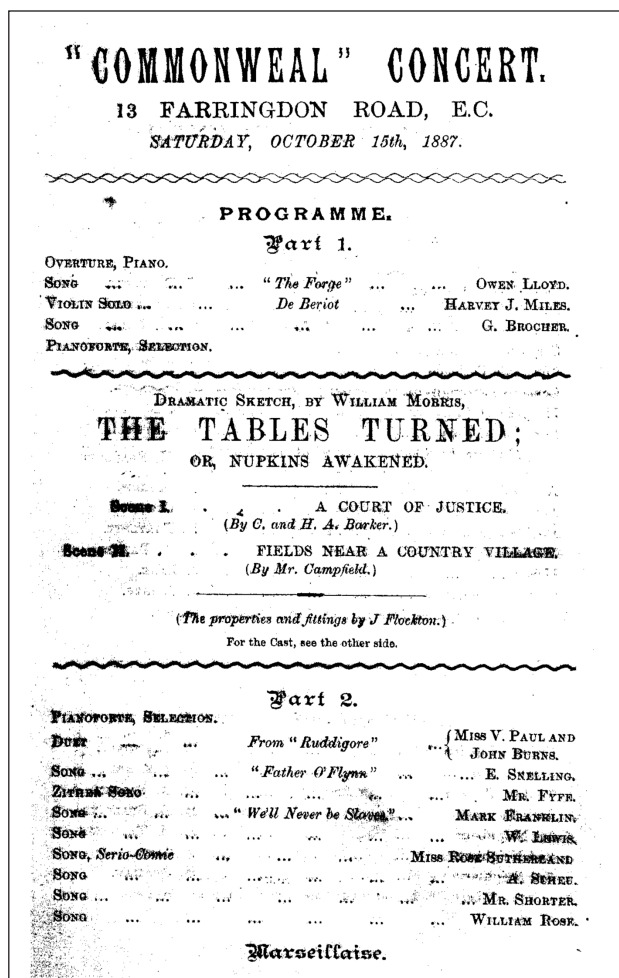
Fig. 3. Program for a "'Commonweal' Concert," 15 October 1887.
Courtesy of International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

Morris died in 1896, and the Kelmscott Press came to an end two years later. Ironically, it was at precisely this time that Monotype was perfected and made commercially viable. . . . If 1890 had already been too late for a major revival of the hand press, the twentieth century seemed about to choke the world with reading matter produced by people with little direct control over the appearance of the end-product. Speed was all.[58]

Morris's late-life venture into "slow publishing" has prompted many critics to question the connection between his politics and his aesthetics. In his 1899 study *Theory of the Leisure Class*, Thorstein Veblen issued a damning indictment of Kelmscott, calling it a prime example of the "conspicuous waste" that characterizes modern consumption: "these products, since they require hand labour, are more expensive; they are also less convenient for use. . .; they therefore argue ability on the part of the purchaser to consume freely, as well as ability to waste time and effort." That the Kelmscott books

were "edited with the obsolete spelling, printed in black-letter, and bound in limp vellum fitted with thongs" suggested to Veblen a greater concern with the beauty of the autonomous art object than with print's sociopolitical import.[59] Dowling, too, sees in Kelmscott a "turn to political quietism."[60] Because of their expense and exclusivity, even critics sympathetic to Morris have not traditionally viewed the Kelmscott books as exemplifying Morris's political principles. William Peterson's history of the press notes that the Kelmscott books were "intended to symbolize a protest against the ethos of Victorian industrial capitalism [but] became themselves, in all their opulent splendour, an example of conspicuous consumption" (*KP*, 275). In his biography of Morris, E. P. Thompson figures Kelmscott as a fundamentally apolitical enterprise, "founded in a different spirit from that in which the original Firm had been launched thirty years before. Morris now had no thought of reforming the world through his art" (*WM*, 583). In short, Kelmscott has been viewed as being more overtly Aesthetic than most of Morris's socialist *oeuvre*, and consequently as being less political.[61]

More recently, however, critics have identified a distinctly modernist political sensibility in Kelmscott's deliberate attention to materials. Jerome McGann argues that in the Kelmscott books, "the distinction between physical medium and conceptual message breaks down completely," while in the Kelmscott edition of *Earthly Paradise*, "the effect is to foreground textuality as such, turning words from means to ends-in-themselves. The text is . . . thick with its own materialities. It resists any processing that would simply treat it as a set of referential signs . . . [and] declares its radical self-identity."[62] This radical self-identity effects an Aesthetic separation between art and reality— with art existing on a plane beyond its referential faculty—but also enacts, as Jeffrey Skoblow puts it, "a rigorously materialist impulse" that is part of "a great Romantic-Marxist continuum" involving "the exploration of objectification, sensory alienation, commodification, and the negative dialectics of resistance."[63] Kelmscott, then, can be said to unite unexpectedly Morris's utopian idealism and Marxist materialism.

Both the *Commonweal* and Kelmscott make, in Jameson's formulation, "a Utopian leap, between our empirical present and the Utopian arrangements of [an] imaginary future" (*AF*, 147). The *Commonweal* focuses on the morning after the revolution, while Kelmscott tries to instantiate a postcapitalist mode of production better suited for the morning after the revolution than for a society steeped in invisible labor and cheap commodities, where "speed is all". Kelmscott combines this utopian leap, however, with a resolutely materialist insistence on attention to production. In "A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press," Morris describes his efforts to create sustainable products and humane labor conditions at the press, searching diligently to find the perfect handmade paper.[64] The Kelmscott inks, as one U.S. periodical put it at the time, "are the best that money can buy in a country where vicious chemicals are unknown."[65] Kelmscott workers were unionized and received a living wage, as Peterson describes, though Morris struggled to balance optimal labor conditions with the use of the best materials. Morris could not, of course, truly extricate the press from its capitalist present, but Kelmscott can be viewed as a Utopia based on the premise that the process of production is as politically significant as the product.

The press attempted to estrange readers from the present day through its highly visible production values, which are simultaneously archaic and futuristic.

To better conceptualize the utopian and Aesthetic continuities between the *Commonweal* and Kelmscott—which are not generally considered to have much in common—I would like to focus on two Kelmscott volumes whose text originally appeared in the *Commonweal*: Morris's dream vision novel, *A Dream of John Ball*, and his utopian novel, *News from Nowhere*. Both were written at the height of his career as a socialist agitator and both curiously express an anti-print or even an anti-textual sensibility. In *A Dream of John Ball*, the narrator goes back in time, or dreams he goes back in time, to experience firsthand the primarily oral culture of fourteenth-century peasants, and suggests that the oral or verbal forms of "media" that sparked the Peasants' Revolt were better equipped to channel revolutionary messages than the print media of the nineteenth century. Likewise, *News from Nowhere* depicts a peaceful, prosperous future society that has undergone a socialist revolution as well as an information revolution, having virtually abandoned print in favor of oral communication. Morris's utopian idea of print is quite apparent in these formulations: because Utopias are unnecessary *in* Utopia, and because Morris wants to render print a utopian space, there is no print in these utopian worlds. Moreover, as Jameson has argued, ironic reflexivity is a formal feature of Utopias: "interrogation of the dilemmas involved in their own emergence as utopian texts" functions to remind us of their unreality, to secure their borders as a space apart (*AF*, 293). Thus when Morris critiques the medium of print within the context of print, ironically deconstructing his own critique in a manner that prefigures Derrida's reading of Plato, he reminds us that his Utopias are not attempts to predict the future and are not to be read as "real." Functioning as a critique of progress, breaking from historical possibility, and destabilizing the future altogether, their very unreality constitutes their revolutionary quality.

News from Nowhere ran serially in the *Commonweal* from January to October 1890; Chapter 17 ran on the front page of the 24 May 1890 issue, with Crane's "Solidarity of Labour" cartoon embedded within the text (fig. 4). The cartoon renders the physical text of the novel as a utopian space apart from the political reality of the moment. *A Dream of John Ball*, which was serialized in the *Commonweal* from November 1886 to January 1887, similarly created a dialogue about utopianism via print context. The 18 December installment, for example, ran alongside the poem "Be Content" by the working-class Leeds poet Tom Maguire. Like *John Ball*, "Be Content" challenges the idea that the poor must suffer on earth for a reward in heaven: "Said the parson, 'Be content, / Pay your tithe-dues, pay your rent; / They that earthly things despise / Shall have mansions in the skies.'" The closing stanza reads: "Be content! be content! / Till your dreary life is spent! / Lowly live and lowly die, / All for mansions in the sky. / Castles here are much too rare: / All may have them—in the air."[66] The poem's point (made also by Joe Hill in the famous IWW song "The Preacher and the Slave": "You'll get pie in the sky when you die—that's a lie!") is likewise articulated by John Ball, the excommunicated priest who helped foment the Peasants' Revolt, in a speech from Morris's novel: "Forsooth, ye have heard it said that ye shall do well in this world that in the

Fig. 4. Serial installment of William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, with Walter Crane cartoon embedded in the text, 24 May 1890. Courtesy of Labadie Collection, University of Michigan.

world to come ye may live happily for ever; do ye well then, and have your reward both on earth and in heaven; for I say to you that earth and heaven are not two but one."[67] Both the novel and the poem remind us that Christianity and capitalism alike depend upon a particular means of appropriating the future: of determining present conditions on the basis of speculations about the future—whether in the form of future profits or a future afterlife. Utopias, by contrast, call attention to their unreality to suggest the indeterminacy of the future, not its predictability à la Christian, capitalist, or rigidly Marxist notions of progress.

The *Commonweal* editions of *News from Nowhere* and *A Dream of John Ball* create a utopian print context for Morris's work via the resources conventionally available to periodicals: juxtaposition, textual variety, layout, and design. Still, these editions depend problematically upon industrial forms of literary production such as the serialized novel—a nineteenth-century print genre formally suited to capitalist ideology, as Linda Hughes and Michael Lund argue—and mass print to provoke a changed consciousness *against* industrial capitalism.[68] The *Commonweal* had a small and countercultural readership, but relied on the template of mass mediation. In transferring his labors from the *Commonweal* to Kelmscott, Morris focused his attention more precisely on questions of mediation and production, which made his print works more expensive and less accessible; yet as Crane argued in his defense, "the cheapness of the cheapest things of modern manufacture is generally at the cost of the cheapening of human labour and life, which is a costly kind of cheapness after all."[69]

As a utopian thinker, Morris never strictly adhered to a Marxist notion of history, though he did believe a revolution was coming; with Kelmscott, he skipped over historical process altogether to make books "in the future already." Some of the titles produced by the Press suggest its underlying utopian vision: a Kelmscott edition of More's *Utopia* was published in 1893, and Morris even began designing a map of Utopia for it, though the book was published eventually without it (*KP*, 154). The Kelmscott editions of *A Dream of John Ball* (1892) and *News from Nowhere* (1893), unlike the *Commonweal* editions, take a production-based approach to utopian print: the book becomes an end in itself rather than a means, embodying in the present a future disruption of industrial progress. Kelmscott's *News from Nowhere*, for example, simultaneously insists upon its own material presence while reminding us of its artifice. The rigorous literalism of the caption found on the volume's frontispiece (fig. 5) forces the reader to pay attention to the object at hand: "*THIS IS THE PICTURE OF THE OLD HOUSE BY THE THAMES TO WHICH THE PEOPLE OF THIS STORY WENT. HEREAFTER FOLLOWS THE BOOK ITSELF WHICH IS CALLED NEWS FROM NOWHERE OR AN EPOCH OF REST & IS WRITTEN BY WILLIAM MORRIS.*" The caption calls attention to the picture and text as representations even as it uses the present tense to reinforce the immediacy and concreteness of "*THE PICTURE*" and "*THE BOOK ITSELF*," which become artifacts from the future. C. M. Gere's illustration of Kelmscott Manor that accompanies this caption visually echoes this literalism, since the perspective seems to invite readers to walk right into the house.[70] Matthew Beaumont argues persuasively that *News from Nowhere* engages "the perceptual problem of the present," which is "at some level the result of the reifying effects of commodity culture under capitalism," and "depicts a world wherein the present is finally present to itself."[71] While Beaumont does not address the print context of *News*, Morris's attempt to simulate the presence of the future is all the more obvious in the Kelmscott frontispiece, which reminds us of its alterity in order to highlight our own alienation from the present it depicts.

Similarly, the frontispiece of *A Dream of John Ball* challenges the reader to consider the labor at the heart of all production by calling attention to its own materiality (fig. 6). This image, drawn by the Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones, takes a famous catch phrase of John Ball as its caption: "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was
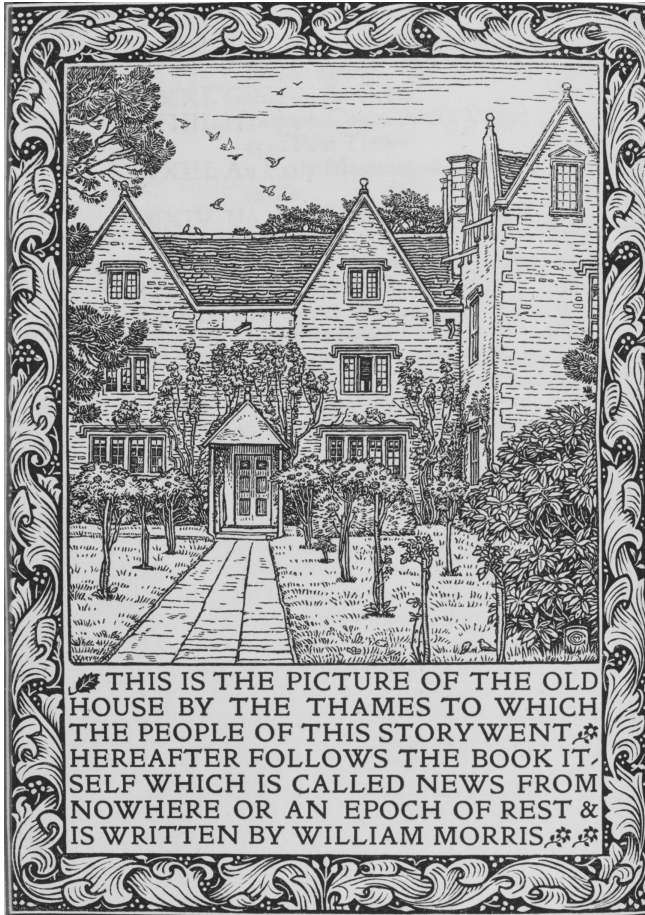
Fig. 5. Frontispiece for the Kelmscott edition of *News from Nowhere*. Beineke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

then the gentleman." In a manner quite uncharacteristic of Aestheticism, the words and picture denaturalize leisure rather than obfuscate labor; as Ruth Livesey suggests is true of much socialist art of the period, however, the image also renders the "masculine laboring body" as "an aesthetic site," a maneuver that links Morris's socialist aesthetics with homoerotic Aestheticism.[72] Burne-Jones originally composed this illustration for the first book edition of *A Dream of John Ball* in 1888, and revised it for the Kelmscott edition, which was the first Kelmscott book to include wood-block illustrations. Figure 6 provides a side-by-side comparison of the two frontispieces: one is a photogravure illustration and the other a wood-block print, just one of the key differences that reveals a great deal about Kelmscott's aesthetic project, since wood-block engraving had become obsolete "almost overnight" with the onset of photographic means of reproducing images in the 1880s.[73] The Kelmscott image uses capital letters and sharper, cleaner lines to insist on its material presence, even as it depicts a prelapsarian scene wholly detached from history. Its perspective is deep while the first image is flat. It calls attention to bodies and embodiment, with, for example, its detailed delineation of Adam's muscles. The leafy border framing the image functions to integrate the work of art into organic nature, yet also demarcates the artificiality of the image by cordoning

▲

Fig. 6. Edward Byrne Jones's illustration for the frontispiece of the first edition of *John Ball,* 1888 (left) and his revision for the Kelmscott frontispiece (right), 1892. Beineke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University 1892.
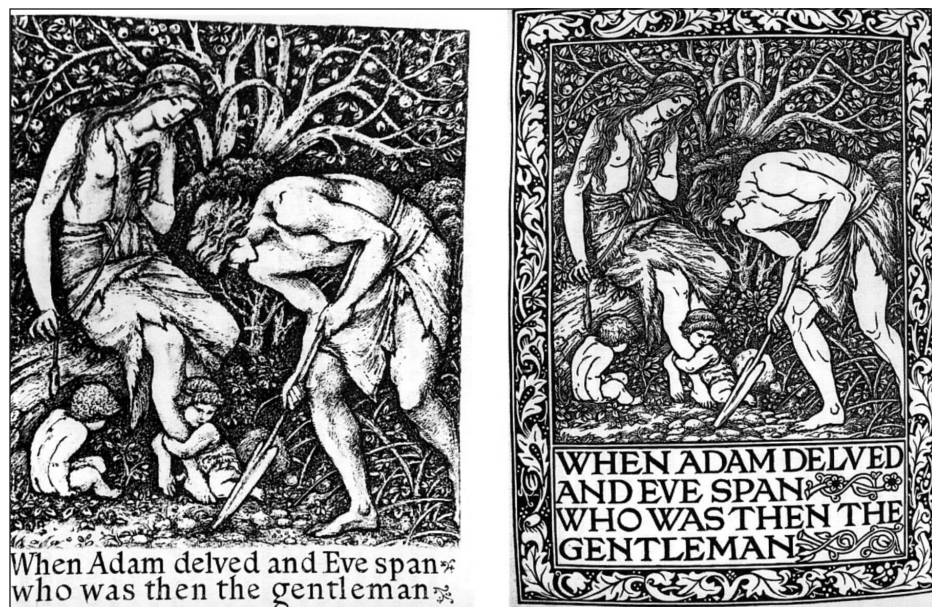
it off. Such frames and borders, exemplified in the picture from *News* as well as *John Ball*, were characteristic of all the Kelmscott books, and are a feature of their utopian form: they signify that the image is not continuous with phenomenal reality, but exists in a separate space and chronology.

I have been arguing here for an analogy: that is, that Morris's print ventures, the *Commonweal* and the Kelmscott Press, construct themselves in relation to mainstream print in the same way that Utopia constructs itself in relation to present-day reality. This formal division also replicates Aesthetic notions of art and realism, indicating that Aestheticism, utopianism, and Morris's print work share a conception of the relationship between aesthetics and politics. Morris was not in all ways Aesthetic, and his place within conventional Aestheticism is complex. In *News from Nowhere*, he made a great many digs at contemporary art and literature, and while some of these were aligned with Aesthetic critique—his argument about the worthlessness of realism at the end of Chapter 16, for example—others targeted Aestheticism itself, as when he calls Oxford and Cambridge "the breeding places of a peculiar class of parasites, who called themselves cultivated people . . . but they affected an exaggeration of cynicism in order that they might be thought knowing and worldly-wise. . . . They were laughed at, despised—and paid. Which last was what they aimed at."[74] *News from Nowhere* also, however, invokes Aestheticism and idealism in its opposition to late-Victorian naturalism; in the context of naturalist novels such as George Gissing's *The Nether World* (1889), which took on the issue of class division with such an utterly deterministic and empirical perspective as to present it as an insoluble problem, we see how Aestheticism might provide Mor-

ris with a contrasting model for addressing social inequities by detaching from them altogether. As Ernst Bloch writes, a "narrow-minded empiricism is just as dubious as the immaturity (the fanaticism) of the underdeveloped utopian function."[75]

What, in the end, was the political effect of William Morris's utopian detachment? Does the case of Morris offer political justification for Aestheticism's insistence on a division between Art and Reality? Does it recuperate the political potential of nineteenth-century idealism? Or does it suggest the limits of Morris's political and artistic imagination and his inability to develop beyond the Aestheticism of his Pre-Raphaelite pubescence? I would suggest, finally, that comparing the utopianism of Morris's print to the utopianism of Aestheticism reveals the significant late-nineteenth-century tension between revolutionary and reformist politics that informs them both. Likewise, such a comparison demonstrates Aestheticism's engagement with a peculiarly utopian strain of British socialism. Utopianism shares with Morris's print work and with Aestheticism a revolutionary impulse to create a new social system whole cloth, skipping over process, eschewing piecemeal reform, and calling into question progressive models of history. To ask whether Morris's utopian print was politically useful is to ask whether the Socialist League should have compromised on trade unionism and elections; to ask whether the *Commonweal* and Kelmscott should have produced less Aesthetic art is to ask whether the methods of the Fabians were superior to those of the Socialist League (and the much-discussed artistic differences between Shaw and Wilde and between Shaw and Morris would be relevant here). Viewing Morris as an Aesthete reframes the debate over Aestheticism's politics in terms of a broader debate over revolution, reform, and Utopia.

Arscott argues that "Morris's art theory after 1883 only really concerns the role of art in socialist society; he can merely consider its adumbration in the capitalist era."[76] His theory of print is analogous: because engaged print seems impossible under capitalism, and because print seems to go hand-in-glove with capitalism in its history and its future, Morris actively creates a marginalized print Utopia—print forms that situate themselves outside of the historical present and outside the calcified status quo of the press and the book trade. These print projects, like the art object within Aesthetic theory, present an image of social and political otherness at a moment when capitalism seems immovable and print seems incapable of saying otherwise.

Notes

1. Caroline Arscott, "William Morris: Decoration and Materialism," in *Marxism and the History of Art: From William Morris to the New Left*, ed. Andrew Hemingway (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 9.

2. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance* (New York: Modern Library, 1919), 196.

3. Ann Ardis, *Modernism and Cultural Conflict, 1880–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 10.

4. Toril Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006),

5. Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," in *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (New York: HarperCollins, 1966), 1026.

6. Morris and Aestheticism retained elements of idealism in a utopian form. Aestheticism was neither strictly idealist nor strictly materialist, but its tendency to imagine art as another and better

world (a utopian world) was common to Pater, Wilde, Ruskin, and Morris. In an analysis of Wilde's Oxford notebooks, Philip E. Smith and Michael S. Helfand argue that as a student in the 1870s, Wilde divided his loyalties between Ruskin's idealism (13) and Pater's materialism (14), ultimately finding "in Hegelian philosophy a variety of idealism better suited … to incorporate the materialist assumptions and findings of science" (viii). Smith and Helfand's account of Pater's "utilitarian argument for aesthetic hedonism" (14) ignores, however, the utopian idealism that remains central to his aesthetic theory (Smith and Helfand, *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks: A Portrait of a Mind in the Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), viii). In *The Renaissance*, for example, Pater describes the artistic period under analysis as "that movement in which, in various ways, the human mind wins for itself a new kingdom of feeling and sensation and thought, not opposed to but only beyond and independent of the spiritual system then actually realized" (Pater, *Renaissance*, 6).

7. Norman Kelvin, "Morris, the 1890s, and the Problematic Autonomy of Art," *Victorian Poetry* 34, no. 3 (1996): 425.

8. Regenia Gagnier, *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 152. Gagnier, "Productive Bodies, Pleasured Bodies: On Victorian Aesthetics," in *Women and British Aestheticism,* ed. Talia Schaffer and Alexis Psomiades (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 270–89.

9. Linda Dowling, *The Vulgarization of Art: The Victorians and Aesthetic Democracy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), xii–xiii.

10. Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).

11. Ardis describes Pound's evident hostility toward mass audiences in his 1913 "Approach to Paris" series. "Dialogics of Modernism(s) in the *New Age*," *Modernism/modernity* 14, no. 3 (2007): 415.

12. Frederic Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005); hereafter abbreviated *AF*.

13. Pater, *Renaissance*, 195.

14. "Society of the Future" is an obvious example. (Morris, "Society of the Future," *Commonweal* (30 March 1889), repr. in Morris, *Political Writings of William Morris*, ed. A.L. Morton (New York: International Publishers, 1973), 188–204). "Useful Work Versus Useless Toil" looks forward to the "happy day [when] we shall then be relieved from the tax of waste, and consequently shall find that we have . . . a mass of labour-power available. . . . We shall no longer be hurried and driven by the fear of starvation" (Morris, "Useful Work Versus Useless Toil," printed as Socialist League pamphlet, 1885, repr. in Morris, *Political*, 99). In "How We Live and How We Might Live," Morris says that all humans should enjoy surroundings "pleasant, generous, and beautiful; that I know is a large claim, but this I will say about it, that if it cannot be satisfied, if every civilized community cannot provide such surroundings for all its members, I do not want the world to go on; it is a mere misery that man has ever existed" (Morris, "How We Live and How We Might Live," *Commonweal* (4–11 June 1887), repr. in Morris, *Political*, 153).

15. Pater, *Renaissance*, 177. Most critics who describe the "utopianism" of Aestheticism use the word derisively, as in Dowling's volume. In a more neutral sense, Amanda Anderson has described a "self-consciously utopian" desire for a realm of freedom in Wilde's "Soul of Man under Socialism." Such a conception appears elsewhere in Wilde's work, she says, in the form of "artistic autonomy, spiritual detachment, or the purer air of the intellect." *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 154.

16. Evangelical reformers were somewhere in the middle, tending to advocate literacy and print for the masses, but only of the "healthy" censored sort. I am not concerned with these reformers for the purposes of this essay, since I see Morris as emerging from a separate strain of left-wing social protest characterized by radicalism, Chartism, secularism, and (later) Marxism—a strain that had traditionally advocated unrestrained, plentiful print. Richard Altick and David Vincent, among other critics, discuss the importance of religious movements in spreading literacy and print in the nineteenth century. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998). Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

17. Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 65; Ian Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics and the People,* 1790–1860 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 103.

18. Henry Brougham, "Progress of the People—The Periodical Press," in *Victorian Print Media: A Reader*, ed. Andrew King and John Plunkett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 22.

19. John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (1873; repr., London: Penguin, 1989), 94. Books were not as central to Chartist political dispute as, for example, the fight over political representation, yet still the Moral Force Chartists ensured that literacy and cheap print had a place in the Chartist agenda, as Martha Vicinus has established. *The Industrial Muse: A Study of Nineteenth Century British Working-Class Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1974).

20. Archibald Alison, "The Influence of the Press," in *Victorian Print Media*, ed. King and Plunkett, 27.

21. This shift occurred amid a broader escalation of debate over literary publishing and the capitalist marketplace: Mary Hammond points out that while "the art/market divide" in print and publishing was not "an Immaculate Conception of the 1890s," "the period 1880–1914 . . . does represent a kind of zenith in the impact of these debates, actual and ideological." *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880–1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 7–8.

22. E. P. Thomson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (New York: Pantheon, 1955), 393–403; hereafter abbreviated *WM*.

23. "The Workers' Claim and 'Public Opinion,'" Socialist Leaflet no. 5, n.d., Socialist League Archive, International Institute for Social History, Folder 587.

24. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 120.

25. Morris, "Some Thoughts on the Ornamented Manuscripts of the Middle Ages," in Morris, *The Ideal Book: Essays and Lectures on the Arts of the Book*, ed. William S. Peterson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 1, 2.

26. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. Lawrence H. Simon (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 163, 162.

27. "Poet as Printer," *Pall Mall Gazette* (12 November 1891), repr. in Morris, *Ideal Book*, 92.

28. Nicholas Frankel, *Oscar Wilde's Decorated Books* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

29. Morris, "The Early Illustration of Printed Books," *British Colonial Printer and Stationer* (9 January 1896), repr. in Morris, *Ideal Book*, 20.

30. "Mr. William Morris at the Kelmscott Press," *English Illustrated Magazine* (April 1895), repr. in Morris, *Ideal Book*, 102.

31. Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875–1914* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1989), 34, 32.

32. Deian Hopkin, "The Left-Wing Press and the New Journalism," in *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914*, ed. Joel H. Wiener (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1988), 226.

33. See William Peterson's history of the press for more on the Kelmscott editions, many of which sold out their limited printings. *The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris's Typographical Adventure* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); hereafter abbreviated *KP*.

34. See, for example, *WM*, 391–92, or James Gordon Coolson, *The Evolution of Selected Major English Socialist Periodicals, 1883–1889* (Ph. D. diss., American University, 1973), 80–82.

35. At the *Commonweal*'s semi-annual conference in January 1886, H. Halliday Sparling (Morris's son-in-law-to-be, who helped edit the paper), reported that in its first year the average issue sold about 3,500 copies, cost about £15 to produce, brought in about £7 in receipts, and had a debt of about £4. Socialist League Archive, International Institute for Social History, Folder 15. After its first year, the paper became a weekly rather than a monthly, and its circulation dropped accordingly. In a July 1887 letter, Morris wrote, "with the present circulation of say about 2800 we are losing £4 per week" (*Letters* 2:679). In March 1889, he remarked that circulation was "going up, but too slowly"

500 (3:42) and, in December 1889, that "sale of the paper has fallen off" (3:132). Morris, *Collected Letters of William Morris*, ed. Norman Kelvin (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984); hereafter abbreviated *CL*.

The paper's distribution was mainly through subscription and a small number of sympathetic dealers, and delivery to these dealers was by voluntary labor: an 1885 "Report of the Paper Selling Committee" stressed that "every member of the Council ought to make it his duty to serve at least 3 or 4 shops in the vicinity of his dwelling or workshop. . . . This will mean an hour's work once a week . . . which none of our members are unable to do and none should be ashamed to do." Socialist League Archive, International Institute for Social History, Folder 120.

36. "Manifest of the Socialist League," *Commonweal* 1, no. 1 (February 1885): 1.

37. William Morris and E. B Bax, "Editorial," *Commonweal* 2, no. 16 (1 May 1886): 33.

38. Morris, "The Worker's Share of Art," *Commonweal* 1, no. 3 (April 1885): 18.

39. Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying," *Complete Works*, 976, 991.

40. Wilde, "Critic," *Complete Works*, 1043.

41. Letter from Oscar Wilde, 29 October 1887, Socialist League Archive, International Institute for Social History, Folder 3230.

42. This is an old debate, and while critics such as Regenia Gagnier and Sos Eltis have reclaimed Wilde as a politically-engaged writer, counterclaims persist. On Wilde's political commitments, see Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace* and Eltis, *Revising Wilde: Society and Subversion in the Plays of Oscar Wilde* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). For the opposing view, see Josephine Guy and Ian Small, *Oscar Wilde's Profession* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

43. C. W. Beckett, "It Is the Day," *Commonweal* 3, no. 86 (3 September 1887): 283.

44. Beckett, "For Fellowship," *Commonweal* 4, no. 112 (3 March 1888): 67.

45. Beckett, "A New World," *Commonweal* 4, no. 120 (28 April 1888): 135.

46. The Leaguers perhaps misjudged the extent to which the Commune could be called upon to signify a timeless, placeless ideal, which suggests the danger of using the historical particular to represent the utopian. In a 26 September 1885 letter, George King, a Socialist League member from Dublin, wrote of a fundamentally different conception of the Commune among Irish workers: "fancy a lecturer . . . here saying a word in favour of the Paris Commune. . . . The one fact that the average Dublin working man knows about the Commune is that during the struggle the Archbishop of Paris was shot and he holds all communists guilty of the murder of an Archbishop." Socialist League Archive, International Institute for Social History, Folder 1877. Indeed, the extent to which even English workers would have taken a positive view of the Commune is unclear, given the visceral reaction against the event that Matthew Beaumont has described. Beaumont's article also suggests, however, that the Commune had already been figured in British discourse as a utopian event that "ruptured the bourgeois faith in progress," which suggests the aptness of Crane's image for the particular context of the *Commonweal*. Beaumont, "Cacotopianism, the Paris Commune, and England's Anti-Communist Imaginary, 1870–1900," *ELH*, 73 (2006): 467.

47. In their use of abstracted female figures, Crane's cartoons exemplify the lingering idealist tradition within the *Commonweal*'s utopianism. As Moi describes, idealist aesthetics required the artwork to transcend the carnal, the animal, and the sexual; thus "poetry and painting need to idealize [women] far more intensively than they do men" and "the figure of the *pure woman*" became "an icon of idealist aesthetics." Moi, *Henrik*, 80. Crane's cartoons rely upon an idealist conception of art's relation to politics, but also reproduce the gender ideology embedded in this discourse.

48. Walter Crane, Introduction to *The Easter Art Annual for 1898: The Work of Walter Crane with Notes by the Artist* (London: J. S. Virtue, 1898), 29.

49. Crane, Introduction, 30.

50. "Marx and Engels on the British Working-Class Movement—IV," *Labour Monthly* (February 1934): 120, 123, 121. "Marx and Engels on the British Working-Class Movement—VI," *Labour Monthly* (April 1934): 250.

51. George Bernard Shaw, "Mr. Auberon Herbert and Individual Liberty," *Commonweal* 2, no. 23 (19 June 1886): 89.

52. T. Tonkin, "'The Labourer as Man Made Him.' From More's 'Utopia,'" *Commonweal* 2, no. 12 (January 1886): 5.

53. Pater, *Renaissance*, xxvii, 74, 38.

54. Ann Ardis, "Oscar Wilde's Legacies to *Clarion* and *New Age* Socialist Aestheticism," in *Wilde Writings: Contextual Conditions*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 277.

55. A letter from Eleanor Marx dated 1 March 1886 documents such an audience; complaining about a raunchy song sung at one of the League's concerts, she asks, "Can't the concert committee … ruthlessly strike out anything objectionable? …do not let us say 'anything will do' for our audience because it is a poor and working-class one." Socialist League Archive, International Institute for Social History, Folder 2208.

56. Pamela Bracken Wiens, Introduction to *The Tables Turned, or, Nupkins Awakened: A Socialist Interlude*, by William Morris (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), 24.

57. Morris's letters indicate that he was reluctant to do even a paper of this scale. After Morris resigned as editor of the *Commonweal*, his comrade Bruce Glasier proposed a new paper, to which Morris responded: "I don't like papers; and we have after a very long experiment found out that a sectional paper cannot be run." *CL*, 3:244.

58. Pat Francis, "Socialism and the Art of Printing," *History Workshop Journal* 23 (1987): 155.

59. Thorstein Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899; repr., Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1979), 162.

60. Dowling, *Vulgarization*, 67.

61. The same has been said of Morris's late romances, written in the 1890s, but John Plotz argues that their lack of realistic particularity is a political strategy based in socialist egalitarianism rather than an "excursion into indulgent fantasy." "Nowhere and Everywhere: The End of Portability in William Morris's Romances," *ELH* 74 (2007): 938.

62. Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 77 and *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 74.

63. Jeffrey Skoblow, "Beyond Reading: Kelmscott and the Modern," in *The Victorian Illustrated Book*, ed. Richard Maxwell (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002), 241.

64. Morris, "A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press," 1896, rpr. in Morris, *Ideal*, 75–8.

65. W. Irving Way, "A Visit to William Morris," *Modern Art* 4 (July 1896), repr. in *We Met Morris: Interviews with William Morris, 1885–1896*, ed. Tony Pinkney (Reading: Spire, 2005), 137.

66. T. Maguire, "Be Content," *Commonweal* 2, no. 49 (18 December 1886): 299.

67. Morris, *A Dream of John Ball*, in *Three Works by William Morris*, ed. A. L. Morton (New York: International Publishers, 1986), 51.

68. Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991).

69. Walter Crane, *William Morris to Whistler: Papers and Addresses on Art and Craft and the Commonweal* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1911), 39.

70. This effect appears to have been of Morris's design. Critiquing an early version of the illustration in a letter to Gere, Morris wrote, "the stone path up to the porch might be drawn with more literality" (*CL*, 3:482).

71. Matthew Beaumont, "*News from Nowhere* and the Here and Now: Reification and the Representation of the Present in Utopian Fiction," *Victorian Studies* 47, no. 1 (Autumn 2004): 37, 36.

72. Ruth Livesey, "Morris, Carpenter, Wilde, and the Political Aesthetics of Labor," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 32 (2004): 603. One might also consider the road-mending scene in *News from Nowhere* or the depictions of male bodies in Morris's late romances in terms of Aestheticism's engagement with New Hellenism.

73. *KP*, 21. William Harcourt Hooper engraved the image for the Kelmscott edition of *John Ball*. Peterson provides a detailed description of the negotiations among Hooper, Burne-Jones, and other Kelmscott staff in transforming the image from illustration to wood-block print (*KP*, 147–52).

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74. Morris, *News from Nowhere* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2003), 117.

75. Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1988), 106.

76. Arnscott, "William Morris," 13.