



# Contents

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Vol. XXIV No. 3 2021

**2 Editorial**

Owen Holland

**3 Morris and the Homeric Epic: Translating *The Odyssey* into Socialist Praxis**

Michelle Weinroth

**22 'A Moving Life': Jane and Jenny Morris at Kelmscott, 1897-1909**

Celia Davies

**37 Philip Webb and the Socialist League**

Stuart Barlow

**Reviews**

Edited by Rosie Miles

**58 Julian Beecroft, *William Morris*, Peter Faulkner**

**62 Notes on Contributors**

**63 Guidelines for Contributors**



# Editorial

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The present issue of the *Journal* contains three fine offerings from Michelle Weinroth, Celia Davies and Stuart Barlow. Weinroth explores the political contours of Morris's decision to translate Homer's *Odyssey* in 1887, at the height of his period of socialist activism. During the 1870s, Morris had collaborated with the Icelandic scholar Eiríkur Magnússon to translate several Norse sagas. In 1875, he brought to bear his demotic sensibility and his romantic poetic in a translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, claiming to have done the work as 'a poet and not as a pedant'.<sup>1</sup> During the following decade, he embarked on a much larger and more figurative project of cultural translation in seeking to secure a place for the revolutionary thought of Karl Marx in the hearts and minds of the British proletariat. Weinroth adroitly considers Morris's *Odyssey* as a nodal point which can focus these two related contexts, exploring his conception of the task of the translator in both aesthetic and political terms. For Weinroth, 'Homer's epic acted as a catalytic force that would press Morris to rethink his role as a political tribune and retune his voice in accordance with genuinely socialistic values' (p. 4). The work of translation, Weinroth argues, allowed Morris to carry over 'The *Odyssey*'s humanist themes into his Socialist teachings while supplanting the epic's heightened speech and virile heroism with the quizzical interiority of the prose romance' (p. 18).

Celia Davies explores the intimacies and the sadness of the relationship between Jane and Jenny Morris during the early years of the twentieth century. Jenny's worsening epilepsy meant that this was a period marked by 'moments of bleak despair [...] and yet [Jane's] resourcefulness also shines through' (p. 27). Continuing the work begun in her 2018 article, 'Jenny Morris in her Own Voice: Letters to Sydney Cockerell, 1897-99', Davies also writes another important chapter in the history of Kelmscott Manor in the years after Morris's death. Stuart Barlow, meanwhile, focuses on the socialist activism of Philip Webb, who had designed the Red House for the Morrises in 1859. As Morris's close friend and co-founder of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, it was fitting that Webb should become Morris's comrade in the socialist movement during the 1880s. Barlow offers a meticulous reconstruction of Webb's work for the Socialist League, commenting on the under-appreciated significance of his role as treasurer.

Owen Holland  
Editor

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## NOTES

1. *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, ed. by Norman Kelvin, 4 vols in 5 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984-96), 1, p. 275.



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## Morris and the Homeric Epic: Translating *The Odyssey* into Socialist Praxis

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Michelle Weinroth

According to his doctor, the cause of Morris's death was excessive exertion: he had 'done more work than most ten men'.<sup>1</sup> This oft-quoted diagnosis is borne out by the enormity of Morris's Socialist League duties. Between 1886 and 1887 alone, his agenda was awash in writing projects, meetings, lectures and sundry menial chores for the cause. His rate of activity was staggering. Apart from publishing *The Pilgrims of Hope, A Dream of John Ball* and the first part of *Socialism from the Root Up*, he delivered roughly one hundred and twenty lectures, spoke at countless open-air rallies, edited *Commonweal*, wrote reams of correspondence and designed interior furnishings.<sup>2</sup> And if that was not enough, in 1886 he took up the onerous challenge of translating Homer's *Odyssey*. At first blush, it was a cumbersome and extravagant addition to an interminable list of involvements. One can only wonder at Morris's decision to undertake such a gargantuan project amidst his plethora of tasks. Yet, his ostensibly preposterous choice to tackle a translation of the great epic amid his many other duties has scarcely been probed by scholars. It has remained a biographical curiosity, eliciting little if any discussion. Fiona MacCarthy, for one, tends to relegate Morris's literary venture to an amusing pastime.<sup>3</sup> E. P. Thompson, similarly, sees it as 'stolen luxury', snatched from the

demands of compelling activist life.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, William Whitla argues that Morris's literary project was scarcely a ludic retreat from League activism, but a gesture of protest against the Oxbridgean institution of classical translation, with its imperialist transfer of cultural prestige (*translatio imperii et studii*) from Greek antiquity to Victorian Englishness.<sup>5</sup>

I am partial to this latter claim, yet I submit that Morris's decision to render the Greek epic in the heat of activism was not only a political attack on the institution of *belles lettres*, but a moment of personal self-questioning and self-transformation. If he first sought to assert his literary prowess before his contemporaries while flouting the academy's rules and cultural dominance, he also, but more importantly, would deploy the epic as a mental space for clarifying his own thinking about the politics of socialist leadership and socialist preaching. 'I am wool-gathering', he wrote in correspondence, 'and must collect my scattered wits by doing some Homer'.<sup>6</sup>

In poring over *The Odyssey*, Morris would recognise the ethical imperatives, far-reaching goals and limits of his own political agency. In the Greek text, he would see his strenuous efforts, as a socialist propagandist, figuratively embodied in Ulysses's subjection to the relentless buffets from the gods. He would derive from the Greek hero a model of moral strength, a limitless capacity to endure disorientating ordeals while remaining faithful to his kith and kin. But Ulysses's flaws would also complicate the concept of virile political leadership. Morris's scrutiny of *The Odyssey* would yield a nuanced comprehension of the contradictions inherent in figures of patriarchal authority, both ancient and modern. This, in turn, would raise doubts about whether the nineteenth-century epic was an apposite tool for socialist education, since the literary form bore the indelible stamp of masculinist English imperialism, which even Morris's idiosyncratic idiom could not erase. If, in substance, *The Odyssey* was inspirational and politically enlightening, the generic form in which it had to be conveyed to an English audience was nonetheless problematic. Still, in this contradiction lay the seeds of renewal. Homer's epic acted as a catalytic force that would press Morris to rethink his role as a political tribune and retune his voice in accordance with genuinely socialistic values.

The argument presented here is speculative. There is no ready-made empirical or easy proof for the claims that I advance. But, arguably, if biography can be invoked as supporting evidence for literary exegesis then, conversely, a literary text (for example, Homer's epic) can be deployed (along with other documents) to resolve a biographical enigma. In both instances, the result, if speculative, remains plausible, and contrasts with surface readings that eschew hermeneutical scrutiny. In adopting a holistic approach, I interpret Morris's literary venture in function of a specific historical moment and in conformity with his consistent pattern of ethical, personal

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and political conduct. In this, I marshal a thesis of *plausibility* rather than of factuality. The benefit of such an approach, as with the value ascribed to speculative (utopian) projections, is that it enlarges the horizon of thinking beyond immediate ‘proofs’, and directs us towards uncharted ground – towards what we do not know, but could well know, if we linked and parsed it cogently with what we do.

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In the autumn of 1886, Morris wishes to call on his friend William Bell Scott, but he writes to explain that business obligations leave him no time for socialising: he has taken to ‘the pernicious practice of what may be called “professional” agitating’ and can barely manage a ‘flying visit’ to see his ‘dear Scott’.<sup>7</sup> Before signing off, he announces that he is also *at work* translating *The Odyssey*: ‘this is very amusing and a great rest from the *other work* [my italics]’, he notes.<sup>8</sup> Formulated as a quasi afterthought, this closing remark to his friend laconically recalls my central question: why did Morris embark on a colossal literary project while fully immersed in League activism? Words such as ‘amusing’ and ‘rest’ might prompt us to think, like Thompson and MacCarthy, that the literary translation offered Morris some recreation, relief from ‘the petty worries that encumber the progress of even great movements’.<sup>9</sup> But can a monumental literary project be deemed an ancillary pastime or adjunct of ‘real’ work? In a letter where Morris justifies indefinitely postponing a visit to his ‘dear Scott’, on account of a frightfully tight schedule, the implication is that translation is *work*, however ‘amusing’ – a priority as duty-bound as the multiple tasks of ‘professional agitation’. The creative undertaking consumes, but does not squander, Morris’s time; it is a component of his professional vocation and, not least, of his celebrated ethic of joy in labour.

There is, of course, a limit to what can be teased out of a few epistolary remarks, particularly when the author has dashed off his letter in the frenzy of countless obligations and feels obliged to apologise for his hastily penned prose. Written on the fly, Morris’s letter is not the most reliable document through which to discern his reasons for rendering *The Odyssey* between 1886 and 1887. But it is a start. A more thoroughly documented event, such as the Homeric Question, the nineteenth-century controversy among literati on how best to translate the ancient Greek epics, promises to yield more grist.

Transpiring largely between Matthew Arnold and Francis Newman, the renowned debate unfolded on grounds of linguistic style, prosody and meter. But underlying the contenders’ differences was the matter of social class. While Arnold’s emphasis lay on achieving the effect of ‘nobleness’ and the ‘grand manner’, Newman

chose to highlight the demotic sonority of an ancient popular voice by adopting the ballad meter.<sup>10</sup> His prosodic predilection, against Arnold's preferred dactylic hexameter, underscored a subversive theory proposed in 1795 by the German F. A. Wolf that the Homeric epics were 'originally collections of folk lays', much like English balladry, and not the achievement of a genius bard.<sup>11</sup> Such an idea proved scandalous, indeed devastating, to Arnold's cabal of literati. The latter saw Homer's masterful lyricism as an emblem of cultural finesse and enshrined that symbol of elegance as the academy's ruling standard of excellence.

Seen in this context, Morris's so-called 'amusing' or ludic project could scarcely have been a light affair. The exigencies of rendering the classical *magnum opus* under the judging eye of literary peers made Morris's task all the more onerous. In a letter to his friend and publisher Frederick Startridge Ellis, he described his translation of *The Odyssey* as 'a real one [my italics], so far not a mere periphrase of the original as all the others are'.<sup>12</sup> He was clearly conscious of the prevailing method of classical translation and underscores the superior quality of his own approach. Indeed, his aesthetic ambition was not only to translate skillfully, but creatively, in short, to soar beyond mediocrity. Novel in design and far-reaching in aim, Morris's 'recreational' project thus constituted a strenuous endeavour. If he was 'amusing himself' he was not indulging in idle leisure, but deriving pleasure from an arduous yet fulfilling achievement. And while he construed his weighty project as at once restful and satisfying, he confessed to May Morris in December of 1885 that it was a challenge that put his selfhood to the test – 'the deceitfulness of ambition tempted me to sit up all day doing Homer'.<sup>13</sup>

But the impulse that prompted Morris to vie with his literary contemporaries was not only what Morris self-consciously describes as deceitful ambition, but a combative spirit manifested in verse. As Whitla has shown in detail, Morris's translation was a pronounced resistance to a class system of patrician poets and pundits whose aesthetic dogmas served to buttress the iniquitous structures of Victorian society. By deploying an unorthodox prosody and by tacitly aligning himself with the advocates of Wolf's theory, Morris countered the Arnoldian consensus, repudiated the mellifluous tongue with which the English ruling elite sang its own praises, and replaced it with the boisterous lyricism of the *hoi polloi*.<sup>14</sup> In short, by engaging in that genteel practice of classical translation, he proved his superior verbal prowess while unabashedly exhibiting his heretical style. In this, he scandalised his literary peers, making his political antipathies clear.<sup>15</sup> Such open disdain for the elite academy was the measure of his allegiance to another social class, to the readers of *Commonweal*, to fellow Socialist Leaguers and to a body of men and women he hoped to win over for the cause of Socialism. For, as with his other aesthetic projects, Morris's translation of

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*The Odyssey* was intimately tied to his evolving political praxis. In fact, the very enormity of his self-assigned mission to render Homer's classic work suggests that his choice was a matter of serious poignancy, integral to his irrepressible calling to act at once as bard and tribune of socialist revolution. That said, to become serviceable for his proselytising efforts, the translation would have to undergo a second transformation, an *extra-linguistic* conversion of upper-class cultural material into political knowledge. To this end, Morris would wrest *The Odyssey's* cultural significance from the Oxbridgean academy and incorporate it into his own socialist strivings, thereby achieving a double feat: a translation of Ancient Greek into Medievalist English on one side, and a distillation of belletristic art into politically educative material for the masses, on the other.

This transmutation of a cultural artifact into political discourse would be more than an objective process. Being the result of an immersive literary experience, it would also impinge on his selfhood. The intensive labour of translation, the effort to decrypt the intended meaning of the host text would guarantee Morris's identification with the epic's fictive characters. If he glimpsed in his own political odysseys something of Ulysses's convoluted voyages, such a perception might have encouraged him to draw inspiration and guidance from the hero's fortitude. For, as with Ulysses, Morris's far-reaching political goals were frequently thrown off course by a series of crises and perils: for example, Socialist League dissensions between electoral and anarchist factions, challenges in preaching to an uninspired English working class, the threat of police brutality at Trafalgar Square rallies, inter alia. The Homeric epic may be read as an aesthetic correlative of Morris's tale of recurring setback and unflagging moral strength. Like Ulysses who longs for his native home (the Island of Ithaca), so Morris spends years desiring a *Heimat*, a place he calls Socialism, a hearth, fittingly prefigured in *The Earthly Paradise* as a shadowy isle of bliss where monsters akin to Scylla and Charybdis abound to frustrate the voyages of desperate men. Like Ulysses's repeatedly disrupted journey home, Morris's political odyssey is turbulent and recursive. And yet, despite these similitudes, his admiration for epic fortitude would not have been unqualified. He would perceive in the Hellenic hero significant failings, those discerned by translator Emily Wilson, who calls Ulysses 'a complicated man', heroic, but also flawed: a 'liar, pirate, colonizer, deceiver, and thief, [...] often in disguise, absent [...] while other people – those he owns, those he leads – suffer and die [...]'.<sup>16</sup> The Greek hero is also an intransigent political leader. Upon his return to Ithaca, he imposes his domestic mastery with untrammelled brutality on Penelope's suitors, of which the most illustrative instance is the gruesome slaying of Antinous.<sup>17</sup> All this would not have been lost on Morris, who, in the opening lines of his translation, refers in less-than-flattering terms to Ulysses as 'The Shifty'.

A severe critic of savage aggression and not least of political treachery, however graphically he may have depicted ancient and medieval violence, Morris would have abjured the Ulyssian model of masculinist authority (and its modern manifestation in men of high standing), marked as it was by arrogance, aggression and compromised ethics. If he was immersed in, and influenced by, a male-dominated Victorian culture, he was resistant to many of its entrenched features.<sup>18</sup> While he never relinquished his manly dignity, over time he would forge an alternative male selfhood, governed by moral integrity, social equality and collaborative human relations.<sup>19</sup> But precisely in opposing a mainstream culture of masculinist individualism and martial prowess, he would meet repudiation from all quarters, not least from within the Socialist League.<sup>20</sup> On the turf of political oratory, where he aimed to educate working-class audiences against the grain of patriarchal pedagogy, he would also encounter major hurdles.

In 1885, Morris confided in Georgiana Burne-Jones and, true to his self-effacing character, made clear the inescapability of his calling to lead the Socialist League. 'In spite of all the self-denying ordinances of us semi-anarchists I grieve to have to say that some sort of leadership is required, and that in our section I unfortunately supply that want'.<sup>21</sup> As if some supernatural force had ruled his actions, he feels coerced by duty: 'You see, my dear, I can't help it. The ideas which have taken hold of me will not let me rest: nor can I see anything else worth thinking of.'<sup>22</sup>

Thrust into a position of leadership, Morris would thus ponder Ulysses's role as King of Ithaca and captain of a naval crew; he would confront the equivocal merits of masculine political authority, discernible not only in the ancient world but also among his contemporaries, whether Conservative and Liberal (for example, Disraeli and Gladstone) or Socialist (for example, Hyndman). In scrutinising Ulysses's character, Morris would clarify the tactics and ethics of his own agency and reassess his role as political pedagogue, poet, orator and leader. Tackling the translation of *The Odyssey* would thus be more than a literary enterprise; it would help shape Morris's Socialist League activism in a revolutionary movement fraught with sectarian divisions and associated adversities, among which were street riots and police coercion. There was also the seemingly insuperable challenge of overcoming working-class apathy and ignorance. While his involvement in the Northumbrian miners' strike afforded him a moment of great rhetorical prowess (where 'at last he was speaking as he wanted to speak, as a leader of the Socialists addressing the workers – not as the distinguished curiosity and man of letters lecturing to an audience partly drawn by his artistic reputation'), that triumphant episode was exceptional.<sup>23</sup> Repeatedly, his diary jottings reveal the strain of public speaking. When he lectured in the Chiswick Hall Club, he had a scant and lackluster audience, a public that 'hung on [his] hands as heavy as lead'.<sup>24</sup>

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To ignite in his audiences the luminous spark of desire, a vision of fulfilling existence, was arduous labour. On 7 February 1887, he wrote in his diary: '[m]y Socialism was gravely listened to by the audience but taken with no enthusiasm [...]. The sum of it all is that the men at present listen respectfully to Socialism, but are perfectly supine and not inclined to move except along the lines of radicalism and trades unionism.'<sup>25</sup> A month earlier, he spoke at a meeting of the Hammersmith Radical Club: 'I thought the applause rather hollow as the really radical part of the audience had clearly no ideas beyond the ordinary party shibboleths [...] they seemed to me a very discouraging set of men, but perhaps can be got at somehow. The frightful ignorance and want of impressibility of the average English workman floors me at times.'<sup>26</sup>

Morris's mutterings about his wanting oratorical skills and his despair over the inertia of his working-class audiences form a series of monologues, often dismal, yet politically insightful. The diary constituted, as he put it, his Jonah-type view of the Socialist movement from inside the whale; it was not for immediate public consumption, but for posterity. Yet behind this private sphere of reflections lay an even deeper recess of interiority. It was, I submit, the mythological world of the Homeric epic. For Morris was translating the work while he was recording his thoughts about League propaganda, and if the creative engagement with *The Odyssey* recalled his everyday activist involvements, it would certainly have offered him a sealed textual space for critical thinking, for identifying the principles and strategies requisite for effective political leadership, and, not least, for radical political education. If, as the Homeric debates show, *The Odyssey* served as a tool of patrician education, Morris's aim would be to convert it into an instrument of *democratic* instruction.

The *Diary* already hints at what might have been a revolution in Morris's approach to political teaching, spawned by his candid acknowledgment that the challenge of stirring his crowds and expanding their mental horizons was daunting.<sup>27</sup> His propagandist quandary yielded significant lessons, traceable in private journal confessions and personal correspondence, as well as in his evolving literary voice.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, his own self-appraisals suggest that he was redefining his role as a political tribune. His lectures from the 1870s onwards increasingly exhibit his tacit rhetorical philosophy: that socialist education should not be monological if it is to be in itself revolutionary. Conquering minds from a superior pedestal or ex cathedra authority, he learned, would only reinforce the hierarchical edifice of existing society.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, if the consciousness of the masses would be manipulated through the contrivances of rhetoric, the result would only reproduce the yawning chasm between charismatic Olympian leaders (masters) and their submissive (enslaved) followings.

On this logic, Morris recognised that his public set limits to what could be

delivered to them in political speeches. The language he adopted, the content of his lectures, the length of his delivery, the extent of his ‘preachiness’ or fellowship and the degree of his confidence – all these contributed to the effectiveness (or failure) of his propaganda.<sup>30</sup> Empathy with, and recognition of, the working man’s sensibility and material needs would mark the parameters of his appeals and dictate his reception. For Morris’s radical education was decidedly not the discourse of a socialist apostle from on high, but the efforts of a figure who, through repeated encounters with workingmen, displayed compassion and sensitivity to human frailty.<sup>31</sup> Combined with this was his both vigilant and inspiring counsel: he encouraged his fellow men to act, hope and resist, while cautioning himself and others against deceptive idealism. Propaganda was gruelling work.<sup>32</sup>

To galvanise his following was an invidious, often thankless, task. Still, from it, Morris learned humility, tolerance and, not least, political strategy. He became convinced of two imperatives: firstly, the need to educate the public to think beyond surface appearances, to see ‘the change beyond the change’, the far-reaching Socialist isle of bliss and not its mirage; he repeatedly cautioned workers against settling into a state of sham Socialism where they would enjoy more decent lives but remain enslaved to the capitalist machine; and, secondly, the importance of facilitating worker autonomy and reducing dependency on the parliamentary apparatus.

In a *Commonweal* editorial titled ‘Facing the Worst of It’, published two months before he sent Part 1 of his translated *Odyssey* to press (April of 1887), Morris analysed the tumultuous conjuncture of the late 1880s in terms of capitalism’s two driving forces. The first was ‘the stream’, understood figuratively as capitalist commercial ruin rushing unstoppably to the sea, in other words, capitalism’s monstrous drive to destruction; and the second being the counter-current of socialist resistance, propelled by ceaseless hope. But within the first, Morris also identified whirlpools, the ‘eddies’, as he called them – capitalism’s occasional moments of recovery that shelter society from discerning the inexorable death spasms of capitalist crisis.<sup>33</sup> Morris interpreted these circling pools (instantiated by periodic economic prosperity and short-term gains for workers) as intermittent relief from capitalism’s devastations, but also as deceptive sites of calm. He would thus discourage his following from lapsing into a false sense of security, urging them instead to forge through the great stream of commercial ruin and perceive dialectically both catastrophe and revolution in one passage. Here, Ulysses’s dangerous navigation between Scylla and Charybdis springs to mind. Circe’s advice to the Greek hero is to resist violent confrontation with the monster: ‘drive on thy keel full swiftly’, she says.<sup>34</sup> ‘Fierce, wild is [Scylla], and cruel, and not to be met in fight,/ And nought may prevail against her: it is best to flee outright’.<sup>35</sup> Recommending a circuitous route, Circe’s counsel compares with Morris’s appeal to

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anarchist Socialist Leaguers to pursue the long course of socialist education and cease trying to hasten the revolution through direct, single-handed attacks on the state, the consequences of which could only be fatal. The goddess's advice to Ulysses also reverberates in Morris's discursive efforts to dissuade electoral socialists from yielding to the enticement of short-term gains, whether economic or parliamentary. The cost of these little 'victories' may have recalled for him the fate of Ulysses's 'witless' crew who, contrary to Circe's dire warnings, ate up the Sun-Titan's cattle and died 'of their own souls' folly'.<sup>36</sup>

In teaching dialectical wisdom, 'Facing the Worst of It' delivered a lesson about fortitude. The editorial exhorted followers to abide unflinchingly by political principles and steer clear of economic blandishments that would suck socialists into the whirlpools of the commercial stream. Morris may have found a fictive model of this prescribed moral strength in Ulysses's resistance to the sirens' lethal lyricism. Standing 'upright in the step of the mast' with 'the rope-yarn thereto tied', the Greek hero sails aloof, refusing to yield to temptation.<sup>37</sup> Such disciplined forbearance was the moral message Morris conveyed to his followers in seeking the far-reaching 'change beyond the change'.

In this context, 'Facing the Worst of It' also preached hope amidst uncertainty when the distant vision of Socialism – that shadowy isle of bliss – was darkened by years of disrupted journeys. The events of Bloody Sunday, which occurred on 13 November 1887 (coincident with the publication of Part II of the translated *Odyssey*), mark one such aborted venture. Morris reaped a sobering lesson from that notorious massacre. The state was a Scylla-like monster; she would savagely crush any confrontation or spontaneous uprising of the people. The timing and strategies of socialist revolution would thus be rethought. The receding horizon of home (in this instance, Socialism) would push Morris's projected 'hour' of change into the future just as Ulysses's repeatedly stymied plans to reach Ithaca would protract the timetable of his own return.

Repeated deferral, however, does not quash determination. Morris, like his Greek hero, is a pilgrim of hope. But in what vein and with what temper do these two wearied leaders go forward? Ulysses is a battered figure, having been subjected to an onslaught of supernatural assaults. As for Morris, the atrocities of Bloody Sunday are devastating. If Ulysses is privileged to have Athena's supernatural support, Morris has no such *deus ex machina* to boost his morale. The confident voice of defiant revolution that typically marked his early *Commonweal* writings (see the Socialist League Manifesto of 1885, which rehearses the bold rhetoric of the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848) starts to modulate. How then will *The Odyssey* fit into Morris's teachings beyond this critical juncture? It is to this question that I now turn.

Significantly, Morris's published translation of *The Odyssey* does not feature in the pages of *Commonweal*, although it is advertised for sale in its classified columns. For the purpose of Socialist propaganda, the monumental work could not be readily adopted. In its mainstream English translation, Homer's text was inextricably tied to the nineteenth-century epic, a genre typically steeped in the affirmation of empire and at odds with Morris's critique of imperialism, evident already in October 1876 with his open letter to the *Daily News*, 'England and the Turks'.<sup>38</sup> Nor would his unorthodox prosody dispel mainstream views that *The Odyssey* was an admirable icon of imperialist and masculine culture. Morris could, arguably, only deploy *The Odyssey* for his self-transformation as political actor and educator. And this private use of the poem would paradoxically incur, if not coincide with, a shift in his discursive voice. In working through Homer, Morris would affirm his political identity, but discover the disjuncture between the conservative resonances of the epic mode and his atypical Socialist rhetoric.<sup>39</sup> The Ulyssian narrative would inspire, but also trouble him, exposing the flaws of political leadership embodied in Ulysses and *mutatis mutandis* in Victorian men holding public office.

Scant on expressions of individual subjectivity and introspection, massive in scale and voiced with a lyrical authority, *The Odyssey* heralded a story of superhuman feats, of towering strength, but also of aristocratic privilege. For Morris, it would have been at once inspiring and problematic; it carried in its narrative the seeds, though not the fruit, of a more egalitarian political voice. For all its poetic beauty and drama, its emblems of human fortitude and tragic overtones, the Greek epic in translation had been colonised by a nineteenth-century imperialist community, and would not dovetail easily with Morris's mission to disseminate socialistic ideals. *The Odyssey* would prompt him to choose another path, and another authorial medium, grounded in principles of equality rather than iniquitous hierarchy and aristocracy.

By the mid-1880s, Morris would turn (indeed return) to the prose romance as his preferred literary medium. Henceforward, he would cease to translate or mimic the great works of classical antiquity, even though there are clear residues of *The Odyssey* in his later oeuvre. He would draw on his early fascination with Nordic culture to forge and thus herald alternative models of heroism, contingent on mutual respect, stoicism and endurance.<sup>40</sup> In contrast with modernity's celebrated pantheon of individualist figures, Olympian statesman, victorious conquerors and 'genius' artists, the Norse heroes were (at least in Morris's imaginary and fictive renderings) grounded in, and committed to, their community, averse to ostentation, falseness and servility.<sup>41</sup> To be sure, these alternative models of heroism were already in gestation in Morris's oeuvre prior to 1887. But as time elapsed, they became essential components of his political praxis, not simply elements of fiction.

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For Morris, heroes were significant heuristic structures of political instruction; but they were wont to leave deleterious effects on those who lapsed into idolatry, those who succumbed to the impact of a mesmerising ‘genius’ leader, drawn from a romanticised earlier time. One thinks of French revolutionaries in 1848 who donned the costumes of their eighteenth-century forebears, each emulating a preferred character from history (for example, Saint Just, Danton, Marat, Robespierre), each falling prey to the inebriating aroma of tradition.<sup>42</sup> If Morris exhibited a conscious sense of historical precedent, he emphatically resisted slavish imitation.<sup>43</sup> He pondered the lessons of the masters, weighed the value of charisma, understood its disarming and disempowering effects, and, most crucially, sought to distinguish inspiration from intoxication.<sup>44</sup> In short, he maintained a dialogue with the past, but never yielded to it blindly. His subversive translation of Homer can thus be seen as a protest against enslavement to myths (for example, Homer as singular genius poet) harboured by men who bathed in the radiant aura of a Hellenic past. And yet, in refusing such idolatry, Morris would not jettison his cultural inheritance. Instead he seized and refurbished it in a new tongue while eschewing Victorian tastes and literary practices. In this, he simulated the speech patterns of the people, coining a language rooted in the sensuous rhythms of collective labour and life. Such an antiquarian idiom harboured a different *social* grammar, constitutive of communitarian relations and modes of interaction. More than a *langue* (in the Saussurian sense of code), it was a new *parole*, a reconstituted public utterance.<sup>45</sup> In its idiosyncrasy, it contested elite literary forms but also elevated speech, the patriarchal conventions of political oratory and the top-down structures of educational discourse that defined the transmission of patrician culture, with its celebration of great works and great men.

Seen thus, Morris’s translation delivered a forceful message to his literary contemporaries; but it also marked a transformative moment in his own political thinking about socialist agitation. He was engaged in a quiet but sustained re-evaluation of Socialist League propaganda, and his reappraisal involved recasting heroic prototypes, typically invoked for purposes of winning political consent. With this shift, Morris would resist the monological address of traditional oratory and focus instead on dialogical conversation. This re-evaluation would also involve questioning the persuasiveness of open-air declamatory propaganda, acerbic journalism, as well as ex cathedra lectures to workingmen. For, in the end, it was doubtful that such propaganda would convert persons who were not already predisposed to Socialism. More likely, it simply reinforced long-held values familiar to the crowds he addressed. Proselytising of this kind was not in itself politically transformative, only performative.<sup>46</sup>

Understood as a different type of political education, the late romances (notably,

those published in *Commonweal*) appear to be the key sites where Morris reconfigures conventional propaganda. *Pilgrims of Hope*, a narrative poem about the emotionally fraught calling of a London joiner and Paris communard, is illustrative. With the protagonist's disclosure of personal vulnerability in the face of arduous and often dispiriting activism, the text marks a decisive shift away from epic speech or grandstanding exhortation. Instead its narrative voice is one of authorial self-interrogation, conveyed through dramatic monologue, romantic pastoralism, elegiac strains and grim realism.

O love, stand beside me; the sun is uprisen  
On the first day of London; and shame hath been here.  
For I saw our new life like the bars of a prison,  
And hope grew a-cold, and I parleyed with fear [...]

Let us grieve then – and help every soul in our sorrow;  
Let us fear – and press forward where few dare to go;  
Let us falter in hope – and plan deeds for the morrow,  
The world crowned with freedom, the fall of the foe.

As the soldier who goes from his homestead a-weeping,  
And whose mouth yet remembers his sweetheart's embrace,  
While all round about him the bullets are sweeping [...]<sup>47</sup>

In sundry modalities of discourse, Morris replaces the exuberant declamatory style of a charismatic leader with a language of comradeship and an admixture of fear and resilient hope. This style of rhetoric, evident both in his three serialised *Commonweal* romances and in his news commentaries, suggests that he may have been tracing the first outlines of an alternative political education where ideologues would divest themselves of paternalism (see the rhetoric of H. M. Hyndman) and would relinquish the overweening confidence (and arrogance) of the patriarchal voice.<sup>48</sup> Conversely, in advocating an extra-parliamentary road to Socialism, Morris was calling for working-class self-reliance. Workers, he believed, would not become 'Socialist *men*' if they depended on representation from an elite vanguard of intellectuals (for example, the Fabians) or relied on the institutions of parliament.<sup>49</sup>

With such a prescription, he was effectively defying Victorian educational precepts and tacitly condemning the asymmetrical relationship between leaders and led – an inequality sustained through the cult of salient men: for example, celebrated artists, military heroes and political orators. In each of these, he detected an instance of

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fetishised authority. In the genius poet, he discerned the plague of class division, a condition that privileged a select group of individuals, while robbing most workingmen (and women) of their potential to fulfil a dignified existence through creative labour. In military heroes, he saw the dubious ethics of conquest and the brutal violence meted out on an adversary; and in the enchanting inflections of the political preacher (for example, John Ball), he detected the seductive lyricism of captivating orators, but also the effects of their spellbinding rhetoric on besotted listeners.<sup>50</sup>

Morris's multi-faceted refusal of hero-worship not only underpinned his vision of an egalitarian society, it also encapsulated his espoused method of effecting wholesale social change. His rhetorical medium then was crucial to his message, not only as a *referential* statement, projecting onto the future an *imagined* commonweal of equality, but as an *existential* act of communication, where educators and educated would sample the substance of social equality in the very dialogism of their public talks. And yet, to revolutionise political education in this vein would be a colossal venture. Morris would have to dismantle the social hierarchies inscribed in conventional political discourse, and redesign the language of militant prose, marked as it was by the heightened drama of class warfare and the celebration of epic heroes – elements ultimately incompatible with his politics of persuasion. Not surprisingly, as the 1890s approached, he relinquished conventional propaganda and turned increasingly to poetry and prose romance where the rituals of social interaction could be reorganised and refashioned to meet his principles of fellowship. His utopian romance *News from Nowhere* offers an aesthetic model that both illustrates and animates this new mode of persuasive political discourse.

Not only a fictive projection of how humans might live more equitably, decently and collaboratively, *News from Nowhere* is also Morris's strenuous effort to jettison a number of prevailing Victorian assumptions about political education, not least the relation of authority and subservience between masters and their disciples. The sustained dialogue between Old Hammond (the historian and sage) and Guest (the visitor and eager apprentice) illustrates this asymmetry concretely. Embodying the mildly patronising Victorian pedagogue, Hammond's disquisitions about Nowherian life and history pre-empt refutation; they serve as repositories of information to be accepted, not resisted. There is no parity or equality here between host and guest, only polite domination. As the utopian romance unfolds, Hammond's pedagogy is eventually superseded by Ellen's holistic approach. The central heroine and vibrant New Woman engages Guest in the sensuous and sensual properties of the twenty-second-century world, but her educative role is ultimately to usher him out of the earthly paradise, and thereby encourage his political self-reliance.<sup>51</sup> For, while he is

generously hosted in this glorious pastoral setting, he is finally reminded that his sojourn is fleeting; he is quietly, though abruptly, evicted from the dream vision.

In Guest's two-tiered experience of intimate engagement with Ellen and *expulsion* from Nowhere lies the hermeneutical key to Morris's dialectical education. Indeed, *News from Nowhere's* narrative pattern of *seduction and gentle eviction* is a parable for deciphering an alternative political instruction, contingent on a convergence of contrary impulses. The reader is encouraged to grasp the lessons of Nowhere, to receive its wisdoms, but not to enshrine them as laws. This confluence of contrary energies is discernible in Ellen's capacity to charm but also discourage infatuation. With Guest, she wards off fetishism, shielding him from deceptive illusions and empowering him with the responsibility of transforming aesthetic experience (the dream vision) into his nineteenth-century political praxis. As she puts it:

Go back again, now you have seen us, and your outward eyes have learned that in spite of all the infallible maxims of your day there is yet a time of rest in store for the world, when mastery has changed into fellowship [...]. Go on living while you may, striving, with whatsoever pain and labour needs must be, to build up little by little the new day of fellowship, and rest, and happiness.<sup>52</sup>

Unlike the voices of traditional revolutionary orators, whose enrapturing authority typically fettered followers to dogma and hackneyed slogans, Ellen, the new educator, offers a decidedly different example of heroism. While she engages Guest, she also breaks her own spell, ensuring that he leave the earthly paradise and assign primacy and self-sufficiency to his own era. Figuratively, then, her teachings reflect Morris's radical political education, a pedagogy that precludes idolatry and encourages working-class autonomy wherever possible. It is the kind of instruction that Morris himself applied in his lecture on 'The Policy of Abstention' when he argued that the 'real business of [...] propagandists is to instil this aim of the workers becoming the masters of their own destinies, their own lives'.<sup>53</sup> Advocating the self-governance of the working class, he also ceded his judgement to them. As he said, '[t]ime and also power fails me to give any scheme for how all this could be done'.<sup>54</sup> In this, he urged his working-class following to act judiciously and independently of governing classes, in accordance with its specific historical possibilities. To be sure, dependency on some higher institutional structure (for example, parliament) or on traditional patterns of political behaviour may have been as seductive as Calypso's enthralling power over Ulysses; yet such alluring forces needed to be resisted.

If teaching autonomy underlies Morris's 'Policy of Abstention' lecture, and if it

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defines the ending of *News from Nowhere*, it also features in Book XII of *The Odyssey*. Prior to navigating through the perilous strait of Scylla and Charybdis, Ulysses receives Circe's counsel. In this, he is urged to negotiate the dangers of the strait but with his *own* wits and wherewithal, supported only by preliminary words of warning: 'But now, whenso thy fellows past these things thus shall fare,/ Thenceforth all close and clearly I have not to declare/ Which one of the ways shall be thine: thereof seek thou a rede/ From thine own mind'.<sup>55</sup>

*News from Nowhere* and 'The Policy of Abstention' thus yielded some of Morris's most significant teachings: revolutionary change would invariably be an extended odyssey involving great feats of social cooperation and determination. Pre-eminently, it would demand that each individual embrace two competing political energies: on the one hand, an ardent desire for future redemption (in the form of Socialism), sustained by imaginative projections (for example, dream visions) and, on the other, a rational disengagement from the spell of ideological blandishments (for example, parliamentary action and sham Socialism), enticements strewn in the path of political actors and their followings.

Being a medievalist dream vision, *News from Nowhere* simulates these two contending impulses: the enchantment with *nostos* – the desire for a Socialist hearth – and the cold realisation that the journey there is riddled with pitfalls and deluding mirages, to be averted and resisted at all costs. This is the imperative of revolutionary clairvoyance: to see the genuine objectives in the distant beyond and to break with the aura of treacherous surface images. Shades of the questing medieval knight, who must fend off the magnetic powers of erotic temptation, are evident here, too. Not incidentally, Morris's socialist medium of persuasion henceforward draws heavily on the fourteenth-century romance. With its characteristic 'fade-out' feature, the medievalist dream vision offers Morris the most apt heuristic model for conveying and setting in motion this dialectical disposition among readers. The oneiric moment of the fictional form, however alluring, eventually dissolves and dims its own glow, releasing the reader from an otherwise imprisoning imaginary. In this, the dream vision becomes a powerful literary conduit of Morris's socialist philosophy, and not only for what it articulates, but also for the way it *actualises* its message. Engaging its readers in the luminosity of its wondrous dream world, it ultimately folds back into its fictional enclosure, dissolving its enthralling ambience and ushering its protagonists and vicarious readers *out of* the oneiric world, and into a rude but salutary awakening. This double dynamic of contrary energies, involving both the *production* and *dissolution* of an aesthetic aura, allows Morris to simulate this mode of thinking in narrative form, and to make it the sine qua non of his political discourse.

In his rendering of *The Odyssey*, he had already begun to apply this spell-breaking

practice. Deploying a pithy Nordic style, he vindicated, but also rearticulated the moral and political substance of the great epic for his radical educative ends and, with that, dispelled the Arnoldian charm of ‘sweet melody’ that governed nineteenth-century classical translation. Rebellious against the deadening scholasticism of the academic establishment, he rejected the preservation of Homeric epics as museum pieces, and the conversion of ancient bardic practices into literary artefacts, made sacrosanct by imperial institutions and traditions. His iconoclastic translation of *The Odyssey* thus served to shatter the ideals of ‘noble’ art – privileged cultural property guarded by an elite – and to uncover the living narrative of unsung artisanal heroes, the forgotten masons of civilisation. As Oscar Wilde so aptly noted, Morris’s strength in translating *The Odyssey* was his ability to reveal the sentient character of artisanal labour, to breathe new life into the epic and to invent an idiom that vindicated popular art.<sup>56</sup> Such a reclaiming of Homeric poetry was not only transformative in redesigning elite cultural material for popular ends, it was singularly daring in converting the rhetoric of patrician pedagogy into a discourse of fellowship. Morris’s literary venture was thus both textually and extra-textually creative. With his gargantuan project, he carried over *The Odyssey*’s humanist themes into his Socialist teachings while supplanting the epic’s heightened speech and virile heroism with the quizzical interiority of the prose romance.

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He was already a committed socialist in 1886, but by reclaiming Homeric poetry for popular ends, Morris would deepen his radical politics; he would not only seek to transform others (by making socialists), he would eventually transform his own discourse, reshape the language of his political pedagogy, striving to annul its embedded class divisions. Paradoxically, it was his farewell to the epic form that enabled this transformation. To be sure, Homer’s poem was inspirational, but it was also catalytic. And like all catalysts, it would disappear once its service had been rendered. *The Odyssey* would carry in its narrative the emboldening appeals of socialist rhetoric, the tropes of fortitude, survival and *longing for home*; but for Morris, it was the prose romance that would radicalise the politics of socialist speech.

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#### NOTES

1. Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. vii. (Afterwards MacCarthy).
2. E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London: Pantheon, 1976), pp. 423-24. (Afterwards Thompson).
3. MacCarthy, p. 541.

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4. Thompson, p. 432.
  5. William Whitla, 'William Morris's Translation of Homer's *Iliad* I.1-214', *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, 13 (Fall 2004), 75-121 (82-84). (Afterwards Whitla, 'Translation').
  6. *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, ed. by Norman Kelvin, 4 vols in 5 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984-1996), II, p. 510. (Afterwards Kelvin).
  7. Kelvin, II, p. 575.
  8. *Ibid.*
  9. *Ibid.*
  10. Matthew Arnold, *On Translating Homer* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862), p. 16.
  11. *Ibid.*, p. 50; Whitla, 'Translation', p. 75; Frank M. Turner, 'The Homeric Question', in *A New Companion to Homer*, ed. by Ian Morris and Barry Powell (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 123-45 (126-29).
  12. Kelvin, II, p. 510. (According to Kelvin, the date of this letter is uncertain – either January 1886 or February 1886).
  13. *Ibid.*, p. 498.
  14. Book I of Morris's translation of *The Odyssey* contains several examples of his demotic style. These include archaic diction (for example, bane, fain, God-folk, abrim); Norse-influenced syntactical inversions ('But him alone, Odysseus [...] Did the noble nymph Calypso, the Godhead's glory, hoard'); the use of rhymes, contrary to Arnoldian prescriptions (hoard/lord; strife/wife); and alliteration (full fain/noble nymph/circling seasons; O Goddess, O daughter of Zeus, from whencesoever ye may). See William Morris, *The Odyssey of Homer Done into English Verse*, in *The Collected Works of William Morris*, ed. by May Morris, 24 vols (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910-1915), XIII, Book I, II, 14-20. (Afterwards CW, XIII). For more on Morris's 'poetic] of the people', see William Whitla, 'William Morris and the Classical Tradition', in *The Routledge Companion to William Morris*, ed. by Florence S. Boos (New York and London: Routledge, 2021), pp. 302-31 (310-11); Paul Acker, 'A Very Animated Conversation on Icelandic Matters: The Saga Translations of William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon', in *ibid.*, pp. 332-42 (337-38); Sun Kyoung Yoon, 'Medievalising Homer: William Morris's Archaising Translation of *The Odyssey*', *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 29: 1 (January 2021), 33-45 (39-40); and Herbert Tucker, 'All for the Tale: The Epic Macropoetics of Morris's *Sigurd the Volsung*', *Victorian Poetry*, 34: 3 (1996), 373-94 (384-86).
  15. Michelle Weinroth, 'Morris and the Literary Canon', in *Teaching William Morris*, ed. by Jason D. Martinek and Elizabeth Carolyn Miller (Lanham, Maryland: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 2019), pp. 187-203 (192-93).
  16. Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by Emily Wilson (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2018), pp. 105, 66.
  17. CW, XIII, p. 319, Book XXII, II, 15-20.
  18. Jan Marsh, 'Morris and Victorian Manliness', in *William Morris: Centenary Essays*, ed. by Peter Faulkner and Peter Preston (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), pp. 185-99 (191, 199).
  19. Michelle Weinroth, 'Reinventing Socialist Education: William Morris's Kelmescott Press', *Socialist Studies/Études socialistes*, 3: 1 (Spring 2018), 36-56 (38-42). (Afterwards Weinroth, 'Re-inventing').
  20. *Ibid.*, 40-42.
  21. Kelvin, II, p. 479.
  22. *Ibid.*, p. 480.
  23. Thompson, p. 442.
  24. *William Morris's Socialist Diary*, ed. by Florence Boos (London: Journeyman Press, 1985), p. 44. (Afterwards Boos).
  25. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
  26. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
  27. *Ibid.*
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28. Weinroth, 'Re-inventing', pp. 42-45.
29. Stephen Coleman, 'William Morris and "Education Towards Revolution": "Making Socialists" versus "Putting Them in Their Place"', *JWMS*, 11: 1 (August 1994), 49-58 (50-52). (Afterwards Coleman).
30. Boos, p. 54.
31. Coleman, p. 54.
32. Thompson, pp. 431-35; 445.
33. William Morris, 'Facing the Worst of It', *Commonweal*, 3: 58 (19 February 1887), pp. 60-61. (Afterwards Morris, 'Facing the Worst of It').
34. *CW* XIII, p. 174, Book XII, l. 124.
35. *Ibid.*, ll. 119-120.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 1, Book I, ll. 6-9.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 175, Book XII, l. 179.
38. Amanda Hodgson, "'The highest poetry": Epic Narrative in *The Earthly Paradise* and *Idylls of the King*', *Victorian Poetry*, 34: 3 (Autumn, 1996), 341-54 (341-43).
39. Nathanael Gilbert traces the genesis of this tension between epic and Morris's anti-capitalism in an extended discussion of *The Earthly Paradise* and *Sigurd the Volsung*. See 'A Vision Rather than a Dream: The Production of Space in the Epic and Romantic Works of William Morris', PhD thesis (Washington State University, 2005), pp. 11-12, 109, 117-30.
40. William Morris, 'The Early Literature of the North – Iceland', in *Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*, ed. by Eugene D. Lemire (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1969), pp. 185, 186-89. (Afterwards Lemire). Interestingly, Morris compares Homeric and Norse heroes in this lecture. See page 188.
41. A feature of Morris's preferred heroism, such as 'deedfulness' (understood as a collectivist ethos), may not have been an inherent feature of Norse culture, but an *imputed virtue* that he underscored in his rewriting of the Icelandic sagas. On this, see Ian Felce's discussion of *Sigurd* in *William Morris and the Icelandic Sagas* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2018), pp. 135-36; Lemire, pp. 185, 188, 190.
42. Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 170.
43. William Morris, 'Some Hints on Pattern Designing', *CW*, XXII, pp. 177-78.
44. I consider the disarming force of charisma in 'Redesigning the Language of Social Change: Rhetoric, Agency, and the Oneiric in William Morris's *A Dream of John Ball*', *Victorian Studies*, 53: 1 (Autumn 2010), 37-63 (50). (Afterwards Weinroth, 'Redesigning').
45. On this notion of a new language, see Whitla, 'Translation', pp. 99-100.
46. As Nicholas Salmon points out, Morris's Socialist chants 'were all directed at the enlightened working men who were already committed to "the Cause".' See 'The Communist Poet-Laureate: William Morris's *Chants for Socialists*', *JWMS*, 14: 3 (Winter 2001), 31-40 (38).
47. William Morris, *Pilgrims of Hope*, 'The Bridge on the Street', *Commonweal*, 1: 3 (April 1885), p. 20.
48. Weinroth, 'Reinventing', pp. 42-44; Coleman, pp. 52-54.
49. Morris to John Glasse, 23 September 1887, in Robin Page Arnot, *William Morris: The Man and the Myth* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1964), pp. 85-87.
50. See Florence Boos, 'William Morris's Lesser Arts and the "Commercial War"', in *To Build a Shadowy Isle of Bliss: William Morris's Radicalism and the Embodiment of Dreams*, ed. by Michelle Weinroth and Paul Leduc Browne (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), pp. 35-55 (43-46); see also Weinroth, 'Redesigning', p. 50.
51. The gendered shift here is significant, symbolising Morris's turn from the masculinist epic to the romance form, from the monological language of socialist propaganda to the dialogism of the medieval dream vision.
52. *CW*, XVI, pp. 210-11.

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53. William Morris, 'The Policy of Abstention', in *William Morris: How I Became a Socialist*, ed. by Owen Holland (London: Verso, 2020), pp. 125-41 (133).
  54. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
  55. *CW*, XIII, p. 172, Book XII, ll.55-57.
  56. Oscar Wilde, 'Mr. Morris's Odyssey', *Pall Mall Gazette*, xlv (26 April 1887), p. 5.

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# ‘A Moving Life’: Jane and Jenny Morris at Kelmscott, 1897-1909

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Celia Davies

The year after William Morris’s death in October 1896 found his widow Jane, his elder daughter Jenny and Jenny’s nurse-companion spending a quiet summer at Kelmscott. The Manor was now to become a more permanent home, but it was also to be a place of many comings and goings over the next decade and more. For Jane, now in her late fifties, there was much to do both in terms of domestic practicalities and the management of William’s books and manuscripts, his publication projects and his designs. Jenny would delight in being at the Manor but there was also the question of the management of her epilepsy. Nurse-companions had become a key part of the solution. But the situation for Jane would be more difficult without the help of her husband. Looking at the lives of the two women, and at a number of younger daughter May’s visits to Kelmscott in these years, will reveal some of the challenges they faced and help to bring into focus a first phase of life in the Manor after Morris.

## **I. First Moves**

Winter was coming and Jane’s first instinct, after the funeral of her husband in October 1896, was to get right away. By December, she and May had taken up Wilfred Scawen Blunt’s invitation to go to Egypt and they stayed there until the following Spring.<sup>1</sup> Marion Grove, sister of family friend Cormell (Crom) Price, opened Thamescote, her London home in Chiswick, to Jenny and her companion. Crom Price wrote frequently to Jane with news of her elder daughter: ‘Every bit of news of her is valuable to my poor heart’, Jane replied to one such letter on 24 January 1897.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Jenny’s health during this time was remarkably good. She began to be in frequent informal correspondence with Sydney Carlyle Cockerell who had managed many of Morris’s affairs.<sup>3</sup> A rare business letter in her own hand also survives, acknowledging copies of her father’s letters, explaining that Cockerell, her father’s

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secretary and librarian, was at present in Italy, but would handle the matters raised on his return.<sup>4</sup>

Jane took the decision to make Kelmscott Manor the permanent home for herself and her daughter. Summer 1897 found them both back in London at the family home, Kelmscott House, arranging packing and transfer of furniture. Kelmscott Manor, of course, would be a place of wistful memories for them both, but the peace and quiet could be of help. As summer turned to autumn, a few visitors were encouraged and plans were set in train for a winter at Lyme Regis. Jenny was enthusiastic – remembering perhaps the months that she, her mother and May had spent at Lyme during the winter of 1882-83 when William had sent her ideas about walks. She was concerned that the trip would not be the same delight to her mother.<sup>5</sup> Yet Jane did enjoy her isolated life at Lyme. An avid reader, she researched the history of Lyme Regis and was intrigued to discover that their lodging place, Chatham House, a large property overlooking the sea, was on the site of the old leper hospital.<sup>6</sup>

Both women made a brief visit to Kelmscott during the new year – Jenny in February 1898, before returning to Chiswick, Jane in March, to be at the Manor for the anniversary of William's birthday, before going back to Lyme.<sup>7</sup> By June, however, they were settled at Kelmscott for the second summer. Summers at the Manor and winters on the south coast, particularly for Jane, were to be a pattern in the years that followed. While Jenny, as already noted, was remarkably well in the years 1897-99, the continuing unpredictability of her epileptic seizures took its toll on Jane.<sup>8</sup> Nurse-companions were vital, but there was no longer the help that William had been able to provide in giving respite to Jane.<sup>9</sup> Visits from May were important, however, and there would be a new kind of integration into the life of the village compared with that in William's day.<sup>10</sup> These themes are explored below.

## **II. Into the Twentieth Century at Kelmscott**

This second year brought new sadness – the deaths both of Edward Burne-Jones and of Kate Faulkner. And yet the old house could still work its charm. There were the gardens to enjoy, and there was fruit-picking and tea on the lawns. There were walks along the river and visitors who could cheer them. Jenny reported that she did what she could to console her mother, reading to her, for example.<sup>11</sup> Some of the books that still remain on the shelves at the Manor reveal what were perhaps some quiet hours for the two women in 1902, each taking down her copy of William's books, each signing her name and dating the signature. But over the next years, Jane had practicalities to confront. She was in much communication with Cockerell both on matters of finance and as questions arose about William's many possessions and the management of his legacy.<sup>12</sup> Unknown enquirers, interested to see the home of the

famous William Morris – sometimes pre-announced but sometimes not – visited. Jenny provides an amusing account of a summer afternoon when what she called some ‘house-seers’ suddenly arrived:

I find that Mother is personally conducting them, so I am flying to Miss Staveley’s room, as I am not as well groomed as I should be for strangers. I have been called down to tea in the garden & found some pleasant friends of the Mackails, two Eton masters, one with a charming lately-married wife, & a nice lad, her brother, taking a couple of days boating down the Thames to Oxford before the holidays.<sup>13</sup>

Family and friends did not neglect them. Jane’s sister Bessie had made regular summer visits of a fortnight or more during the last four years of William’s life. Although the records do not show her there as frequently later, she was certainly at Kelmscott again in 1897, 1900, 1901 and 1902.<sup>14</sup> William’s sisters Henrietta Morris and Isabella Gilmore visited at least once in these years. Long-standing friends of the Morris family came to stay and William’s close male circle – Webb, Cockerell and Walker – were all visitors to Kelmscott in these years as well as keeping in touch by letter. And while the Burne-Joneses had been rare visitors over the years, the widowed Georgie visited the Manor, for example, in the summers of 1898, 1900, 1901 and 1902. Her growing concern over Jane and the toll that care of Jenny was taking on her is a particularly important strand in the story of this period and will be outlined below. Others also came to stay. Evelyn and William De Morgan came several times and there were at least eight visits by Mary De Morgan in the seven-year period up to 1903.

There is a rare reference to the hard work that this entailed in a letter from Jane to Sydney Cockerell in March 1898.<sup>15</sup> The housekeeper, she explained, could not manage more than two guests singlehanded. At that time of year, there was also the extra work of lighting fires in the bedrooms. Most visitors came during the summer months and at times there were also housemaids to help with the load. It is hard to provide a full picture of the help available, but the planning of visits, the decisions as to meals and entertainment and the oversight of all the domestic tasks all fell to Jane.<sup>16</sup>

While visitors offered support and stimulation, the Manor afforded the opportunity for leisure and pleasure of a quieter kind. Both women read a great deal. Jane’s interests encompassed history, biography and poetry and her letters show her frequently acknowledging books sent as gifts from others. She also followed current affairs, as exchanges, in particular but not exclusively, with Crom Price reveal. Jenny too was a keen reader and when William De Morgan turned from his ceramic work to the writing of novels, both women enjoyed his work hugely.<sup>17</sup> There is little in the

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way of evidence of working together or separately on embroidery in Jane's letters, although it seems likely, and there are some signs that this might well have occurred.<sup>18</sup> Outdoor activities, however, were certainly important. Both, but particularly Jenny, went for walks in the area and the Manor gardens too were a delight to the two women. Jenny, said Jane, 'never wearies of this place – where she knows every tree and plant'.<sup>19</sup> Jane herself took pleasure in the garden, at least when the frustrations of cold and wet weather, occurring even at times in high summer, could be set aside.<sup>20</sup>

Nor was Jane's life as a model and muse entirely over. The painter Charles March Gere visited Kelmscott Manor for six days in 1900 and for another five days in 1901. There are several versions of his small head and shoulders portrait of Jane in existence, one of which is held by Kelmscott Manor itself.<sup>21</sup> There is also the painting by Evelyn De Morgan known as *The Hourglass*. Preliminary drawings for this are dated 1904 and the finished work 1905.<sup>22</sup>

The Manor's residents were by no means cut off from the village or uninterested in its concerns. The village inn, The Plough, was to be put up for auction in summer 1898, together with several other village properties. Jane and Jenny discussed this with Philip Webb on one of his visits. All three were concerned about the kind of rebuilding that might occur. They also shared an interest in preserving what Webb called the 'sober dignity' of the village. The creation of educational and recreational opportunities had been something Jane had tried to pursue without success a year earlier, and the need for more housing in the village was something they also recognised.<sup>23</sup> This was to result in Jane commissioning Philip Webb to design two cottages in memory of her husband. The first designs were discussed in 1899 and the two Memorial Cottages were completed by 1904.

One of the new cottages was reserved for Mr. Sutton, Jane's newly appointed gardener, but Jane planned that his cottage was to house a Reading Room – an alternative to the public house for the men of the village. The Reading Room was opened on 8 January 1904 by May Morris supported by Mr. Hobbs junior.<sup>24</sup> A few weeks later, the local paper judged the new venture a great success, noting the collection of over 100 books and 200 periodicals, and the fact that table games were allowed on two of the three evenings a week that the Reading Room was opened. The paper continued:

The attendance has been very large every evening, in fact, several times uncomfortably large, showing how great and pressing a need Mrs Morris has met by her liberality and kindness.<sup>25</sup>

May, still resident in London, also had direct involvement with the village, particularly

on her visits in the holiday period around Christmas and New Year. In December 1901, Jane had arranged a winter stay for herself in Falmouth, remaining through January. May, Jenny and Jenny's companion spent the holiday period at the Manor. On New Year's Eve and again on New Year's Day there was piano playing, together with songs, poetry reading and a play in the village schoolroom. Miss Staveley, Jenny's companion, took part, singing three songs. Then on 3 January 1902, there was more excitement. Mr. Hobbs provided a massive fir tree in the schoolroom. Miss Goldby, the schoolmistress, invited not just the children but also the ladies of the village. Seventy souls sat down to tea at 4.30pm. The local paper described the event in detail. After tea, it reported, 'cheers were then given for Mrs. Morris and family, Mr. Hobbs and family as well as for various others. And then Miss Morris gave each child a bright, new, three-penny bit.'<sup>26</sup> This was not all. February found May playing the guitar, accompanying Miss Staveley's singing and also singing a Spanish song herself. May had written a play for this event, a farce in two acts called *Poor Jonathan's Girls* specifically for the Misses Goldby and Hobbs to perform. The local paper gave a fairly full a synopsis of the plot.<sup>27</sup>

The next Christmas season brought similar village occasions. There was a new play by May, *Miss Garford's Little Walking Tour*, performed on Boxing Day and 27 December 1902. This time it was Jenny's companion Miss Peerless who sang solos. But Mr. Bert Hobbs, the local paper reported, was 'the chief glory of the evening'. It was he, the newspaper report continued, who 'with a blackened face and faultless n[—] costume delighted all with his rendition of plantation songs'. A January tea followed, where Jenny's two nurse-companions of the time, Miss Peerless and Miss Staveley, performed songs as did Mrs. Panting, the Manor's cook.<sup>28</sup>

On a different note, however, it must be acknowledged that coping with Kelmscott Manor was no easy matter. It was not only the demands of preparing for what might be as many as three or four visitors in any one of the summer months, there was also the matter of the weather. While 1899 had been a good year, with Jane writing of the joy of being outdoors in October, there was also much cold, damp and flooding to be endured.<sup>29</sup> In the previous year, for example, it had still been necessary to light fires as late as June, with the meadows and roads remaining too muddy for walking.<sup>30</sup> The year 1902 found Jane again writing of a 'damp sunless summer' and summer 1903 brought a flood where all had to abandon the ground floor of the Manor.<sup>31</sup> The servants too could give problems from time to time. The faults of Mrs. Panting the cook (the same Mrs. Panting who sang at the January concert in 1903) were graphically recounted by Jane later that year and she and her husband were dismissed.<sup>32</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Sutton replaced them: 'such nice people', Jane remarked as she arranged for him and his wife to move from the Memorial Cottages into the

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Manor to look after it in winter 1906.<sup>33</sup>

However, it was the care of Jenny that coloured everything as far as Jane was concerned. Nurse-companions were invaluable, but finding the right kind of person and keeping her in post was no easy matter. Several women were employed as nurse-companions in the period under consideration here. The serious illness of Miss Staveley in 1904 and ultimately her emergency removal back to London caused immense concern. Miss Shemmonds, a great success as a nurse-companion when initially appointed in summer 1909, and who later proved an invaluable help to Jane herself, had to be dismissed for her treatment of Jenny.<sup>34</sup> Jane could not countenance the idea of Jenny finding a permanent home apart from her, but the strain was getting harder as Jane herself aged and her physical and mental wellbeing came into question. What was to be done? There were moments of bleak despair, as this account will reveal, and yet her resourcefulness also shines through.

### **III. Living Together, Living Apart**

It was not just the winter weather that drove Jane to plan time away from Kelmscott Manor, though the cold and damp was a factor for both women. It was also her need to spend time apart from Jenny, taking a rest from the constant watching for seizures, rebuilding her own strength and restoring her equilibrium. Living in London with Marion Grove had worked well for Jenny while Jane was in Egypt after William's death. When the lease on Mrs. Grove's house was due to end, in summer 1899, Jane set to work to find somewhere else where Marion Grove could live and where she, Jenny and Jenny's companion could have rooms. It would give her choices – to be together with Jenny and to be apart, to spend time in London and time in Kelmscott. Number 22, St Mary Abbots Terrace, Kensington, provided an answer for a while. Winters on the south coast were already a pattern. Jane was to be away for three or four months each year over the next decade and more, sometimes with Jenny, sometimes alone. Jane also sometimes stayed at May's house in Hammersmith, and with other London friends. She rented London rooms for herself one year. She was also alert to the times when Jenny needed a change of scene. They spent a week together in Bognor in 1900, for example, something that delighted Jenny but exhausted her mother.<sup>35</sup> While, for Jane, this peripatetic life was a vital means of protecting her own wellbeing, the sheer extent of travel back and forth over the years for the two women all but defies summary. The regular packing, opening and closing of houses would have been a punishing schedule for someone younger and in better health. And it took its toll.

In March 1900, in a letter from Bognor, Jane described herself as having been suffering from a nervous condition for many months. December that year found her

writing 'I am quite broken and must part with Jenny for a time if I can find the right sort of lady to place her with'.<sup>36</sup> She did not, it seems, find that lady, and living what in 1898 she had described as 'a moving life' continued.<sup>37</sup>

By summer 1903, the year, previously mentioned, of dramatic floods at Kelmscott, it looked as if a more lasting solution to the together and apart issue was possible, and one which would still mean much time at Kelmscott for both – though not necessarily together. Jane took a tenancy at premises known as 'The Old Hospital' in Burford. Jane, Jenny, Jenny's nurse, Miss Peerless and May were all there that summer, getting the house ready. Writing to Cockerell Jane explained:

Jenny seems happy in it and I think it will be a great resource as time goes on – there are many walks and the people are nice everywhere all except the children who are mostly impudent and generally ill mannered. Mr Price is with us today and thinks the house charming with its white and green paint on the pretty old rooms.<sup>38</sup>

Some good times did follow. After a visit to Burford in late summer 1905, for example, Sydney Cockerell reported to Philip Webb that Jenny, now on a reduced dose of bromides was cheerful and 'quite her old self'. The same, however, could not be said of her mother, who 'talks a little despondently about herself'.<sup>39</sup>

The Old Hospital still stands in Church Street in Burford. As the Eight Bells public house it had been in the ownership of the Burford Grammar School. In 1867, it had been taken over by a local physician, Dr. T. H. Cheatle.<sup>40</sup> He saw the need for a clean and airy place in which the poor could be nursed. Its two cottages were made into one. It was equipped and staffed by nurses for up to eight patients at a time. During the 1880s, the doctor had another building erected adjacent to the hospital, possibly serving as a dispensary. But by the turn of the century, medicine was advancing and a new site was purchased in Sheep Street. In 1902, voluntary subscriptions were raised to build Burford Cottage Hospital which was to boast modern equipment and operating facilities. The Old Hospital at this point was rendered ready for a new use. Jane Morris was still shown as the tenant of Dr. Cheatle in 1911.<sup>41</sup> When the widowed Alice Cheatle decided to sell the premises back to the Governors of the Grammar School in the spring of 1913, Jane Morris was still listed as the tenant of the property.<sup>42</sup> It is clear then that Jane retained The Old Hospital for a full decade and possibly indeed to the end of her life the following January.

How successful was the Burford plan? Both Webb and Cockerell waxed enthusiastic about it and over the next years Jane and Jenny enjoyed time there separately and together. It was Jane rather than Jenny who spent a couple of winter

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months at Burford at the end of 1903. Miss Staveley returned to the Manor and to Jenny for Christmas. The flood water at Kelmscott that December had reached the meadow but not the house. But was the Kelmscott and Burford arrangement going to work in the longer term? There were now twelve years to run on the lease at the Manor. The owner, Mr. Hobbs, offered to sell the Manor to Jane in April 1904. Should she buy it to secure a long-term future home for Jenny? She was uncertain. She took herself to Wales for a rest cure. But turning, as she so often did, to Cockerell, she wrote that she was going home without having made much improvement in her health or knowing what action to take. She wrote:

I am haunted by the thought that I may be obliged to give up my living with Jenny – my doctor here says it is madness for me to go on in my present condition, the nerves are strained to the very uttermost. He advises me to go to a regular rest cure place for a time. I can't make up my mind to anything in a hurry. Meantime come and cheer me up as soon as you can.<sup>43</sup>

By November she was acknowledging that she was never going to recover her powers of endurance again and doubting the idea of purchasing the Manor.<sup>44</sup> She had spent a few days with Georgie Burne-Jones at Rottingdean in the summer before returning to Kelmscott. And it is from this point that Georgie comes strongly into the picture.

#### **IV. Challenges Increase**

Georgie Burne-Jones had made a special effort to support Jenny and Jane after William's death. She was careful over the next few years to write to Jenny or send flowers on her birthday. While she and her husband had only rarely visited Kelmscott, now widowed, she visited more frequently. Her letters provide a worried outsider's view of the situation. A visit in the summer of 1901 left her very concerned about Jenny, who at that time was heavily dosed with bromides. She wrote to Cockerell about 'a considerable change in Jenny':

she is so much slower in speaking, and apparently in thinking, than she was a year ago – even in reading aloud she seems long in grasping the meaning of words and longer still in uttering them – but after delay I believe she does understand perfectly. She never speaks without being spoken to, or almost never, or seldom smiles. Her gentleness tho' is very touching, and I think her mother has comfort from it. The place is more beautiful than ever and May is here you may like to know.<sup>45</sup>

It was in 1905, however, that she became very concerned about Jane herself. In January, having had a visit from a worried and exhausted Jane the month before, she was dreading a complete breakdown on Jane's part. Jane remained very low – too ill, for example, to take up Blunt's offer of his house and alongside that, Jenny was worse than usual. Georgie and Cockerell exchanged letters, comparing what Jane had written to each of them, expressing fears lest what she called her 'brain trouble' should return and agonising about what could be done. The 'spell of Kelmscott' must be broken, Georgie thought. It would be possible to let the Manor without too many practical difficulties. Jane should then go to London, Jenny away to some high ground, perhaps Malvern, Wales or Derbyshire.<sup>46</sup>

In a second letter, Georgie became more insistent about the need for separation from Jenny and a move to London for Jane where there would be more stimulating company:

All its good side offers the help she needs and a number of people who will gladly shew her kindness and attention, without being a weight on anyone especial, and amusements of various kinds, and young people, to whom she is attracted, and I think attractive. She is still a splendid looking creature – nothing of the old woman about her. I long for her to take her place in life were it but for a year. Why we might live to see her holding not exactly a salon but a sofa, of a brilliant kind, mightn't we?<sup>47</sup>

As for Jenny, she now thought of Switzerland – though she knew that Jane would not countenance the idea of her daughter being so far away.

In the event, Jenny was sent away for a few months to Lyme. Jane took some rooms in London for a while with a maid who could provide some nursing care. She also embarked on the idea of letting the Manor. Cockerell found a potential tenant in Lord Lytton who visited with his family. But with seven servants and a baby, even letting out the adjacent cottage as well as the Manor, it was not practical.<sup>48</sup> Not keen on resorting to advertising, Jane dropped the idea. With Jenny back and wonderfully well, with a visit from Jane's good friend, the painter Marie Stillman, and time spent at Burford, life picked up its old rhythm. Together in Lyme for the winter months, Jane wrote of Jenny's wonderful recovery:

Those attacks have almost left her, and she is more like herself than she has ever been since the illness began – her mental power is returning too, which I have not dared to hope for – all this is a great joy to me – and a puzzle to her doctors.<sup>49</sup>

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Much of the next year (1906) proved to be positive as far as Jenny's health was concerned. Yet the situation was still precarious. Jane wondered about her own ability to continue to look after the Manor and also felt that winters at the Manor were no longer going to be feasible for her daughter, given Jenny's negative reaction to the cold. The separate winter breaks Jane had enjoyed for the last few years did not look to be possible again. At Paignton with Jenny the next winter, Jane was having trouble walking and spoke of being pushed in a chair.<sup>50</sup> She also went to Sidmouth for treatment for heart trouble.

There were further seizures in what Jane referred to as a 'frightful year' in 1907. And now Georgie saw for herself what living with Jenny entailed. Jenny and her companion Mrs. Culmer visited her at Rottingdean. Mrs. Culmer was a 'marvel of strength' and good company in her own right.<sup>51</sup> But

a week in dear Jenny's company has made me understand Mrs Morris' life as I never did before. Jenny has been gentle and loving and happy – but each day till yesterday there was a slight attack, and there is no sense of security for a minute; I only wonder that her mother is not a hopeless invalid.<sup>52</sup>

A serious relapse on Jenny's part in the autumn of the next year (1908) prompted Georgie to observe that Jane seemed to have 'extinguished her last ray of hope'.<sup>53</sup> Multiple seizures came later that year during their winter sojourn at Lyme. 'Jenny keeps us in a continual state of anxiety, attacks every day or night', wrote Jane to Crom Price, and she went on: 'I am worn out but can't make up my mind to make any change at present'.<sup>54</sup> Jane's health remained poor. She managed to get to Sidmouth again in March 1909, where her doctor strongly urged her to part with Jenny. Back in Lyme Regis, she wrote a despairing letter to Sydney Cockerell. She had been too weak this time to continue with treatment at the baths at Sidmouth, she said, and she continued:

The doctor there told me my nerves were shattered from the long strain of living with my dear Jenny, and strongly advised me to part from her, but I can't make up my mind – it is heart rending only to think of it. She has had a bad winter.<sup>55</sup>

Jane did not know what to do. Nor did Georgie. Realising that two fit persons were now needed to cope with Jenny, Georgie wondered whether Jane's sister Bessie might take a turn and, pondering on the seemingly large number of women who needed homes and work, she appealed to Cockerell: 'can't we find anyone?'.<sup>56</sup> May at this point spent a month in the summer at the Manor, but she was to sail for an American

tour in October 1909, which proved to be a particularly low month. Jane was tired and rheumatic, and Jenny was experiencing repeated petit mal attacks which Jane felt were worse than the larger more convulsive ones.<sup>57</sup>

A solution came in the shape of the indefatigable Mrs. Culmer. Her permanent home was with her husband George in his native Kent. After unsuccessfully searching for a property near to Kelmscott, she found a house in Kent, in Faversham. She took Jenny, heavily dosed with bromides, to stay with her and her husband at the end of 1909. In Jane's eyes, Kelmscott was still Jenny's home and Jenny returned for visits in 1910 and 1911, only to get worse again each time. It did seem, however, that Jenny fared better in Faversham with the Culmers. In practice, Faversham was to be Jenny's permanent home for the next eight years (to December 1917). The era of Jane and Jenny and their moving life at Kelmscott had effectively come to an end in late 1909.

What briefly of Jane in the following years? It seems that when Jenny went to Faversham Jane gave in to exhaustion and remained thoroughly unwell over the best part of the next year and more. March 1910, for example, found her feeling low, unable to travel far and staying in a different property in Burford – both The Old Hospital and Kelmscott being too cold and damp for her.<sup>58</sup> She suffered from bronchitis, which can be hard to shake off, and jaundice. She continued to feel terribly weak and depressed. Jenny's visits did not help. In time, however, Jane did recover her energies. There were visits to friends – Georgie and the Richmonds, for example – and visitors to her at Kelmscott. There was an active time in London in 1912 with some concerts and visits to galleries. Frank Sharp and Jan Marsh, editing her letters of the period, also draw attention to the part she played in initially gathering together some of her husband's literary works and providing May with memories, thoughts and corrections for the massive project she was then undertaking in compiling the twenty-four volumes of William Morris's *Collected Works*.<sup>59</sup>

The idea of purchasing the Manor came up again. Jane agreed with Cockerell that it was a question now of whether May wanted eventually to live there. It would make little difference to Jane's life. The purchase was more or less settled before she left for Bath for the winter of 1913-14, although her letters suggest nothing was finalised until at least the end of October and perhaps indeed as late as the end of December.<sup>60</sup> Either way, Jane was never to spend any time in Kelmscott Manor as its owner. She died in Bath on 26 January 1914.

The years 1897-1909 and indeed up to Jane's death in Jan 1914 form a distinctive and little charted period in the history of the Morris women and their time at Kelmscott Manor. There were indeed good times: the peace, the tranquillity and sheer pleasure in the Manor and its gardens, the enjoyment that was to be had in the unspoilt quiet of the area and the appreciation of visitors. Jenny's letters to Cockerell

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in the early part of this period gave evidence of enjoyable daily life, albeit sometimes laced with concern about her mother. There is a glimpse too of engagement in village life – an active involvement led by May which was to be deepened in her own tenure of the Manor during the years that followed.<sup>61</sup> But for Jane there was no unbroken peace. The fact of Jenny’s epilepsy shaped everything for her. At least as much as the cold and damp it led to constant comings and goings as Jane struggled with her own fragile health. Yet the strength of both women’s love of Kelmscott, the ‘spell’ that Georgie felt would have been better broken, remained strong to the last.

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#### NOTES

1. For an account of the events of these years, focusing on the development of May’s career and the challenges faced by Jane, see Jan Marsh, *Jane and May Morris: A Biographical Story 1839-1938* (London: Pandora, 1986), chs. 21 and 22. (Afterwards Marsh). For newer research on May, see Lynn Hulse, ed., *May Morris: Art and Life – New Perspectives* (London: Friends of William Morris Gallery, 2017). (Afterwards Hulse).
2. *The Collected Letters of Jane Morris*, ed. by Frank C. Sharp and Jan Marsh (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), p. 290. (Afterwards Sharp and Marsh). The introductions to Parts 4 and 5 of this volume provide a brief but important overview of Jane’s part in the events under discussion in this paper.
3. Celia Davies, ‘Jenny Morris in her Own Voice: Letters to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, 1897-99’, *JWMS*, 22: 4 (2018), 31-46. (Afterwards Davies).
4. Jenny Morris to H. Buxton Forman, 25 November 1896, Hammersmith and Fulham Archives DD/341/1/6.
5. See Jenny Morris to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, 4 October 1897, British Library Add. Ms. 52739. (Further letters by Jenny Morris from this collection are cited by date only).
6. Sharp and Marsh, p. 301.
7. These movements can be traced through Jenny’s letters to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, British Library Add. Ms. 52739, and through Jane’s letters for the period in Sharp and Marsh.
8. Although research into epilepsy had begun to develop during the mid-nineteenth century, there was nothing in this period approaching today’s anti-epileptic drugs which can make seizures rare and enable sufferers to lead full lives. Brain-dulling bromides were one of the few treatments on offer. Fear on the part of those observing the uncontrolled bodily movements and strange vocalisations that can accompany a major seizure was common and a strong stigma continued to surround the disease. This is discussed briefly in Davies, p. 41. For detail on the history of medical treatment of the disease, see M. J. Eadie and P. F. Bladon, *A Disease Once Sacred: A History of the Medical Understanding of Epilepsy* (Eastleigh: John Libby, 2001). Evidence of Jenny’s epileptic episodes can be traced to some extent through the correspondence of her parents and close family friends, but the true extent of their frequency and severity is impossible to trace.
9. William Morris recognised the effects of Jenny’s epilepsy on his wife and the way that anxiety about her daughter could become quite unbearable for her. It is true that he sometimes had to be brought to realise just how bad the situation was. Yet he had looked after Jenny in London while Jane spent

- some months recovering in Italy in 1881, 1885 and again in 1892. He had often gone alone with Jenny to Kelmscott Manor; he had taken her to Rottingdean, staying with the Burne-Joneses, and taken her late in his life on a trip to see some of the places in France that he himself had visited as a young man.
10. For William's networks and involvement with the local area, see Frank C. Sharp, 'William Morris's Kelmscott Connections', *JWMS*, 13.2 (Spring 1999), 44-55.
  11. Jenny Morris to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, 21 November 1897.
  12. Jane's continuing command of the detail of Morris's many projects is notable in the correspondence. Sharp and Marsh regard her as 'a careful preliminary editor of Morris's literary manuscripts' in these years, as well as revealing 'a strong practical streak' in financial and legal matters (Sharp and Marsh, p. 287). Certainly, she was reliant on Cockerell, but on many matters, he often accepted her initiatives and suggestions. Her memories were also important later as May began to assemble the multi-volume *Collected Works* of her father. See *The Collected Works of William Morris*, ed. by May Morris, 24 vols (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1910-1915).
  13. Jenny Morris to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, 14 July 1899. Julie Staveley was one of several nurse-companions employed in these years.
  14. All references to visitors in this period are drawn from the Kelmscott Manor Visitors Book, British Library Add. Ms. 45412.
  15. Sharp and Marsh, p. 307.
  16. It is clear that the previous arrangement of appointing a couple as gardener/handyman and cook/housekeeper was continued. There are also occasional mentions of a housemaid. The 1901 Census records seven Manor residents. These were Jane, Jenny and Jenny's then-companion, Louisa C. Strong, together with William Panting (gardener/domestic), Emily Panting (housekeeper/domestic), their son William, age 9, and Henrietta J. Carter (housemaid/domestic). Jane's letter of March 1898, referring to the housekeeper Mary Giles, offers glimpses of the changes that occurred over the years. The Pantings had at some point replaced William and Mary Giles, the couple appointed in 1892. They were to be dismissed, as this account later shows, in 1903.
  17. Davies, pp. 35-36. In thanking William De Morgan for sending his second novel to them, Jane pronounced it 'delightful', saying that Jenny, who at that moment was reading it, 'gurgles and chuckles with pleasure'. Sharp and Marsh, p. 403.
  18. Mother and daughter had worked together on embroidery projects during the 1880s and Jenny worked with May on pieces for the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1899. There is a reference, frustratingly ambiguous, in Jane's letters to sending Cockerell 'a bit of embroidery begun long ago, but only just finished'. Sharp and Marsh, p. 316. It seems likely that in part it had been worked by another hand and finished by Jenny who was forceful in her criticism of the standard of some of the work. See Davies, p. 36 n. 21-22. Much later, however, Jane was to comment to Charles March Gere in January 1906: 'I still embroider while there is daylight'. Sharp and Marsh, p. 393.
  19. Sharp and Marsh, p. 350.
  20. April 1905, for example, saw Jane referring with great pleasure to two rows of lilies which she had lifted and replanted the previous year. They had not flowered for some years but now were doing well. Sharp and Marsh, p. 386.
  21. Kelmscott Manor, KM553. Gere made at least two and possibly three other versions of this portrait (personal communication, Jill Halliwell).
  22. For the finished painting, see <<https://www.demorgan.org.uk/collection/the-hourglass/>> [last accessed 17 December 2020]. The pastel portrait, a close-up of the head of Jane Morris, prepared as a preliminary sketch for the painting, was displayed by the De Morgan Foundation to mark the centenary of Jane's death. See <<http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/demorgan/2014.html>> [last accessed 17 December 2020]. Kelmscott Manor Visitors Book records a five day visit in September 1903, British Library Add. Ms. 45412.

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23. For a fuller account of the nature and stages of Jane's thinking, see Marsh, pp. 242-43. Marsh traces Jane's first unsuccessful effort to find a barn or get local support for new building for education and recreation for local agricultural labourers. She emphasises Jane's concern with the lot of the working poor, her wish to benefit the village with her money, as well as to create a memorial to Morris. For some of the correspondence on these matters see Sharp and Marsh, p. 295; Jenny Morris to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, 21 July 1898; *The Letters of Philip Webb*, ed. by John Aplin, 4 vols (London: Routledge 2016), II, pp. 385-86.
  24. The Hobbs family had the most important farm in the village and were owners of a substantial landholding and a prized cattle herd. Kelmscott Manor had been first leased to Morris and Rossetti by Charles Hobbs and a friendship developed between Morris and his son Robert Hobbs. Robert Hobbs was the father of the Hobbs junior (Bert Hobbs) referred to in these newspaper reports. Bert Hobbs was husband of May Elliott Hobbs who became a friend of May Morris. The two women were jointly involved in the development of village activities.
  25. *Faringdon Advertiser*, 23 January 1904, n.p.
  26. *Faringdon Advertiser*, 18 January 1902, n.p. It is not clear whether the reference here to 'Miss Morris' refers to Jenny or May. It does seem likely that Jenny was present at these events given the involvement of her carers, although no direct evidence has been found.
  27. *Faringdon Advertiser*, 8 February 1902, n.p.
  28. For the two events, see *Faringdon Advertiser*, 3 January 1903 and 10 January 1903, n.p.
  29. Sharp and Marsh, p. 331.
  30. Sharp and Marsh, p. 311.
  31. Sharp and Marsh, pp. 356.
  32. Mrs. Panting, Jane wrote, 'has been getting sluttish and careless with the cooking and I fear drinking too'. She spoke of the trial of adjusting to new faces – dealing with a new cook, for example, who would need much coaching. Sharp and Marsh, pp. 365-66.
  33. Sharp and Marsh, pp. 399-400.
  34. For the illness of Miss Staveley, see Sharp and Marsh, pp. 378-79. Miss Shemmonds, first appointed in 1909, was to remain with Jane beyond Jenny's removal to Faversham, which will be discussed below. It was on Jenny's visit back to Kelmscott in 1910 that Miss Shemmonds was described as 'incapable and brutal' and was dismissed. Sharp and Marsh, pp. 439-40. The very occasional references in correspondence make it difficult to list in full the names and dates of nurse-companions. Names appearing in this period include Miss Roberts, Miss Strong, Miss Peerless (also appearing later in this account as Mrs. Culmer), Miss Cousins (or Cansius) and Miss Shemmonds. By 1908, although it had also occurred earlier, it is clear that it had become necessary to employ two nurse-companions, given the deterioration in Jenny's health. See Sharp and Marsh, p. 413.
  35. The detail of these moves can be traced through Jane's letters reprinted in Sharp and Marsh. The visit to Bognor during March 1900 shows particularly vividly how Jane could succeed in improving Jenny's health with a change of scene, but at some cost to herself. Sharp and Marsh, pp. 338-39.
  36. Sharp and Marsh, p. 342. Jane's health was a concern from an early stage in her marriage, and despite considerable activity in these later years, her letters are peppered with reference to tiredness, sleeplessness, chills and particularly rheumatism. While this strong statement is early, her quest for treatments prompted another despairing statement in August 1904, followed by serious concerns from friends, as detailed later in this paper.
  37. Sharp and Marsh, p. 320.
  38. Sharp and Marsh, p. 364.
  39. Sydney Carlyle Cockerell to Philip Webb, 18 September 1905, NAL MSL/1958/690/88.
  40. Thomas Henry Cheatele (1832-1906), like his father before him, was a well-known medical practitioner and a prominent figure in the town of Burford. The information in the text which follows about the old

- and new hospitals has come to light since the brief reference in Sharp and Marsh, p. 364. For more on the story of the old and new hospitals set out here and Cheate's involvement, see A. Catchpole et al., *Burford: Buildings and People in a Cotswold Town* (Chichester: Phillimore 2008), M. S. Gretton, *Burford Past and Present*, rev. edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1945). A typescript account of the Grammar School history, 'Burford Grammar School, 1571-1971', can be consulted in Burford Library.
41. *Duties on Land Values: record of valuations made by the Commissioners of Inland Revenue in accordance with the provisions of part I of the Finance (1909/10) Act 1910: county of Oxford* (Witney: Micrographix, 2000-2001) (District Valuation Report), available online: <<https://apps2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/srvheritage/recordSearch?offset=0>> [last accessed 17 December 2020].
  42. An application was made on 28 December 1912 to show estate duty paid in connection the Will of Dr. T. H. Cheate who had died in 1906. It refers to 'Far Old Hospital Church Lane' as let to Mrs. Morris. A Conveyance of 5 April 1913, on behalf of his widow, transferred 'The Old Hospital Church Street' to the ownership of Burford Grammar School. Despite variations in wording, it is clear that both documents refer to the same premises as let to Jane Morris. The Conveyance specifically refers to the Old Hospital as 'in the occupation of Jane Morris or her undertenant'. Oxford History Centre, BGS V111/6-7. The evidence from her letters show she was in residence there in 1906, and in 1910 stayed elsewhere in Burford since 'my own house was too cold to risk going into'. Sharp and Marsh, p. 437. A letter in August of that year is the last direct reference in her published letters to the house, although she was not in residence at the time. Sharp and Marsh, p. 442.
  43. Sharp and Marsh, p. 381.
  44. Sharp and Marsh, p. 382. A further sense of how low Jane felt over these months came in a letter written by May. She urged Sydney not to say anything to 'unsettle' her mother over the decision not to purchase, commenting that wherever her mother went she would be unsettled, although she was also worried about the risk, if she did not purchase, that Kelmscott might end up being developed inappropriately. May Morris to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, 16 September 1904, WMG S4.3.16 Briggs Box 1.
  45. Georgie Burne-Jones to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, 13 August 1901, NAL MSL/1958/693/29.
  46. Georgie Burne-Jones to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, 24 February 1905, NAL MSL/1958/693/50.
  47. Georgie Burne-Jones to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, 1 March 1905, NAL MSL/1958/693/51.
  48. Sharp and Marsh, pp. 385-86.
  49. Sharp and Marsh, pp. 392-93.
  50. Sharp and Marsh, p. 399.
  51. Before her marriage, Ada Culmer, as Ada Peerless, had already acted as companion to Jenny and had returned to help further.
  52. Georgie Burne-Jones to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, 23 July 1907, NAL MSL/1958/693/77
  53. Georgie Burne-Jones to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, 30 September 1908, NAL MSL/1958/693/86.
  54. Sharp and Marsh, p. 417.
  55. Sharp and Marsh, pp. 419-20.
  56. Georgie Burne-Jones to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, 11 April 1909, NAL MSL/1958/693/90.
  57. Sharp and Marsh, p. 430.
  58. Sharp and Marsh, p. 437. Sharp and Marsh provide an overview of Jane's activity and movements in Part Five, 'The Last Decade', introducing the letters of the period.
  59. Sharp and Marsh, p. 371.
  60. There is a direct reference in Jane's correspondence to a forthcoming meeting concerning the final settlement of the sale. See Sharp and Marsh, p. 464. Jane later refers to sending some signed documents to St. John Hornby, a trustee of the Morris Estate, although there is no indication of what these documents were and whether they related to the purchase of the Manor. Sharp and Marsh, p. 465.
  61. Kathy Haslam "'Our Beloved Oxfordshire Home": May Morris and Kelmscott', in Hulse, pp. 191-208.

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# Philip Webb and the Socialist League

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Stuart Barlow

Philip Webb first met William Morris when they worked together at the Oxford architectural office of George Edmund Street in 1856, and they became lifelong friends and companions, collaborating in design and politics throughout their lives. In their respective works, Philip Webb's biographers W.R. Lethaby and Sheila Kirk have dealt with Webb's political activity in different ways. Lethaby, who was a friend of Webb when he was older, dedicated a chapter to 'Webb's Socialism', composed of anecdotal reminiscences and extracts from Webb's papers.<sup>1</sup> Kirk's chapter, titled 'Webb the Socialist', takes a more analytical approach by investigating the common roots of Webb's architectural and political philosophies.<sup>2</sup> Mark Swenarton also recognised the importance of Webb's socialism by devoting a chapter to Webb in his book on the Ruskin tradition within architectural ideas.<sup>3</sup> In this article I look at Webb's activity within the Socialist League, and what was happening around him in the League, principally making use of letters and documents held in the Socialist League (UK) Archives at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam (referred to later as the Archive), and the pages of the Socialist League's journal *Commonweal*.<sup>4</sup>

## **The Journey to Socialism**

Philip Webb followed Morris's political journey from radical liberalism to believing social change could only be achieved through the efforts of the working classes, but it would be wrong to think he took this journey just out of loyalty to his friend.<sup>5</sup> It was a journey Webb began even before he met Morris, when he spent a brief period in Wolverhampton, during 1854, where he witnessed the impact of large-scale industry and 'all that God-forsaken prosperity drawn from terrible iniquity'.<sup>6</sup> It appears that Webb did not hide his political views from friends or clients. He described most of the Liberal parliamentarians as 'a base lot' in a February 1875 letter to

Rosalind Howard, for whom he designed Number 1 Palace Green, and the Howards were certainly aware that he had sent a message to William Gladstone, the Liberal Leader, demanding greater seriousness in Parliament.<sup>7</sup> Later clients Sir Lowthian Bell (for whom he designed Rounton Grange and other buildings in the North East) and Percy Wyndham (Clouds House, East Knoyle Wiltshire), would goad Webb into arguments about his socialist beliefs.<sup>8</sup>

When Morris stepped into politics in October 1876, to protest against the Tory government's support for Turkey in a possible war with Russia, he had no hesitation in sending Webb's name, with others, to A. J. Mundella, a Liberal MP, as someone who felt 'strongly and rightly about the matter'.<sup>9</sup> Webb's and Morris's involvement in the Eastern Question Association resulted in their growing radicalisation, with Webb even thinking about 'taking a public house at Gravesend or Portsmouth and hocussing [tricking] the soldiers as they shall not go to fight the Russians', as he put it in a letter to Jane, Jenny and May Morris on 25 December 1877.<sup>10</sup> It also brought them into contact with working-class political action through the Labour Representation League. After the new Liberal Government introduced the Coercion Bill in 1881, and shelled Alexandria the following year, Morris broke with Liberalism and joined the Democratic Federation in January 1883, followed by Webb.<sup>11</sup>

The Democratic Federation had been founded in 1881 by Henry Mayers Hyndman, who had been a Tory Radical before converting to socialism after reading Karl Marx's *Capital*. The Federation was still in transition towards socialism when Morris and Webb joined and it later changed its name to the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in February 1884.<sup>12</sup> While Morris was soon thrust into a leadership role, becoming the treasurer, Webb's involvement seems to have been limited to making a weekly subscription of 1s-0d and various other donations to the Propaganda and Band Funds, including a sum of £10 in November 1884. Webb's name appeared in *Justice* as an attendee, sympathetic with the aims of the Democratic Federation, at a meeting held in London in January 1884. As a number of his friends also attended, it is safe to assume this was Philip Webb. Despite this limited involvement Morris still introduced Webb to Hyndman as 'the man who taught me Socialism'.<sup>13</sup>

Morris, and others, had grown increasingly frustrated with Hyndman's undemocratic control of the SDF, along with his intrigues and jingoism, but Webb had left for Italy to recuperate from his first rheumatic attack, in early November 1884, before the conflict reached its climax. Even so Webb's eagerness for news of the SDF and its activities is clear in his letters home. On 7 December, he thanked Kate Faulkner, sister of Morris's friend and fellow socialist Charles Faulkner, just after arriving in Italy for the

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description of going to [the] S. D. Federation gathering [which] interested me much, the more so that it was the first news of active life at home that I have heard of (I see no newspapers, except Italian ones, wh<sup>t</sup> I can't read) and the activity in such a cause cheered me [...].<sup>14</sup>

Webb's commitment was again in evidence when he wrote to Morris, a couple of days later, asking for 'any news you could give of the working of the S.D.F'; he was 'not bursting with hope of instant advance', though he added that 'the future success is certain to my mind, but most surely only in the future'.<sup>15</sup> The conflict within the SDF came to a head on Saturday 27 December 1884 when the majority voted against Hyndman at the Federation's Executive Committee meeting, after which Morris read out a statement announcing their resignations and the Socialist League was founded three days later. Morris and the others thought it best to make a fresh start as they considered their majority insufficiently large to get rid of Hyndman's jingoistic faction. Morris was also glad to be rid of people whose good faith he distrusted, preferring a fresh start with colleagues animated by principles close to his own.<sup>16</sup>

### **Webb and the League's Bloomsbury Branch**

While Morris had written to Webb about the break from the SDF, Webb was still impatient for further news, telling Kate Faulkner on 28 January 1885 that he would be 'glad to know how the new "league" is getting on' and 'if things are going pretty well in the new form'.<sup>17</sup> Webb's enthusiasm for the split, along with his concerns for the future, can be seen when he wrote to Morris in early February:

[your last letter] was even better in its tune than the former ones. I felt quite happy [...] that the League had escaped the snare of the sham reconciliation. Now that the cable is really cut, even if our side drifts a little, it would not matter so long as we can keep clear of the too cranky hulk of the SDF.<sup>18</sup>

Webb also thanked Morris for setting up his membership with the League's Bloomsbury branch and told him to put in '£5 'till I come home, for subscriptions &c'.<sup>19</sup> From this letter it is clear that Webb already knew some of the leading figures in the League, expressing the hope that Morris could make Andreas Scheu 'sit quiet when the fever is on him [as he could] be the most helpful of companions'. Until Webb returned to England, in the middle of April 1885, he continually badgered his friends for copies of the League's new journal, *The Commonweal*, asking Kate Faulkner to send additional copies when he thought previous copies 'may have been confiscated by the police'.<sup>20</sup> Once received, Webb devoured the news about 'the progress of this

new venture [the Socialist League]'.<sup>21</sup>

By February 1886 Webb was one of the thirty-seven members in the Bloomsbury branch and was playing an active part in running it as one of three branch officials, which Emery Walker recalled later as being the branch treasurer. The Bloomsbury branch grew steadily to sixty-seven members by the time of the League's annual conference in May 1887 and then one hundred and ten members the following year. The number of League branches increased in a similar fashion, from just eight attending the League's first conference in 1885 to twenty-four at the 1887 conference.<sup>22</sup> The Bloomsbury branch reported to these conferences that they were carrying out active propaganda work with weekly lectures and outdoor meetings in St. Pancras which they believed, by 1888, had achieved 'one step forward for the cause of Socialism'.<sup>23</sup>

Initially Bloomsbury branch meetings were held at the Stanley Coffee House in Wardour Street before moving around the corner to the Eagle and Child Coffee House, in Old Compton Street, in September 1885. The growth in membership meant they had to look for larger premises and branch meetings were moved to the Arlington Hall on Rathbone Place, Oxford Street in June 1886. They only stayed there for three months before moving to the Communist Club on Tottenham Street, just off Tottenham Court Road. To accommodate larger audiences, branch talks given by Morris, Hyndman, Annie Besant and the radical MP Robert Cunninghame Graham were held in the Athenæum Hall on Tottenham Court Road.<sup>24</sup> For a period the Bloomsbury branch met on the same evenings as the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) committee, which Webb had helped Morris establish in April 1877. One can imagine Webb scurrying between these two meetings, trying not to be late, as it was customary for the SPAB committee and some younger members to eat 'frugally but merrily' at Gatti's on the Strand after their meetings.<sup>25</sup>

Bloomsbury became one of the most formidable branches in the League as it contained some of the most high-profile socialists of the period – notably Eleanor Marx-Aveling and her partner Edward Aveling, through whom Frederick Engels maintained his contact with the British socialist movement.<sup>26</sup> Eleanor Marx-Aveling was not only the daughter of Karl Marx, she also made a profound contribution to the socialist movement of the period and has been described, by her recent biographer Rachel Holmes, as 'the foremother of socialist feminism'.<sup>27</sup> She also had a passion for the theatre, was active in amateur dramatics, and translated Henrik Ibsen's plays into English, as well as Gustave Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary*. Eleanor lived with Edward Aveling in what they described as a 'free union', because Edward's previous marriage had ended in a separation but not in divorce, with Eleanor adopting the name Eleanor Marx-Aveling.<sup>28</sup>

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Edward Aveling had been a scientist and a prominent secularist before becoming a socialist. He was considered a brilliant intellectual and one of the leading socialist propagandists of the period. Unfortunately he also had a reputation as an inveterate borrower of money and a womaniser, which would eventually lead to serious unethical, even criminal, behaviour.<sup>29</sup> Webb seemed to have been aware of some of Aveling's shortcomings when he wrote to Morris in April 1885, while in Italy, saying that:

I am not afraid of Aveling, though I don't think I shd like him, but I understand that it may be, & probably is, absolutely necessary for you and other serious members to use any ability you can lay hold of. I thought so even with Hyndman, who was of very inferior stuff in comparison with Aveling.<sup>30</sup>

The Bloomsbury branch was closely associated with the League's parliamentary group which wanted to engage in parliamentary and municipal elections, as well as amalgamation with other socialist organisations. Morris was vehemently opposed to this approach as he believed that the act of seeking reforms through parliament would require acceptance of the capitalist system he detested.<sup>31</sup> In his lecture, 'Whigs, Democrats and Socialists', Morris suggested it was better to engage in educational work and he made clear his belief that even if policies appearing to be socialist were passed by parliament they would become a mere nullity:

There is no end of these semi-Socialist looking measures one may name [...] which after all in spite of their benevolent appearance, are really weapons in the hands of reactionaries, having for their real object the creation of a new middle class made out of the working-class and at their expense [...]. The future of the constitutional Parliament, therefore, it seems to me, is a perpetual Whig Rump, which will yield to pressure when mere political reforms are attempted to be got out of it, but will be quite impossible for any real change in social and economical matters [...].<sup>32</sup>

Morris successfully fought off a motion at the Third Annual Conference, May 1887, put forward by Eleanor Marx-Aveling on behalf of the parliamentary group, which proposed that Parliament, municipal and other local-government bodies, and the contest for the election of members to them, be taken advantage of for spreading the principals of Socialism and organising the people into a Socialist Labour Party.<sup>33</sup>

While Webb attended this conference, intervening in a dispute over the verification of the North Shield branch delegates, he could not vote on the motion as he was not

a branch delegate.<sup>34</sup> But Webb's support for Morris's views might be gleaned from comments he made to Giacomo Boni in October 1892 when he wrote that 'Parliamentary Government has had its day', before describing the English Parliament as 'a slave [...] to precedent, convention and compromise'.<sup>35</sup> Morris's conflict with the parliamentary group did not go away and both Morris and Eleanor Marx-Aveling spoke at branches on their positions during the following year.<sup>36</sup> The matter came to a head at the 1888 conference where, as Morris confirmed to Bruce Glasier in Glasgow, he had the support of both Webb and Faulkner.<sup>37</sup> Bloomsbury branch motions calling for 'a scheme for the federation of the various Socialist organisations', and allowing branches to 'run or support candidates for all representative bodies of the country', were defeated. This was only achieved, however, with the support of the League's anarchists, who grew increasingly influential over the next two years.<sup>38</sup>

Frustration with the actions of the Bloomsbury branch led to moves to exclude them from the League but the majority of the branch, including Eleanor and Edward Aveling but excluding Webb, left the Socialist League to set up the Bloomsbury Socialist Society, which advertised some of their early talks in *Commonweal* in September 1888. It took the League six months to reconstruct the Bloomsbury branch for those who had not left and it eventually met at the Percy Hall on Percy Street, off Tottenham Court Road. Unfortunately the branch lost the use of the hall within a month and this seems to have been the end of the Bloomsbury branch. Unattached members in the area were then encouraged to join *The Commonweal* branch which had been set up at the beginning of 1890. Unfortunately the Archive contains no membership records for this branch.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Socialist League's Treasurer**

In December 1885 Thomas Binning reported to the League's Council that the auditors were very concerned about the way the accounts were being kept by the then-treasurer, William Morris. Shortly after this Webb started attending Council meetings and from February 1886 he was co-opted onto the Council before taking over the treasurer's role from Morris in March. Webb was subsequently formally elected onto the League's Council at the Annual Conference in June 1886, and then elected as the treasurer by the Council.<sup>40</sup> Before taking on the role of treasurer Webb had been concerned about the amount of work Morris had taken on for the League, telling Kate Faulkner in April 1885 that he was 'very anxious for both Morris and Charles [Faulkner], as they will be both of them very earnest in their labours and neither of them wanted any added work on their shoulders'.<sup>41</sup>

Despite an un-demonstrative countenance Webb was, according to Sydney Cockerell, 'a man who has never done the smallest thing with less than his might'.<sup>42</sup>

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Webb's punctiliousness in matters financial meant he was better suited to balancing the small amounts of money for which Morris did not have the patience. This along with a willingness to attend to business at the League's headquarters and what Emery Walker described as his 'boundless generosity in helping lame dogs over stiles', seemed to have been qualities ideal for the treasurer's role.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that Fiona MacCarthy's assertion that Webb was an inept choice for the role may have been wide of the mark.<sup>44</sup> Webb's diligence is evident in his attendance at forty-seven out of a possible fifty Council meetings in his first year as treasurer. Webb did apologise to Henry Spurling for not attending meetings in June and August 1886, and for not getting the accounts done in time; possibly his architectural work did sometimes conflict with his new role in the League.<sup>45</sup>

After Webb was re-elected to the Council, and to his role as treasurer, in October 1887 he suffered a near-fatal attack of rheumatic fever, which meant he missed twenty-nine out of the next forty-nine Council meetings. Charles Faulkner had to take over the treasurer's role in his absence. Webb's illness can be traced in his letters to Henry Barker between September and November 1887. Initially Webb told Barker that he had a bad cold and a sore throat, but by the beginning of October he was complaining that his throat was 'rather dogged' and of rheumatism in his knees in November. While he abandoned much of his work for the League during this period Webb still invited Barker to his house to sort out ongoing financial matters and to ensure the Council discussed the question of the League's work with the unemployed.<sup>46</sup> Illness again forced Webb to miss meetings during August and September 1888, but he continued to be re-elected to the Council, and as treasurer, at the next three annual conferences, suggesting the membership appreciated Webb's work as treasurer.<sup>47</sup>

### **Dealing with the League's Finances**

When Webb became the treasurer he undertook a review of the League's finances and reported to the Council on the state of the General and *Commonweal* Funds in July 1886. The General Fund supported the running of the League, including the printing of literature and propaganda work. It was made up from members' subscriptions, individual donations, collections at lectures or meetings and the sale of literature. Webb reported that while the General Fund's balance-in-hand was £4-13s-3d, there was a large outstanding printing bill of £16-18s-3p. Despite this potential looming debt Webb also felt it necessary to criticise the Council for repeatedly refusing 'to undertake [the] very necessary steps for forwarding the propaganda [work of the League], on account of want of funds'.<sup>48</sup> Webb wanted to see a marked increase in donations from members and must have supported the

Executive Council's July resolution calling on branches to increase their subscriptions to the General Fund. Webb believed that members should contribute as much as they could afford, suggesting regular amounts ranging between 6d to 1s or 2s-6d, rather than relying on large donations from a few individuals.<sup>49</sup>

Interestingly Webb does not seem to have heeded his own advice as he continued to donate every spare penny he had, as well as, according to George Jack, 'giving practical help to the poorer members'.<sup>50</sup> The pages of *Commonweal* show that Webb made regular donations to various funds, such as his 1s-0d per week, over a fifteen-week period, to the Norwich Prisoners' Aid Fund (set up to support members who had been arrested and jailed after a meeting of the unemployed in Norwich resulted in violence) and the League's Strike Committee between March and May 1887. He also made donations to one-off appeals such as the Paris Commune Celebration Fund. Webb's generosity is more evident in his letters to Charles Slaughter, during 1888, in which Webb enclosed weekly payments of four pounds on behalf of himself and Charles Faulkner. He continued to send this amount even after Faulkner's stroke in October 1888. These donations were considerable when considered against Webb's estimated annual income, at the time, of just less than four hundred pounds a year or eight pounds per week. While Morris was doing something similar, his wealth was considerably greater.<sup>51</sup>

Webb's immediate response to the state of the League's finances was to draft a letter to members which he composed while doing his review, probably prior to the Annual Conference in 1886.<sup>52</sup> Webb wanted to draw members' attention to the League's rules concerning 'Contributions'. This required members to pay a 'weekly subscription of [...] AT LEAST ONE PENNY', or 'one shilling a quarter' for those members who were unable to belong to a branch. Before reporting to the Council Webb attempted to increase the regular flow of money from branches by inserting a 'Branch Subscriptions Paid' notice into each issue of *Commonweal* showing how up to date they were with their membership subscription payments. This was initially signed 'P W' or 'PH W' for the first four months, but was subsequently published unsigned.<sup>53</sup> These notices show the difficulty Webb had in collecting subscriptions and he even resorted to an additional plea, which said:

Branches not mentioned [in the list] here have not paid to date, and some are months in arrears. This laxity on the part of Branches is one of the greatest hindrances to the propaganda of the League – P W<sup>54</sup>

Branches were soon writing to Webb, enclosing overdue subscription payments. Fred Pickles, who had helped to form the Bradford branch and was its secretary and

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treasurer, sent a letter in May 1886 enclosing subscriptions for twelve members. Webb later received letters from another Bradford branch member, George Arthur Gaskell, containing more subscriptions. M. Geldart likewise sent in subscriptions for the eleven members of the Croydon branch. Webb also received letters from the Dublin branch secretary, John O’Gorman, enclosing subscriptions from the branch’s fifteen members.<sup>55</sup> These letters confirm that rules concerning branch contributions at the rate of one penny per member per month, suggested in the League’s constitution and rules, were generally being applied. This level of contribution seemed to have been set so as not to discourage workers from joining. Figures for workers on the railways in 1884 suggest that this level of contribution represented less than one tenth of one percent of their wages.<sup>56</sup>

The issue of prompt payment of subscriptions continued into the following year, as seen when Faulkner wrote to Webb in February 1887 enclosing three months’ subscriptions for the thirty members of the Oxford branch. Then R. F. Muirhead wrote in April enclosing one pound in lieu of outstanding Glasgow branch subscriptions, explaining he was unable to send a larger sum because the branch had incurred large expenses from ‘performing the functions of a centre’ for the League in Scotland.<sup>57</sup> In 1887 and 1888, the Executive Council even decided, presumably prompted by Webb, that branches would not be allowed to send delegates to annual conferences if their subscriptions were not up to date. While the ‘Branch Subscriptions Paid’ notices do show that a number of branches met these deadlines, not all did so, and yet their delegates still attended the conferences. These notices also demonstrate the decline of the League, with twenty-seven branches being listed in 1888 and only fourteen in 1890. It can be seen that the issue of overdue members’ subscriptions was a permanent problem for Webb and the League.<sup>58</sup>

The production of the League’s journal, *Commonweal*, was supported by the Commonweal Fund, which consisted of money from the sale of the publication as well as specific donations. When Webb became treasurer the fund amounted to £82-16s-6p, following large donations by Morris and others to enable *Commonweal* to be printed weekly, which commenced on 1 May 1886.<sup>59</sup> By the time of Webb’s Report three months later the fund’s balance had been reduced considerably, to £66-10s-3d, due to the ongoing expenses incurred with the printing of the journal. Webb, one might say optimistically, felt these losses could probably be avoided if branches paid their *Commonweal* accounts promptly and he complained that some branches had not sent in money from the first weekly edition of *Commonweal* published some ten weeks earlier.<sup>60</sup>

In order to support the finances of *Commonweal* Webb published appeals in the journal saying he would ‘gladly receive Subscriptions from all friends willing to aid in

carrying on our paper'.<sup>61</sup> This led to the "'Commonweal' Printing Fund' being set up with donations and subscriptions listed in the paper, initially signed 'PH W'. The fund continued for the next two years until October 1887 and Webb sent 0s-6d per week to the fund. It was replaced by the "'Commonweal' Guarantee Fund' in January 1889, into which Webb contributed 1s-0d per week up to the time he left the League.<sup>62</sup>

Webb sometimes received letters enclosing money from the sale of *Commonweal* and other literature, as with those from Gaskell who was trying to keep the Bradford branch's sales up to date. Other letters show that some branches, however, sent money to a variety of people at the Central Office in London. One wonders if this caused some of the accounting issues with which Webb had to deal. Gaskell wrote to Webb again, in December 1886, asking for clarification on what the Bradford branch owed in relation to the supply of literature, as did Bruce Glasier from Glasgow. Gaskell continued writing to Webb asking for acknowledgement of the money sent in, complaining about the lack of 'the courtesy of a reply' and later, at the beginning of 1887, about an incorrect bill for literature.<sup>63</sup> These exchanges suggest the League's accounting practices were wanting or the issuing of literature was poorly recorded. Philip Webb himself was not immune to making mistakes. In June 1886 he admitted his 'additions were wrong in 3 places' which had resulted in him only paying Sparling 8s-5d rather than £1-7s-3d as he should have done.<sup>64</sup>

Over a year after becoming treasurer Webb complained to Henry Barker that he could not complete the accounts as he had not received the weekly sheets from the Ways and Means Committee. By June 1887 Webb appeared happier with the situation as he told Barker that he accepted his proposal for reorganising the League's cash account subject to Faulkner looking at it. Webb was concerned about the accuracy of the office ledger, which might result in the calculated General Fund balance being different to the figure in Barker's account. *Commonweal's* finances did not improve and by the following June it was losing £4 each week, even if every paper sold was paid for.<sup>65</sup> These continuing financial problems give substance to Webb's later comment to Lethaby that '[t]he League required as much bailing as a leaky boat'.<sup>66</sup>

### **Free Speech Campaign**

Open-air meetings were a regular feature of socialist and radical organisations during the 1880s, which led to a friendly rivalry between the League and SDF to see who could achieve the highest number of open-air speaking pitches. From May 1885, however, the police started to arrest and prosecute socialist speakers. Morris wrote several times in *Commonweal* about the police's 'petty tyranny' and strong bias against

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socialists when it came to open-air meetings. He asked for equal treatment with religious, temperance and secularist bodies.<sup>67</sup> He warned in July 1886 that

the public have to make up their mind whether the police shall be their servants or their masters. In order that they may escape the danger of the latter event they must bestir themselves and look at what is being done [...] against Socialists because of their doctrines.<sup>68</sup>

A 'Free Speech Defence Fund' was launched in *Commonweal* and donations were recorded in the paper, signed variously 'W', 'P.W.' and 'PH Webb Treasurer'. The fund continued until January 1887 by which time it showed there was a deficit between money raised and expenditure on fines, etc. Webb received letters from both branches and individuals enclosing donations to support the free speech campaign. During 1886 Gaskell, J. E. McCarthy and E. Teesdale sent Webb donations from the Bradford, Dublin and Hull branches for the 'Defence Fund' or 'Free Speech Defence Fund', while Marianne Grone sent Webb a personal donation of 1s-0d for what she called the 'Socialist Defence Association' and promised to send the same amount every month.<sup>69</sup> A multi-organisational Vigilance Committee had been set up to coordinate the Free Speech Campaign and Webb represented the League at one of the meetings at the Tower Hamlets Radical Club, participating alongside Annie Besant and George Bernard Shaw from the Fabian Society. A copy of the Vigilance Committee Balance Sheet, dated 6 May 1886, shows the donations and subscription received being used to cover the extensive costs of paying solicitors and Court of Justice fees.<sup>70</sup>

### **Other League Duties**

Charles Walkden wrote to Webb from Ashwell, a village of some 9000 people in Hertfordshire, with a donation for the General Fund, payment for his copies of *Commonweal* and a request to send five additional copies of the journal. Walkden, who had corresponded with the League since 1885, wanted these extra copies of *Commonweal* to 'keep the diggers and thatchers and weeders [of the village] informed about the world of schemers they live in'. Walkden was also distributing copies of Morris's *Art and Socialism* and *Useful Work versus Useless Toil* around Ashwell.<sup>71</sup> Walkden went on to write articles on the agricultural situation for *Commonweal* at a time when agricultural workers were forming trade unions in response to falling wages and living standards. A few years later the Hertfordshire Land and Labour League was formed in Hitchin only fourteen miles from Ashwell.<sup>72</sup>

Webb had to deal with other requests as well, such as one from Gaskell to place

an advert in *Commonweal* for Jane Hume Clapperton's first book, *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness*, which appeared in *Commonweal* on 4 September 1886.<sup>73</sup> Clapperton, a close friend of Gaskell, was a philosopher, socialist and social reformer who later wrote the novel *Margaret Dunmore*, which explores how the confines of marriage might be broadened into a free exchange of affection.<sup>74</sup> Then in May 1887 Webb had to deal with a final demand to submit a tax return for the Commonweal Publishing Co., the non-provision of which carried a fifty-pound penalty. Previously, in October 1885, the tax authorities had served a Notice of First Assessment, under the Income Tax Act, on the Commonweal Publishing Co. in relation to the tax due from employees' income. Morris had responded with a declaration that no employee had an income exceeding the income threshold, where tax became liable, of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum.<sup>75</sup> Although there is no record of Webb's response in the Archive no doubt he responded to the tax authorities in a similar manner as it was unlikely anybody working for *Commonweal* was receiving a salary as high as that threshold.

In addition to the League's Council meetings on Mondays, Webb's role as treasurer also meant he attended the League's Ways and Means Committee meetings, which was responsible for the League's premises, sale of literature, collecting subscriptions etc., on Thursdays. Then, on Saturdays, Webb would go into the League's offices to work on the books with the secretary. In addition to weekly branch meetings, Webb would also sometimes chair the London members' monthly meetings.<sup>76</sup> Despite all this activity the issue of the League's finances, unsurprisingly, took most of Webb's attention.

### **Speaking and Writing for the League**

Webb was renowned for not speaking or writing about his architectural work. Nor did he give public lectures for, or take any official office within, SPAB preferring to work in the background, guiding on matters of policy, acting as a consultant on repairs, attending weekly committee meetings and writing reports on threatened buildings.<sup>77</sup> He also provided informal training to young architects in the 'real school of practical *building* – architecture with all the whims which we usually call "design" left out'.<sup>78</sup> While Webb's work within the Socialist League seemed to have followed a similar trajectory, Webb also gave lectures and even published an article in *Commonweal*.

Lethaby recalled that: '[a]bout 1883, I heard Webb lecture to the Hoxton branch [...]. The only point I remember was an image of the unwinding of the great written scroll of history, unceasingly, unrestingly'.<sup>79</sup> This would have been just after Webb joined the Democratic Federation and one wonders whether Lethaby got the date

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wrong or whether Webb's socialist views emerged in advance of the Federation's foundation. Kirk refers to the subject of this talk as 'The Source of Capital', but places it, I think incorrectly, in Horton rather than Hoxton.

Bloomsbury branch handbills firmly establish that Webb chaired a discussion at the Eagle and Child Coffee House, on 28 January 1886, about Aveling's talk 'The Source of Capital' given the previous week.<sup>80</sup> Webb must have attended and sufficiently understood Aveling's talk to have the confidence to lead this discussion, as he once complained to Faulkner that he was 'not very handy in making people understand what is not quite clear to myself'. Unfortunately the discussion went unreported in *Commonweal* at the time.<sup>81</sup> Then during June 1886 Webb gave a lecture on 'The Necessities for Socialism' at three League branches in London (Croydon, Clerkenwell and the Labour Emancipation League in Hoxton).<sup>82</sup> Could the Hoxton talk be the one Lethaby remembered? The report of the Clerkenwell talk said it had created a lively debate and while it had received some opposition from 'a Radical and a Christian', the talk had highlighted 'the reality of the characteristics of the very poor outside our sham Society, and the reality of our commercial institutions as compared with freedom and justice for all'.<sup>83</sup>

At about the same time *Commonweal* reported Webb taking part in a series of Wednesday lectures at the Hammersmith branch along with William Morris and George Bernard Shaw. Unfortunately the subject of Webb's talk is not given but, apparently, attendance at these talks was good. Then in September Webb led the first of the Bloomsbury branch's new monthly discussions at The Communist Club. His subject was 'Foreigners in English Socialism' which generated a good debate between the members.<sup>84</sup>

The one article Webb appears to have written for *Commonweal*, at the end of 1886, was called 'Town and Gown', and was signed 'PH W'.<sup>85</sup> On the face of it the article appears to be a bit of a filler piece for the journal, describing Webb's visit to Oxford for a branch meeting of the League, on the subject of 'For a Lack of Knowledge'. But it also gives an insight into Webb's thoughts on a number of subjects. While reading his friend's notes for the meeting, presumably from Charles Faulkner, Webb points out the influence of class interest in the spreading of knowledge or information in relation to Faulkner's suggestion that 'the "otherside" is particularly dumb', in that:

these dumb have to depend on 'middlemen'; now middlemen have, deservedly, a bad name, as their usual quality is not of impartial judge between differing people, but rather that of the advocate for himself of his class [...].<sup>86</sup>

Webb is clearly sympathetic to those who are 'dumb', in the sense of those who do

not speak out or are reticent to do so. Then amongst his observations of fellow train passengers, undergraduates and walking around a damp Oxford, Webb describes the working class's 'considerable freedom of speech from the more distinctly "working men" [at the meeting, whose] illustrations were vigorous and often greatly amusing'.<sup>87</sup> The article also shows that Faulkner's status as a revolutionary socialist was well known since one of his colleagues addressed him 'in a half-jocular, half cynical way as a "Dynamiter"'. Webb seems to be delighted when he is introduced as 'another of the same trade!'

This seems to have been the high point for Webb in giving lectures as subsequently there appears to be no other record of Webb giving lectures or writing articles in the pages of *Commonweal*. Whether this was because of his repeated bouts of illness or the time required for his role as treasurer is not known. But within weeks of Webb leaving the Socialist League he chaired a meeting of the Hammersmith Socialist Society and later opened a discussion at the Society on the issue of 'toleration of opinion'.<sup>88</sup> Webb prepared six pages of detailed notes for this talk, which resulted in a 'wind of discussion' after he had proposed that the 'reason why *Socialists* and *Religionists* are so markedly intolerant, is, that they have their convictions only on probable evidence'.<sup>89</sup> He concluded his talk with the thought that 'toleration, to my mind is very much a matter of *manners*, of *courage*, and of *reason*' before, as he told William and Jenny Morris, being pitied for his mistaken beliefs.<sup>90</sup>

### **Webb and Anarchism in the League**

Within a year of the parliamentary group leaving the League Morris was telling Bruce Glasier in late December 1888 that the anarchist faction was 'determined to extremity and break up if we do not declare for anarchy'.<sup>91</sup> The growing influence of anarchism became evident within the pages of *Commonweal*, with increasing numbers of branch lectures incorporating aspects of anarchism, the handing out of anarchist leaflets at League meetings and articles by well-known anarchists such as Peter Kropotkin.<sup>92</sup> During this period, in May 1889, Morris wrote to *Commonweal* explaining why he saw himself to be a Communist and had 'no wish to qualify that word by joining any other to it'.<sup>93</sup>

Although both Webb and Morris were re-elected to the Council in 1890, Morris lost the editorship of *Commonweal* and became increasingly isolated following the election of more anarchists to the council. In the following November Morris wrote an article titled 'Where are we now?' which drew letters of criticism from anarchists within the League. After this Morris decided to leave the League along with the Hammersmith branch.<sup>94</sup> As he later explained to Glasier, because of previous experiences, '[a]s soon as there are two parties in any body I am in – then I go'.<sup>95</sup>

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Webb was at the Council meeting on 24 November 1890 when the Hammersmith branch withdrawal notice was read out. It was only at this point that Webb informed the Council that he ‘must cease being treasurer’.<sup>96</sup> Despite his apparent friendship with leading anarchists in the League, suggested by Swenarton, Webb followed his friend out of the Socialist League, and joined the Hammersmith Socialist Society in January 1891. Webb went on attending meetings at Hammersmith until another bout of illness prevented him from doing so during the winter of 1893-94.<sup>97</sup>

## **Conclusion**

I think the evidence found in the Socialist League’s archive and the pages of *Commonweal* supports Shelia Kirk’s assertion that Webb’s contribution to the socialist cause was not as ‘insignificant as has sometimes been proposed’.<sup>98</sup> Webb’s time and work within the League demonstrates that he was as committed a socialist as was Morris. His eagerness to join at the start of the League’s existence is undeniable; as is his determination to help the League succeed in any way he could. He was even prepared to take on the difficult role of treasurer and, contrary to the suggestions of some commentators, his temperament helped him in this. But Webb was not only active within committees; he contributed as much of his income as he could to the cause, and he also undertook various propaganda activities, such as public speaking and writing, that he tended to avoid in his other endeavours.

Webb was open about his socialist beliefs with both friends and clients. Some clients even seemed to have realised that they may have benefitted from Webb’s politics. When Clouds partially burnt down at the beginning of 1889 Madeline Wyndham wrote ‘[i]t is a good thing that our architect was a Socialist, because we find ourselves just as comfortable in the servants’ quarters as we were in our own’.<sup>99</sup> Webb’s work as treasurer reflects his belief that the socialist movement should be ‘free from middle-class direction’, while middle-class socialists such as himself and Morris should be the ‘helpers, not the leaders in the movement’.<sup>100</sup>

Swenarton asserts that Webb could not adjust to the newer, reformist forms of socialism typified by the Independent Labour Party. Webb certainly told Morris in January 1895 that he was ‘not in tune for a socialist dash in these waiting days, and sh[ould] not be allowed to speak’.<sup>101</sup> Then, after Morris’s death in October 1896, Webb retired from political activity, although he spoke at the final meeting of the Hammersmith Socialist Society on 17 January 1897. Yet Lethaby maintained that at the dawn of the twentieth century Webb considered himself ‘more of a socialist than ever’ and other friends reported that well into his retirement Webb would still ‘discuss politics and all things in excellent spirits’.<sup>102</sup>

But a year after Webb’s death on 17 April 1915, Lethaby wrote to Sydney

Cockerell stating that ‘I wonder whether he ever shared Morris’ view that Socialism was “*coming*” – in later days, hardly’.<sup>103</sup> Kirk thought this statement showed Webb remained a socialist, but a pessimistic one at the end of his life. It is unsurprising that in the middle of the slaughter and nationalism of a world war, Webb was a little despondent about socialism’s likely success.<sup>104</sup> Yet only two years after his death revolutionary events would unfold in Russia. One wonders what Webb would have thought about that experiment in socialism.

## NOTES

1. W. R. Lethaby, *Philip Webb and His Work* [1935] (London: Raven Oak Press, 1979), pp. 239-44. (Afterwards Lethaby).
2. Sheila Kirk, *Philip Webb: Pioneer of Arts & Crafts Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2005), pp. 202-7. (Afterwards Kirk).
3. Mark Swenarton, *The Ruskin Tradition in Architectural Thought* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1989), pp. 32-60. (Afterwards Swenarton).
4. Socialist League (UK) Archives, International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, available online: <<https://search.iisg.amsterdam/Record/ARCH01344>> [last accessed 20 February 2021]. The Archive’s location and web address is abbreviated to Archive-IISH elsewhere in these notes. *The Commonweal* digital archive, University of Michigan Digital General Collection, available online: <<http://name.umdl.umich.edu/0544678.0001.001>> [last accessed 11 October 2021].
5. Lethaby, p. 161; Kirk, p. 203; Swenarton, pp. 48-52; *The Letters of Philip Webb*, ed. by John Aplin, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 2016), I, p. 244. (Afterwards Aplin).
6. Lethaby, pp. 10-11.
7. Aplin, I, p. 83.
8. Kirk, pp. 203, 316 n. 13; Lethaby, p. 194.
9. E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, rev edn. [1977] (London: Merlin Press, 1996), pp. 192, 207. (Afterwards Thompson).
10. Aplin, I, p. 134.
11. Kirk, p. 203; Thompson, pp. 211-14, 266; G.D.H. Cole, *Socialist Thought: Marxism and Anarchism, 1850-1890* (London: Macmillan, 1954), p. 398. (Afterwards Cole).
12. Cole, pp. 394-98, 401; Hassan Mahamdallie, *Crossing the ‘River of Fire’: The Socialism of William Morris* (London: Redwords, 2013), pp. 38, 41, 48.
13. Quoted in Lethaby, p. 241. See also ‘The Democratic Federation – Special Meeting at Anderton’s Hotel’, *Justice*, I: 1 (19 January 1884), 7; ‘List of Weekly Subscribers’, *Justice*, I: 23 (21 June 1884), 5; ‘Propaganda Fund’, *Justice*, I: 24 (28 June 1884), 4; ‘List of Weekly Subscribers’, *Justice*, I: 25 (5 July 1884), 5; ‘List of Weekly Subscribers’, *Justice*, I: 28 (26 July 1884), 5; ‘List of Weekly Subscribers’, *Justice*, I: 29 (2 August 1884), 5; ‘Propaganda Fund’, *Justice*, I: 43 (8 November 1884), 5; The British Newspaper Archive, available online [paywall]: <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/justice>> [accessed 11 October 2021].
14. Aplin, I, p. 252.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 254-55.
16. Thompson, pp. 346-49, 358-59, 364-66; Cole, p. 400; Yvonne Kapp, *Eleanor Marx: Volume II, The Crowded Years (1884-1898)* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), pp. 58-65. (Afterwards Kapp). See also Stephen Williams and Tony Chandler, *Letters From England 1895: Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2020), p. 3. (Afterwards Williams and Chandler, *Letters From England*). I am also indebted to Stephen Williams and Tony Chandler’s *Notes of Talk to William Morris*

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- Society, 16 January 2021.
17. Aplin, I, p. 269.
  18. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
  19. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
  20. *Ibid.*, p. 276.
  21. *Ibid.*
  22. 'Reports – Bloomsbury', *Commonweal*, 1: 3 (April 1885), 24; '525a. List of members (Feb. 1886)' (i. Local Branches: Bloomsbury), ARCH01344.525a; '14. Report of the Secretary of the Council, H. H. Sparling' (b. annual conferences: II. Semi-Annual Conference, 25 January 1886), ARCH01344.14; '20a. Report of the Third Annual Conference of the Socialist League, May 29 1887' (b. annual conferences: IV. Third Annual Conference, 1887), ARCH01344.20a; '22. Report of London and Provincial Branches: Bloomsbury by Donald and Utley' (b. annual conferences: IV. Third Annual Conference, 1887), ARCH01344.22; '37a. Report of the Fourth Annual Conference of the Socialist League' (b. annual conferences: V. Fourth Annual Conference, 1888, ARCH01344.37a; '43. Reports of London Branches: Bloomsbury by W. W. Bartlett' (b. annual conferences: V. Fourth Annual Conference, 1888), ARCH01344.43, available online at Archive-IISH [last accessed 20 February 2021]. See also Swenarton, p. 50; Lethaby, p. 241.
  23. ARCH01344.43, p. 2
  24. 'Branch Meeting Rooms', *Commonweal*, 1: 7 (August 1885), 72; 'Branch Meeting Rooms', *Commonweal*, 1: 8 (September 1885), 84; 'Summary of Monthly Reports', *Commonweal*, 1: 11 (December 1885), 108; 'Branch Reports', *Commonweal*, 2: 21 (5 June 1886), 80; 'Lecture Diary', *Commonweal*, 2: 35 (4 September 1886), 184; '3459-3461. Bloomsbury, 1886-1888:(14)' (l. printed matter issued by the socialist league: II. Issued by Local Branches [handbills, little tracks etc.]), ARCH01344. 3459-3461, available online at Archive-IISH [last accessed 20 February 2021]. Thompson describes how the Communist Club had been formed by a group of Marxists after the General Communist Workers' Union had moved towards anarchism. Thompson, p. 278.
  25. Lethaby, p. 156; Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Times* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), p. 601. (Afterwards MacCarthy).
  26. Aplin, I, p. 310 n. 2.
  27. Rachel Holmes, *Eleanor Marx: A Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. xiii.
  28. Williams and Chandler, *Letters From England*, p. 1; Stephen Williams and Tony Chandler, "'Tussy's Great Delusion": Eleanor Marx's Death Revisited', *Socialist History Society Journal*, 58 (October 2020), 7-31 (8). (Afterwards Williams and Chandler, 'Eleanor's Marx Death Revisited'). See also ARCH01344. 3459-3461, pp. 6-7.
  29. Williams and Chandler, *Letters from England*, pp. 21-29; Williams and Chandler, 'Eleanor's Marx Death Revisited', pp. 7-27.
  30. Aplin, I, p. 288.
  31. MacCarthy, p. 575.
  32. William Morris, 'Whigs, Democrats and Socialists', *Commonweal*, 2: 24 (26 June 1886), 98; *Commonweal*, 2: 25 (3 July 1886), 106.
  33. ARCH01344.20a, p. 12.
  34. ARCH01344.20a, pp. 1-2, 11-14; '19. Minutes, notes of - 5 pages, manuscript, incomplete' (b. annual conferences: IV. Third Annual Conference, 1887), ARCH01344.19, p. 2, available online at Archive-IISH [last accessed 20 February 2021].
  35. Aplin, II, p. 182.
  36. For Morris's delivery of 'The Policy of Abstention from Parliamentary Action', see 'Lecture Diary', *Commonweal*, 3: 81 (30 July 1887), 248; *Commonweal*, 3: 84 (20 August 1887), 272; *Commonweal*, 3: 86 (3 September 1887), 287. For Eleanor Marx-Aveling's delivery of 'Socialism and Political Action',

- see 'Lecture Diary, *Commonweal*, 3: 78 (9 July 1887), 224; *Commonweal*, 3: 80 (23 July 1887), 240.
37. Thompson, p. 453; *The Letters of William Morris to his Family and Friends*, ed. by Philip Henderson (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1950), p. 291.
  38. For these motions and series of quotes, see ARCH01344.37a, pp. 12-13 and Kapp, p. 265.
  39. Thompson, p. 509; Williams and Chandler, *Letters from England*, p. 4.
  40. '102a. List of members and visitors present at council meeting: 1886 (Jan. 11-Aug. 8) (book)' (d. council meetings), ARCH01344.102a, pp. 5, 10, 12; '114. Reports of Officers of the Council, *Manuscripts – Auditors Reports*: 5 December 1885 by Th. Binning, signed by Th. Binning and W. C. Hall April 1887' (d. council meetings), ARCH01344.114, p. 1; '109. Report of state of finances between 19 March and 13 June 1886, by Ph. W(ebb)' (d. council meetings), ARCH01344.109, p. 2; available online at Archive-IISH [last accessed 20 February 2021] and ARCH01344.20a, pp. 2-3; 'Report on Annual Conference, *Commonweal*, 2: 23 (19 June 1886), 96, 103-104.
  41. Aplin, I, p. 290.
  42. Lethaby, p. 230.
  43. *Ibid.*, p. 241; Swenarton, p. 50.
  44. MacCarthy, p. 554.
  45. ARCH01344.20a, p. 3; '3185. Webb, Ph., London to Sparling 1886, n.d. - 3 letters' (k. correspondence), ARCH01344.3185, Archive-IISH [last accessed 20 February 2021], see letters dated 25 June and 31 August 1886.
  46. ARCH01344.20a, pp. 2-3; ARCH01344.37a, pp. 3, 14; '3180-3181. Webb, Ph., London to Barker 1887, n.d. - 9 letters' (k. correspondence), ARCH01344.3180-3181, see letters dated 19 September, 4, 6, 9 October and 17 November 1887, available online at Archive-IISH [last accessed 20 February 2021]; 'The Third Annual Conference', *Commonweal*, 3: 73 (4 June 1887), 183.
  47. '3182-3184. Webb, Ph., London to (Slaughter) 1888, n.d. - 14 letters' (k. correspondence), ARCH01344.3182-3184, see letters dated 24 August and 1 September, available online at Archive-IISH [last accessed 20 February 2021]; Kirk, pp. 206, 317 n. 39; Swenarton, p. 51; 'Second Annual Conference'; 'The Socialist League – Executive', *Commonweal*, 4: 125 (2 June 1888), 176; 'Annual Conference', *Commonweal*, 5: 179 (15 June 1889), 190; 'The Annual Conference', *Commonweal*, 6: 229 (31 May 1890), 174; Aplin, II, p. 88.
  48. ARCH01344.109, available online at Archive-IISH [last accessed 20 February 2021].
  49. 'Reports - Executive', *Commonweal*, 2: 27 (17 July 1886), 128.
  50. Lethaby, p. 241.
  51. Kirk, p. 204; 'The Norwich Prisoners' Aid Fund', *Commonweal*, 3: 57 (12 February 1887), 128; *Commonweal*, 3: 72 (28 May 1887), 176; 'Strike Committee', *Commonweal*, 3: 61 (12 March 1887), 87; *Commonweal*, 3: 72 (28 May 1887), 176; 'Commune Celebration Fund', *Commonweal*, 4: 116 (31 March 1888), 103; ARCH01344.3182-3184, see letters dated 10, 24 August, 1, 8, 15 September, 6, 13, 20, 27 October, 8 November and undated letter; Swenarton, p. 40.
  52. '3186. Webb, Ph., London to unknown n.d. - 1 letter (fragment)' (k. correspondence), ARCH01344.3186, p. 2, available online at Archive-IISH [last accessed 29 September 2020]; Aplin, I, p. 317.
  53. '3. Constitution and Rules of the Socialist League, adopted at the General Conference 1885, with suggested Branch Rules. *Printed matter, Leaflet, 8 pages*' (a. formation, constitutional rules), ARCH01344.3, p. 2, available online at Archive-IISH [last accessed 20 February 2021]; 'Branch Subscriptions Paid', *Commonweal*, 2: 19 (22 May 1886), 64; *Commonweal*, 2: 38 (2 October 1886), 215.
  54. 'Branch Subscriptions Paid', *Commonweal*, 2: 32 (21 August 1886), 167.
  55. '2457. Pickles, Fred, Bradford to Webb, Ph. 1886 - 1 letter' (k. correspondence), ARCH01344.2457; '1492. Geldart, W M, Croydon to Webb, Ph. 1886 - 1 letter' (k. correspondence), ARCH01344.1492;

- '1486-1487. Gaskell, G. A., Bradford to Webb, Ph. And treasurer Socialist League 1886-1887 - 6 letters' (k. correspondence), ARCH01344.1486-1487; '2374. O'Gorman, John, Dublin to Webb, 1886 - 4 letters' (k. correspondence), ARCH01344.2374, available online at Archive-IISH [last accessed 20 February 2021].
56. Kapp, pp. 50-51 n. 98-99. This indicates that the annual wages levels for workers of one of the main railway companies ranged between £39 per year for porters to £59 per year for firemen.
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  58. 'Annual Conference', *Commonweal*, 3: 63 (26 March 1887), 103; *Commonweal*, 4: 110 (18 February 1888), 56; 'Branch Subscriptions Paid', *Commonweal*, 3: 69 (7 May 1887), 151; *Commonweal*, 4: 121 (5 May 1888), 144; *Commonweal*, 5: 178 (8 June 1889), 182; *Commonweal*, 6: 228 (24 May 1890), 167.
  59. William Morris, *Political Writings: Contributions to "Justice" and "Commonweal", 1883-1890*, ed. by Nicholas Salmon (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994), pp. 132, 135.
  60. ARCH01344.109.
  61. 'The Treasurer of the Socialist League', *Commonweal*, 2: 29 (31 July 1886), 144; *Commonweal*, 2: 30 (7 August 1886), 151.
  62. "'Commonweal" Printing Fund', *Commonweal*, 2: 36 (18 September 1886), 200; *Commonweal*, 3: 84 (20 August 1887), 271; *Commonweal*, 4: 143 (6 October 1888), 319; *Commonweal*, 5: 157 (12 January 1889), 15; *Commonweal*, 5: 180 (29 June 1889), 199; *Commonweal*, 6: 253 (15 November 1890), 367.
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  64. ARCH01344.3185, see letter dated 29 June 1886.
  65. ARCH01344.3180-3181, see letters dated 26 March and 4 June 1886 and an undated letter, available online at Archive-IISH [last accessed 20 February 2021]; J. Bruce Glasier, *William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1921), p. 193. (Afterwards Glasier).
  66. Lethaby, p. 242.
  67. Thompson, pp. 393-95; 'Free Speech', *Commonweal*, 1: 10 (August 1885), 99; 'Free Speech at Stratford', *Commonweal*, 2: 22 (12 June 1886), 87; 'Free Speech in the Streets', *Commonweal*, 2: 29 (31 July 1886), 137.
  68. 'Free Speech in the Streets', *Commonweal*, 2: 29 (31 July 1886), 137.
  69. 'Free Speech Defence Fund', *Commonweal*, 2: 29 (31 July 1886), 144; *Commonweal*, 2: 32 (21 August 1886), 168; *Commonweal*, 2: 33 (28 August 1886), 176; *Commonweal*, 3: 52 (8 January 1887), 15; ARCH01344.1486-1487, see Gaskell's letter dated 27 August 1886; '2064. McCarthy, J.E., Dublin to (Webb) treasurer Socialist League 1886 - 1 letter' (k. correspondence), ARCH01344.2064; '2948. Teesdale, E., Hull to Webb 1886 - 3 letters' (k. correspondence), ARCH01344.2948; '1601. Grone, Marianne, (Bloomsbury) to Webb (1886) - 1 letter' (k. correspondence), ARCH01344.1601, available online at Archive-IISH [last accessed 20 February 2021].
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  72. Reg Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle! The History of the Farm Workers' Union* (London: The Porcupine Press, 1949), pp. 101, 87. For the history of the first national farm workers' union's strike against farmers during the 1870s, see pp. 71-85.
  73. ARCH01344. 1486-1487, see Gaskell's letter dated 27 August 1886; see also *Commonweal*, 2: 34 (4 September 1886), 184.
  74. S. M. den Otter, *Clapperton, Jane Hume (1832-1914)*, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, available online: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/55282>> [last accessed 20 February 2021].
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  77. Lethaby, pp. 146-47, 152-53, 157-58; Kirk, pp. 166, 176, 205; Swenarton, pp. 38-39.
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  81. Swenarton, p. 50.
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  84. 'Branch Report', *Commonweal*, 2: 22 (18 June 1886), 88; *Commonweal*, 2: 35 (11 September 1886), 191; *Commonweal*, 2: 36 (18 September 1886), 199.
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  87. *Ibid.*, p. 285.
  88. Aplin, II, p. 120.
  89. *Ibid.*, see p. 122 n. 9.
  90. *Ibid.*
  91. Glasier, p. 196.
  92. 'Lecture Diary - Clerkenwell', lecture on 'Social Democracy v. Anarchist-Socialism', *Commonweal*, 5: 189 (24 August 1889), 271; 'Reports - Clerkenwell', lecture on 'Anarchist Socialism Defined and

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- Defended', *Commonweal*, 5: 195 (5 October 1889), 319; 'Lecture Diary - North London', lecture on 'Anarchism', *Commonweal*, 5: 203 (30 November 1889), 383; 'Reports - East London', *Commonweal*, 6: 236 (19 July 1890), 231; 'Revolutionary Government', *Commonweal*, 5: 241, 242, 243 (23 and 30 August and 6 September 1890), 269-70, 276-77, 281-82.
93. 'Correspondence from William Morris', *Commonweal*, 5: 175 (18 May 1889), 157.
  94. William Morris, 'Where Are We Now?', *Commonweal*, 6: 253 (15 November 1890), 361-62; 'Correspondence – Where We Are Now?', *Commonweal*, 6: 255 (29 November 1890), 381-82.
  95. Glasier, pp. 203-5.
  96. Aplin, II, pp. 88-89.
  97. *Ibid.*; Kirk, p. 206; Swenarton, pp. 58-59 (which includes Webb's statement from Lethaby, p. 243).
  98. Kirk, p. 207.
  99. Jill Franklin, *The Gentleman's Country House and its Plan: 1835-1914* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 103. Also quoted in Caroline Dakers, *Clouds: The Biography of a Country House* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 135.
  100. Lethaby, p. 244.
  101. Aplin, II, p. 275.
  102. Swenarton, pp. 51-52; Kirk, p. 206; R. Page Arnot, *Unpublished Letter of William Morris* (Labour Monthly Pamphlet, 1951, Series No. 6), p. 16; *Friends of a Lifetime: Letters to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell*, ed. by Viola Meynell (London: Jonathan Cape, 1940), p. 181.
  103. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
  104. Kirk, pp. 206, 317 n. 44.



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## Reviews

Edited by Rosie Miles

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Julian Beecroft, *William Morris* (London: Flame Tree Publishing, 2019), 352 pp., fully illustrated in colour, £14.99 hbk, ISBN 9781787553071.

This is a visually attractive book, printed in an unusual smallish near-square format, 16 x 17 cm, and heavy, due to its numerous glossy pages; the cover is a version of the perennially popular *Strawberry Thief* design. After an odd two-page section entitled ‘How to Use this Book’, there is a two-page Foreword by Helen Elletson, followed by a reproduction of the *Fruit* (or *Pomegranate*) wallpaper and a four-page Introduction. This is followed by a two-page reproduction of details from the *Foliage* tapestry, and five sections of text. The first, ‘Life’, (pp. 20-91), has right-hand-page illustrations starting with Water House in Walthamstow, circa 1750 (now the William Morris Gallery), and continuing chronologically with facts and designs culminating in E. H. New’s drawing of the drawing-room at Kelmscott House in 1899. The second section, ‘Inspiration and Influences’ (pp. 94-151) has right-hand-page illustrations beginning with a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry, and ending with *A Note by William Morris on his Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press* (1898). In the third section (pp. 156-217), the right-hand-page illustrations begin with the *Penelope* embroidery, circa 1860, and end

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with two pages from the Kelmscott Press edition of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1896). The fourth section (pp. 220-285) deals with ‘Politics & Society’, the right-hand-page illustrations beginning, rather surprisingly, with two pages from *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867) and ending with the binding by the Doves Bindery of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. In the fifth and final section, ‘Arts & Crafts’ (pp. 287-345), the right-hand-page illustrations begin with the *Spring* and *Autumn* stained-glass windows at Craggside in Northumberland, circa 1873, and end with a sideboard-back and pair of candlesticks by Ernest Gimson in 1915. The book concludes with recommendations for Further Reading, an Index by Work and a General Index.

This *William Morris* is certainly good to look at, though heavy to handle, but the text is not always accurate. Indeed, the book opens on two successive pages with a reproduction of *Blackthorn*, attributed to Morris, while when it appears on p. 86 it is rightly attributed to J. H. Dearle. In his biographical account, Beecroft writes that in 1855 Morris’s future ‘seemed to lie with the Church’. He then adds: ‘However, bored with theology – the subject he was supposed to be studying – he immersed himself instead in medieval history’ (p. 14). However, the degree in Theology did not exist until 1869; Morris was studying Classics, known at Oxford as ‘Greats’. On the same page we are told that the young Morris received £900 per annum from his father’s mining investment. This amount is not quite accurate, and indeed on p. 16 Beecroft notes that income from the mining shares was in decline. MacCarthy tells us in her *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (Faber & Faber 1994, p. 171) that Morris’s income from Devon Great Consuls amounted to £819 in 1857, £780 in 1858, declining to £572 in 1859.

After Morris had reorganised the business as Morris and Co. in 1875, we are told that he expanded the range of products offered, from wallpapers and printed textiles, then woven textiles, tapestry and carpets, ‘and finally calligraphy and illustrated books’ (p. 17). This is a little untidy, as later we are told that Morris practised calligraphy from the earlier year of 1870, completing *A Book of Verse* dedicated to Georgiana Burne-Jones by August of that year (p. 56). This is confirmed by MacCarthy (p. 264), who tells us that it was for Georgiana’s birthday. As far as ‘printed books’ are concerned, the Kelmscott Press did not come into existence until considerably later, in 1891; in relation to the Press, Beecroft reproduces some striking typeface designs for decorated capitals from the 1880s or 1890s (p. 211).

Elsewhere, Beecroft gives an enthusiastic account of the Firm’s work in stained glass, starting at G. F. Bodley’s All Saints, Selsley, in Gloucestershire, in 1861. He reproduces the striking *Resurrection* window, and tells us that Morris, Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, Burne-Jones and George Campfield were all involved in making it for a scheme devised by Webb. MacCarthy is equally impressed. For her, ‘Selsley demonstrates most movingly of what the Firm was capable. These windows have the

power of the genuine ensemble' (p. 177). (It would have been useful here for Beecroft to have made clear that Morris was, and remained, responsible for the leading and colouring of the windows, while most of the designs were to be by Burne-Jones. Another stained-glass window illustrated by Beecroft is the fine *Three Marias at the Sepulchre* of 1862, while later we are shown a striking detail from the colourful east window at St. Martin's, Brampton, in Cumbria, of 1880; it is described here as *Writhing Tree*, although the adjacent text (p. 236), which quotes from Morris's lecture 'Art and the Beauty of the Earth', makes no reference to the window, and that title nowhere appears. Has Beecroft invented it? It is certainly appropriate. MacCarthy notes that 'From the 1870s a pervasive vegetation appears in all the products of Morris & Co. [...] The magnificent east window at Brampton, close to Naworth, has a jungle in the background: massed blue and bright red flowerheads with emerald green fronds' (p. 358). Charles Sewter describes the window as consisting of '5 lts, each with 3 tiers of subjects' (*The Stained Glass of William Morris and His Circle - A Catalogue*, New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1975, p. 29), and notes that all the lights appear against a 'background of foliage and flowers, with deep blue in the small interstices'. He quotes Burne-Jones as amusingly calling the window 'a Herculean labour – hastily estimated in a moment of generous friendship for £200' (p. 30). The window is illustrated in Sewter's first volume, dated 1974, Plate 12. The section shown by Beecroft is at the very bottom of the central section, below the Burne-Jones 'Pelican on Nest'. It is a striking and unusual choice.

Beecroft tells us that Morris was offered the post of Poet Laureate on the death of Tennyson in 1892 (p. 16). MacCarthy gives a more accurate account: 'James Bryce, now a member of the Cabinet, went to see Morris unofficially, to sound him out [...] Morris, with little hesitation, turned down the suggestion that he should be put forward. There is anyhow some evidence that Gladstone would have vetoed the appointment of "an out-and-out Socialist"' (p. 632). On the political front, when we are told that Morris's 'socialist credo is perhaps overshadowed by some of the dreadful events of the twentieth century that occurred in the name of socialism' (p. 17), a reference to Soviet Communism would be more appropriate.

Despite these reservations, I find that, all in all, this is a worthwhile book which deserves its publication by Flame Tree in what would seem from the cover to be a series of *The World's Greatest Art*. Flame Tree have also published *William Morris: Artist, Craftsman, Pioneer* by Rosalind Ormiston and Nicholas Wells, and *Arts and Crafts* (2018) and *The Pre-Raphaelites* (2018), both by Michael Robinson.

**Peter Faulkner**



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## Notes on Contributors

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STUART BARLOW is a retired architect who worked in London for thirty years while maintaining an interest in Philip Webb, both as an architect and socialist. He now lives in the North East and is a Trustee of a local heritage centre in North Shields and researches hidden stories from local history.

CELIA DAVIES is Professor Emerita at The Open University. She is a sociologist who specialises in the study of health professions and patient and public involvement. Her experience of volunteering at Kelmescott Manor and participating in its Volunteer Research Group stimulated her interest in possibilities for new research, relating in particular to female members of the Morris family.

PETER FAULKNER taught English at the University of Exeter until his retirement in 1998; he is a former editor of the *Journal* and Honorary Secretary of the Society.

MICHELLE WEINROTH is the author of *Reclaiming William Morris: Englishness, Sublimity, and the Rhetoric of Dissent* and the co-editor of *To Build a Shadowy Isle of Bliss: William Morris's Radicalism and the Embodiment of Dreams*. Her articles on William Morris have been published in *Victorian Studies*, *The Journal of William Morris Studies* and *Socialist Studies*, among others.

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Contributions to the *Journal* are welcomed on all subjects relating to the life and works of William Morris. The Editor would be grateful if contributors could bear in mind the following guidelines when submitting articles and reviews:

1. Contributions should be in English, and be word-processed or typed using 1.5 spacing, and printed on one side of A4. They should be circa 5,000 words in length, although shorter and longer pieces will also be considered.
2. Articles should ideally be produced in electronic form (e.g. preferably in Word.doc format). Please send your article as an email attachment to [journal@williammorrisociety.org.uk](mailto:journal@williammorrisociety.org.uk), or on a memory card or CD, marked for the attention of the Editor, *JWMS*, to:  
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