During the conversation that provides the most important description of the utopia in *News from Nowhere*, William Morris’ narrator pauses to have lunch with his hosts. He has a glass of wine, of ‘very good Bordeaux’ as he remarks, and notices his glass which is ‘elegant and quaint’ and ‘somewhat bubbled and hornier in texture than the commercial articles of the nineteenth century’. He then goes on with his conversation with Hammond, the Bloomsbury sage, who tells him the history of the revolution.

A similar pause was taken earlier in the morning, on the way to the British Museum, when the narrator and Dick, his guide, had stopped to buy a pipe, which the narrator then described in some detail and called ‘as pretty and gay a toy as I had ever seen’. He then took a glass of wine remarking that ‘if ever I drank good Steinberg, I drank it that morning’.

Among the very first of things which the narrator noticed on waking to the utopia at the beginning of the day were the clasp of a boatman’s belt ‘of damascened steel beautifully wrought’, a ‘pretty bridge’, and ‘quaint and fanciful little buildings’.

We are constantly aware of the press of objects in the world to which the narrator comes: he interrupts his conversation or delays his narrative in order to introduce them singly and in detail. To each human movement or to the performance of a task however simple, the narrator adds in his description a catalogue of its implements, until even the movement itself has been so slowed by the detail of adjectival interruptions and interpolations that it takes on the appearance and pattern of an object itself. In several places, for instance, a man’s movement is conveyed by the appearance of his muscles, the colour and texture of his skin: Dick first appears as ‘dark-haired and
berry-brown of skin, well-knit and strong, and obviously used to exercising his muscles'; Bob his friend, however, is 'not so well-looking or so strongly made . . . being sandy-haired, rather pale and not stout-built'; the first women that the narrator meets are immediately remarked to be 'shapely and well-knit of body, and thoroughly healthy-looking and strong'.

The human body seems as carefully wrought and patterned as the other objects of this world, and as the narrator carries us past them, we have the sense of passing through tableaux of innumerable objects set about several major figures, almost monumental in their centrality, while the detail of their relations is drawn with painstaking care. If the use of an object reveals its formal structure, the bodies of the inhabitants reveal their potentiality for movement, even as this movement is arrested and cast into the general form of the tableau. Nature too is an abundance of detail, 'a delicious superabundance' in one place, 'teeming' in another, 'stuffed full of flowers' at Runnymede.

The crush and press of all these things—we are constantly reminded of things—produces something like the sensation of claustrophobia, and while early the narrator remarks on 'the exhilarating sense of space and freedom' he feels upon entering a house, this space is quickly consumed, filled with description of structural and formal detail, the evocation of textures and the regalia of scent.

And yet, if the tableaux are crowded with detail, the appearance of this detail is noticeably uniform. We are struck by the recurring sameness of the means of describing these things, so that all of them—men, women, behaviour, objects, gardens—are touched by the same adjectives—pretty, nice, quaint, dainty, handsome and gay. The costume of children is pretty, a village near Hampton Court is quaint and pretty, Ellen's house near Runnymede has a very pretty room, the Maple-Durham lock, Pangbourne village, the site of a house near Basildon, and the river are all pretty. The narrator picks his tobacco from a dainty basket offered him by children with quaint manners; the next day he eats a dainty breakfast, observes the dainty raiment of a girl, and records the quaint
garrets of the manor house at the end of the journey. A gang of road menders are ‘as handsome clean-built fellows as you might find a dozen of in a summer day’; a woman who is tall, dark-haired, white-skinned and handsome, catches the narrator’s eye at the Hammersmith market when she is dressed in a pretty light-green dress; a similar woman, this time very handsome and wearing figured silk, holds his horse at Piccadilly, and a third, with the same hair and carriage, with the added detail of deep-set grey eyes, meets him at the end of the river journey: she is handsome and stately.

To be sure, this repetition has been noticed before, and critics of News from Nowhere have tended to call the work after Morris’ own names—as pretty, quaint or dainty. Indeed, the uniformity of this judgement is as striking as serious attention to the work has been slight; let me provide a brief catalogue of typical remarks.*

Morris’ first biographer, Aymer Vallance, provided one direct quotation from the work as illustration of Morris’ house, Kelmscott Manor, and one paragraph of comment in which he regarded Morris as aiming ‘at escaping altogether the complex conditions of modern life’, to seek out a ‘more primal and elementary state of simplicity’ (6, pp. 347–48). Two years later, J. W. Mackail found little more space in his larger, two-volume work, and thought News from Nowhere a ‘slightly constructed and essentially insular romance’. In sum, it represented Morris’ effort to put ‘into a connected form those dreams of an idyllic future in which his mind was constantly hovering’; in short, it represented ‘refined rusticity’ (2, p. 243). Alfred Noyes who was impatient enough with the work to consider it in some detail, thought it ‘a lyrical cry for his (Morris’) own dead days’; and though he had little sympathy for Morris’ picture of the communist society and less for its sensuousness, he thought the book attractive for its ‘dreamlike pastoral atmosphere’; its substance, however, was ‘amiable dreams’ and a ‘homogeneous sensuous mist’: ‘There could be no hell like it—this world where hardly anything matters any more, except superficial

*Works referred to in this article are listed at the end of it.
sense-pleasure’ (4, pp. 134–35). Philip Henderson thought *News from Nowhere* a ‘curiously naive and innocent Utopia’ in which Morris ‘was merely abolishing everything he disliked in the nineteenth century and replacing it by everything he nostalgically longed for’, and he too considered the story a light sketch. Finally, Paul Thompson, in his study of Morris, thought it a romantic dream with a strong social message.

Dream-like, refined, pretty but insubstantial, quaint but unrealistic — these are common responses to *News from Nowhere*, and it would seem that Morris’ own style of rendering his picture encourages the critic to this view. I say it would seem so with some caution: it is no doubt true that *News from Nowhere* is slightly constructed, or at least rapidly, as indeed all of Morris’ work was constructed: we have been told, for example, that he preferred to write brand new verses for *The Earthly Paradise* rather than re-write those he considered unsatisfactory. But having said this, we have said little if anything about the purposes of the work. About these most critics have taken Morris at his word—the word, that is, of the poet of *The Earthly Paradise* of 1868—as the ‘Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time’, the ‘idle singer of an empty day’, and treat the utopia composed twenty-two years later as but a further manifestation of the earlier purpose and an identical sensibility. What I have to say is aimed at introducing an alternative method for reading the work, strengthening the reader’s satisfaction with it.

There is good evidence of the lyrical cry for Morris’ dead days of which Noyes speaks. Henderson has considered the writing of *The Earthly Paradise* in some detail in an effort to establish the degree to which the poem represented a solution to the climacteric of Morris’ marriage, and a recent essay by Lewis Mumford offers animadversions on the same theme from the substance of *News from Nowhere* (3).

In several places Morris’ narrator compares the utopia with the recollection of his childhood days: lavender recalled the kitchen-garden of his childhood home, and the chance of eating ripe plums from a remembered tree; a blue suit reminds him of a former holiday costume; hay-making, the Thames,
and finally of course, the manor house set similar chains of remembrance in progress; even the sudden, precipitous loss of the utopia is likened to a ‘nightmare of my childish days’.

It is true, too, that the journey which the narrator takes with Dick and Clara up the Thames resembles the two that Morris himself took with his family and friends in the summers of 1880 and 1881; it may even be that Dick of the tale is modelled upon the Hon. Richard Grosvenor, who was one of the rowers of the party in 1880, and Clara drawn after Morris’ daughter May, whose own marriage flickered between two men (one of them G B Shaw) and then went out.†

It is more likely however, that the conflicts which beset the utopians—the only kind of conflict in that society—are patterned after the ruinous situation that existed between Morris, his wife Jane and Rossetti. ‘We do not deceive ourselves’, the elder Hammond tells the narrator, ‘or believe that we can get rid of all the trouble that besets the dealings between the sexes’, and his examples of these troubles are reminiscent of what we know of Morris’ life:

‘Calf-love, mistaken for a heroism that shall be life-long, yet early waning into disappointment; the inexplicable desire that comes on a man of riper years to be all-in-all to some one woman, whose ordinary human kindness and human beauty he has idealized into super-human perfection, and made the one object of his desire ...’

There are intriguing details, though, which resist such a simple derivation of Morris’ tale. An ideal of feminine beauty was a very distinctive feature of Morris’ writing and painting throughout his life, an ideal which he shared with Burne-Jones and Rossetti, whose paintings of Jane Morris are the most well-known exemplars of this Pre-Raphaelite wraith. Morris himself had written of this figure (after Jane) in the early poem Praise of My Lady:

My Lady seems of ivory
Forehead, straight nose, and cheeks that be
Hollow’d a little mournfully —

† May’s marriage did not finally break up until 1892, that is until after the publication of News from Nowhere, though it had been flickering for some years before that.
And had painted her as Queen Guenevere when she had long dark hair, dark lashes and eyes, the same hollowed cheeks, long neck and pale skin.

Such a woman may be the handsome figure who appears three times, or the three handsome figures who catch the narrator’s eye in the utopia, whom I have already mentioned. But the chief figures for whom the narrator expresses most concern, are manifestly unlike the Pre-Raphaelite ideal: Clara has the characteristic ivory complexion and red lips, but her cheeks are significantly full and round and there is a muscular goodwill to her carriage in place of the mournful attenuation of the figures of Jenny. And Ellen, about whom the narrator spells an almost familiar mystery, has light hair and grey eyes, and as if to exorcise the ivory paleness of his earlier figures, the narrator and Morris repeat on four different occasions that her skin is dark brown and suntanned.

But this is a spurious method if we aim at understanding the work’s purposes as distinct from the author’s motives, though the latter have been generally treated with more seriousness than the former. The work itself yields up motifs of this sort, but is quite reticent of motives, and were they even better understood, motif and motive both, we may know no better what the function of these parts was in that whole which Morris especially subtitled a ‘utopian romance’. I want to suggest instead that Morris may have had a rather more exact understanding of utopia, and a rather more eccentric one, than has so far been understood by his interpreters, and whereas a thorough reading ought to be sufficient to dispose of the view that Morris sought only to project \textit{dreams}, either from a nostalgia for his past youth, or from a studied medieval past, or from a passionate communist conviction, I wish to suggest a way of apprehending the \textit{principles} of utopia, which Morris’ most peculiar insight revealed and embodied.

Consider Morris’ employment of the adjectives ‘pretty’, ‘handsome’, ‘quaint’ and ‘dainty’: In Dr Johnson’s dictionary ‘handsome’ meant ‘beautiful with dignity’ and was distinguished there from ‘pretty’ which meant ‘beautiful without dignity’. To use the words of the same object implied on the
one hand a diminution or deflation of its value, and on the other, a high estimation or inflation of its worth, though the nature of this value is ambiguous: it may be an aesthetic value or a moral one, though the various uses of ‘pretty’ have suggested that an object of aesthetic value may be merely that and without moral substance, or on some occasions, what has been conceived to be of aesthetic value alone has been regarded as plainly immoral. ‘Pretty’ can have this morally derogatory sense quite commonly in the same way that the synonyms—which Morris uses frequently also—‘gay’, ‘precious’, ‘nice’, ‘fine’, ‘elegant’ and so on, may have.

Originally though, ‘pretty’ derived from an Old English word meaning a trick, wile or craft, and was akin to the Icelandic prettagr, tricky, deceitful, and the East Frisian prettag, sportive, funny, humorous. No use of the word is recorded after the Old English period until the fifteenth century, by which time it became frequent in a variety of uses, none of which are identical, and all of which are roughly coeval. The earliest recorded uses of ‘pretty’ in the fifteenth century indicate that it meant in respect of people, clever and skilful, without the implication of deceit that had existed at its source, and that a pretty object was a thing ingeniously or cleverly made, well and artfully constructed. It was an attribute of artifice and Oxford English Dictionary records this sense in the Gesta Romanorum: ‘My son ... woll with his prayt wordis & pleys make me forgete my anger’. This use has become obsolete both of things and of people, and the attribution of artifice and artfulness in the word has survived with a meaning more akin to the original; the kind of skill that was earlier valued for a person or in an object is no longer so valued, and if ‘pretty’ does not imply deceit, it does mean mere craft, artifice for its own sake, artificiality, where these things connote some failure or lack of proper purpose or motive, or the exhibition of trifling or improper pleasure.

‘Handsome’ is not known before the fifteenth century according to the dictionary, and its earliest uses have likewise become obsolete: of objects it meant easy to handle, manipulate or wield, easy to use in any fashion; handy or conve-
nient; suitable; dexterous, apt (used of action or speech); and of a person, apt, clever, skilled. Like ‘pretty’, ‘handsome’ originally connoted an especially sensuous connection with objects, referring to the skill with which they were made, the appropriateness of the design for their use. From a particular evaluation of this kind, both words were applied as a mode of approbation for many kinds of objects, acts and behaviour in general; but ‘handsome’ survived in its approving sense, though it no longer had the sensuous and aesthetic qualities of its beginning; it meant fitting, seemly, becoming, apt—qualities evoking moral admiration—whereas ‘pretty’ quickly was turned into a device for disapprobation.

‘Quaint’ and ‘dainty’ are two other words which Morris uses throughout *News from Nowhere*, and their history is a similar one: the original meaning of the former was of things, skillfully made, ingeniously and artfully contrived, and of people much the same, though this meaning was superseded and a quaint appearance lost both its aesthetic and moral value. ‘Dainty’, derived from the Latin *dignus*, meant of high worth, value or estimation in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and was equivalent in original meaning to ‘quaint’, but like this also, the value it described grew less and ‘dainty’ became a diminutive.

What kind of a metamorphosis did each of these words undergo? In the first place, the change of meaning signals a change in the function of the object referred to and the skills required to make it. In one sense, all four adjectives refer to the purposiveness of design and the appropriateness with which the designer has manufactured the object for a particular use; and the change in meaning reflects the change in the object, from its perfect functionality to its lack of function, its uselessness. In this second sense, ‘pretty’, ‘quaint’ and ‘dainty’ refer to objects which have ornamental value alone, and no value in use: they have no functions to serve apart from their display.

In the second place, the change in meaning indicates a deflection of attention away from the craftsman of the object to
its owner and possessor; indeed, it signifies that the object is no longer made for the use of its creator, and evaluated in terms of that use, but is made for the possession of others for a wide variety of their purposes; but then it is evaluated in terms of the intentions and feelings of the possessors irrespective of the skills or intentions of the creator; or, if the latter are not wholly disregarded, they become subsidiary to the former.

Thirdly, the change in meaning suggests a change in the size of the object, in the amount of physical space it occupies, for not only does the change represent a diminution of value, it seems also to represent the object referred to as a diminutive, as having small dimensions. But more than this, the change seems to represent a re-evaluation of the spatial dimension taken abstractly. It seems no longer a sufficient measure of worth, either of a man or of an artifact, that he or it be disposed in a particular way in space, contrived in a certain fashion in relation to other objects and men similarly disposed. The qualities of structure and function seem no longer an adequate measure of value, and ethical criteria are invoked to discriminate among functions and to order the values of different structures. Not that the functionality of the earlier sense had no ethical implications or was led by no moral directives, but rather, it seems, that the creators and the users shared the same values and moral ends, and indeed were often enough identical people. When, on the other hand, we find a disjunction between manufacture and use, between producer and consumer, then the values, ethical and aesthetic, of the one process differ from those of the other, of the one man from those of another.

This is not a simple historical development for both senses of these words occurred at approximately the same time. What we do find is that the change in the meaning of the words varies according to the history of the objects to which they referred, and to the changes occurring over time of their mode of manufacture and design, and the social organization of their production and consumption. At the same historical moment perhaps, household architecture may have been
pretty, meaning a high valuation, whereas pretty costume may have been regarded in low esteem. Significant changes moreover, in cultural and religious values in the first half of the seventeenth century, with the rise of Puritanism, along with the economic values of emerged capitalism worked toward the devaluation of each of these words and of the objects to which they commonly referred.

Now, is not this metamorphosis precisely what Morris' analysis of his utopia is about? Not that he mentions the Puritan ethos at all—but in the long conversation with the elder Hammond, and in most of the narrator's observations on the labour of utopia, Morris has contrived this picture of English society: that historically production had been divorced from the purposes of consumption and that the labour of producing had become in nineteenth century England the utter misery and degradation of those who laboured in behalf of the few, the very few, who possessed these goods and the profits earned from this misery. By contrast, in the utopia of Nowhere:

The wares which we make are made because they are needed: men make for their neighbours' use as if they were making for themselves, not for a vague market of which they know nothing, and over which they have no control... whatever is made is good and thoroughly fit for its purpose. Nothing can be made except for its genuine use; therefore no inferior goods are made...

To state the point clearly: what looks like quaintness and (mere) prettiness in *News from Nowhere* appears so largely because Morris himself describes utopia in these words. However, the very hollowness with which these words ring in our time and in Morris' reflects the kind of disjunction between production and consumption, the kind of alienation of creativity from labour, which it was Morris' purpose to diagnose and analyse; and the frequency with which he rings these words is part of the general analytic task which he had set out to accomplish. The affectation and ornamentation that these words might have represented paralleled the wasteful mode of production which the elder Hammond distinguished as characteristic of English society of the nineteenth century. But the history of the meanings of the words also reflects the history
of the modes of production, which were the foundation of Morris' social analysis; so that in reaching back to the obsolete fifteenth century uses of the words, Morris was adapting at the formal level a model of social analysis and a method for utopian construction which he employed in illustrating the substance or contents of his utopia.

To read these words in the devaluative sense that they have come to have may lead only to a devaluation of every object in the utopia, and the outcome of that is the kind of devaluation of the total work mentioned earlier. Does it seem likely that Morris intended such an effect? Is it probable that he could have been blind to the common meaning of these words or careless with their meanings when he used them so often throughout News from Nowhere? I am suggesting that these words, so apparently empty of adjectival impact, are a peculiar stylistic choice of Morris', and that, whether or not they are effective for his purpose, they were intended to serve important substantive purposes in a meaning that was long obsolete and forgotten.

Mackail has drawn our attention to the significant reconstructive tasks which Morris set his own prose, the same tasks toward the same ends which he set all his techniques of art. That the translator of Icelandic sagas, the well-known medievalist, and proponent of the values of artisanship, should have used these words carelessly and without regard to their origin or history—so germane as these were to Morris' themes—seems altogether unlikely. Mackail, for instance, suggests in his conclusion that Morris' prose was more 'old-fashioned', and deliberately so, than his poetry:

... in literature as well as in the manual arts he was throughout his life striving to take up and continue the dropped threads of the medieval tradition ... his work in both fields, while it was in one sense completely modern and even in advance of his age, was based on the return to and development of methods which had long since gone out of fashion, if they had not become completely obsolete. (2, p.341)

To take Morris' utopia then at bis, that is Morris', word may give to its prettiness and refinement a significantly different
meaning from the one that it has been given by others.

It must be remembered also that Morris was a Marxist and that much of the historical reconstruction and economic theory which permeates *News from Nowhere* was drawn from Marx's *Capital*, which Morris made great efforts to read from the year 1883 on. He described the experience in his essay 'How I Became A Socialist' which was published in 1894:

Well, having joined a Socialist body ..., I put some conscience into trying to learn the economic side of socialism and even tackled Marx, though I must confess that, whereas I thoroughly enjoyed the historical part of *Capital*, I suffered agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the pure economics of that great work. Anyhow, I read what I could, and will hope that some information stuck to me from my reading ...

One of the principal elements of Marx's economic theory was what he called the labour theory of value. Very roughly speaking, this theory regarded an artifact, a product, as worth the amount of labour which contributed to its production; the value of production, in other words, was computed not in terms of its value-in-use, and thus in terms of the value of its functions, but rather in terms of the amount of work required for its manufacture.

According to Marx, the economic system of capitalism aimed solely to increase the profits accruing to the capitalist class, the owners of the means of production, from the process of production and its subsequent consumption. Profit was defined as the difference between the value of a product, that is an amount of labour, and the cost of that labour to the capitalist. If then, the capitalist wished to maximize his profits, he needed to increase this difference, the surplus value of the product, and so it was in his interest to pay the worker as little as he could for his labour, while trying to force him to work harder and longer. In this fashion, Marx argued, the surplus value of all goods increased as the production of them increased, but only on condition that the worker was paid less for his labour.

In this view, the capitalist profit was in effect the labour of the worker which had been expropriated from him and not
repaid. The more products he made, the less of their value he received, and the less he was paid, the fewer goods he was able to own. Marx saw this as a progressive process of increasing exploitation on the part of the capitalist and increasing pauperisation and misery for the worker; he was alienated from the object which he produced but could not own, for which he provided value, without receiving any benefit of use or pleasure.

It should be borne in mind that this theory was well-known to Morris, if in a confused form as he admitted himself; it was what he believed, and the evidence of its effect and its importance is available in that part of Hammond’s conversation with the narrator which is given in chapter fifteen, ‘On the Lack of Incentive to Labour in a Communist Society’. This is not the place to discuss in detail the relations between Morris’ account and Marx’s nor to catalogue the former’s derivations and deviations. What I aim to make clear, is that this economic theory provided a new integration of concerns which had been Morris’ prior to his coming upon it: in one sense of the Marxist phrase, Morris had always been a fetishist of the object, and the Marxist theory of production and value forms a significant part of the principles upon which Morris’ utopia is constructed; it reverberates in the smallest trifles of meaning and style with which the utopia is composed. In consequence, a method for reading and interpreting it that did not take this into account would be misleading; also, the shaping of Morris’ artistic style around the theory, and the shape that the theory gave his style would be lost to sight.

Thus, when the narrator describes his luncheon wine glass as quaint and repeats the description a page later, or when he speaks of his pretty pipe and the value of such ‘toys’—the account of Nowhere is filled with these toys—then Morris is drawing upon the labour theory of value, to point up the analysis which Marx had made of the nature of production and the value of art and to go somewhat further than Marx in suggesting what a communist system of production might be like: for this he adopted, more from the utilitarian economics of J S Mill than from Marx, a theory of economic util-
ity and productive functionalism, which is set out by Hammond in the chapter referred to.

It is in the language and the prose style, however, as much as in the contents of utopia, that Morris evokes this theory, though we will have not understood *News from Nowhere* if we regard Morris’ deviation from Marx as nothing more than the revival of a medievalism that encouraged him to find models for his language and for his social and aesthetic values in thirteenth and fourteenth century England. For whether he intended to do so or not, the construction of utopia as he set it out suggests a theory of space and of the social uses of space which is one of the chief principles on which the concept is founded, and which goes far beyond the image of communism which Marx or his followers ever attempted to portray.

By turning to the obsolete uses of common words like ‘pretty’ and ‘quaint’, Morris meant to draw attention to the meaning of that obsolescence in the economic organization of society. At the same time he drew attention, repeated attention, to what had become an obsolete mode of perceiving, describing and creating objects, in the belief perhaps that by reviving the antique usage, he might develop not only an image of utopia in which the original meanings, and the original ethos, might be restored and given altogether a new life; but also a model of utopia and of the utopian sensibility in which earlier attitudes toward the object, to labour and its use might be newly integrated.

There is a distinction to be made between an image of utopia and a model; an image shows what a utopia looks like; but a model shows how utopia works. It is curious, then, that though Morris has filled his utopia with objects, the language he employs to describe them does very little to reveal what they look like. What, after all, does an elegant dress, or a pretty pipe, or a quaint glass look like? To be sure, Morris makes some effort at providing images; but the pretty bridge, for example, which the narrator first catches sight of, is both like and unlike the medieval examples he introduces in comparison with it:
I had perhaps dreamed of such a bridge, but never seen such a one out of an illuminated manuscript; for not even the Ponte Vecchio at Florence came anywhere near it.

The medieval example is always introduced to be superseded and transcended, and the old house to which the narrator comes at the end of his journey—which we know from Morris’ frontispiece to the book to be Kelmscott Manor—is distinguished from all the other structures of the country and time as being, first of all, so old and then unique for its lack of ‘the extravagant love of ornament which I had noted in this people elsewhere’.

It is interesting to note that what distinguishes the old, almost medieval house from the general domestic design in utopia is the absence of ornament—its lack, in one sense of prettiness. For—and this is Morris’ point of departure from Marxist theory and from his own youthful medievalism—he has set out to demonstrate that the utopian sensibility conceives of the world entirely and solely in aesthetic terms, in the medium of space alone: what distinguishes this from another sensibility is its exclusive concern for objects, for the essential quiddity of the world. All objects are to the utopian frame of mind pretty, handsome or quaint in the sense that they are all—inanimate things, objects of nature, people—seen to be fashioned, carefully wrought, and constructed. Yet they are not all seen in their appearance as image, but rather their appearance is of their manner of functioning, their form or structure, and the relation of their parts in the functioning of the whole.

Morris, I believe, was trying to imagine what it would be like to live in a world where life was ruled by an analytic mode of perception, which in his own day was the rare and momentary property of vision of a few artists—and he attempted to employ a language, a style of description, which such a mode of perception might require. To imagine the analytic imagination—to imagine what one sees, and what life is like for those who see, only the spatial relations of an object-world, the patterns and surfaces of things, their structure and functional relations: this is the task which News from Nowhere sets out
to accomplish, and it is an extraordinary, not to say impossible one. It is a model of how utopia works and an attempt to illustrate the utopian sensibility that thinks and perceives and illustrates in model terms rather than imagistic ones; and I think that this is the especial significance of these everyday words such as 'pretty' and 'quaint'.

This justifies perhaps viewing Morris' tale as quite exceptional in the long tradition of utopian literature, which is more imagistic in its perspective than modular. Few writers who have attempted to show how a utopia works have considered the principle on which Morris' utopia is founded—the aesthetics of space, and the consequent elimination of time—and few have treated the personal and social implications of this principle, its analytical meaning and human consequences, in such depth and with so little romance.

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6 Aymer Vallance, *William Morris, His Art, His Writings and His Public Life* (George Bell & Co., 1897).