

# Slow Print

*Literary Radicalism and  
Late Victorian Print Culture*

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"More pleasant and profitable reading can scarcely anywhere else be found in so small a compass as in these few pages." Still, the review, published just after the 1888 edition of *John Ball* first appeared in print, objects that the novel was not published in a cheaper edition.

The price is 4s. 8d., and this places it beyond the reach of those who would be most likely to buy it. It would be well if Mr. Morris could see his way to publish a shilling edition; if roughly printed and simply stitched together it would not interfere with the sale of the dearer volume which after all will be read by those who can spare 4s. 8d. chiefly for the charm of its style, rather than for the doctrines it puts forth. (2)

The Kelmscott edition of *John Ball* was even more expensive (30s.), but unlike the 1888 edition, it was able to emphasize the interconnectedness of its style and doctrine.

### *Orality and Print in News from Nowhere and A Dream of John Ball*

In both of their print forms, *News from Nowhere* and *A Dream of John Ball* express an antiprint sensibility, as though the technology of print is hopelessly bound up in capitalist formations. These novels are saturated with subtle irony, but perhaps the deepest irony of all is their skepticism concerning their own form. The novels' denigration of books and newspapers seems to diverge from Morris's commitment to changing the politics of print, evident in his labors for the *Commonweal* and Kelmscott Press, but in both works Morris builds on antiprint sentiment to innovate new print forms and genres.

As the editor of the *Commonweal*, Morris argued that education through print and oral propaganda would precede the revolution, preparing the masses to assume power when the change came. He wrote in the newspaper's inaugural issue: "To awaken the sluggish, to strengthen the waverers, to instruct the seekers after truth; these are high aims, yet not too high for a journal that claims to be Socialistic, and we hope by patience and zeal to accomplish them" (February 1885: 1). Print, in this hopeful proclamation, does crucial preparatory work for the revolution. Given such a theory of print, it is perhaps unsurprising that no newspapers exist in the utopian socialist society Morris creates in *News from*

*Nowhere*. If socialist organs change, then they are no longer society of Nowhere has achieved progressing in a cyclical, seen than a historical dialectic. that has reached the end of

The nineteenth-century Guest, learns from Old Ha society, that public debate is textual. When a social dispute is raised at the "meeting-cording to the ancient tongue Bureaucracy is correlated with discussion is considered more essential first Mote, "there is an end of disagreement, they "put off meantime arguments *pro* and so that everybody knows v together again there is a re of hands" (134). When dispute the debate might be printing on," but this happens so to die out, along with the v

Tellingly, the novel's on "How the Change Came," Nowhere to its utopian state capitalist print that were for great harbinger of the 195 a mass expropriation of re with more panic than the § keeping order at the sack of fire," the newspapers "deter "threatened the people, the of unless 'order were at once account, the papers are the is only after "a number of 1

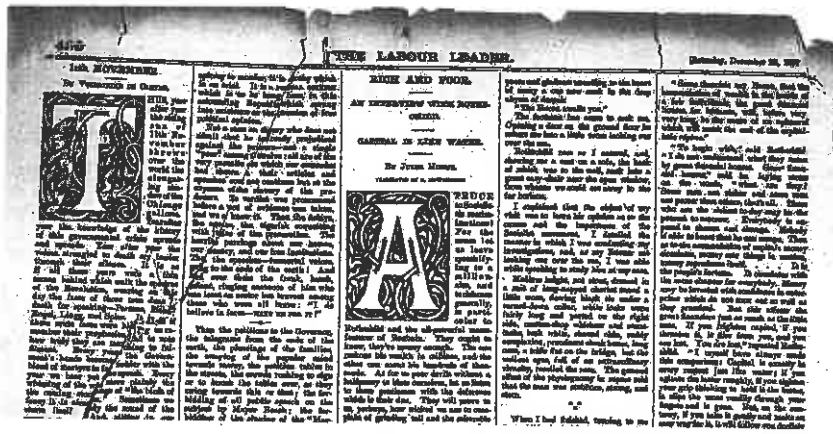


Figure 11. Use of Keltmascott-style initial letters in the *Labour Leader* (25 December 1897).

volume of Morris's lecture *Gothic Architecture* was printed in public at the 1893 Arts and Crafts Exhibition in front of large crowds and sold for 2s. 6d. (Peterson, *Keltmascott Press* 182, 318). The books were part of a broader anticapitalist counterculture, and their influence extended beyond those who could afford to purchase them. For example, the *Labour Leader* used Keltmascott-style initial letters in its special issue for Christmas 1897 (see Figure 11).<sup>27</sup> The Keltmascott books were artifacts from the future, material and aesthetic reminders that after the revolution labor and production would no longer be the alienating, repetitive industrial enterprise that mechanized mass print so neatly symbolized.

News from Nowhere and A Dream of John Ball:  
*The Commonweal and Keltmascott Editions*

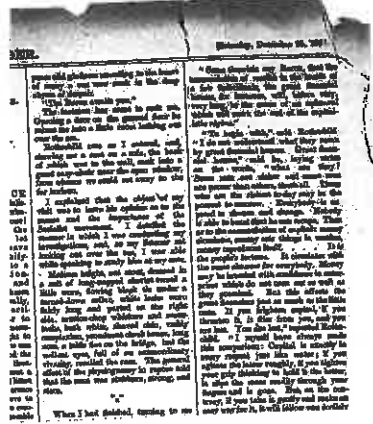
To better conceptualize the continuities between the *Commonweal* and Keltmascott Press—which are not generally thought to have much in common—let us turn to Morris's dream vision novel *A Dream of John Ball* and his utopian novel *News from Nowhere*, both of which appeared in Keltmascott and *Commonweal* editions. Both works were written at the height of Morris's career as a socialist agitator, and both express an antiprint or even antitextual sensibility. In *A Dream of John Ball* the narrator goes back in time, or dreams that he goes back in time, to experience firsthand the primarily oral culture of fourteenth-century peasants; the book suggests that the oral means of communication that sparked the Peasants' Revolt

were better equipped to ch media of the nineteenth ce prosperous future society well as an information rev favor of oral communicat pta and because Morris wa is no print in the world-of out of an antiprint sensibili moment. In this way both formal feature of utopias. A terrogation of the dilemma texts" functions to remind u a space apart (*Archaeologies* print within the context of tique in a manner that pref us that his fiction is not an be read as such. Its unrealit ing from historical possibil

The publishing historie *Ball* reveal Morris's commi ing. Both novels originally reprinted as Keltmascott edi *Commonweal* from 11 Janua such topics as the labor str ers in Siberia, and the brut novel resonated with and aq embedded. For example, the *Commonweal* delivered a bl Morton Stanley (see Figur paper suggested, had obscu Stanley was widely reviled i other socialist papers, objec civilising the African races of partial and absolute star very next page *News from N* a chapter that describes how

were better equipped to channel revolutionary discourse than the print media of the nineteenth century. *News from Nowhere* depicts a peaceful, prosperous future society that has undergone a socialist revolution as well as an information revolution, having virtually abandoned print in favor of oral communication. Because utopias are unnecessary in Utopia and because Morris wants to render print as a utopian space, there is no print in the world of his utopias. Instead, the two works generate out of an antiprint sensibility new forms of print suited to their socialist moment. In this way both works exhibit the ironic reflexivity that is a formal feature of utopias. As Jameson argues, utopian novels' ironic "interrogation of the dilemmas involved in their own emergence as utopian texts" functions to remind us of their unreality, to secure their borders as a space apart (*Archaeologies* 293). When Morris critiques the medium of print within the context of print, ironically deconstructing his own critique in a manner that prefigures Derrida's reading of Plato, he reminds us that his fiction is not an attempt to predict the future and should not be read as such. Its unreality constitutes its revolutionary quality, breaking from historical possibility and destabilizing the future altogether.

The publishing histories of *News from Nowhere* and *A Dream of John Ball* reveal Morris's commitment to two distinct theories of radical printing. Both novels originally appeared in the *Commonweal* and were later reprinted as Kelmscott editions. *News from Nowhere* ran serially in the *Commonweal* from 11 January to 4 October 1890, alongside articles on such topics as the labor struggle, the abuse of Russian political prisoners in Siberia, and the brutality of African colonization. The serialized novel resonated with and against the newspaper items with which it was embedded. For example, the front page of the 29 March 1890 issue of the *Commonweal* delivered a blistering verbal and visual critique of Henry Morton Stanley (see Figure 12), whose hypocritical Christian piety, the paper suggested, had obscured his profit-driven exploitation of Africa. Stanley was widely reviled in the radical press, and the *Commonweal*, like other socialist papers, objected that "England has the hypocrisy to talk of civilising the African races," even though it has "hundreds dying yearly of partial and absolute starvation in her great cities and towns." On the very next page *News from Nowhere* picks up in the middle of Chapter Ten, a chapter that describes how the slums of London were cleared after the



the *Labour Leader* (25 December 1897).

architecture was printed in public at the front of large crowds and sold for 1s (see Figure 1, p. 318). The books were part of a larger project and their influence extended beyond their time. For example, the *Labour Leader* in its special issue for Christ-ott books were artifacts from the period that after the revolution labor became alienating, repetitive industrial work so neatly symbolized.

### of John Ball: Editions

connections between the *Commonweal* and the novel *A Dream of John Ball* and other works which appeared in Kelmscott editions were written at the height of Morris's radicalism. Both express an antiprint or even anti-*John Ball* the narrator goes back in time, to experience firsthand the lives of the century peasants; the book suggests a revolution that sparked the Peasants' Revolt

# THE COMMONWEAL

The Official Journal of the  
**SOCIALIST LEAGUE.**

Vol. 6—No. 220.

SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 1896.

WEEKLY, ONE PENNY.



**THE CHRISTIAN PIONEER.**

In a few days there will land in England a man whom all the Christians of the country in this Christian nation of shopkeepers will rush

of another worker in the same sacred field of duty, "Christian Gordon." The same good authority assures us, further, that every heart in this great and glorious empire, upon which the sun ever declines to set, will thrill with enthusiastic joy at the prospect of welcoming home to these shores the Modern Crusader. And thus, after laying upon England, who is lauded by her glorious traditions as a civilizing power to accept it, the duty of carrying the blessing of her civilizing influences into yearning Africa, until we shake hands across her equatorial forests with the conquerors of the Cape, he enters as 'in Hannibal, Charlemagne, Napoleon, Rome and Greece, in their palmyest days, using and basely Christ, but modestly withholding his own name, retires into obscurity.

Across the road, where another branch of the "Great Industry" is carried on, the lumber trade 'tis said to supplement the efforts of the scribe. And we see the presentation of a lion, real British you know, often used for similar purposes, and Britanna, and in what appears to be a damp shed, is standing in an unbecomingly vacant awaiting her Stanley in her hand she holds a terrific wreath suggestive of General Green cemetery, and thus is also for Stanley.

The patrons of the stalls at music halls and theatres are also in the way path. We see treated to tin snare, red tin, and second-hand uniforms in honour of those who are ready, dead boys, to dare and die, or get it done by proxy. Hurra, hurra, and hawra, all pressed into the service of doing honour to the hero.

The scribe is most probably the same who anonymously satirises and vilifies the working class and their aspirations for a fuller share of the pleasures of life.

The skocher will, if a strike disturbs the classes, represent the workman with an ape-like countenance, with mouth of letter-box proportions, scotchily handling pot and pipe. The same will do with slight alterations, for our Irish comrades when their turn comes to be vilified. Such are the appliances of Stanley.

If the working class allow the loafers of society to misrepresent them in the matter of swabbing and butchering expeditions in the name of England, and the scribe, and the skocher, and the

Figure 12. Front page of the 29 March 1896 issue of the *Commonweal* depicting Henry Morton Stanley as a Christian hypocrite. Labadie Collection, University of Michigan.

revolution, with the residents resettling in the roomy and comfortable buildings of what used to be London's "business quarter."

Similarly, *A Dream of John Ball* was serialized in the *Commonweal* from 13 November 1886 to 22 January 1887 and created a dialogue about utopianism through print context. Its opening chapter ran on the front page opposite Morris's regular column, "Notes on Passing Events," which focused in this issue on the Liberal Party's failure to sponsor effective legislation for Irish home rule: "That the assembled Liberals did not think of or wish for the results of the political freedom of Ireland is not a matter of guess, but is proved by the barrenness of the programme put

forward by them—a programme at re-enactment of Magna Charta" (13 forms an ironic juxtaposition with novel that could be said to "reenact the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, by se witness it."<sup>28</sup> The section of the novel issue appeared alongside the poem Leeds poet Tom Maguire, who is d like *A Dream of John Ball*, challenging on earth for a reward in heaven. It o Pay your tithe-dues, pay your rent; Shall have mansions in the skies."

Be content! be content!  
Till your dreary life is spent!  
Lowly live and lowly die,  
All for mansions in the sky.  
Castles here are much too rare:  
All may have them—in the air. (18 Dece

The poem's point (also made by Workers of the World song "The pie in the sky when you die—that John Ball, the excommunicated pri Revolt, in a speech from Morris's said that ye shall do well in this v may live happily for ever; do ye we on earth and in heaven; for I say t two but one" (51). The novel and t ity and capitalism alike depend on the future: of determining present tions about the future (future prof contrast, call attention to their un of the future, not its predictability Marxist notions of progress.

The *Commonweal* editions of *Ne Ball* create a utopian print context



to her worker in the same sacred field of duty," Christian Gordon "same good authority assures us, farther, that every heart in this land and glorious empire, upon which the sun ever declines to set, shall with enthusiastic joy at the prospect of welcoming home its heroine the Modern Crusader. And then, after laying upon her hand, who is bound by her glorious traditions as a civilizing power except in the duty of carrying the blessings of her civilizing influence into faraway Africa, and we shake hands across her eternal floods with the colonists of the Cape, he looks at us as usual, Charlemagne, Napoleon, Rome and Greece, in their palmistry, a mind, and lastly Christ, but modestly withholding his own name, yet into obscurity.

across the road, where another branch of the "Great Industry" is tried on the human scale has not to supplement the efforts of the the. And we see the presentment of a son, real British you know, no need for similar purposes, and Britannia, clad in what appears to a damp snow, is standing in an unrelenting wind awaiting her only in her hand she holds a terrific wrath suggestive of Kanelan son cemetery, and this is also for Stanley.

The patriots of the stalls at music halls and theatres are also on the up-path. We see treated to tin snore, red fire, and second-hand virtues in honour of those who are ready, dear boys, to die and die, get it done by proxy. Surfers, lunars, and bawlers, all pressed into in service of doing honour to the household.

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The shudder will, it is scarce disturbs the classes, represents the workman with an ape-like countenance, with mouth of letter-box proportions, suitably handling job and pipe. The same will do, with high alterations, for our fresh comrades when their time comes to be based. Such are the appliances of Stanley.

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forward by them—a programme about as valuable as a proposal for the re-enactment of Magna Charta" (13 November 1886). Morris's comment forms an ironic juxtaposition with the opening chapter of *John Ball*, a novel that could be said to "reenact" another medieval political event, the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, by sending the narrator back in time to witness it.<sup>28</sup> The section of the novel that ran in the 18 December 1886 issue appeared alongside the poem "Be Content" by the working-class Leeds poet Tom Maguire, who is discussed in Chapter 4. "Be Content," like *A Dream of John Ball*, challenges the idea that the poor must suffer on earth for a reward in heaven. It opens: "Said the parson, 'Be content, / Pay your tithe-dues, pay your rent; / They that earthly things despise / Shall have mansions in the skies.'" The closing stanza reads:

Be content! be content!  
 Till your dreary life is spent!  
 Lowly live and lowly die,  
 All for mansions in the sky.  
 Castles here are much too rare:  
 All may have them—in the air. (18 December 1886: 299)

The poem's point (also made by Joe Hill in the famous Industrial Workers of the World song "The Preacher and the Slave": "You'll get pie in the sky when you die—that's a lie!") is likewise articulated by John Ball, the excommunicated priest who helped foment the Peasants' Revolt, in a speech from Morris's novel: "Forsooth, ye have heard it said that ye shall do well in this world that in the world to come ye may live happily for ever; do ye well then, and have your reward both on earth and in heaven; for I say to you that earth and heaven are not two but one" (51). The novel and the poem remind us that Christianity and capitalism alike depend on a particular means of appropriating the future: of determining present conditions on the basis of speculations about the future (future profits or a future afterlife). Utopias, by contrast, call attention to their unreality to suggest the indeterminacy of the future, not its predictability à la Christian, capitalist, or rigidly Marxist notions of progress.

The *Commonweal* editions of *News from Nowhere* and *A Dream of John Ball* create a utopian print context for Morris's work by means of the

resources conventionally available to periodicals: juxtaposition, editorial tone, and design. Still, these editions depend on industrial forms of literary production, such as cheap print (the paper sold for a penny) and the serialized novel (a nineteenth-century print form perhaps formally tied to capitalist ideology, as discussed in the next chapter) to provoke a changed consciousness *against* industrial capitalism. The *Commonweal* had a small countercultural readership but relied on the template of mass mediation; as Glasier notes, Morris did attempt “to make the paper in some degree a good example of typographical art, designing for it a simple but beautiful title block, and insisting on good, readable type and consistency of headings and spacing throughout” (*William Morris* 179), but nonetheless William Peterson calls it “a typographically unimpressive periodical” (*Kelmscott Press* 65). In transferring his labors from the *Commonweal* to Kelmscott, Morris refocused his attention on questions of mediation and production, with the effect of making his print works more expensive and less accessible. Yet as Crane has argued in Morris’s defense, “The cheapness of the cheapest things of modern manufacture is generally at the cost of the cheapening of human labour and life, which is a costly kind of cheapness after all” (*William Morris* 39).<sup>29</sup>

After founding the Press, Morris published a Kelmscott edition of *A Dream of John Ball* in 1892 and a Kelmscott edition of *News from Nowhere* in 1893.<sup>30</sup> These editions embody a process-based rather than an outcome-based approach to radical print and textuality; production of the book becomes an end in itself rather than a means, exemplifying Morris’s call for a Ruskinian anti-industrial revolution in labor and creativity. With Kelmscott Morris skipped over historical process altogether to make books “in the future already.” Some of Kelmscott’s titles suggest this utopian vision for the Press. For example, a Kelmscott edition of More’s *Utopia* was published in 1893, and Morris even began designing a map of Utopia for it, although the book was published without the map (Peterson, *Kelmscott Press* 154). Kelmscott likewise produced all manner of antirealist texts, including Morris’s romance tale *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, the first book produced at the Press. Such books are not transparent vehicles of political enlightenment or information but rather express their politics in their life and production as objects, embodying in the present a future disruption of industrial progress.

Kelmscott’s *News from Nowhere* presence beginning with the rigorous literalism of its caption the object at hand: “This is the to which the people of this story which is called News from Now William Morris.” The caption representations, even as it uses and concreteness of “the pictur artifacts from the future. The i companies this caption, drawn Hooper, echoes this literalism readers to walk right into the *News from Nowhere* engages w ent,” which is “at some level the ity culture under capitalism,”



Figure 13. Frontispiece to the Kelmscott edition of *News from Nowhere*. Illustration drawn by C. M. Gere at the Kelmscott Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

riodicals: juxtaposition, editors depend on industrial forms of the paper sold for a penny) and by print form perhaps formally (in the next chapter) to provoke social capitalism. The *Commonweal* relied on the template of mass attempt "to make the paper in graphical art, designing for it a thing on good, readable type and throughout" (*William Morris* 179), it "a typographically unimpressive-transferring his labors from the focused his attention on questions effect of making his print works it as Crane has argued in Mor-eapest things of modern manu-heaping of human labour and after all" (*William Morris* 39).<sup>29</sup> published a Kelmscott edition of Kelmscott edition of *News from Nowhere* a process-based rather than an and textuality; production of the than a means, exemplifying Mor-el revolution in labor and creativer historical process altogether to some of Kelmscott's titles suggest example, a Kelmscott edition of and Morris even began design-e book was published without the Kelmscott likewise produced all Morris's romance tale *The Story* roduced at the Press. Such books cal enlightenment or information air life and production as objects, rruption of industrial progress.

Kelmscott's *News from Nowhere* demands attention to its material presence beginning with the frontispiece illustration (Figure 13). The rigorous literalism of its caption forces the reader to pay attention to the object at hand: "This is the picture of the old house by the Thames to which the people of this story went. Hereafter follows the book itself which is called News from Nowhere or an Epoch of Rest & is written by William Morris." The caption calls attention to the picture and text as representations, even as it uses present tense to reinforce the immediacy and concreteness of "the picture" and "the book itself," which become artifacts from the future. The illustration of Kelmscott Manor that accompanies this caption, drawn by C. M. Gere and engraved by W. H. Hooper, echoes this literalism visually; the perspective seems to invite readers to walk right into the house.<sup>31</sup> Matthew Beaumont argues that *News from Nowhere* engages with "the perceptual problem of the present," which is "at some level the result of the reifying effects of commodity culture under capitalism," and that it "depicts a world wherein the



Figure 13. Frontispiece to the Kelmscott edition of *News from Nowhere* (1893). Illustration drawn by C. M. Gere and engraved by W. H. Hooper. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.



present is finally present to itself" ("News" 36–37). Although Beaumont does not address the print context of *News from Nowhere*, Morris's attempt to simulate the presence of the future is all the more obvious in the Kelmscott frontispiece, which reminds us of its alterity to highlight our own alienation from the present it depicts.

Similarly, the frontispiece for *A Dream of John Ball*, drawn by the Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones, takes a famous catchphrase of John Ball as its caption: "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman" (Figure 14). In a radical commandeering of art for the working classes, the words and picture stress the book's materiality, challenging the reader to consider the labor at the heart of all production. The caption omits the question mark in a sentence that is obviously a question, rejecting orthographic signs of meaning in favor of an im-

plied intonation, necessarily also denaturalizes leisure rather than quite uncharacteristic of aesthetic socialist art of the period. The laboring body" as "an aesthetic socialist aesthetics and homogenized same time the image relies on ideological critique of class.<sup>32</sup>

Burne-Jones originally conceived the edition of *A Dream of John Ball* Kelmscott edition, which was block illustrations.<sup>33</sup> W. H. Hooper and Morris designed the letter-



Figure 14. Frontispiece for the Kelmscott edition of *A Dream of John Ball* (1892). Drawn by Edward Burne-Jones and engraved by W. H. Hooper. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.



Figure 15. Frontispiece for the 1888 edition of *A Dream of John Ball*. Drawn by Edward Burne-Jones.

s" 36–37). Although Beaumont Newhall from *Nowhere*, Morris's attitude is all the more obvious in its use of its alterity to highlight epiphanies.

*A Dream of John Ball*, drawn by the artist, takes a famous catchphrase "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman" as a rhetorical commandeering of art for the purpose of stressing the book's materiality, labor at the heart of all production, and work in a sentence that is obviously a play on words of meaning in favor of an im-

plied intonation, necessarily oral- rather than print-based. The image also denaturalizes leisure rather than obfuscating labor, in a manner quite uncharacteristic of aestheticism, but as Ruth Livesey suggests of much socialist art of the period, the image also renders the "masculine laboring body" as "an aesthetic site"—a central link between Morris's socialist aesthetics and homoerotic aestheticism ("Morris" 603). At the same time the image relies on traditional gender divisions to mount an ideological critique of class.<sup>92</sup>

Burne-Jones originally composed this illustration for the first book edition of *A Dream of John Ball* in 1888, and he revised the image for the Kelmscott edition, which was the first Kelmscott book to include wood-block illustrations.<sup>93</sup> W. H. Hooper engraved the Kelmscott illustration, and Morris designed the lettering and border. Figure 15 reproduces the



Figure 14. Frontispiece for the Kelmscott edition of *A Dream of John Ball* (1892). Drawn by W. H. Hooper. Reinecke Rare Book and



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*A Dream of John Ball*, drawn by the artist, takes a famous catchphrase from the *Book of Genesis* and Eve spanned Adam, who was then the gentleman. This is a radical commandeering of art for the purpose of stressing the book's materiality, the labor at the heart of all production, and the work in a sentence that is obviously a play on the words of meaning in favor of an im-

plied intonation, necessarily oral—rather than print-based. The image also denaturalizes leisure rather than obfuscating labor, in a manner quite uncharacteristic of aestheticism, but as Ruth Livesey suggests of much socialist art of the period, the image also renders the “masculine laboring body” as “an aesthetic site”—a central link between Morris's socialist aesthetics and homoerotic aestheticism (“Morris” 603). At the same time the image relies on traditional gender divisions to mount an ideological critique of class.<sup>38</sup>

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Figure 15. Frontispiece for the 1888 edition of *A Dream of John Ball*. Drawn by Edward Burne-Jones.

earlier frontispiece; note that it is a photogravure illustration, whereas the Kelmscott frontispiece is a wood-block print, just one of the key differences that reveal a great deal about Kelmscott's aesthetic project. Wood-block engraving had become obsolete "almost overnight" with the onset of photographic means of reproducing images in the 1880s (Peterson, *Kelmscott Press* 21).<sup>34</sup> The Kelmscott frontispiece uses capital letters and sharper, cleaner lines to insist on its material presence, even as it depicts a prelapsarian scene wholly detached from history.

The leafy border framing the Kelmscott frontispiece functions to integrate the work of art into organic nature, yet it also demarcates the image's artificiality by cordoning it off. Such frames and borders, exemplified in the frontispiece for *News* as well as *John Ball*, were characteristic of all Kelmscott books and are a feature of their utopian form. They signify that the image is not continuous with phenomenal reality but exists in a separate space and chronology. Responses in the socialist press suggest that critics read the works in this light. A review of *News* in the *Workers' Cry* claims that the depiction of the postrevolutionary commonwealth should not be taken as prophetic.

Morris, alike with the true instinct of a poet and artist and the foresight of wise political judgment, does not attempt to frame together a cast-iron social structure fixing its height, width, and depth, and filling in all the details of its construction. He knows too well that we cannot quite foresee how all things may be done when the people's minds and bodies are set free from the sordid desires and the industrial servitude of to-day. (18 July 1891: 10)

Some socialists did appeal to *News* as a vision of what a socialist society might look like, but typically they did so to reinforce the point that a new social order *was* possible. A poem by R. L. Gorton titled "The Promised Land (As Shown by Morris's 'News from Nowhere')" ran in the 14 March 1896 issue of the *Clarion*: "I oftentimes wonder if 'twill ever be, / That future visioned by the Poet-seer, / When England's children shall in truth be *free*." The point of the poem is that the conditions of capitalism have the effect of making alternatives seem impossible: "Amidst the lovely vale now factory's wheel / Throbs, hammers clang; the struggle e'er is rife / For food and pelf: there is no Common Weal." Playing on the name of the newspaper where *News* originally

appeared, "Common Weal" is the title of the first stanza of the "Promised Land" in *News from Nowhere*. The first stanza suggests, however, that the populist, reformist vision of the promised land is not a simple one: "I dar'nt blow the clarion call /

The *Clarion* again distinctive in its serial story "A Day in the Life of a Worker" ran from 27 April to 25 May 1888. The story is carried back to the fourteenth century, 'by the sword' from Nowhere, by the swordward into the twenty-second century. The story is based on these premises: "I dar'nt see an English serf of the Middle Ages, we are supposed to enjoy the life of a free man, but the story focuses on a medieval peasant who lives in a medieval peasant day England. Humorous and satirical, it is met by William Guest who is sentenced for stealing, after a long time in prison, to a life of food. Eventually, after a long time in an iron foundry, he dies of a disease which is rather clumsy—for example, the story for exposition: "It is a pity that I discovered that freedom, which is a mockery to the majority of the people, is built on the defamiliarization of the people. The juxtaposition, was influenced by the story of the

Critics of Morris often accused him of political quietism, but his story, set in the 14 April 1888 issue of the *Clarion*, will focus on the immediate work of the proletariat. The little work of Mr. Morris is a stirring speech to the people.

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 detached from history.

scott frontispiece functions to  
 ture, yet it also demarcates the  
 : Such frames and borders, ex-  
 : well as *John Ball*, were charac-  
 a feature of their utopian form.  
 unuous with phenomenal reality  
 ology. Responses in the socialist  
 s in this light. A review of *News*  
 iction of the postrevolutionary  
 prophetic.

: and artist and the foresight of wise  
 ne together a cast-iron social struc-  
 d filling in all the details of its cont-  
 t quite foresee how all things may be  
 e set free from the sordid desires and  
 891: 10)

us as a vision of what a socialist  
 hey did so to reinforce the point  
 A poem by R. L. Gorton titled  
 orris's "News from Nowhere") ran  
 rion: "I oftentimes wonder if 'twill  
 ne Poet-seer, / When England's  
 int of the poem is that the condi-  
 aking alternatives seems impos-  
 :tory's wheel / Throbs, hammers  
 ood and pelf: there is no Common  
 ewspaper where *News* originally

appeared, "Common Weal" connects the space of radical print to the space of the "Promised Land" Morris's novel imagined. The poem's final stanza suggests, however, in a self-referential allusion to its own forum, that the populist, reformist socialism of the *Clarion* is better suited to make the promised land actually come true: "But dream not yet. Clear blows the clarion call / To don our armour. Comrades all, awake!" (81).

The *Clarion* again drew on Morris's model of socialist utopian narrative in its serial story "A Free Country," by M. B. ("Mont Blanc"), which ran from 27 April to 25 May 1895. The story begins in homage to Morris: "In William Morris's 'Dream of John Ball,' a modern Englishman is carried back to the fourteenth century of our glorious country. In 'News from Nowhere,' by the same author, a modern Englishman is lifted forward into the twenty-somethingth century." M. B. proposes a variation on these premises: "I daresay you have often wondered—as I have—what an English serf of the Middle Ages would think of that freedom which we are supposed to enjoy in this nineteenth century" (136). The story focuses on a medieval peasant, Wat Warton, who awakens in present-day England. Humorous difficulties of dress and language—like those met by William Guest in *News*—ensue, but soon Warton is imprisoned for stealing, after nearly starving from lack of money to purchase food. Eventually, after a suicide attempt and a workplace injury at an iron foundry, he dies destitute. The narrative art of "A Free Country" is rather clumsy—for example, the 11 May 1895 installment abandons story for exposition: "It would take too long to tell in detail how [Wat] discovered that freedom, the Englishman's birthright, is little more than a mockery to the majority of the English people" (149)—but the central imaginative move of the story suggests how Morris's fictional structure, built on the defamiliarization of social custom through chronological juxtaposition, was influential across radical press literature.

Critics of Morris often suggest that his neomedievalism was a form of political quietism, but a review of *A Dream of John Ball* by F. Keddell in the 14 April 1888 issue of *Justice* argues that the novel, despite its historical setting, will foment socialist feeling: "To-day . . . the more immediate work is the propaganda of Socialism and in this we think this little work of Mr. Morris will have a good part to play." Of John Ball's rousing speech to the peasants at the heart of the novel, Keddell writes,