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# Vizuální utopismus ve viktoriánské Anglii: William Morris a jeho „učitelé"

# Visual Utopianism in Victorian England: William Morris and His "Teachers"

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MA THESIS

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# ABSTRACT

The thesis presents William Morris as a utopian thinker with focus on the centrality of *vision* in his thought. The main focus is put on the analysis of his only utopian novel, *News from Nowhere*, together with his other speeches and treatises. It is believed that the focus on *vision* is so significant not only for his life philosophy but also for his views on art and society that it can give answers to many questions that have arisen in relation to his political views, medievalism or handcraft. The structure of the thesis respects the central argument of the widely held "from romantic to revolutionary" hypothesis and presents Morris as a "revolutionary" Victorian who has never fell out with the ideas of Romanticism. Together with this, it should be understood that Morris strongly reflects and comments upon wider socio-cultural Victorian discourse as well as the ideas of his "teachers" – Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin. Reflecting this, the text is divided into two main parts – the first and second chapter deals with the notion of vision (in Romanticism and Victorian Age) and the work of Morris's "teachers", and the third chapter focuses on the interpretation of *News from Nowhere* and Morris's utopianism. The interrelated areas of "Nowherian" space (3.2), beauty (3.3), art, work and history (3.4) help establish the nature of Morris's visual utopianism on the background of Ernst Bloch's theory of utopia and alongside the *democratic vision* argument.

**KEYWORDS**: William Morris, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Ernst Bloch, utopia, vision, Victorian Age, Romanticism, society, art, work, architecture, picturesque

# SHRNUTÍ

Tato diplomová práce představuje William Morrise jako utopického myslitele, přičemž se zaměřuje na ústřední postavení *vidění* v rámci jeho myšlení. Hlavní důraz je kladen na analýzu jeho jediného utopistického románu *News from Nowhere* společně s jeho dalšími přednáškami a odbornými pojednáními. Práce se zakládá na předpokladu, že důraz na aspekt *vidění* je tak důležitý nejen pro jeho životní filozofii, ale rovněž pro jeho náhled na umění a společnost, že může zodpovědět mnohé otázky, které vyvstaly ve vztahu k jeho politickým názorům, medievalismu nebo rukodělné výrobě. Struktura této práce respektuje ústřední argument široce respektované hypotézy „od romantika k revolucionáři" a prezentuje Morrise jakožto „revolucionářského" Viktoriána, který nikdy neztratil kontakt s myšlenkami romantismu. Společně s tímto postojem se má za to, že Morris značně vnímá stejně tak širší socio-kulturní viktoriánský diskurs, k němuž se vyjadřuje, jakožto i myšlenky svých „učitelů" – Thomase Carlylela a Johna Ruskina. Na základě toho je text rozčleněn do dvou hlavních částí – první a druhá kapitola pojednává o pojetí *vidění* (v romantismu a viktoriánské době) a díle Morissových „učitelů" a třetí kapitola se zaměřuje na interpretaci *News from Nowhere* a Morrisova utopianismu. Vzájemně související oblasti „nowheriánského" prostoru (3.2), krásy (3.3), umění, práce a historie (3.4) napomáhají k prokázání povahy Morrisova vizuálního utopianismu na pozadí teorie utopie Ernsta Blocha souběžně s argumentem *demokratické vize*.

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# 0 INTRODUCTION

During his lifetime, William Morris was an influential public figure, when taking into account a number of activities he was involved in (ranging from architecture, through design, writing, translating to social activism). As a result, a lot has been written on his poetry, views on society, design or even utopia. And it is the last area which I will closely examine in this thesis, as I am strongly convinced that what characterizes Morris best as an author, thinker, social critic and, last but not least, designer and one of the leading figures of the Arts and Crafts Movement, is his *utopianism* which should not be understood in the narrow sense, as a literary genre, but rather in a wider sense, as an endeavour encompassing any human activity aimed at transforming the given state of things.

With this in mind, I fully agree with Ruth Levitas that "the absence of reference to Bloch in recent re-evaluations of Morris is surprising"[1] and it will be one of the aims of this thesis to fill this gap. Ernst Bloch's concept of "hope" (*Hoffnung*), presented in his *opus magnum Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (*The Principle of Hope*), will allow me to re-interpret Morris's main ideas as a highly practical project that found its irreplaceable position in the late 19th century Victorian Britain and demonstrate that it does not have to be read just as an example of dreamy medievalism or unfulfilled escapism. It is my contention here that everything Morris did was aimed first at man and his well-being and secondly, at the reformation of the whole society. As a result, his striving was, in its orientation through theory towards practice, a very tangible epitome of search for better future, a dream that was turned into vision transcending the materiality of the "Now" and reaching far beyond the horizon of the present into the *as-yet-unknown* and intangible future.

Further, a long list of Morris's activities clearly shows that he was a "visual thinker" and that *vision* can be seen as being central for his overall thought. It is surprising to find out that little attention is paid to this aspect in the critical literature examining his prose works and that it appears just as a background to his political or artistic undertakings, whereas socialism or medievalism are given much greater space. Yet, the focus on *vision* is so central not only to his life philosophy but also to his views on art and society that it can give answers to many questions that have arisen in relation to his political affiliations (socialism), medievalism or handcraft, and so it can explain the intimate interrelatedness between the theoretical and practical aspects of Morris' work.

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[1] Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*. *Ralahine Utopian Studies* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010) 106.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis will be to present William Morris as a utopian thinker with focus on the centrality of vision in his thought. Although Morris's *oeuvre* is vast, he wrote an openly utopian text, the novel *News from Nowhere*, which will be closely read (together with his speeches and treatises) in order to highlight the main tenets of his *visual utopianism* that can be found in his prose works. As vision can refer to its physical aspects (as to receive physical stimuli, which has been promoted by science), psychological aspects (as to "imagine" and "dream", which was greatly stressed by Romantics) and political aspects (as to see into the future, which is the epitome of utopia and utopian thought), the interpretation must take into account all three of them. Last but not least, the principle of "hope" is highly visual itself, as it combines both the "inner" vision of mind (attempting to locate the yet-unrealized) and the "physical" sight of the bodily eye minutely observing the environment in which one lives and which gives him material for his dreams that may or may not be put in practice.

It is my belief that that Morris's ideas cannot be fully examined without a direct reference to the works of "his teachers", namely Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin, both of whom influenced him substantially. Furthermore, their views are concerned with the notion of *vision* to a great extent, which may help to demonstrate the Victorian approach to vision that has not fully broken away from the stress on the subject ("self") and imagination both of which were characteristic for Romanticism. For this reason, the first part of this thesis is concerned not only with Carlyle and Ruskin but also with the notion of vision in Romanticism and Victorian period. Despite the fact that such a complicated issue cannot be satisfactorily examined on a small scale, I believe that the first chapter gives a sound background for the ensuing analysis of Carlyle's, Ruskin's and Morris's works. Its main aim is to provide a wider socio-cultural background that is understood as being central not only for utopia, a genre strongly reflecting and commenting upon the state of society, but also for Morris's overall thought. I find this aspect lacking in some analyses of his major works.

As to my approach, the overall structure of the thesis will respect the central argument of the widely held "from romantic to revolutionary" hypothesis presented by William Thompson's book of the same title, the book that has had the greatest influence among Morris' scholars. Nevertheless, this hypothesis will be restructured in a way that the dialectical view on Morris' thinking will be sidelined, and so he will be presented as a "revolutionary" Victorian who has never fell out with the ideas of Romanticism, which Thompson's attitude may obscure (mainly when he presents mature Morris as a

revolutionary Marxist). To demonstrate this, the text of the thesis will fall into two main parts – Chapters 1 and 2 dealing with the notion of vision (in Romanticism and the Victorian Age) and the writings of Morris's "teachers", and Chapter 3 focusing on the interpretation of *News from Nowhere* and Morris's utopianism.

Firstly, it will be exemplified how vision was understood by Romantics (1.1) (mainly Coleridge, Keats, Wordsworth, Emerson or Byron) and the nature of the dynamic image (let it be the poem, the painting or even memory) created by the interplay of sensual experience and imagination will be highlighted. In the second sub-chapter (1.2), "the visual" in the socio-cultural discourse of Victorian Britain will be located. As for the theoretical background, Jonathan Carry's study "Techniques of the Observer", Kate Flint's *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* and Friedrich Nietzsche's *On Genealogy of Morals* will be cited.

Secondly, the works of Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin will be examined in the second chapter with respect to the role of "vision" that has an important role in their thought.[2] The main attention will be paid to Carlyle's praise of activity over idleness reflected in the notion of work as a sacred principle (2.1) and Ruskin's views on nature, art and society (2.2). Their views should help to elucidate Morris's own thoughts.

In the last part of this thesis, the concepts of utopian dream and vision will be introduced (3.1), which will provide a sound basis for the further close reading of *News from Nowhere*. Finally, the interrelated areas of "Nowherian" space (3.2), beauty (3.3), art, work and history (3.4) will be dealt with in order to describe both the world of *Nowhere* and the nature Morris's visual utopianism that will be characterized by the *democratic vision* argument interpreted alongside the lines of pragmatism and Hegel's master-slave dialectics. When theoretical works are concerned, mainly Bloch's *The Principle of Hope*, Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory* and John Dewey's *Art as Experience* will be used in this part of the thesis.

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[2] The fact that it was Carlyle himself who, according to Nicholas Mirzoeff, coined the word "visuality" in his lectures *On Heroes and Hero Worship* (1894), only proves this assumption. Nicholas Mirzoeff, "On Visuality," *Journal of Visual Culture* Vol. 5, No. 1 (2006): 55, < http://www.nicholasmirzoeff.com/Images/Mirzeoff_visuality.pdf > 2 Jan.

# 1 VISION – FROM ROMANTICISM TO THE VICTORIAN AGE

"Visibility is a trap."

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

"WE NEVER SEE ANYTHING CLEARLY. (...)What we call seeing a thing clearly, is only seeing enough of it to *make out what it is*; this point of intelligibility varying in distances for different magnitudes and kinds of things, while the appointed quantity of mystery remains neatly the same for all."

John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*

The 19th century was a turbulent age deeply affected not only by the ideals of the French Revolution but, more importantly, by the scientific and industrial progress the peak of which was the Great Exhibition in 1851 symbolically represented by the construction of the Crystal Palace.[3] This event (admired throughout Europe) proved Britain's position as the world's superpower[4] and moreover, it also demonstrated the role of vision which became central in the period. Although it can be claimed that the 17th century was more concerned with ocular perception than any other era, as seeing stood for the companion of reason at the time (Descartes and Leibniz),[5] advancements in optics two hundred years later put the eye, the bodily organ of sight, into the centre of interest. It was impossible to be "the leader" and not to see properly, as sight went hand in hand with knowledge

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[3] Not only the exhibits themselves but the very construction of the building itself (using steel and glass elements) demonstrated a close relationship between technology and science. In terms of architecture, this building was one of the first in the world not to use timber or brick but steel which was employed just for the construction of glasshouses or railway stations before. Not surprisingly, Crystal Palace looked like a huge greenhouse from the outside, whereas its main hall resembled a railway station that made it possible to enclose full-sized trees.

[4] Queen Victoria expressed the feelings of triumph in her opening speech: "God bless my dearest Country, which has shown itself so great today!" Christopher Hibbert, *Queen Victoria: A Personal History* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2000) 214. In relation to the Great Exhibition, David Morse points out that the whole project was more than an exhibition: it was "the moment when England definitively proclaimed and demonstrated her superiority over the rest of the world." Simply, Britain intended to show that she is able not only to show its progress but also to support the spread of civilization and stay in charge of international prosperity. The unrivalled progress in science signified also advancement in other fields and thus it stood as "an example to all other nations, by virtue of her political institutions, her legal system, and the freedom of the press." David Morse, *High Victorian Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993) 30-32.

[5] Sibylle Krämer, "The 'eye of the mind' and the 'eye of the body': Descartes and Leibniz on truth, mathematics, and visuality," *Sensory Perception,* eds. Friedrich G. Barth, Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch and Hans-Dieter Klein (Wien: Springer, 2012) 369-370. The reasons for this view are significant inventions in optics (development of various optical apparatuses, mainly the microscope) and also reflection of optics in philosophy of the age (e.g. Descartes, Leibniz).

(accumulation of facts) and power. Moreover, emotional experience was unthinkable without the notion of vision either in the form of a direct contact with the living space (nature) or of an "internal" sight (vision of the mind and memory).

On the superficial level, these two universal approaches to the activity of the eye can be represented by the two literary schools coexisting throughout the century – Romantics (sharing rather the latter approach) and Victorians (in favour of the former). Furthermore, even the cultural phenomenon of a distinct shift from the rural to urban areas between 1830-1851 and the atmosphere it brought with itself (prominence of the city and so of "the material" contrasting with the view of nature as a spiritual refuge) can be linked to these characteristics of vision. Although such distinct boundaries and generalisations can help us understand the ambience of the time, as they reflect the tendencies present in individual literary movements, it is better to avoid them straight away. More importantly, it is crucial to focus on the transformation of the approach to vision from the Romantic Age to the Victorian period.

## 1.1 Subjective Vision

Romantics did not see the world only with the physical eye but they also employed the "eye of the mind" to capture its uniqueness. This does not mean that they altogether abandoned the world around them, the world from which they drew inspiration, and retreated to the recesses of their inner selves. It only stresses the fact that Romantic poets adopted "the material" in a specific way – they clung to the spiritual side of the image and creatively transformed it, so that it was not a copy or a mirror image of the real anymore but, quite on the contrary, the expression of *their* understanding of reality, of their imagination that may have even pointed to the mystical whole of the universe. In this way, a high value was put the on the poet or, in other words, on the bearer of creative powers who had the ability not only to perceive the world of nature but moreover, to alter it in a very specific way. He himself thus became an autonomous subject who drew his energy from nature (or Nature) and whose work was developed comparably to her powers. William Blake put this quite bluntly: "As the eye, such the object."[6]

When we examine the 18th century aesthetic theories and generalize about them, we come to conclusion that a strong tinge of the empiricist understanding of mind, as presented by John Locke (and later by David Hume or David Hartley) who conceived it

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[6] William Blake, "Annotations to Reynolds" [c. 1808], *Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) 456.

simply as a *tabula rasa* on which impressions from the external world are imprinted,[7] can be sensed there. As a result, mind was presented as a passive organ which stores the data (especially those coming from sight) that are mere copies of the real objects and which can also be retrieved from memory. Imagination was then understood as a mode of memory responsible for producing fictional and illusory images (usually by combining the existing impressions).[8]

### 1.1.1 Imagination and Dream

Thinkers of the time concerned with aesthetic issues dealt rather with the nature of taste or beauty and their standards than with a direct revision of Locke's theory of the mind[9] until Coleridge radically rejected Locke's assumptions in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817) by juxtaposing mechanic "fancy" and organic "imagination".[10] It is not imagination but fancy that becomes the faculty responsible for documenting sensory information and the former comes into foreground in the form of an active capacity of the mind, a living force capable of achieving an "organic unity" of discordant visual impulses. This "esemplastic power" which "shapes into one" expresses the same energy and unity that can be observed in nature (in the growth of plants) viewed as an ideal model to which theories of literary production or invention must be accommodated.[11] The very choice of the word

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[7] "Whence has [the mind] all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from *experience*; in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself." John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Vol. 1.* (London: Eliz Holt, 1690) II, i. 2.

[8] The whole matter was further complicated by the fact that there was no clear distinction between fancy and imagination made in the 18th century and both usually came under one heading. Samuel Johnson defines imagination in his *Dictionary of the English Language* as "Fancy; the power of forming ideal pictures; the power representing things absent to one's self or others." Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (Heidelberg: Joseph Engelmann, 1828) 556.

[9] Joseph Addison's conception of taste and sublime presented in *The Spectator* (1712) together with Edmund Burke's concept of sublime in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) or Francis Hutcheson's "line of grace" and "line of beauty" delineated in *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) are some of the widely known and relevant undertakings in this respect, to name but a few. Yet, as Zdeněk Beran exemplifies, the 18th century aestheticians already foreboded strong romantic tendencies which were yet to come, and so distanced themselves from Locke's philosophy in this way. Cf. Zdeněk Beran, *Romantické impulsy ve viktoriánské literatuře*. Diss. (Praha: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy v Praze, 2012) Chapter 1, *Is.cuni.cz* <https://is.cuni.cz/webapps> 28 Dec 2013.

[10] For Coleridge, fancy "has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites," being "no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space" and "must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association." In contrast, (primary) imagination is described as "the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM." The secondary imagination ("differing only in *degree* and in the mode of operation" from the primary imagination) "is essentially *vital*", as it "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify." Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1930) Chap. XIII, 60.

[11] M. H. Abrams gives a concise summary of Coleridge's central ideas on organic growth which provide a definite answer on "how to explain the genesis of order and design by the operation of purely mechanical

originating in the Greek πλάττειν (pla/ttein) with the meaning of "to form" or "to mould" highlights not only deeply artistic (*poietic*) connotations but also refers to the physical practice of changing the shape which does no longer take place outside in nature but in the innermost corners of the human mind, within man. As a result, man unites with nature through the physiological process of seeing (visual perception) interpreted as the power innate to him which shares similar functions to his hands – it can create a harmonious and functional whole out of the non-homogenous mass (hence creative and synthetic potential of sight). Perception then loses its passive character and becomes dynamic in a way that it penetrates the physical world and incorporates the whole being (the "infinite I AM") into its re-creation and re-interpretation. In short, imagination enables a finite human being to "see" with the eye of the mind infinite wonders of the world around him and it also "generates and produces a form of its own," while its rules are "the very powers of growth and production."[12]

As it is obvious, there is a close relation between the poet (his activities) and Nature (both in a narrow and a wider sense of the word) which brings us to imagination that can be understood as "one of many possible expressions of a spiritual identity of poet's character."[13] So, imagination becomes emblematic for an "ideal" poet whose artistic creation can have mythical or even visionary dimension, which uncovers another aspect of Romantic vision. This is greatly expressed in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" (1816) which is a demonstration of the dynamic character of an organic imagination.[14] Individual stages of a creative process are blurred and interpreted as a result of the mysterious workings of poet's (inner) vision whose main source is "the infinite I AM" resembling God. In any case, it is both the result of this vision (the poem) and the vision itself which are to be understood as

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laws": "(1) The plant originates in seed. (...) (2) The plant *grows*. (...) (3) Growing, the plant assimilates to its own substance the alien diverse elements of earth, air light, and water.(...) (4) The plant evolves spontaneously from an internal source of energy - 'effectuates', as Coleridge put it, 'its own secret growth' - and organizes itself into its proper form. (...) (5) The achieved structure of a plant is an organic unity." M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953) 171-174. "Organic unity" also means that individual parts depend on each other in a way that they cannot be extracted from the whole which they constitute. "Imaginative unity is an *organic* unity: a self-evolved system, constituted by a living interdependence of parts, whose identity cannot survive their removal from the whole." Abrams, 175.

[12] Abrams, 169.

[13] Martin Procházka, *Romantismus a osobnost: subjektivita v anglické romantické poezii a estetice* (Pardubice: Mlejnek, 1996) 79.

[14] In the preface to the poem, the author suggests that the poem was a reproduction of a dream in which "all the images rose up before him as *things*" and which he had after falling asleep under the influence of opium when reading a page from "Purcha's Pilgrimage." Such mystification is aimed not only at imparting higher credibility to the end product but also at putting forward the dynamic character of organic imagination. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912) 296.

being original and such originality becomes a "construct, illusion in which we should believe."[15] The objectification (or "thingifying") of subjective dreams and visions which are materialized in the form of a stable building (palace)[16] can serve as one of the ways of how to make them (and so the overall product) something tangible and "real".

In the poem, this mystifying and productive character of vision is even more strengthened. Towards the end, the poet induces that the means used to build the aerial "dome" are not based on anything rational but stem from the sound of music that comes from memory (the song of an "Abyssinian maid").[17] Yet, the poet transforms volatility of his *dream* into a stable and well-planned whole (that when read as "objectified" may lose its inconstant character) in the first place, which is represented as the transfiguration of the oscillating tones into a more or less solid structure of the dome. On the other hand, as the caves of the "sunny dome" are made of "ice", the building itself retains its ephemeral character and proves the shifting quality of inner vision and imagination. It can be concluded that the rational approach to life (represented by the materialization of vision in the form of the poem) and the instability of feelings are united in the end by the poet whose imagination is capable of creating an organic whole out of two seemingly unrelated conflicting principles.

Also Keats' "The Fall of Hyperion - A Vision"[18] testifies the power of poetry to unfold the visionary dreams common to all humans ("Since every man whose soul is not a clod / Hath visions", 13-14) which would otherwise be, in the hands of "fanatics", either perverted visions of a fallen paradise ("Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave / A paradise for a sect", 1-2) or the ephemeral ones ("The shadows of melodious utterance", 6). Only the poet's imagination is able to transform the fleeting sensual impressions ("Sweet smelling, whose pure kinds I could not know", 35) into a structured whole which

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[15] Procházka, *Romantismus a osobnost*, 82.

[16] Kathleen M. Wheeler, "'Kubla Khan' and the Art of Thingifying," *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995) 132-135, quoted in Martin Procházka, *Transversals* (Prague: Literaria Pragensia, 2007) 120.

[17] "Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
 I would build that dome in air
 That sunny dome! those caves of ice!" (42-47); Coleridge, 298. When we accept Robert Barth's interpretation, we can say that the poet still stays in harmony with the forces of nature (his dome may stand in the midst of it), in contrast to Kubla Khan whose palace is surrounded by "walls and towers" and who attempts to control and shape the nature according to his own wishes. Robert Barth, *Romanticism and Transcendence: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Religious Imagination* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003) 82.

[18] E. De Selincourt, *The Poems of John Keats* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1905) 229-240.

escapes the finality in the form of the real and only he (in contrast to a dreamer) is "a sage; 'A humanist, physician to all men" (191-192) who can "pour out a balm upon world" and not to "vex it" (203-204) in the endless hopelessness stemming from the impossibility to attain (and materialize) one's dreams. But first and foremost, the poet must symbolically die before he is able to ascend the steps of Saturn's altar at which moment his senses unite ("I heard, I look'd: two senses both at once", 120) and are continuously emptied out ("dull eyes", 250). So, it is not the "sensual speech" but rather the force of imagination which can finally capture the visionary experience and communicate it through the poet to others.

## 1.1.2 Sensual Experience and Nature

Yet, it would be a false impression to believe that creative powers are not fuelled by the senses or that the sensual experience is altogether superseded by imagination. In his "Tintern Abbey"(1798)[19], Wordsworth presents the closeness and interrelatedness of Nature (which also stands for the spiritual principle) with a poet who strongly relies on his sensual experience. Mainly in his youth, the poet is enchanted by what he perceives through the senses, which is mediated to him by memory in his later life. In the poem, vision turns out to be the central sense – the "beauteous forms" of nature console the poet not only when he observes the country from the top of the hill on a summer day but bring sweet "feelings (...) of unremembered pleasure" (30) to him even when he finds himself "in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din / Of towns and cities" (24-25). Such images have the power to "lighten" "the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world" (39-40) and produce "that serene and blessed mood, / In which the affections gently lead us on" (41-42). Therefore, memory, although not excited by any opiate and brought into an almost religious state of a mystical *mania*, can provide the mind (and heart) with "a feeling and a love, / that had no need of a remoter charm, / By thought supplied, nor any interest / Unborrowed from the eye" (80-83). Moreover, the poet is capable of communicating with nature and understanding the moral message of her symbolic language. As Procházka demonstrates in his absorbing contemporary reading of the three versions of "The Prelude" (1799, 1805, 1850), the "sensuous impressions" play rather roles of activating agents and stimulants and do not overcome mind as in Coleridge's concept of imagination. Reflecting Deleuze, Procházka exemplifies that in the earlier versions of the poem, imagination was

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[19] William Wordsworth, "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey...," *Lyrical Ballads 1798*, ed. W. J. B. Owen (London: Oxford University Press, 1967) 115.

not a unifying force but rather an "effect" of the variety of sensuous impressions that are retrieved from memory and thereafter translated into feelings and emotions.[20]

Whether perceived with the physical eye or the eye of the mind, Nature understood as both consoling and spiritual or moral power is always here for man, as she embodies him in the same way as he embodies her. His senses (vision and hearing) not only mediate the outer world to him ("beauteous forms") but they are also constitutive to it. In this way, they can be understood in a similar way as the power of imagination.[21] The poet is capable of harmonising with nature (through the understanding of her forms and through the "language of the sense"), which enables him to "see into" the heart of things, to comprehend them completely, and not only to reflect their surface. The material is suspended for the spiritual and the body (now "asleep") for the soul which is enlivened and takes over the whole. As a result, spiritual sight (transformed by "the power of harmony" with nature) gains its primacy and opens up new horizons for the poet who becomes "a living soul."[22] In other words, imagination can be understood as a proof of soul's self-containedness and the fact that she can boast of her "sovereignty within and peace at will" together with "cheerfulness in every act of life" (1805, XIII, 114, 117).[23] And such life optimism is brought about not only by the idea of imagination as a "genuine liberty" (1805, XIII, 122) but also by perception.[24]

The idea of pantheist Nature ready to serve man is also explored by Emerson who, in his *Nature* (1836)[25], highlights the power of the eye to "integrate all the parts" that it sees. Similarly to Wordsworth, we can identify several places where Emerson stresses the spiritual dimension of sight and thus the spiritual dimension of nature and the external

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[20] Procházka, *Transversals*, 125-126 and 134.
[21] " From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear, – both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being." (105-110); Wordsworth, 119.
[22] "Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In Body, and become a living soul,
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things." (45-49); Wordsworth, 117.
[23] Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams and Stephen Gill, *The Norton Critical Edition: The Prelude* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1979). Procházka, *Transversals*, 134.
[24] Wordsworth, "The Prelude". "The joy is generated by perception, 'resembling more / Creative agency' (1779, II, 431), of 'affinities / In objects where no brotherhood exists / To common minds' (1799, II, 432-34)." Procházka, *Transversals*, 126.
[25] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*, *Emersoncentral.com*, 9 Apr <http://www.emersoncentral.com/nature.htm> 20 Oct 2013.

physical world ("The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child."[26]). Also a well-known passage that establishes vision as the source of the identity for man[27] aptly represents it as the power which can get hold of the spiritual in the world (similarly to Wordsworth). Yet, Nature alone, defined as something transgressing an individual, establishes the overall unity (of humankind, God) and brings man (who turns out to be "nothing") closer to the "source" of his being and in consequence, to the unity of being ("Universal Being") as such.

In contrast to the earlier stages of Romanticism, the independence of the poet (similar to that expressed by Wordsworth in "The Prelude" from 1805) becomes more profound in its later phase and transforms itself into strong individualism demonstrated not only in the form of an opposition towards society but also by a problematic inclusion of the poet in the natural world.[28] One of the examples of this could be a passage from the Canto III of Byron's *Child Harold's Pilgrimage*[29] highlighting the role of vision and imagination. The hero defines his existence in terms of creativity ("'Tis to create, and in creating live") which enables him to produce anything he wishes, to enliven and materialize images that rest in his mind ("With form our fancy (...) / The life we image"). Yet, the poet negates himself right in the next line (similarly to Emerson) and postulates himself as "Nothing" although he still keeps the power of his vision ("Invisible but gazing"). Nevertheless, it is not necessarily Nature that fills up his essence but rather other human being ("Mixed with thy Spirit, blended with thy birth"), a companion, "Soul of my thought!" (in his return back to Ada and Annabelle). If we accept the autobiographical reading of these lines, we can conclude with Procházka that imagination transcends rational thinking and "rational understanding of the authorial subject" but the poet also figuratively confirms the autobiographical moment and demonstrates the impossibility to abandon his own past.[30] In this way, transcendence becomes only a possibility and the act of creation a repetitive and

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[26] Emerson.

[27] "— All mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God." Emerson.

[28] Cf. Procházka, *Romantismus a osobnost*, 21.

[29] "'Tis to create, and in creating live
A being more intense, that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now.
What am I? Nothing – but not so art thou,
Soul of my thought! with whom I traverse earth,
Invisible but gazing, as I glow
Mixed with thy Spirit, blended with thy birth,
And feeling still with thee in my crushed feelings' dearth."
(*CPW* II, 78, *III, vi,* 46-54); Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

[30] Procházka, *Romantismus a osobnost*, 187-188.

endless endeavour to fulfil this potential, an effort to re-create one's identity. Sight remains one of the primary senses which should contribute to this attempt.

1.1.3 <u>Conclusion</u>

To sum up, the "story" of what vision meant for Romantics is a "narrative" in which it comes to the interplay between the sensual experience and imagination, both of which contribute to the production of the final image (let it be the poem, the painting or even a thought). Such a product is never complete and static, it is not a sum of sensual stimuli – it retains its dynamic potential (borrowed either from nature or creative capacities of the human mind) and at the moment when it is produced, it lives its own life. Although poets attempted to materialize their visions, they were not able to check the activity of imagination spurting out images for which dynamics is emblematic – Kubla Khan's dome must be re-build anew, as it melts in the heat of the sun in Xanadu, and the final message of the poet returning from the Saturn's palace in Keats' poem is likewise distinctly inconclusive ("On he flared", 583), to name but a few examples. Yet, the writers could not have abandoned the sensual, as the "eyeball" was the "channel" through which the world of nature "flowed" to them, through which they could have understood *their* nature – either in the form of unification with the divine (Wordsworth and Emerson) or of the identification with the past (Byron). But still, the activity of an eye is not necessarily physically determined and as such, it leads man out of the realm of the material into the sphere of the spiritual, it does not allow him to linger but makes him to be productive and, last but not least, helps him realize his own self.

**1.2 The New Observer**

Jonathan Crary in his "Techniques of the Observer" exemplifies that modern understanding of visual perception emerged in 1810-1840.[31] As it was noted before, much attention had not been paid to the study of this subject before this period and if so, it had been based on the anti-innatism and sensationalism of Lockean psychology. As Crary makes clear by quoting Maine de Biran, visual perception was viewed in the 19th century as being determined not only by mental processes but also by the physical activity of the eye, and thus represents a "complete reversal of the classical model of the apparatus as a

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[31] Jonathan Crary, "Techniques of the Observer," *October* Vol. 45 (Summer 1988): 3-55, JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/779041> 17 Aug 2012.

neutral device of pure transmission."[32] Yet, Locke was a sensationalist and, as Chris Otter points out, he disrespected the physiology of sensation, as he based it on the ancient model of the camera obscura principle brought to life again by Renaissance thinkers (Leonardo da Vinci and Vesalius).[33] Such representationalism rejected the idea of bodily subjectivism – the eye was conceived as a gate through which an image passes undistorted except for the fact that it is inverted (a mirror image). And as Kate Flint stresses, "not to be able to see with the physical eye, is to call into play the powerful forces of imagination and memory,"[34] which is actually the legacy of Romanticism interwoven into the very structure of Victorian culture.

Nonetheless, the boom of scientific research in the 19th century[35] made it possible to localise eyesight "within" the human body. In 1826, a physiologist Johannes Peter Műller qualitatively differentiated five sensory systems (which had been indistinct before) and came with the notion of "specific nerve energies" that enabled to interconnect bodily mechanisms with the activity of the brain.[36] From this moment onwards, human body has been viewed as a "mediator" of perception, which allowed to give different answers than those provided by Cartesian dualism – the material (from the world around) affects the physical (the eye and nerve fibre) and so the mental processes in the brain are closely linked to the bodily ones. Simply, the outer and the inner becomes one. It also comes to a distinction between sensation (a physical process) and perception (a psychological one).[37]

So, there is an interrelation between the physical and the mental, as one cannot exist without the other. As a result, vision (sensual perception) is closely linked with the body

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[32] Crary, 7.

[33] Chris Otter, *Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) 25-26. The camera obscura was conceived as a dark room with a hole through which light entered creating an image on the wall: "For, methinks, the Understanding is not much unlike a Closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible Resemblances, or Ideas of things without; would the pictures coming into such a dark Room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the Understanding of a Man, in reference to all Objects of sight, and the Ideas of them." Locke, IX, 17.

[34] Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 23.

[35] During the period, science specialized (reflecting the idea of evolutionary process of differentiation) and thus many new branches (such as evolutionary biology for instance) emerged. Cf. Philip Davis, *The Victorians, 1830-1880: The Oxford English Literary History, Volume 8* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 70. Moreover, science was seen as a sort of myth, "the magic key that opened every door" and could give valid answers to the questions such as *how* and *why* things happen (without having to refer to the metaphysics or any supernatural explanations). Robin Gilmour, *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context, 1830-1890* (London: Longman, 1993) 112. Cf. Davis, 55.

[36] Otter, 27. Otter refers to Carry's book *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cf. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1990) 81.

[37] Otter, 7.

and objective reality, which best characterizes its specification among Victorians. Nonetheless, vision should not be viewed as a merely (1) physiological phenomenon but also as something which refers to the (2) intellectual, (3) emotional and (4) spatial features of bodies and the environment through which they move, which was mainly the way Romantics understood this concept. William Cohen exemplifies that (1) the somatic understanding of perception helps to demonstrate "how the world of objects (including other bodies) enters the body of the subject and remakes its interior entities."[38] When we have a closer look at *aestheticism* or *decadence* for example, we can see plenty of instances of how the body or the material are transformed (juxtaposition of the flesh and painting in Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* (1890-91) is probably the most notorious one). When (3) feelings are concerned, Cohen claims that somatic and affective experiences are mutable, they can "switch, blend, or substitute one for another."[39] In contrast to Romantics, for whom the mental world of the subject eventually gains greater significance (subjective vision), some Victorians treat subject's emotions and desires as something tangible at the moment when the spiritual identity expresses itself in the physical form (Catherine's statement to Heathcliff "He's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same," in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847)[40] could serve as a good example of how inner feelings are embodied and thus grasped).

Otter (referring to Hans Jonas) relates the issue of vision (2) to "objective judgment", which can be explained as the presentation of objects to the eye "without any suggestion of activity."[41] This aspect in particular became highly significant for science that dealt with facts and aspired to absolute objectivity, which had a also socio-political dimension and led to the concept of a liberal subject who was not only self-determined and so independent but also "self-judging being, rational and objective."[42] As Crary shows, it has its precedent in the camera obscura that represented a model "of how observation leads to truthful inferences about the world" on the basis of an easily definable place in the dark that was a unique, irreplaceable point from which the observer could get the best possible view.[43] (Mr. Gradgrind's cry: "Now, what I want is Facts," in the opening chapter of

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[38] William A. Cohen, *Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) 6.
[39] Cohen, 6.
[40] Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. William M. Sale, Jr. (New York: Norton, 1972) 72.
[41] Otter, 47. Cf. Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) 149– 50.
[42] Otter, 48.
[43] Crary, 3.

Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854)[44] adequately expresses the spirit of the age and of this concept.) Consequently, an individual can also be viewed as an autonomous (and active) observer of himself, of his own thoughts and life. Self-observation necessarily points to moral introspection and, consequently, explains the abundance of autobiographical fiction at the time when the "self" became an object of observation.[45]

And finally, (4) there was a greater number of encounters that had to be perceived through vision in the Industrial Age, which resulted into "the idea of the obligation to observe or notice" in order to avoid the possibility of misrecognition or misunderstanding.[46] In short, the city "lays traps" and requires good orientation in the labyrinth of artificial objects and diverse forms, not to mention the rapidly moving objects, so that the traveller can feel less alienated and better equipped to move faster through the space which is, strictly speaking, unnatural for him as an organic being. Mainly this aspect will serve as the basic referential point for the study utopia in which a strange country through which the narrator passes and which he gets to know is one of the distinctive features of the genre.

## 1.2.1 Objectivity (Re) Considered

It is clear that the bodily eye was one of the crucial organs for the modern man which enabled him to get to know not only himself but also the space in which he lived and moreover, to gain control over the latter. Therefore, there was a fear of losing sight and people became increasingly aware of the danger of irrecoverable disorders such as myopia growing "in proportion to ʿcivilizationʾ or ʿmodernizationʾ" and paid much attention to treatment and prevention.[47] They also soon realized that viewing anything "objectively" is not as straightforward as it may seem at first, mainly owing to the fact that the eye is fallible. Whereas reliance on the camera obscura principle in the 17th century left the position of the eye unrivalled (both were conceptually the same), two hundred years later it was challenged – the eye and the apparatus did not share the same characteristics (light

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[44] Charles Dickens, *Hard Times and Reprinted Pieces* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1905) 3.
[45] Earl of Shaftesbury's account of an "inward eye" can serve as an example of the moral introspection: "No sooner are actions viewed, no sooner the human affections and passions discerned (and they are most of them as soon discerned as felt) than straight an inward eye distinguishes, and sees the fair and shapely, the amiable and admirable, apart from the deformed, the foul, the odious, or the despicable." Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), ed. John M. Robertson (1900; reprint, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964) 2:137, quoted in Otter, 49. There were many instances of autobiographical fiction or at least autobiographical accounts in the Victorian fiction (Harriet Martineau, Dickens' *David Copperfield*, or even Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, to name but a few). Cf. Cohen, 9.
[46] Otter, 50.
[47] Otter speaks of the development of spectacles and ocular hygiene, the latter of which must have been followed particularly in dusty workhouses and factories. Otter, 41-43.

passing through the hole and forming a reversed image on the flat surface); both were viewed as being defective and both were made of different material.

So, in the Industrial Age, it was up to the technological apparatuses to refine what was imperfect and "the limits and deficiencies of one (...) [were] complemented by the capacities of the other and vice versa"[48]. As Crary suggests (referring to Marx), the tool underwent transformation and its "relation to the innate powers of the human subject" was no longer viewed as being "metaphoric" (similarly to the relation between the eye and camera obscura, telescope or microscope) but rather "metonymic" – the tool changed into a machine which could substitute man in his work (who could only serve as its power agent or operator or be altogether absent).[49] In this way, also optical devices changed and thus it was doubtful whether they provided access to "the real", or rather what was the nature of such mechanically transformed reality.[50]

The issue of fallibility of eyesight, invisibility and knowledge leads us to the question of how Victorians (re)considered objectivity. On the one hand, *to see* referred to a physical distance which induced the notion of an objective approach. Yet, such a distance could have also been questioned (the objects "entering" the bodies as images) together with the problem of mediated vision (optical apparatuses), which led into difficulties of interpretation. As a result, it was necessary to replace the doctrine of truth with some other attitude that would incorporate the new state of things – it was science and scientific truth which were to be believed and stood contrary to any philistine pursuits.

However, there were also those who did not believe in science or were suspicious of its absoluteness (e.g. Morris), which represents an alternative approach to vision well expressed in Friedrich Nietzsche's relativity principle formulated in his *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887). Nietzsche warns against the blind reliance on the scientific *truth* as such.[51] Although science may be viewed as opposing religion, it has only substituted God for *truth* as an absolute standard to which each justification or even human existence must subordinate. Therefore, a single perspective secured by the outdated concepts such as "pure

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[48] Crary, 31.
[49] Crary, 32-33. "From the moment that the tool proper is taken from man, and fitted into a mechanism, a machine takes the place of a mere implement." Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1* (New York: International, 1967) 374, quoted in Crary, 32. "As soon as man, instead of working with an implement on the subject of his labor, becomes merely the motive power of an implement-machine, it is a mere accident that motive power takes the disguise of human muscle; and it may equally well take the form of wind, water, or steam" Marx, 378, quoted in Crary, 33.
[50] Crary, 33.
[51] "The will to truth needs a critique – let us define our own task with this – the value of truth is tentatively to be *called into question....*" Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) III, *24*, 113.

reason", "absolute spirituality" or even "knowledge as such" does not suffice, as one must face "*difference* in perspectives and affective interpretations of knowledge."[52] Nietzsche considers the dual nature of the eye (physical and spiritual) – he requires that we "think an eye", which he immediately claims to be impossible, and introduces a transposed proto-phenomenological argument that through an eye "seeing still becomes a seeing-something" which results into postulation of a "non-concept of eye".[53] This puts the foundation stone to perspectivism that must discard the possibility of a single vision, of the excellence of an eye and associate itself with limited capability and necessity of considering different views when a stand is being taken: "There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival 'knowing'; the *more* affects we are able to put into words about a thing, the *more* eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our 'concept' of the thing, our 'objectivity'."[54]

Although the natural sciences were based on the notion of a single perspective founded upon the absolute certainty of natural laws, there were also voices that did not believe in the postulates of scientific findings. Introducing Nietzsche into the context of Victorian approach to objectivity may seem haphazard but its main aim is to provide a strong counter-perspective that was already present in the cultural discourse of the 19th century.[55] This thesis introduces authors who made an attempt to find an alternative to what was considered to be the epistemological certainty (i.e. the results of scientific

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[52] Nietzsche, III, *12*, 87.
[53] Nietzsche, III, *12*, 87. In phenomenology, thinking equals the activity of thinking *something*.
[54] Nietzsche, III, *12*, 87.
[55] The relationship between Nietzsche and Victorian writers is not easily definable and it is unnecessary to go into great detail for the purpose of this thesis. Yet, it should be made clear that it is possible to draw parallels between his work and the spirit of the age, mainly when it comes to the ethical and consequently aesthetic questions. In this way, it can be demonstrated that Nietzsche had influence on Victorians (or at least had analogical ideas to those presented in Britain) at the time when Morris was working on his *News from Nowhere*. First of all, Nietzsche was "anti-Victorian", for he rejected "morality in favour of art," as Malcolm Pasley points out. Malcolm Pasley, *Nietzsche: Imagery and Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978) 231. In other words, his revolt presented itself in an attempt to establish "a new, aesthetic ideal" that replaced "the discredited ethical ideal." Pasley, 231. So, it is evident that Ruskin's praise of moral ideals does not sufficiently capture the experience of a modern man in which the value of art can be proclaimed without any reference to ethics. Such a stand is characteristic for decadence and thus there is no surprise that it was Arthur Symons who exemplified analogical ideas between Nietzsche and William Blake in his William Blau (1907). Pasley, 231. Further, not only Pater united with the idea that art should be put on a high pedestal, but also Wilde saw "poetry and lying as sister arts" in "The Decay of Lying". Pasley, 233. Nevertheless, analogies can be seen also in the earlier periods of the Victorian Age. Although Nietzsche might not have read Carlyle, as Mark Wallace shows, similarity between these two thinkers is striking. For instance, their approach to the question of truth (*sham* ruling life in Carlyle's thought), hatred of systematization (comparable to the *mechanization* of intellect) or the Will to Power ("morality ('rights') was to be determined by the power ('mights') of the party concerned") share the same characteristics and can be read in a similar way. Mark Wallace, "Nietzsche and Carlyle," *The Victorian Sage.com* <https://thevictoriansage.wordpress.com/2012/07/08/on-looking-into-nietzsches-twilight-of-the-idols/> 20 Jan 2017. In general, it can be thus said that "Nietzsche caught the imagination of generation" that "hoped to find in his work certain new truths to replace the discredited Victorian 'truths'." Pasley, 220.

research). In this way, it is possible to speak of plurality of perspectives that might not have been profuse, yet that prove certain heterogeneity in the Victorian Age.

## 1.2.2 "Knowledge" Means "Power"

Simply, one could learn through vision much about oneself, others and the world, each of which were presented as objects to one's eye. Although the activity of the bodily organ was unsatisfactory at times, it could be "assisted" by various apparatuses which enabled, for instance, to study the tiniest structures of organisms or objects. Victorians yearned to understand the world around them in as much detail as possible and to *see* what lay "below the surface" meant to be informed and so to be secure. In this way, they could even presuppose that the vast world of the invisible, which they attempted to grasp, lay behind the visible.[56]

On the example of the distribution network in London, Kate Flint demonstrates that the things which were unseen and buried under the pulsating streets of capital caused quite a distress to the contemporaries who made their best to get to know and understand even seemingly trivial parts of the world around them.[57] The 19th century Britain witnessed the building of the underground system of water and gas pipes construction as well as of the tube itself (1863). It is then obvious that a lot was hidden beneath the ground and shunned from sight, which was a destabilizing factor rather than an asset, as it indicated that not everything could be comprehended, or if grasped, then it could be interpreted differently. Furthermore, neither these mechanical structures were, unsurprisingly, perfect and absolutely reliable: "Then, again, these structures are also described in terms which blend engineering with the human skeleton, since they suffer from 'defective joints': simultaneously the places where gas dangerously escapes, and symbolic of the whole creaking foundations of the city."[58] Metaphorically, unstable substances leaking from the hidden vaults stretching under the streets parallel with uneasiness that perspectivism brought about.

Another aspect of vision (linked to knowledge) is its relation to power explored in Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon* (1787) (revived in Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975)). Bentham sketches a plan of a circumferential prison in which the central position

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[56] Cf. Flint, 63.
[57] Flint gives a good example of how Victorians studied even dust to reveal its "dangers and the welcome properties." Flint, 63. In light of this, it becomes absolutely clear that anything which lay out of their sight was understood as a potential threat to be eliminated in the future.
[58] Flint, 161.

is given to the one who sees and should see the others (the inspector dwelling in the inspection house), whereas he is invisible for the prisoners. It is noteworthy that the *persuasion* of the occupants that they are seen is much stronger than the actual chance that they are being watched.[59] As in Flint, also here distress is caused both by the inability to see and by the idea of being seen also in this example, which demonstrates two points: (1) a binary relation between the visible and the invisible as well as the (2) ambivalence of the two. The one who has the power is the one who is able to see, the inspector, a God-like figure managing the facility only with his voice. Nonetheless, his power is lies in his invisibility and good visibility of the others. Only then, visibility can be a "trap", as Foucault puts it, which widely applies also to the whole society and its "disciplinary mechanisms."[60] In consequence, "to see" does not only equal "to learn" but also "to gain control." Visibility becomes an instrument for segmentation that makes it possible to define individuals and relationships between them. In this way, these people can be easily controlled (and even manipulated), which puts the foundation stone to disciplinary discourse and has its application in institutions where discipline is required (such as prisons or schools).

Such domination does not have to be unequivocally recognized but can take disguise of multifarious socio-cultural phenomena and inventions ranging from illustrations in periodicals and novels which "could provide an interpretive gloss on the written word", through the invention of many other optical apparatuses such as the magic lantern, the kaleidoscope or the stereoscope, up to the very existence of various museums or galleries or to the realization of the Great Exhibition itself.[61] One does not even need to be able to read – it is sufficient to employ the eyesight which is "trapped" in the profusion and richness of images and controlled by them. *Punch* (est. 1843), famous not only for the written word but also for its illustrations, a mass of manuals or catalogues are just a few examples which could support this view. In addition, the popularity of novels (deepened thanks to the circulating libraries), for which long narrative passages introducing the scenes described by the narrator in the minutest detail were characteristic, places the role of vision into different perspectives considering the textual material.

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[59] "Not only so, but the greater there is, of a person's being at a given time actually under inspection, the more strong will be the persuasion - the more *intense*, if I may say so, the *feeling*, he has of his being so." Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon*, ed. Miran Božovič (London: Verso, 1995) V, 44.

[60] "The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognise immediately (...) Visibility is a trap." Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 200. "And, lastly, this great carceral network reaching all the disciplinary mechanisms that function through society." Foucault, 298.

[61] Flint, 4-5.

1.2.3 *Ekphrasis*

   The last point which should be taken into account in this context is the instance of *ekphrasis* or "a full vivid description" according to one of the earliest definitions of the term coming from Ailios Theon of Alexandria (in translation by James Heffernan): "Ekphrasis is exhibitionistic (literally 'leading around') speech, vividly leading the subject before the eyes."[62] The history of the term is rich and it dates back to the ancient times; yet, it could be said that its overall meaning and application has alternately narrowed and widened over the time. Originally, *ekphrasis* was understood as a long description of almost anything that poet could experience (e.g. landscape, battles, objects) in order to "materialize" the depicted subject in front of the audience's eyes.[63] It should not be forgotten that the culture of the time was oral, which means that *ekphrasis* was employed almost exclusively within the realm of rhetoric "making the listener 'see' the subject in their mind's eye."[64] Nevertheless, our notion of *ekphrasis* is derived from sophists who limited the term to the description of the works of art,[65] which actually brings us close to the famous "ut pictura poesis" argument ("as is painting so is poetry" or "as in painting so in poetry"[66]) presenting likeness or even identity of painting and poetry that began with Horace's *Ars Poetica* in 19 BC and was echoed also later in Lessing's *Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Mahlerey und Poesie* (1766).

   Both *ekphrasis* and "ut pictura poesis" have been variously defined and understood throughout the centuries (also thanks to the ambiguity of the possible translations and explications) and one of the few things that can be claimed without any doubt is that "the definition ultimately depends on the particular argument to be deployed."[67] It would be useless to try to sketch such a lengthy discussion on a small scale. However, the most important fact for the notion of visuality is that *ekphrasis* works not only with the visual in the physical sense (captures the visual art) but also seems to incorporate the mental (inner) sight (or imagination in other words). *Ekphrasis* establishes a (close) relation between both

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[62] James A. W. Heffernan, "Ekphrasis: Theory," *Handbook of Intermediality: Literature – Image – Sound*, ed. Gabriele Ripl (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015) 35-36.
[63] Sylvia Karastathi, "Ekphrasis and the Novel/Narrative Fiction," *Handbook of Intermediality: Literature – Image – Sound*, ed. Gabriele Ripl (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2015) 93.
[64] Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuastion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), quoted in Ripl, 93.
[65] The complex history of *ekphrasis* in this sense is usually demonstrated on the example of Achilles' shield in Homer's *Iliad* or of a Grecian vase in Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn". Peter Wagner, "Introduction: Ekphrasis, Iconotexts, and Intermediality - the State(s) of the Art(s)," *Icons – Texts – Iconotexts. Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, ed. Peter Wagner (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996) 12.
[66] Translations by Wagner. Wagner, 5-6.
[67] Wagner, 11.

of these features. One of the possible ways of how to explain this dual character is to focus on sign systems that characterize both art forms and speculate about their nature similarly to Lessing who concluded that poetry must "try to raise its arbitrary signs to natural signs."[68] Whether we are of the same opinion as Stephen Bann who is convinced that "the visual work of art can be translated into the terms of verbal discourse *without remainder*"[69] and Thomas Mitchell who believes that "there is no *essential* difference between poetry and painting, no difference, that is, that is given for all time by the inherent natures of the media, the objects they represent, or the laws of the human mind"[70], or we are rather inclined towards Grant Scott's claim that "the great divide between painting and poetry — at least in critical circles – remains as formidable today as it was in the eighteenth century,"[71] we must still agree that *ekphrasis* has certain functions in the literary text. And these functions can help establish relations between *ekphrasis* and visuality.

Reflecting Lessing, Krieger defines *ekphrasis* as "word-painting" which satisfies our need for natural signs by providing "the verbal equivalent of an art object sensed in space."[72] Simply, Krieger revives the classical delineation of the term according to which an object is brought in front of one's *inner* sight but with an added value – a set of judgments about the thing being portrayed. An example of Keats's description of the vase in his "Ode on a Grecian Urn" does not create only a certain spatial and temporal frame but also shows the "moment of looking *as* a practice of interpretation"[73] in which a certain perspective is presented, a particular "angle" from which "the vase" is being watched is put forward.

When it comes to prose, Karastathi (referring to A.S. Byatt) pushes this a little further and speaks of didacticism and control over the reader and the process of "observing" the object when reading about it: "Ekphrasis dictates a particular type of looking; page after page the reader is asked to pay attention (or is aware of not paying attention and skipping). This is a type of externally controlled attention, determined by the

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[68] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), quoted in Ripl, 37.
[69] Stephen Bann, *The True Vine: On Visual Representation and the Western Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 28.
[70] Thomas W. J. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 49.
[71] Grant Scott, "The Rhetoric of Dilation: Ekphrasis and Ideology," *Word & Image* 7 (1991), quoted in Wagner, 6.
[72] Murray Krieger, "Ekphrasis and the Still Movement of Poetry; or *Laookoon* Revisited," *The Poet as Critic*, ed. Frederick P. W. McDowell (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967) 9, quoted in Ripl, 36.
[73] Simon Goldhill, "What Is Ekphrasis For?" *Classical Philology* Vol. 102 (January 2007): 2, JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/521129?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents> 3 March 2017.

author in its length and detail."[74] In the novel, where an instance of *ekphrasis* mostly appears as a single episode, mainly the function of spatialization of the narrative and the practice of interpretation produce a "freeze time effect" – the focus is put on the object described, whereas the action of the story is sidelined for a moment.[75] In this way, voice is given to the otherwise "silent image" and Umberto Eco's fears that "without text, the image lies or gives way to a multitude of interpretations"[76] are dispelled, as text not only refers to an image but also produces an image in the reader's mind.

To sum up, these points demonstrate that a link between *ekphrasis* and visuality can be traced, mainly when it comes to the image produced in mind. Moreover, certain aspects of the Victorian (and Romantic) approach to visuality addressed in the preceding chapters appear also in the context of a "vivid description" of an artwork. First of all, the text stimulates the "sight of mind" and offers different perspectives on a single object. Secondly, didacticism that reflects the need for knowledge is inseparable from any rendering of this kind, which is, finally, intertwined with the author's overpowering influence over the reader – the analogy to Bentham's or Foucault's disciplinary discourse is at hand here. Last but not least, when following the pre-scholastic definition of *ekphrasis*, it is not unthinkable to subsume also pictorial "re-presentations" that do not necessarily belong to the realm of fine arts (e.g. descriptions of cities or landscapes).

## 1.2.4 <u>Conclusion</u>

I would like to conclude this chapter in the same way as Flint concludes her book – by taking into account the image of a horizon which can be interpreted as an epitome of the new observer rising in the 19th century. By drawing attention to the presence of the horizon to which a sailor points in the J.E. Millais' painting *The Boyhood of Raleigh* (1870), Flint highlights the idea of the boundary representing the limits of visibility and opening up the unknown invisible world of future: "The horizon, in other words, marks not just the edge of the visible, but suggests futurity, the space into which the imagination and inner vision may travel: it connotes expansiveness. The horizon suggests empty space...."[77] In this way, an image of the horizon can be viewed both in spatial and also temporal relations – vision

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[74] Karastathi, 104.
[75] Karastathi, 94.
[76] Wagner, 30.
[77] Flint, 285-286.

in the painting expresses "the desire to see beyond"[78] the physical barrier of the horizon and, simultaneously, the yearning to transgress the present moment.

The horizon, in the same way as spectatorship, is thus a "double phenomenon – separate from the self, away from us, and hence the focus of our desires, sometimes our fears; representing a future towards which we move."[79] Latent Husserlian concept of possibility embedded in the notion of the horizon[80] represents the Victorian spectator who neither observers solely himself, nor the world around him. The retina of the physical eye leads his sight from the colourful surface of material objects into the concealed niches of his soul where he realizes his limitedness, the horizon of his mind, which opens up new spaces extending in the yet unexplored "land of hope". Yet, in contrast to Romantic "subjective vision", Victorian visuality was substantially influenced by scientific progress preoccupied rather with object or the notion of knowledge and power, although introspection intertwined with the activity of imagination was neither altogether denounced (as shown on the example of *ekphrasis*). Majority of Victorians were afraid of not being able to see but some were even afraid of seeing the world through the prism of science. This tension not only ensured plurality of perspectives but also enriched the sphere of utopian thinking and broadened the horizons of the unbounded utopian space.

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[78] Flint, 286.

[79] Flint, 305.

[80] "Perception has horizons made up of other possibilities of perception, as perceptions that we *could* have, if we *actively directed* the course of perception otherwise: if, for example, we turned our eyes that way instead of this, or if we were to step forward or to one side, and so forth." Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*: *An Introduction to Phenomenology* (The Hague, Boston, London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1960) §19, 44. "It is this 'leaving open', Husserl says, which is 'precisely what makes up the 'horizon'." Flint, 307.

## 2 TWO "VISIONARIES"

> "Whatsoever of morality and of intelligence; what of patience, perseverance, faithfulness, of method, insight, ingenuity, energy; in a word whatsoever of Strength the man had in him will lie written in the Work he does."
>
> Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism*

> "You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both. (...) If you will have that precision out of them, (...) you must unhumanize them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves."
>
> John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*

The following pages are devoted to two Victorians who shaped Morris's thinking – Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin. Although it may seem that they were not concerned with the notion of vision, it will become clear that this concept (either in the form of an opposition of the visible/invisible or the actual employment of the bodily eye) plays a substantial role in their arguments and thus can represent one of the basic referential points which can help us grasp their views. Both thinkers were unsatisfied with the condition of the 19th century society in Britain; both proposed some steps to its reformation. On a more general level, they can be viewed as "visionaries" who, through the material form of the objects that surrounded them (let it be nature, works of architecture or even society as such), were able to "see" deeper spiritual foundations of these objects, their real "truth" and so the social order which (as they felt) called for a substantial change.

### 2.1 The Invisible through the Visible (Thomas Carlyle)

Carlyle, one of the fiercest critics of the 19th century, struggled against the very tenets of Lockean empiricism for its reliance on the material and physical – thinking meant mere processing of the physical data from the outside world for Locke and the mechanical law of association was believed to be the ultimate answer to every issue, which did not satisfy Carlyle. Alternatively, he understood that below the visible and tangible there was something hidden and unseen which could condition human existence; that thinking reflects the workings of the "soul" and "conscience", which means that it is the effect of

the spiritual and not strictly material; that the rational and objective must be compensated by the universal. Simply, Carlyle (as one of the few thinkers in England at the time) imbibed the notions of German Idealism and transformed them into thoughts which should have counterbalanced the rigid materialism of the age.

There has already been a fruitful discussion to what extent Carlyle actually read the key treatises of Kant and Fichte (or how well he understood their philosophy), and it is not my intention either to repeat it or to expand on it here.[81] Even though most of his readers were not able to appreciate these sources of inspiration,[82] his main concerns deeply reflect the message of German Idealism (one's desire for honest activity, truthfulness and strong leadership that, in consequence, sustains the view that the visible is a manifestation of the spiritual which is also religious and moral) and thus cannot be omitted. My main aim here will be to clarify the relationship between "the visible" and "the invisible" in Carlyle's thought through the reading of his *Past and Present* (1843), *On Heroes and Hero Worship* (1841) and *Sartor Resartus* (1831).

## 2.1.1 Work as a Sacred Principle

When commenting upon the state of the 19th century Britain in *Past and Present*, Carlyle makes a strict division between "idle" aristocracy which "has become Phantasm-Aristocracy, no longer able to *do* its work, not in the least conscious that it has any work

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[81] Out of the key works on this subject, Margaret Storr's dissertation *The Relation of Carlyle to Kant and Fichte* and Hill Shine's article "Carlyle and the German Philosophy Problem during the Year 1826-1827" are good to mention. Margaret Storr, *The Relation of Carlyle to Kant and Fichte*. Diss. (Pennsylvania: Brynn Mawr College, 1929). Hill Shine, "Carlyle and the German Philosophy Problem During the Year 1826-1827," *PMLA* Vol. 50 (September 1935). Also René Wellek in his *Immanuel Kant in England 1793-1838* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931) touches upon the subject. Cf. René Wellek, *Immanuel Kant in England 1793-1838* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931). From the more recent discussions, I would point out J. Douglas Rabb's article "The Silence of Thomas Carlyle." Cf. J. Douglas Rabb, "The Silence of Thomas Carlyle," *English Language Notes* 26.3 (March 1989).

[82] Kant was an inspiration for Carlyle mainly for his concept of "categorical imperative" that expresses the moral consciousness of man and subjective account of the categories of space and time (their ideality). Cf. Wellek, 188-190. From Fichte, Carlyle extracted the main idea that the material around us ("the visible Universe") is dependent upon the all pervading "Divine Idea" that can be comprehended not by the senses but only by the activity of our spirit. "According to Fichte, there is a 'Divine Idea' pervading the visible Universe; which visible Universe is indeed but its symbol and sensible manifestation, having in itself no meaning, or even true existence independent of it. To the mass of men this Divine Idea of the world lies hidden: yet to discern it, to seize it, and live wholly in it, is the condition of all genuine virtue, knowledge, freedom; and the end, therefore, of all spiritual effort in every age." Thomas Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1858) 26. And finally, it will also become clear that mainly Carlyle's approach to "work" shares much with the central concept of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) – the "master - slave" dialectics. His concept of the self is also inspired by Jean Paul's image of one's identity conceived as "Ich bin ein Ich". J.P.Vijn, *Carlyle and Jean Paul: Their Spiritual Optics* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1982) 84-85. Despite the fact that Carlyle's contemporaries might not have understood the references to Fichte (or Hegel) when reading his writings, I believe that the main philosophical concepts of these thinkers can serve as a framework which enables contemporary reader to grasp Carlyle's views on work and society.

longer to do"[83] and ordinary workmen who toil without any prospects of attaining the products of their striving. He stresses dishonesty on the example of the "Master Worker" who tries to "'buy where he finds it cheapest, to sell where he finds it dearest.' With guineas jingling in every pocket, he was no whit richer; but now, the very guineas threatening to vanish, he feels that he is poor indeed."[84] In sum, there cannot be wealth produced in the country which does not bring happiness, wisdom or beauty to its citizens.[85] Although Carlyle makes it evident at the very beginning that he does not own the panacea for the deplorable state of things,[86] he still attempts to show the way out of the muddle by juxtaposing the industrial present with the medieval past where he locates a strong leader, Abbot Samson of St. Edmundsbury, whose moral integrity excels over the character of the others.

Obviously, Carlyle provides the reader with the example of a "Hero" or at least "a great man" who must be admired for his work, as the history of human successes is the "History of the Great Men" and "all things" that surround us "are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world."[87] The hero is presented in his multitudinous forms, as the "hero as divinity" (human incarnation of the divinity of Gods), "the hero as a prophet" (who is only inspired) or, eventually, as a morally pure, sincere and profoundly religious Hero standing as a paragon for the masses of men who should also become heroes, "a believing nation", a sum of "god-created" souls who will stay true to themselves.[88] His religion (or rather spiritual and moral disposition), which is invisible (the part of "the Unseen World" or "No-World") inevitably reveals his true nature, "what the man is, what the kind of things he will do."[89]

It is unquestionable that Carlyle is convinced of the need for guidance but under one condition only – that the leader (the "hero") would possess the ideals of virtue and valour or knowledge and love of his fellows, which may reflect Kantian *a priori* moral law. More importantly, virtually everything that Carlyle proposes or requires demonstrates

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[83] Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843) 175.
[84] Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 7.
[85] "To whom, then, is this wealth of England wealth? Who is it that it blesses." Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 7.
[86] "How it is to be cured? Brothers, I am sorry I have got no Morrison's Pill for curing the maladies of Society." Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 29.
[87] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (New York: D. Appleton, 1841) Chap. I.
[88] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship*, Chap. IV.
[89] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship*, Chap. I.

the Fichtean principle that not the visible but the invisible rules our world, which forms our essence and which we are, in turn, obliged to follow. Our history turns out to be the product of "the spirit", of activity of great men whose behaviour is determined by their beliefs (which is a very Hegelian idea). Even the products of their work are to be viewed as materialization of the sacredness of the moral principles, ideas and bodily movements which lay behind the process of production.

Yet, Carlyle is convinced that the polarisation of wealth had the impact on traditional feudal values which were replaced by demoralising pursuit of personal advantages. The utilitarian society based on *laissez-faire* politics, the "gospel" of which became mammon, does not yearn for responsibility or helpfulness.[90] It is evident that people lost their faith in "invisible" values and believe merely in "the visible". Carlyle does not regard his age as religious, philosophical or moral. He is convinced that it is rather material or mechanical and that the spiritual is exchanged for anything practical and concrete.

And it is the activity, sacredness of work, which can serve as the only redemption to the harshness of the age. Carlyle yearns for vitality and dynamics; nevertheless, he is horrified by deep misconceptions of the modern man for whom mechanization itself became the new religion.[91] In the "Signs of the Times" (1829) (as he does also elsewhere), Carlyle relates the tangible aspects of reality to deeper ethical precedents – he believes that the turn in the production process had a strong impact on the self-confidence of men who subordinated their independent thinking to it. He is convinced that similarly to various modes of action which were alternated, even modes of thinking and feeling, changed towards rigidness, egoism, selfishness and, last but not least, idleness.[92] "The Gospel of Mammonism" or "Valetism" goes well hand in hand with the "Gospel of Dilettantism" both of which must be counterbalanced by honest and joyful manual labour that represents something sacred in human life.[93] An occupation is seen as a "mission" during which the skilled worker listens to the inner voice of "vocation" and attempts to accomplish everything he is called to do. He needs a kind of "bravery" to combat the rising importance of machines and mechanical (rational, market-oriented) thinking which gradually displaces

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[90] "We have profoundly forgotten everywhere that Cash-payment is not the sole relation of human beings." Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present,* 111.

[91] "Our true Deity is Mechanism." Thomas Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (London: Chapman and Hall Limited, 1901) 73-74.

[92] For this reason, "men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand." Thomas Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 67-68.

[93] "Work is of a religious nature:—work is of a *brave* nature; which it is the aim of all religion to be." Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 249.

religion as such.[94]

## 2.1.2 Dandy: Activity vs. Inactivity

About twenty-four years after Carlyle's death, Max Weber came with his concept of "the spirit of capitalism" in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) according to which capitalism is not generated solely by money-making or the evolutionary idea of the survival of the fittest, but stems from (the Protestant) religious asceticism that is characterized by the calling to work (and accumulation of wealth in consequence).[95] Carlyle could not have read Weber's work but he would, almost certainly, rebuff it, as it praises the pursuit of the material and looks for its sources in the sphere of the spiritual. Nonetheless, he would accept like the idea that labour can have, ultimately, spiritual ends (an effort to gain wealth is viewed as an asset to church rather than as a hindrance) and that man is defined by his unrelenting energy towards activity ("the calling" which must have been transformed into compulsion to work in the modern age).

Especially the last point (man's activity) is expressed in *Sartor Resartus* by Teufelsdrockh's "The Everlasting Yea"[96] that altogether annihilates scepticism, atheism and life-denial of the "The Everlasting No"[97] representing the wretchedness of the 19th century Britain. It is a dialectical process between the two forces (very Hegelian in its essence) which leads man out of the "darkness" and "chaos" into the "light" that is "the beginning of Creation" seen by the "eyes" that "have vision".[98] Similarly, as between the master and slave, also here work and the attitude to the end product come into question. According to Hegel, the master enjoys the fruits of slave's work ("he takes to himself only the dependent aspect of the thing"), relies on the physical objects and attempts to subdue them to his powers. Nonetheless, he leaves grants to the slave in his work (he acknowledges him (*Anerkennung*) as a *conscious* subject and acknowledges himself as a

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[94] As a result, "whatsoever of morality and of intelligence; what of patience, perseverance, faithfulness, of method, insight, ingenuity, energy; in a word whatsoever of Strength the man had in him will lie written in the Work he does." Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1848) 158-159.

[95] Cf. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950) 163-180.

[96] "I too could now say to myself: Be no longer a Chaos, but a World, or even Worldkin. Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called To-day; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work." Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1831) Book II, Chap. IX.

[97] "The Everlasting No had said: 'Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's);' to which my whole Me now made answer: '*I* am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee!'" Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, Book II, Chap. VII.

[98] Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, Book II, Chap. IX.

self-conscious subject), which turns out to be the basics of human existence and independent consciousness.[99] Following from this, it is the activity and not idleness which move humanity forward, it is only the continuous human striving which allows man to transgress the idea of pure biological determination, to transcend the materiality of objects which he comes into contact with and to understand himself (to reach the self-consciousness within the realm of "objective spirit"). In Hegel's words, "through work, however, the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is," as "work (...) is desire held in check" which "forms and shapes the thing."[100] As a result, it can come to the replacement of positions – the slave becomes the master and the master becomes the slave in the same way as the overbearing "Everlasting No" ("Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine") is forced to leave its place in favour of "The Everlasting Yea". Everything happens through the process of production ("Work while it is called To-day; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work"). And once again, it is something invisible to the eye which speaks of itself aloud and allows man to find hope ("Men is, properly speaking, based upon Hope, he has no other possession but Hope; this world of his is emphatically the Place of Hope"[101]) and realize his own existence.

Yet, an active approach to life is merely the half of the work which has to be done. The other portion is represented by the anti-romantic operation – a self-denial (*Selbst-Tödung*, "annihilation of self") that nullifies egoism (in sense of limitedness) and stands for the moral act in the Kantian sense of the word, realization of others and of the universe transgressing an individual and determining his existence. Dandy, a visual epitome of what Carlyle despises, is incapable of such self-renunciation. First of all, he is the "actor" who needs the "stage" on which he would be seen and admired – he is "a Clothes-wearing Man" whose main aim is to be dressed well and so, in the visible attire, to express *his* individuality and all the qualities *he* believes to possess.[102] We can see here the idealistic idea of the spiritual that projects itself upon the material, as clothes are an obvious indication of man's inner nature and of his communion with others.[103]

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[99] Cf. G.W.Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, transl. A.V.Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) B, IV, A, 195.
[100] Hegel, B, IV, A, 195.
[101] Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, Book II, Chap. VII.
[102] "Every faculty of his soul, spirit, purse and person is heroically consecrated to this one object, the wearing of Clothes wisely and well: so that as others dress to live, he lives to dress." Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus,* Book I, Chap. IX.
[103] "First, that *Man is a Spirit*, and bound by invisible bonds to *All Men*; secondly, that *he wears Clothes*, which are the visible emblems of that fact." Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus,* Book I, Chap. IX.

Yet, dandy's selfishness and artificiality preclude him from realizing independence of others, and in the same way as the Hegelian master, also he rests enclosed within the boundaries of his unproductive self. He is dishonest, a mere sham (comparable to a "huge lath-and-plaster Hat, seven-feet high, upon wheels" put on public display in *Past and Present*[104]) willing to attract attention and not to represent any deeper moral values; and as such, he stays far away from nature, from the activity of the universe and the general moral law in which he does not find himself. In this disposition, he is doomed but cannot be annihilated – he must be re-born in the very sense of Teufelsdrockhian denial of "The Everlasting No" ("It is from this hour that I incline to date my Spiritual New-birth, or Baphometic Fire-baptism; perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a Man."[105]) or re-placed (in the Hegelian fashion) at the time he discovers (in his consciousness) the willingness to activity which will help him transgress the sphere of the visible and access the values conditioning our world.

A dandy, the representative of how Carlyle relates to the visual, can be also interpreted in more general terms as an incarnation of his reserved attitude to science, which he makes clear when discussing the "Cause-And-Effect Philosophy of Clothes".[106] But the "Philosophy of Clothes" does not relate just to the dandy but to every human being, as clothes equal tools used for decoration, individuation and, interestingly enough, physical manifestation of otherwise invisible bond with others.[107] Carlyle uncovers the physical in order to get to the sphere of the transcendental ("the Philosophy of Clothes attains to Transcendentalism") where the categories of time and space lose, in Kantian fashion, their empirical status[108] and point to the eternity of "a universal HERE" and "an everlasting Now."[109]

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[104] Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 177.

[105] Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, Book II, Chap. VII.

[106] "Let any Cause-and-Effect Philosopher explain, not why I wear such and such a Garment, obey such and such a Law; but even why I am *here*, to wear and obey anything!—Much, therefore, if not the whole, of that same *Spirit of Clothes* I shall suppress, as hypothetical, ineffectual, and even impertinent: naked Facts, and Deductions drawn therefrom in quite another than that omniscient style, are my humbler and proper province." Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, Book I, Chap. V.

[107] "Clothes gave us individuality, distinctions, social polity; Clothes have made Men of us; they are threatening to make Clothes-screens of us." Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus,* Book I, Chap. V. "First, that *Man is a Spirit*, and bound by invisible bonds to *All Men*; secondly, that *he wears Clothes*, which are the visible emblems of that fact." Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus,* Book III, Chap. IX.

[108] "Nay, worst of all, two quite mysterious, world-embracing Phantasms, TIME and SPACE, have ever hovered round him, perplexing and bewildering: but with these also he now resolutely grapples, these also he victoriously rends asunder. In a word, he has looked fixedly on Existence, till, one after the other, its earthly hulls and garnitures have all melted away; and now, to his rapt vision, the interior celestial Holy-of-Holies lies disclosed." Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus,* Book III, Chap. VIII.

[109] "Time and Space are not God, but creations of God; that with God as it is a universal HERE, so is it an everlasting Now." Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus,* Book III, Chap. VIII.

Similarly to the philosopher embracing the "cause and effect" philosophy who is unable to explain the genuine *reason* "why I am *here* to wear and obey anything", also the material-based 19$^{th}$ century science is powerless to clarify deeper existential (and moral) questions. In a general sense, neither the mechanical laws of causation which Lockean psychology relies on can be of much help in understanding of the essence of our being in this world, righteousness of our actions or our mutual relationships with others. Moreover, an individual comprehends that "*Man is a Spirit*" and thus is able to liberate himself from the vassalage of space and time or even Christian God and attain freedom (which is a very Hegelian idea). Yet, a dandy sticking just to the surface of things is unable to perform such a leap.

### 2.1.3 Conclusion

As it was outlined in the preceding chapter, Victorian society put a high value on what could be directly sensed and experienced. Science as such works with objects that can be measured or categorized and so conceived as facts. Ubiquitous materialization discourages an individual from introspection and makes him rely on something stable and unchangeable – the external surface of things that confine him within the spatial and temporal boundaries. Carlyle thus contrasts the external with the inner (spiritual), and so calls for rediscovery of faith but not in oneself (one's own creative capacities), the physical object, science or Christian church – he searches for the universal energy governing the course of events, for an "Eternal God" that would help man find his way towards an active approach to life in which he would overstep the threshold of finiteness and realize the all-governing spiritual principle. As a result, an object which can be visually perceived (similarly to an "object" which we wear) necessarily represents our communion with the universe and other human beings.[110] Yet, this object cannot be scientifically examined in order to reach a single objective perspective (1.2.1) but it must be comprehended and embraced through an unceasing human activity.

Therefore, such a (spiritual) union is not a product of passive contemplation but it is rather the effect of an active involvement, of *work* that encompasses both material and religious dimension. Carlyle foregrounds a close link between *work* and spirituality, which allows him to transgress the physicality of the manufactured goods in favour of their moral dimension and stress the mutual relationships one forms through *work*. What is notable

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[110] "Whether *seen*, rendered visible as an image or picture to the bodily eye; or visible only to the inward eye, to the imagination, to the intellect: this makes a superficial, but no substantial difference. It is still a thing seen, significant of godhead, an idol." Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship*, Chap. VI.

here is the reciprocity, a sort of organicism that ties together whole society in an honest and unceasing strife towards better future opening up on the horizon of the visible present.

Even though Carlyle's contemporaries might not have fully appreciated the inspiration for the "philosophy of clothes" that can be traced back to German idealism, they have indisputably grasped its very essence – the emphasis put on the productive activity which is the only way of how to change the world for better together with the idea that through this kind of occupation individuals do not compete but show respect to each other, and so are able to pull together. There is no longer any requirement for aristocracy (or a "lord"); society needs people who value humanity and get immersed in honest and creative *work*. Imagination and vision are not understood as a creative principle by Carlyle (as they were by the Romantic poets, 1.1) but they are to be actively employed in the rebuilding of society. As such, they even have a political undertone.

## 2.2 Ethics and Aesthetics Hailed (J. Ruskin)

Carlyle's harsh (ironic) criticism, comparable to the sword enabling him to cut through the thickets of hypocrisy and obtuseness, should be viewed as being not only of social but also ethical and political nature, and as such it was directed at the structure of the 19th century society and its economical foundations. Similarly to Carlyle's approach to vision and work, "to see" equals uncovering deeper truth in the broadest sense of this word also for John Ruskin. Yet, it was up to the latter of the two to bring stronger aesthetic arguments into the whole social debate and so to interpret the eye not only as an organ of the spiritual but also of the physical sight that may excel over the former at times.[111]

Although Ruskin's voluminous *oeuvre* may be quite difficult to read for us nowadays (mainly owing to his poetic language, verbosity and lack of system), it gained some degree of popularity in his own time[112] and more importantly, it had a direct influence upon the following generations of thinkers, notably Morris. I would suggest that one of the best ways of how to approach Ruskin is to discuss three major areas of his

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[111] "[We] shall discover at last that the eye is a nobler organ than the ear; and that through the eye we must, in reality, obtain, or put in form, nearly all the useful information we are to have about this world. Even as the matter stands, you will find that the knowledge which a boy is supposed to receive from verbal description is only available to him so far as in any underhand way he gets a sight of the thing you are talking about." John Ruskin, *"A Joy For Ever": Two Lectures on the Political Economy of Art* (London: Ballantyne Press, 1904) Lecture II, 106.

[112] "Ironically, but not exceptionally, the decline in his fame seems to have coincided with the publication of a superb library edition of his works, one of the most thorough and devoted pieces of editing ever undertaken." Kenneth Clark, *Ruskin Today* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967) xii. "What is less well known however, is that some twenty years later Ruskin was hailed as a major influence, especially among socialist sympathisers." Gill Cockram, *Ruskin and Social Reform: Ethics and Economics in the Victorian Age* (London: I. B. Tauris & Company, Limited, 2007) 2.

interest leading one to each other – views on *nature* together with the "Law of Help", the central doctrine running through his work; stands on *art* (or rather *architecture*); and criticism of *society*. When accepting Kenneth Clark's statement that "Ruskin approached art through nature,"[113] it should be added that he approached society through nature and art (architecture in particular). Nonetheless, all these areas are to be seen as interdependent and cannot be treated separately. Moreover, the central role of vision and work is traceable in all of them.

## 2.2.1 In-Between Subjective and Objective Approach to Vision

Ruskin's notion of nature (and also his overall thinking) owes much to Romanticism. In the first volume of *Modern Painters*, from which he strongly distanced himself later on, Ruskin comes very close to Wordsworth's stands when he sees nature as a pantheist, as a revelation of God's word.[114] More importantly, Ruskin's "cooperative law" stems more or less directly from and bears resemblance to Coleridge's organic theory of mind in which the image of a living organism substitutes the laws of mechanical causation. Comparably, it is not, according to the "Law of Help", possible to observe any moment of aid among inanimate objects, whereas in the world of living organisms interdependence of parts and so their mutual assistance is seen to be inevitable. Only when parts cooperate, the organism can thrive and does not deteriorate.[115] Ruskin does not apply this principle only to nature as such but also to an individual (artist) and then society as a whole. Actually, in the *Elements of Drawing*, we encounter the metaphor of "the socialized tree" for the first time, and it is here where we learn that the tree is strong and magnificent only when its

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[113] Clark, 85.

[114] When full reference is not stated, I refer to the *Library Edition, The Works of John Ruskin*. John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, eds. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903-1912). "[And] my first business, before going a step farther, must be to combat the nearly universal error of belief among the thoughtless and unreflecting, that they know either what nature is, or what is like her, that they can discover truth by instinct, and that their minds are such pure Venice glass as to be shocked by all treachery. I have to prove to them that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in their philosophy, and that the truth of nature is a part of the truth of God; to him who does not search it out, darkness, as it is to him who does, infinity." John Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, Vol. I, Part 2, Sec. 1, Chap. 2, Par. 50.

[115] "In substance which we call 'inanimate', as of clouds, or stones, their atoms may cohere to each other, or consist with each other, but they do not help each other. The removal of one part does not injure the rest. But in a plant, the taking away of any one part does injure the rest. Hurt or remove any portion of the sap...the rest is injured. If any part enters into a state in which it no more assists the rest, and has thus become 'helpless', we call it also 'dead'. The power which causes the several portions of the plant to help each other, we call life. Much more is this so in an animal. (...)Intensity of life is also intensity of helpfulness. (...) The ceasing of this help is what we call corruption." John Ruskin, *Modern Painters,* Vol. V, Part VIII, Chap. 1, Par. 4.

boughs are of the same quality and coact.[116] Similarly, faculties should not be viewed in isolation neither in man: "The whole function of the artist in the world is to be a seeing and feeling creature."[117]

In short, nature is the source of inspiration for Ruskin, a model from which he can draw conclusions; yet, a human being is "more than the real sun" to whose powers nature subjects.[118] Man is by no means merely a rational creature – he is, first and foremost, endowed with imagination and creative powers, which will be demonstrated on Ruskin's stands on work. Nonetheless, this proposition should be kept in mind also when speaking about art – art is not to be seen as a play but as a serious business.[119] As an artist is not a mere machine who copies what he *sees*, he should neither imitate nor *think* about what he perceives but rather *feel*.[120]

One notable aspect which would identify Ruskin's undertakings with the main scientific "trends" in Victorian society was his zeal for geology, systematization of plants and natural objects. Nonetheless, I would say that this particular passion is strongly reflected in his approach to art and beauty and reveals a lot about his attitude to vision. Quite interestingly, Ruskin was ignorant of the history or theory of art[121] but he expected at least some kind of law intervene and make the work of art perceptible. Nature is governed by organic laws and so an artist must not fall short of observing its principles.[122] In nature, also God's work can be seen and He, as a designer, cannot work without laws (which can be dated back to the Middle Ages). So, beauty is not a mere "pleasure" but rather a "law".[123] Finally, Ruskin rejects imitative theories and expects *an artist* to show the system

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[116] "Imperative requirements of each bough to stop within certain limits, expressive of its kindly fellowship and fraternity with the boughs in its neighbourhood; and to work with them according to its power, magnitude, and state of health, to bring out the general perfectness of the great curve, and circumferent stateliness of the whole tree." John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing*, Letter III, Par. 215.

[117] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Vol. III, Chap. II, Par. 10.

[118] "Therefore it is that all the power of nature depends on subjection to the human soul. Man is the sun of the world; more than the real sun. The fire of his wonderful heart is the only light and heat worth gauge or measure. Where he is, are the tropics; where he is not, the ice-world." John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* , Vol. V, Part IX, Chap. I, Par. 15.

[119] "The end of Art is as serious as that of all other beautiful things - of the blue sky and the green grass, and the clouds and the dew. They are either useless, or they are much of much deeper function than giving amusement." John Ruskin, *The Cestus of Aglaia*, Chap. VIII, Par. 99.

[120] " (...) The work of his life is to be two-fold only; to see, to feel. It is not his business either to think, to judge, to argue, or to know." John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Vol. III, Chap. II, Par. 10.

[121] Clark, 132.

[122] "I say, first, there must be observance of the ruling organic law. This is the first distinction between good artists and bad artists." John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing*, Letter II, Par. 132-3.

[123] "It was always accuracy I had to ask of him, not sympathy; patience, not zeal; apprehension, not sensation. The thing to be shown him was not a pleasure to be snatched, but a law to be learned." John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. V, Part VIII, Chap. IV, Par. 23. When discussing Ruskin's views on beauty,

of some sort or to present some kind of a unity which may be the unity of imagination.[124]

However, when focusing on sight more closely, we return to Ruskin's views on nature, man and, surprisingly, to his passion for geology. To *see* does not mean to see *clearly* – even when we take a microscope, we do not actually *see* everything but only a state of things appearing to the eye as a fact, which cannot altogether explain the object observed.[125] In such propositions, there are two things reflected: firstly, Ruskin's attack on reliance on the visible in contemporary society. On the one hand, science was important for Ruskin and so were observation and certain precision. But on the other hand, as it becomes clear from the juxtaposition of Romantic and Victorian approach to vision, preoccupation with facts in the 19th century sidelined the role of imagination and led to obliteration of something quite central – creativity and ethics. Therefore, his notion of *sight* strongly reflects the Romantic theory of imagination which stresses the living, ever changing organism in spite of a static immutable object easily defined and delineated. The work of art bears, in some respect, the latter characteristics (lines appearing on the canvas, clay or stone moulded to certain shapes, both producing beauty) and I believe that it is this very aspect which compels Ruskin to expect certain fixed principles from art and artists (as seen above). In opposition to this, there is still uniqueness of human and artist's mind together with the claim that "what we call seeing a thing clearly, is only seeing enough of it to *make out what it is*", which is an expression uncovering creative human capacities and omnipresent dynamics of organic life, the "continual mystery caused through *all* spaces".[126]

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we must also distinguish between the "typical beauty" concerned with formal aspects and the "vital beauty" related to the expression of the aesthetic object.

[124] "(...)Good art rarely imitates; it usually only describes or explains. Good art always consists of two things: First, the observation of fact; secondly, the manifesting of human design and authority in the way that fact is told." John Ruskin, *The Two Paths*, Lecture I, Par. 19.

[125] "But not only is there *a partial* and variable mystery this caused by clouds and vapours throughout great spaces of landscape; there is a continual mystery caused through *all* spaces, caused by the absolute infinity of things. WE NEVER SEE ANYTHING CLEARLY. We suppose we see the ground under our feet clearly, but if we try to number its grains of dust, we shall find it is as full of confusion and doubtful form, as anything else; so that there is literally *no* point of clear sight, and there never can be. What we call seeing a thing clearly, is only seeing enough of it to *make out what it is*; this point of intelligibility varying in distances for different magnitudes and kinds of things, while the appointed quantity of mystery remains neatly the same for all. We go nearer, and can now read the text and trace the embroidery, but cannot see the fibres of the paper, nor the threads of the stuff. (...)Till we take microscope, which will send it where it must stay, hundredth, or thousandth place, according to the power we use. When, therefore, we say, we see the book *clearly*, we mean only that we know it is a book. (...) And yet not one of their boughs or outlines could be distinctly made out, or distinctly drawn. Therefore, if I had drawn either a definite pine, or a dot, I should have been equally wrong, the right lying in an inexplicable, almost inimitable, confusion between the two." John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. IV, Part V, Chap. IV, Par. 4-6.

[126] John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. IV, Part V, Chap. IV, Par. 4-6.

## 2.2.2 Work and Its Transformative Potential

This allows us to move to Ruskin's message concerning society which again begins with art (or architecture in particular). In this area, his affinity to Carlyle (primarily in two respects) can be seen – in the role of "the invisible" underlying, conditioning "the visible" (and manifesting itself in it) and in the idealization of the past as a more worthy precedent for the present decayed state of society. In his famous chapter "On the Nature of Gothic" (that influenced Morris), Ruskin examines "the characteristic or moral elements of Gothic" and so, his treatment of the architectonic style (ornament, surface, texture and colour) is distinguished by a strong social dimension.[127] By contrasting the end product of the manual worker from England of his time and the craftsman from Venice of the Middle Ages, he attempts to prove that the latter one is more beautiful. Whereas the first worker pays attention to absolute precision and measures all the curvatures in order to achieve mathematical perfection, the other does nothing of that kind. The Venetian was trying to be creative and each of his products was unique and thus must have partly differed from the rest. So, the only difference that Ruskin can see between these two men rests in their powers of invention which one has lost and the other retains. Consequently, he characterises the English worker as an individual unable to think independently and not being capable of creating a beautiful form or colour but only of executing the given task.[128]

Important points relevant for his overall thought can be deduced from Ruskin's observations. First of all, he requires *freedom* but not the political one (he was sceptical to democracy similarly to Plato) – Ruskin opts rather for the ethical one, the freedom of invention and one's own contribution to the whole. It is actually not what Adam Smith meant by his notion of "division of labour" in *The Wealth of Nations*, the leading concept of the 19th century economic life and thinking. This concept was very much disagreeable to Ruskin, as it went strongly against the notion of organic unity he believed in. Smith was convinced that the tendencies to do business are not invented but that they are characteristic for human race, as there is "a certain propensity in human nature (...) to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another."[129] Therefore, the "invisible hand" leads

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[127] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Vol. II., Chap. VI., Par. I.

[128] "You can teach a man to draw a straight line, and to cut one (...) but if you ask him to think about any of those forms, to consider if he cannot find any better in his own head, he stops; his execution becomes hesitating; he thinks, and ten to one he thinks wrong. (...) He was only a machine before, an animated tool."" John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice,* Vol. II, Chap. VI, Par. 11.

[129] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. Sálvio M. Soares, MetaLibri, 2007, v.1.0, Book I, Chapter II, 15 <http://metalibri.wikidot.com/title:an-inquiry-into-the-nature-and-causes-of-the-wealth-of> 7 Jan 2017,.

individuals firstly, to satisfy solely their own needs, which actually respects the totality of the whole.[130] Ruskin (as well as Carlyle) would accept the idea of man's contribution to the well-being of others. Yet, he would be horrified at the thought of self-interest that reflects Darwin's phrase "survival of the fittest" (originally coined by Herbert Spencer) and may lead to gross imbalance sooner or later. In short, there are no preferred parts of an organism and each must assist equally without attempting to become stronger; if the opposite happens, the whole organism dies.

Secondly, Ruskin is greatly concerned with the quality of the end product which depends on the means of production itself – it is not merely important whether the product is produced but also what *conditions* led to its finalization. Such a contemporary idea (to which we hold strongly even nowadays in the notions of "ethical consumerism" or "fair-trade policies") was certainly aimed at the industrial production the best pieces of which were displayed at the Great Exhibition. Ruskin despised not only the very construction of the building itself but he was indisputably unhappy about many of the very exhibits which ranged from the technical inventions and artworks to examples of kitsch and bizarre objects.[131] As Cockram makes clear, economics of the time was concerned rather with the exchange value than use-value, whereas Ruskin was highlighting the latter – his proto-functionalist convictions led him to believe that an ornament is useful only where it can be contemplated.[132] Moreover, he expected the overall style to be unified and not inspired from various sources (eclecticism).

Thirdly, the well-known passage brings us back to Carlyle and his veneration of the past and stress on the invisible permeating the visible. In Ruskin's view, the past ages should also stand as an example for the medieval order of hierarchy ensuring that the worker would be given enough free space to invest his creative powers in the object he produces and so to make the whole (of the building for example) valuable (as in the times when Gothic cathedrals were erected). The power of our eye and our feelings then enables

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[130] "By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it." Smith, Book IV, Chapter II, 349.

[131] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Vol. I, Appendix, 455 f. Among hundreds of curiosities, one should probably mention "a garden seat made of coal", "a machine which could turn out fifty million medals a week", "a stuffed frog holding an umbrella", "an alarm bed that threw its occupant out at the chosen time" or "a collapsible piano". Hibbert, 214.

[132] Cockram, 65. In this we can see the roots of functionalism traceable back to Ruskin's views on architecture and ornament. When we read his observations of railway architecture, we can locate proto-functionalist ideas in Ruskin's thought: "Another of the strange and evil tendencies of the present day is to the decoration of the railroad station. Now, if there be any place in the world in which people are deprived of that portion of temper and discretion which is necessary to the contemplation of beauty, it is there." John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Chap. IV, Par. 21 and 23.

us to *see* (in the very structure of the building) the real worth (not economical) of the architectural works of art, which may have a positive (reformative) impact upon society. The same view was shared by A. W. N. Pugin with the exception that Pugin invested all his thoughts with a strong religious Catholic undertone and bias.[133] But comparably to Ruskin, Pugin was convinced that buildings directly reflected the social conditions of the time in which they were erected and the comparison between the Victorian and medieval architecture gave him, in his *Contrasts*, a direct impulse to criticism of the 19th century England on the basis of values materialized on the edifices.[134]

First and foremost, Ruskin values *man* and his work, which is best expressed in his claim that "there is no wealth but life."[135] This leads to the principle that human stands in the centre of economics and culture, which forms the fundamentals of his socialist stands traceable back to the Owenites. The mechanized production contributed to worker's dehumanization and his degradation to a lifeless tool. In consequence, this conditions the decline of society of which a man is an organic part.[136] The requirement of perfection from the breathing individual demonstrates clear misconception of the specificity of human labour and impossibility of its appreciation. We again come to the two prerequisites of a high-quality labour on the one hand and a good state of society on the other, characterized by independence of sort (freedom of thinking) and enjoyment that is the outcome of Ruskin's proposals. Nowhere else than in architecture does Ruskin demonstrate his suggestions on the example of an ornament "made with enjoyment" and "without

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[133] "(...)Everything glorious about the English churches is Catholic, everything debased and hideous, Protestant." Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, *An Apology for the Present Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1895) 98, *Hathi Trust. org* <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=gri.ark:/13960/t40s3g848;view=1up;seq=5> 7 Jan 2017. Yet, it must be made cleat that Ruskin and Pugin felt certain antipathy to each other and thus it should not be assumed that they influenced one another. They rather viewed the situation in England of their time similarly in many respects. Peter Stanton, *Pugin* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971) 14.

[134] "The belief and manners of all people are embodied in the edifices they raised; (...) each style was the type of their religion, customs, and climate." Pugin, *An Apology for the Present Revival of Christian Architecture in England*, 4. Cf. Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, *Contrasts, or a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1897) *Hathi Trust. org* <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015010916727;view=1up;seq=15> 7 Jan 2017.

[135] John Ruskin, *Unto this Last*, Essay III, Par. 54.

[136] "You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both. (...) If you will have that precision out of them, (...) you must unhumanize them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves." John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice,* Vol. II, Chap. VI, Par. 11. "It is verily the degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of the nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves." John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice,* Vol. II, Chap. VI, Par. 15.

enjoyment"[137] and "false" and "true" life out of which the latter enables man to change the things around him whereas the former pressures him to the position of their slave (which bears a strong reflection to Hegelian master–slave opposition seen in Carlyle).[138] These views in particular identify him with Owen's highly practice-oriented community established in New Lanark and his utopian aim to secure "welfare" and "happiness" for each of its inhabitants.[139]

## 2.2.3 Conclusion

To conclude, I will return to the quotation in the beginning of this chapter according to which it is the eye that is seemingly conceived as an organ of truth for Ruskin. Although this is valid, the preceding pages elucidated the nature of this "truth" – it is by no means scientific truth that would stress the objectivity of vision and primacy of physical (bodily) sight but rather some deeper truth, an outcome of the combination of subjective and objective vision. In *The Eagle's Nest*, Ruskin makes explicit that "you do not see *with* the lens of the eye. You see *through* that, and by no means of that, but you see with the soul of the eye." He concludes the passage with an all-saying claim that "sight is an absolutely spiritual phenomenon; accurately, and only, to be so defined...." [140]

All that was said upon the subject brings me to conviction that although Ruskin shares a lot with Romantics, their organicism and stress on "the inner", his notion of vision is not altogether subjective. The fact that he brings into focus both natural phenomena and art (or architecture), creates a very specific tension, which, in my view, points indirectly to the all-governing "spirit" permeating the being of all the things that mainly artist should

[137] "Ornament (...) has two entirely distinct sources of agreeableness: one, that of the abstract beauty of its forms, which for the present, we will suppose to be the same whether they come from the hand or the machine; the other, the sense of human labour and care spent upon it." John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Chap. II, Par. 19. "I believe the right question to ask, respecting all ornament, is simply this: What is done with enjoyment - was the carver happy while he was about it. It may be the hardest work possible, and the harder because so much pleasure was taken in it; but it must have been happy too, or it will not be living." John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Chap. V, Par. 24.

[138] "[Man's] true life is like that of lower organic beings, the independent force by which he moulds and governs external things; it is a force of assimilation which converts anything around him into food, or into instruments; (...) His false life is, indeed (...) that life in which we do what we have not proposed, and speak what we do not mean, and assent to what we do not understand; that life which is overlaid by the weight of things external to it, and is moulded by them, instead of assimilating them...." John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture,* Chap. V, Par. 3.

[139] Owen lists three purposes for establishing New Lanark: "The immediate comfort and benefit of all the inhabitants in this village", "the welfare and advantage of the neighbourhood" and "the gradual improvement of every nation in the world." Robert Owen, *A New View of Society and Other Writings*, ed. Gregory Clayes (London: Penguin Books, 1991) 105. Moreover, he makes clear that he intends to introduce "a practical system into society, the complete establishment of which *shall give happiness to every human being through all succeeding generations*. And such I declare was the sole motive that gave rise to this Institution, and to all my proceedings." Owen, 107.

[140] John Ruskin, *The Eagle's Nest*, 193-95.

understand and depict on the canvas. Although this "spirit" may be viewed as being similar to Carlylean "Eternal God", it is not altogether the same – it is rather a conglomerate of individual perception, imagination and scientific knowledge, an ideal which not only a painter but also a writer (of utopia) should possess in order to reveal the actual "truth" an ordinary man is not able to conceive. And the very symbol of "the eye" combines this visionary principle, organic unity with the world in the realm of the physical and the spiritual: "To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion – all in one."[141]

Whereas imagination and vision are to be understood as a creative gesture for Romantics, Carlyle re-interprets them as a creative *act* in terms of an active involvement in the societal work, which has also political significance. Focusing on the actual artistic production, Ruskin finally brings an aesthetic and ethical dimension into the whole debate, which has further impact on society. A handmade object (of art) provides a visible and tangible alternative to the market-oriented society and creates a sort of "utopian space", a refuge allowing man to get emancipated from the nominal value of goods and enter into an "alternative world" ruled by the laws of organicism and art. It is work, unfettered and collective, that can alone serve as an antidote to the production of unsightly goods which, showing no tinge of creativity, represent the hardships in 19th century cities and factories. There is no place for a strong political ideology here (which contrasts with Carlyle); it is art in all its forms that becomes the sole agent of social change and, as Morris attempts to show later, it is both its producer and spectator who effect it hand in hand. According to Ruskin and other medievalists, Gothic thus serves as a worthy precedent which should be looked up to, as it has the potential to testify to the values that Victorian society lacked.

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[141] John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. III, Part 4, Chap. 16.

# 3 *NEWS FROM NOWHERE*: A VISUAL UTOPIA

> "Thus, the solution to the question of aesthetic truth lies in this direction: *art is a laboratory and also a feast of accomplished possibilities* plus the experienced alternatives within it while the performance as well as the result take place in the manner of the substantiated illusion, i.e., of the worldly completed anticipatory illumination."
>
> Ernst Bloch, "The Artistic Illusion as the Visible Anticipatory Illumination"

> "Dreams (...) think preponderantly, but not exclusively, in visual images."
>
> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*

Medievalism and Gothic are the labels that come immediately to mind when the work of Carlyle, Ruskin or Morris is concerned. The same applies also to the notion of *vision* that, as it can be argued, is related to this particular mediaeval architectural style. Gothic originated in France in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and is commonly known to have introduced the structural feature of the characteristic Gothic vault that made it possible to raise the spires of churches much higher than their Romanesque predecessors and, together with thinner walls and larger windows, thus allowed for immeasurably more light in the interior than in the past. In short, majesty (with emphasis on vertical height), spaciousness and abundance of sunlight in the interior of the cathedral belong to the most prominent qualities of Gothic.

Both Ruskin and Morris were awestruck by the European Gothic – Ruskin devoted several of his major writings to Venetian architecture and Morris decided to abandon the priesthood in favour of (architectural) design after he visited the greatest cathedrals of Abbeville, Amiens and Beauvais.[142] Not coincidentally, the visual nature of Gothic got

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[142] After a holiday in France with Edward Burne-Jones, Morris made a resolution to devote his life to art (architecture in particular): "Walking together on the quays of Havre late into the August night, Morris and Burne Jones at last took the definite decision to be artists and to postpone everything else in this world to art. It was decided that night that neither should proceed to take Orders; that the Oxford life should be wound up as quickly as possible; and that thereafter Burne-Jones should be a painter, and Morris an architect." J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901) 78. It should not be forgotten that Morris was also awestruck by Pre-Raphaelite art, especially after 1856 when he joined Burne-Jones in his apprenticeship under Rossetti who educated both men. Rossetti and Burne-Jones would make

substantially reflected not only in their overall thought but also their personalities – both were attentive to their surroundings, they were very sensitive to (the medieval) art and they strongly relied on their eyesight. Metaphorically, Gothic can be interpreted as a style possessing a deep symbolic dimension – the erected spires pointing to the Heavenly Kingdom or the overall imagery (let it be the actual structure of cathedral, stained glass, sculptures or colourful paintings on the walls that have faded away during the centuries) not only adorned but had a deeper spiritual and symbolic meaning that could be unveiled not only by educated priests but also illiterate masses.

In general, a cathedral was "telling" a story that was supposed to be "read" over and over by its visitors. Analogically, Morris's reliance on "the visual" (not only in his designs but also in his literary works) can be interpreted as a similar endeavour to produce a narrative (in words or in colours and shapes) that would be educative and would provide an alternative to the world that surrounded him. His "speech" is not direct and the main aim of this part of the thesis will be to expose the complex nature of his "language" in relation to utopianism that is *visual* in essence. As Morris was not only a writer but also a designer, a leading figure of the Arts and Crafts Movement, his "utopian dream" combines both the sphere of artistic imaginary pursuits (imagination) and practice. Nonetheless, this is not the only duality that can be identified in his overall thought – although he was a true Victorian artist and thinker, the ideas of Romanticism still ran in his veins and informed most of his undertakings. All these aspects thus produce a complex and rich tapestry of what can be labelled as Morris's *visual utopianism* fitting into the larger picture of Victorian approach to vision. In the following chapters, I will demonstrate in what way Morris's utopian dream (representing a central utopian category) is intertwined with the

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contributions also to the company (Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.) Morris co-founded in 1861 to offer handcrafted products (e.g. textiles, wall-papers, glassware) inspired by medievalism which would provide an alternative to the mass market of the age. Cf. Mackail, 82-90. As Pre-Raphaelites influenced mainly Morris's designs and poetry (mostly their idea of beauty as a spiritual truth and their idealization of the medieval), they are not analysed in this thesis dealing largely with his prose works and aesthetic opinions. Yet, it would be interesting to study Morris's body of design work and demonstrate in what way it was inspired by Pre-Raphaelites, which requires more space than is offered in this thesis. A useful study attempting to outline a complex relationship between Morris and Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is Peter Faulkner's "Morris and Pre-Raphaelitism". Cf. Peter Faulkner, "Morris and Pre-Raphaelitism," *Journal of William Morris Studies* 19.4, No. 4 (2012): 40-62. Personally, I strongly agree with Faulkner's statement which stresses Morris's sensitivity to the environment in which he lived that had greater influence on him than any artist or thinker he came into contact with: "We will find ourselves, with Morris, in the area of concern over our human attitude to the earth on which we live. Here, it seems to me, the strongest element was Morris's innate awareness of, and sympathetic response to, the natural world. This was undoubtedly encouraged by his reading of Ruskin and others, and by his knowledge of a wide range of works of visual art, but it was not dependent on them so much as on his own inner being." Faulkner, 58-59.

notion of vision and I will suggest applying the label *democratic vision* to the project he proposes.

## 3.1 Utopian Dream and Vision

Generally, it could be said that utopia begins with "dreaming" and as such, it is the exemplification of a "dream" (mainly) of those who may find themselves in a difficult socio-economic situation and seek change.[143] A dream is also the most usual form taken by Morris not only in his prosaic but also poetic works (e.g. *The Defence of Guenevere*). Nonetheless, in *News from Nowhere* (and *A Dream of John Ball*) dreaming does not have solely an escapist function, leading one away from the present moment but, adversely, creates the space in which romance (a genre framing Morris's utopia) and "realism" are balanced, which enables to transform both the perception of time (history) and reality of the 19th century Britain.[144] It is my contention that the main message of Morris's utopia is conveyed through the visual dimension intertwined with a dream and dreaming in the everyday experience. Therefore, it will be demonstrated how dream, vision and consequently human activity (or work) intersect.

## 3.1.1 Dreaming and Hope

Although "dream" is, as to its general usage, encumbered with negative associations pointing at retardation, unfeasibility and lack of practical import leading an individual beyond the *real* into the sphere of the *imaginary*, its actual meaning can divert from these labels and, quite surprisingly, come closer to their opposites. Dreaming as such is a very natural activity – firstly, it belongs to human existence as an epitome of multitudinous cyclical changes and, moreover, it proves to be essential for man not only from the viewpoint of biology (as a means of recovery) but also psychology, characterized by mental activity.[145] From the psychological point of view, dreams originally come from

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[143] "World-improving dreams in general seek the outwardness of their inwardness, they emerge like the extrovert rainbow, like a vault across the sky." Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope, Vol. 1* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995) 92. "The concept of *utopian* thinking reflects the opposite discovery of the political struggle, namely that certain oppressed groups are intellectually so strongly interested in the destruction and transformation of a given condition of society that they unwittingly see only those elements in the situation which tend to negate it. (...) They are not at all concerned with what really exists; rather in their thinking they already seek to change the situation that exists." Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960) 36.

[144] See Edward P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976) 694-666.

[145] It is the basic attribute of a living matter to undergo cyclical changes and alterations (molecular change) which are a part of a series of greater planetary changes (change of day and night, seasons, etc.). Alena Plháková, *Spánek a snění* (Praha: Portál, 2013) 16-17. Plháková also sums up that the discovery of the so-

"hunger", from a kind of lack in our subconsciousness, for which "wish" may be understood as a coveted compensation.[146] While dreaming, our mind does not rest and the images it produces can easily become a source of inspiration in arts and sciences, as it was demonstrated in the first chapter on the example of Romantic poetry (e.g. Coleridge's "Kubla Khan").[147] Yet, it was noted (in the first and second chapter) that imagination does not stand in this process alone – it is more or less intertwined with the actual sensuous experience, which in other words means that when awake, one may approach one's "dream world" critically and enrich it by what can be retained from the "lived moment"; on the contrary, it is impossible to "test" reality in any way in a dream.[148] And it is this "critical mode" together with the absence of past orientation (characterizing nocturnal dreams) which makes "daydreaming" a productive activity of the "wish-forming" and "wish-realization" within the realm of utopia.[149]

Therefore, utopia is clearly oriented towards future, which is also the basis of both Karl Mannheim's and Ernst Bloch's approach in their theoretical underpinning. Mannheim makes a strict distinction between ideology and utopia – whereas ideology is directed at the past, at the "collective unconscious" of groups and "obscures the real conditions of society"[150], utopia centres itself on the critical re-evaluation of *now* in an attempt to point at the ideal of *then*, and from the perspective of this future moment it tries to transform the existing situation: "In utopian mentality, the collective unconscious, guided by wishful representation and the will to action, hides certain aspects of reality."[151] Quite similarly, a neo-Hegelian, Bloch, heavily borrowing from Freud and Jung, puts an individual human mind reflecting the "Spirit" into the centre of interest and claims that daydreaming nullifies the opposition between the presence and future together with exclusion of the adherence to

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called NREM and REM phase proves dreaming to be an active and complicated process which can be a "colourful mental experience" for us. Plháková, 20-21; 47- 48.

[146] "Freud's real discovery is this: that dreams are not just foam, and naturally not prophetic oracles either, but that they lie half-way between the two as it were: precisely as hallucinated wish-fulfilments, as fictitious fulfilments of an unconscious wishful fantasy." Bloch, 86. Nocturnal dreaming is uncertain; it loses its own will, does not fight back and is not resilient. Plháková, 135.

[147] See also Plháková, 163-166.

[148] We tend to unequivocally and uncritically embrace dream-world activities whilst dreaming, as the so-called "reality testing" (when one is aware of the fact that visions one sees are the product of their mind) weakens in the process of falling asleep and entering the (N)REM phase. Plháková 47, 131.

[149] According to Freud, censoring ego and past orientation of nocturnal dreams (conditioned by the fact that they are fuelled by everyday experience) retard the process of wish-realization. Bloch puts the situation in the same light: "For night-dreams mostly cannibalize the former life of the drives, they feed on past if not archaic image-material and nothing new happens under their bare moon." Bloch, 87.

[150] Mannheim, 36.

[151] Mannheim, 36.

the past. Shortly, "thinking means venturing beyond"[152] and *The Principle of Hope* serves as a traveller's guide on the journey towards something which has not yet taken place, towards *Novum*, from the stance of the present moment ("now").[153] Yet, neither Bloch gets altogether rid of the rational moment in this long-lasting "expedition" and opts for the term *pre-consciousness of a New* acting as the mediator in the triad *hope – pre-consciousness of a New – Novum*.

Distinctively, it is hope, an expectant emotion contrary to *anxiety* and *memory* (intertwined with nocturnal dreams), which becomes a "gate" to our future-oriented intentions (expectant emotions or ideas) opened up in the present moment towards the so-called *Not-Yet-Conscious*, "a class of consciousness which is itself to be designated not as filled, but as anticipatory"[154], or "the psychological birthplace of the New" in other words, of something which is to come and we are not aware of it. The socio-economic dimension is essential for Bloch in the same way as it is for Mannheim – the *Not-Yet-Conscious* is an expression of what takes place mainly in the revolutionary times (in the age of Industrial Revolution for instance) when a dream "passes from vague, largely private premonition to a more or less socially sharpened, socially mandated premonition."[155]

## 3.1.2 Utopia and Vision

As already outlined, visual images play a significant role in (day)dreaming. For Freud, they form the dream: "Dreams (...) think preponderantly, but not exclusively, in visual images" and their main characteristics is that there "are only those elements of their contents which behave like images, that is, which more closely resemble perceptions than mnemonic representations."[156] Similarly, it is evident that vision belongs to one of our most important senses (together with hearing) – we get most information about the outside world from sight, and thus it is no surprising that an abrupt loss of this ability can lead to suicide.[157] Even within the realm of aesthetics, seeing (and partly hearing) finds its secure place – Baumgarten defines the discipline as the science of perception deriving from the

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[152] Bloch, 3-4.
[153] "This book deals with nothing other than hoping beyond the day which has become." Bloch, 10.
[154] Bloch, 113.
[155] Bloch, 117. Shortly, *Not-Yet-Conscious* is a "conscious premonition" or "the feeling for what is on its way." Bloch, 122.
[156] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A. A. Brill, *Psywww.com* <http://www.psywww.com/books/interp/chap01e.htm> 15 Jan 2016.
[157] Cf. Diego de Leo, et al., *Blindness, Fear of Sight Loss, and Suicide*, Psychosomatics 40.4 (July-August 1999): 339-344, *Eyefreedom.com* <http://eyefreedom.com/suicide_paper.pdf> 20 Dec 2012.

*episteme aisthetike*.[158] In his *Archaeologies of the Future*, Frederic Jameson claims that neither of us (not even an author of utopia) can deny his bodily existence and so confront "the great empiricist maxim, nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses,"[159] which finally brings sight also to the sphere of utopia.

This tradition can be traced back to *The Republic*, regarded to be the oldest European utopia by some critics,[160] in which Plato is primarily concerned with the visible renderings of the activity of a human soul such as politics, education and arts. For utopia in general and Morris's writing in particular, the role of the "aesthetic" education through which the majority of the citizens (the greatest third class of workers) is raised is notable. And it is mainly through their everyday experience that they can be most effectively nurtured and trained to become worthy, useful and beautiful citizens.[161] Naturally, this contact with beauty in the form of various artistic products ranging from architecture or painting to what we call applied arts such as embroidery or furnishings (not excluding human body) is visual to a large extent. As a result, it is no surprise that also the philosopher – king *looks* (βλέπω; blépō) not only at the ideal forms (represented by the blinding Sun) but also into his soul in order to create an image of a perfect *polis*, a city replete with justice and prosperity, a variant (or model) of what in utopian literature becomes to be known as a mythical land of Cockaygne.[162]

Plato has certainly set an example for the subsequent utopianists not just in terms of style (e.g. T. Campanella or T. More made use of the dialogue) but, more importantly, by showing that politics, education, arts and everyday life intersect and influence each other, which forms the cornerstone of utopian writing. By focusing on the utopian function rather than form, Bloch was one of few theoreticians to demonstrate that utopia is not necessarily a literary genre but can be related to any form of human activity ranging from architecture to dreaming as such, which is also Morris's approach. For Bloch (as for Morris), art and

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[158] "Therefore, things known are to be known by the superior faculty as the object of logic; things perceived [are to be known by the inferior faculty, as the object] of the science of perception, or aesthetic." Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954) §116.

[159] Frederic Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*: *The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fiction* (London and New York: Verso, 2005) xiii.

[160] Doyne Dawson, *Cities of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 3-5. I believe that although Plato's *Republic* has certainly inspired utopianism, it does not have to be ranged to this particular genre, as its main aim is the philosophical discussion of soul and its workings.

[161] "And there is surely much of these qualities [good accord, grace, rhythm, disposition] in painting and in all similar craftsmanship—weaving is full of them and embroidery and architecture and likewise the manufacture of household furnishings and thereto the natural bodies of animals and plants as well." Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes: Vols. 5 & 6, The Republic*, trans. P. Shorey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969) 400e-401a.

[162] See A. L. Morton, *The English Utopia* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1952) Chapter I.

culture are to be viewed as constantly "forward-looking", for there has to be a "fragment" of incompleteness present in them, an "objective hollow space with an *un-rounded immanence*" within which "*aesthetic Utopian meanings* of the beautiful" will be revealed.[163] *Art* is introduced as "*a laboratory and also a feast of accomplished possibilities* plus the experienced alternatives within it."[164] Aesthetic truth cannot be defined empirically, as a set of measurable features or units, but rather as a *possibility* incorporated into the tissue of an artwork.

Consequently, an eye invested with utopian vision can glance over the horizon that is no longer just "an inner horizon, which stretches vertically so to speak in self-darkness *(Selbstdunkel)*" characterizing Romantic nostalgia, or "an outer horizon of large breadth in the light of the world *(Weltlicht).*"[165] These two merge on the basis of the fact that they are both determined by the utopian impulse which can be uncovered by the visual potential of a utopian dream. No fact is isolated, no appearance relates just to a single moment – they refer to the "entirety of their epoch and to the Utopian totality that is in process."[166]

I would argue that it is this very moment which characterizes the process of utopian dreaming that is so emblematic for Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris and that makes it possible to re-interpret their message as utopian. Ruskin was critical of the product of a 19th century factory worker, as it was finalised in the unfavourable working conditions inconsistent with the idea of free and independent creative work, and contrasted it with an artefact manufactured by a Venetian craftsman. Similarly, Carlyle underlined genuineness and moral values in the production process and moreover, stressed the importance of work moving society forwards. Finally, Morris highlighted each of these aspects – working conditions, the moral value of the final product and also the irreplaceability of honest work. Dissatisfaction with the state of the 19th century manufacturing process is not just an expression of nostalgia but rather an attempt to stress the absence of "empty spaces" that would attract both the physical and the mental eye and represent a horizon stretching towards the not yet (or *Not-Yet*) realized future. The visible surface of a machine-produced artefact is a manifestation of otherwise concealed production process that sidelines human work and testifies dishonesty of the whole system or worker's hardships.

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[163] Ernst Bloch, "The Artistic Illusion as the Visible Anticipatory Illumination," *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988) 150.
[164] Ernst Bloch, "The Artistic Illusion as the Visible Anticipatory Illumination," 147.
[165] Ernst Bloch, "The Artistic Illusion as the Visible Anticipatory Illumination," 155.
[166] Ernst Bloch, "The Artistic Illusion as the Visible Anticipatory Illumination," 154.

However, solely the fact that we are humans creates the common ground for an organic society, and thus it is only a man who can verbalize his needs and wishes weaved into his dreams. Each of us is different – we have dissimilar bodies and mental capacities, which on the one hand, leads to the production of dissimilar objects (contrasting with flawless machine-made products) and on the other hand, it allows us to view various aspects of the *possibility* that opens up the utopian horizon. First and foremost, we must stay true not only to ourselves but also to the world around – we are not only the instrument-bearers and instrument-users but, on the basis of a Marxist analogy, *we* ourselves become the instruments of change in the process of grasping the *Novum*, which is part of our lived experience.

## 3.2 The Utopian Space of *Nowhere*

In *The English Utopia,* A. L. Morton ascribes quite unusual, yet remarkable position to *News from Nowhere* within the history of utopian thought which may have even a self-abnegating character: "Morris's is the first Utopia which is not Utopian," as its primary interest lies, according to Morton, in aspects which are emblematic for the state of society outside the world of literature such as the "sense of historical development" and "human quality of life."[167] There may be a number of reasons that could be found for this claim; however, the fact that Morris drew inspiration not only from his personal life but also from what he could see in the world surrounding him together with his primary aim to reform the society is surely to be seen as the most prominent one. Therefore, E. M. Thompson's note that "*News from Nowhere* seems to have grown spontaneously rather than to have been constructed with careful artifice"[168] is validated and points at ease of which only those whose writing is largely informed by direct experience are capable. In contrast to Morton, Thompson does not deprive *News from Nowhere* of its genre-status and labels it as a "scientific utopia" in which not only past, present and future intermingle but also "dream" and "conscious mind" are balanced to such an extent that reality quite naturally enters into a forward-looking dream with the person of the narrator.[169] Expectedly, it is then through *his* eyes we see the reality of the utopian world and at first, it is *his* dream we are invited to go through. However, what are the features of this Cockgayne paradise and where can it be found? The following sub-chapter should give an answer to this question.

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[167] Morton, 164.
[168] Thompson, 693.
[169] Thompson, 693-694.

Firstly, when reading the title of the novel carefully, we learn three pieces of information about the land we are about to visit and about the story we are about to be immersed in: it is "nowhere", which is actually a direct translation of Greek *ου τόπος* (u/ topos); it is situated in the "restful" environment; and it is both a utopia and a romance. So, how to decipher the spatiality of this *nowhere*? P. E. Wegner's concept of the "imaginary community" (a complement of Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities") as "a way of imagining subjectivity" and "also a way of imagining space" might serve as the first option. In this manner, a seemingly unrealizable and void space is filled with a potential to have a direct effect on the community – a utopian narrative does not only describe or tell the story but has a tangible consequence in "making modern history."[170] Whether conceived as "a kind of thought experiment" or having "a certain *prescriptive* quality", this imaginary community has still both political and aesthetic aspirations to "push through" its programme.[171] What should be of help in this striving is its negation of the concept of an objective space (res extensa) distinguished from the subject (res cogitans) and the proposition of a way of how to re-structuralize history on the one hand, and the spatial environment on the other, in order to embrace modernity.[172] In short, "the experience of space comes to the center of attention"[173]; however, this imagined space is never finalized and through the narrative (representing "performance, a mapping, or travel itinerary") continually develops within reader's contact with the world he inhabits, yet recognizes anew.[174] Last but not the least, utopia as such is based on the tradition of the romance, from which it borrows the means of how to work with space and grant it its prominence.[175] *News from Nowhere* indisputably attests to this description.

In contrast, a depiction of the space exposed to the physical (or mental) sight entails a huge risk of obliteration of the conditions of *vision* that go beyond the Cartesian categories of time and space. In 1.2, different influences on the objectifying or rather subjective gaze in the Victorian Age or Romanticism such as scientific progress, knowledge, power or imagination were demonstrated. Clearly, what should be considered is not just the physiological fact of an eye *observing* the world around but also everything that lies *beyond* the act of seeing – its wider socio-cultural foundations. In *Landscape and*

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[170] Phillip E. Wegner, *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002) xvi.
[171] Chris Ferns, *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999) 4.
[172] Wegner, 38.
[173] Wegner, 41.
[174] Wegner, 43-44.
[175] Wegner, 39.

*Memory*, Simon Schama draws on René Magritte's 1938 lecture in which he makes clear that vision is formed by a number of impulses which contribute to the final picture that "emerges" in front of our eyes:

What lies beyond the windowpane of our apprehension, says Magritte, needs a design before we can properly discern its form, let alone derive pleasure from its perception. And it is culture, convention, and cognition that makes that design; that invests a retinal impression with the quality we experience as beauty.[176]

Realizing this, Schama views a landscape not just as a cluster of physical stimuli (as if reflected in a mirror or a popular apparatus of landscape painters, a "claude-glass") but re-interprets it as the "product of shared culture, (...) a tradition built from a rich deposit of myths, memories, and obsessions."[177] As a result, we are reminded to look deeper under "our conventional sight-level" and "recover the veins of myth and memory that lie beneath the surface."[178] Wegner exemplifies that the imagined space re-shapes our lived experience and consequently perception of our living space. Schama goes further and considers the inherited landscape myths and memories weaved into our national identity that "would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition: its topography mapped, elaborated, and enriched as a homeland."[179]

Similarly to Morris, and adversely to the proponents of a scientific approach to vision, Schama tries to show that the history of landscape in the West is not "just a mindless race toward a machine-driven universe, uncomplicated by myth, metaphor, and allegory where measurement, not memory, is the absolute arbiter of value."[180] Only this fact makes it possible to explore something unknown and unseen, the *Not-Yet* realized present and open the niches of future, something "we may yet find."[181] In this chapter, I will demonstrate in what way Morris's utopian novel digs deep into the cultural tradition of England and "reads" Victorian London and its environs.

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[176] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 12.
[177] Schama, 14.
[178] Schama, 14.
[179] Schama, 15.
[180] Schama, 14.
[181] Schama, 14.

### 3.2.1 The Landscape and the Picturesque

As noted above (Chapter 1), industrialization had an immense impact on society and also the way people viewed their environment (e.g. the nature of vision). Moreover, it also changed not only the face of the country itself but, consequently, also of the capital. The 1851 Census, showing that it was the city and not the village which attracted the half of Britain's population in a relatively short time, symbolically demonstrated a shift from rural to urban areas.[182] Cities became overcrowded and shabby or grimy slums, in which the newly established industrial lower class of "uprooted, dispossessed" or even "nomadic people *par excellence*"[183] lived, were not pleasant place to stay in. Metaphorically, as Philip Davis comments, London was "unable to wash the dirty things clean" in the river Thames which became "as sullied as the new industrial lower class besides its banks."[184] As a result of this, there was a need to rebuild the city in order to respond to the needs of its inhabitants. On the one hand, stricter town planning that made it possible to control Londoners more easily could be viewed as the epitome of the philosophy of Benthamite utilitarianism (cf. 1.2.2).[185] Alternatively, as Simon Thurley points out, an earlier aesthetic indifference caused by predominance of evangelicalism among the upper-class was simply overmastered by the "wheels of the market", and the economic changes raised interest in the aesthetic qualities of buildings and the overall architecture.[186] So, the cities "were more serious, socially more ordered more private places than their Georgian predecessors."[187]

On the other hand, one of the main architectural trends of the time was to design the city in a way that *nature* would be brought into its very midst – its inhabitants would be provided with gardens or fountains as the "free breathing places,"[188] a sort of "private" refuge opposing the oppressiveness of city life. A good example of this are the so-called "garden squares" scattered around city main areas such as Bloomsbury, Belgravia, Kensington or Notting Hill, or an attempt to enclose trees in the construction of the Crystal Palace itself can be interpreted also along these lines. This trend was a result of two

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[182] Philip Davis demonstrates that according to 1851 Census half of the population lived in cities, whereas the number was by one quarter lower in 1831. Davis, 13.
[183] Morse, 10-12.
[184] Davis, 18.
[185] Davis, 43.
[186] Shops for the wealthy "transformed into ordered and elegant emporia, an ornament to the streets in which they stood" or the changes in the energy supplies (muscle, wind, water power or burning timber were replaced by coal) could be an example of this trend. Simon Thurley, "English Architecture: Into the Modern World," *Gresham.ac.uk*, Gresham College <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/building-the-victorian-city-splendour-and-squalor#uFZ1Biv7QC2dcUox.99> 1 Apr 2017. or banks
[187] Thurley.
[188] Davis, 28.

movements (associated largely and almost exclusively with Britain) that evolved in the 18th and 19th century and that have influenced the whole world and brought about the garden cities and garden suburbs in the late Victorian Age (e.g. Bedford Park) – the *picturesque* and the *landscape* movement.[189] As Schama comments, it is no wonder that nature (let it be in the form of a suburban yard) was to become a part of the city landscape, as it can be viewed as "a cure for the afflictions of city life."[190] Put differently, "the cultural habits of humanity have always made room for the sacredness of nature."[191]

Generally, the term *picturesque* can be applied both to the painting and the landscape. When used to characterize the landscape, it refers to "its fitness to make a picture" and vice versa – to the fidelity with which the picture copies the picturesque landscape.[192] As an aesthetic category, it became established as a third quality mediating between Burke's *sublime* and *beautiful* in William Gilpin's *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty* (1782) or Uvedale Price's *Essay on the Picturesque* (1794)[193] and is characterized mainly by variousness, irregularity, roughness (contrasting with smoothness and regularity of the beautiful).[194] Whereas Classicism (e.g. Boileau) attempted to promote "an equation of nature and regularity" (e.g. in the architecture of gardens), it was not the order but rather the irregularity and variety of plants, trees or rocks that became admired.[195] Consequently, the picturesque landscape had nothing to do with a commercial use of land and meant rather irregular, preenclosed landscape opposing any productive activity other than the one traditionally linked with the classical "locus amoenus".[196] In this way, it was presented in the paintings of landscape painters such as Constable or Gainsborough.

Similarly, when architecture of buildings as truly artificial objects integrated into the very natural setting is concerned, a feeling that "no building can appear truly picturesque, unless, in its outline, the *design* be enriched by vegetation" became

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[189] Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, ed. Matthew Aitchison (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010) 166.

[190] Schama, 17.

[191] Schama, 18.

[192] Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology. The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986) 57.

[193] Although, as Pevsner demonstrates, the concept of picturesque has a long tradition that can be traced back to the 16th and 17th century. Pevsner, 108.

[194] "[A]lthough smoothness be the ground-work of beauty, yet...roughness is its fringe and ornament, and that which preserves it from insipidity....One principal charm of smoothness, whether in literal or a metaphorical sense, is, that it conveys the idea of repose; roughness, on the contrary, conveys that of irritation, but at the same time of animation, spirit, and variety." Uvedale Price, *Essays on the Picturesque* (London: J. Mawman, 1810) 1:115.

[195] Pevsner, 138.

[196] "Price (...) condemned the industrial buildings as ugly, unwanted intrusions into picturesque nature." Bermingham, 80.

prevalent.[197] Therefore, the Gothic style became more and more popular mainly thanks to the richness and profusion of ornamentation contrasting with the symmetry of Palladianism. As Price comments, "a variety of forms, of turrets and pinnacles, some open, some fretted and variously enriched," proved that the Gothic architecture was more picturesque than the other architectural styles known at the time.[198] And it was primarily in the city (and not in the country) where the Neo-Gothic style as the epitome of a picturesque architecture was presented in its true grandeur and embraced the principles that were formerly applied to landscape.[199]

However, when referring to landscape, the picturesque landscape was related not only to the aesthetic but also the ideological programme – on the one hand, it went against the symmetry and regularity of Classicism and on the other hand, it represented the opposite of the landscape produced by the Industrial Revolution or even agricultural practices aimed at the economic profit and gain.[200] Apart from the progress which could Victorian Britain boast of, the dark side of the production process should be taken into account together with the fact that former workshops were replaced by factories (associated with dirt, seclusion and alienation) and that the city was everything but not a quiet or safe location: "The world in which the first Victorians grew up was in many ways a violent, anarchic place."[201] Quite naturally, people looked for a sort of refuge, a space which would remind them of the old pre-industrial times representing order, quietness and security. One way of doing this was to *build* a picturesque landscape, another way was to *imagine* it and either paint a picture or write a story. As Susan Glickman correctly points out, "separation of topographical and ideal landscape is never really possible," for selecting a certain landscape and presenting it from a certain point of view definitely "implies an ideological agenda, conscious or not."[202] Consequently, such landscapes or stories were an embodiment of views standing in a direct contrast to the spirit of the age – they were highly idealized, representing a sort of a paradise counterbalancing the drabness of "real" life and expressing the (deontic) modality of how the landscape *should* look and how

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[197] Humphry Repton, *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (London: Printed by T. Besley for J. Taylor, 1805) 428.
[198] Price, 1:52-53.
[199] Pevsner, 167.
[200] "The aesthetically pleasing landscape was not the economically productive one." Bermingham, 66.
[201] Gilmour, 8.
[202] Susan Glickman, *The Picturesque and the Sublime: a Poetics of the Canadian Landscape* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 7.

nature *should* be looked after.[203] Repose rather than trade or all-day gruelling hard work was expected there.

In other words, it could be said that "the new religion of nature *was* religious" or that "it was just as opposed to scientific materialism as was official dogma, but it found spiritual nourishment outside the doors of the Church."[204] In practice, such "spiritualism" demonstrated itself in the very same manner as it could be seen on the example of Carlyle's or Ruskin's approach – in turning the gaze back to the past, in the nostalgia of rural paternalism, veneration of ruins and dilapidation, in the "emphasis on the erosions of time" that "not only doomed the old order but also obliquely recognized the precariously temporal nature of the new order that replaced it."[205] As outlined above, the reason to focus on the past and cling to nature was obvious – the lost social order and the landscape were emblematic of morality. Yet, there was more to it than that. Paul Carter points out that the irregularity and roughnesses of the picturesque scenes "allowed the eye to wander from object to object."[206] Moreover, not only the eye was attracted but also the mind was urged to roam.[207] And it is this very aspect of travelling, moving through the familiar environment and discovering it anew or moving from the visible outside world to the invisible recesses of the human mind that is important for *News from Nowhere*, as well as for the tradition of picturesque that the novel reflects.

## 3.2.2 Reshaping Victorian London

The stress on the performative status of utopia conceived as an open text complements well Bloch's concept outlined above in which subject's active participation in the transformation of the environment he inhabits (through coming into contact with an open work of art) is put into foreground. In case of *News from Nowhere*, it is Morris's childhood as well as his adult experience which speak through the narrative unveiling the imagined space in front of the reader's eyes. When glancing through the main stages of his early childhood (the way his biographer J. W. Mackail renders them), one should not be surprised to learn that Morris grew up in the midst of a picturesque countryside almost untouched by civilisation where nature remained "in all essentials a part of primaeval

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[203] Nathanael Gilbert, "The Landscape of Resistance in Morris's News from Nowhere," *JWMS* 16.23 (2005): 25 <http://www.morrissociety.org/JWMS/16.1Winter2004/2004.16.1.Gilbert.pdf> 12 Feb 2017.
[204] Glickman, 8.
[205] Bermingham, 70.
[206] Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 231-2, quoted in Glickman, 17-18.
[207] Carter, 231-2.

England, little changed in the course of hundreds, perhaps thousands of years."[208] Surprisingly, at Woodford Hall (where the family moved when he was six) medieval traditions were kept and so it "brewed its own beer, and made its own butter, as much as a matter of course as it baked its own bread."[209] It is then not hard to believe Mackail's assumption that "the picture which Morris draws, in News from Nowhere, of this Essex country in the restored and recivilized England of a distant future, substantially represents the scene of his own boyhood."[210] Moreover, his fascination with Gothic and the heyday of the picturesque and landscape movement in the middle of the 19th century have also indisputably contributed to the fascination with nature, traditions and the Middle Ages.

The opening of the novel "up at the League" at the occasion of a political meeting concerning the subject of revolution (3)[211] betrays the stated literary precedent (romance), yet it clearly reflects not only Morris's own initiative (he was the Socialist League founder in 1884) but, more importantly, announces the need for "discussion" (the word which appears seven times in the first two paragraphs including the title of the chapter and a synonym "converse"), a practice that is characteristic for utopia itself, as it was demonstrated above. Reflecting this, C. Fern's objection that *News from Nowhere* tends to "foreclose dialogue, rather than encourage it" and so does not invite "readers into active participation in the text"[212], should not be treated seriously. Quite an abrupt and fierce walkout of a man who is very well known to "our friend" (the narrator himself) does not suggest that the discussion is at end on his part; quite on the contrary, it only begins, and the space of the underground "carriage", "the means of travelling which civilisation has forced upon us like a habit" (4), instils the need to restore it, but not only through the medium of articulated words: "'If I could but see a day of it,' he said to himself; 'if I could but see it!'" (4).

The allusion to sight (emphasised by repetition) at the moment of being enclosed in the inhospitable dark environment of the London underground evokes almost visionary connotations similar to the philosopher's journey towards the Sun in *The Republic*. In the Chapter 1.2.2, I have already discussed the role hidden areas of the city played for Victorians, mainly in terms of their feelings of fear and discontent arising from the

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[208] Mackail, 5.
[209] Mackail, 9.
[210] Mackail, 6.
[211] The reference is made to the Cambridge edition of *News from Nowhere*. William Morris, *News from Nowhere or an Epoch of Rest: Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance*, ed. Krishan Kumar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[212] Ferns, 23-24.

impossibility to get to know the places buried under the ground of the metropolis. "The unseen" equals "the unknown" which bears negative connotations and seemingly forecloses any potential development. Nevertheless, it also alludes to a "dream state", the moment in which we have some access to our unconsciousness, the *terra incognita* of our own mind that awaits exploration. Characteristically, in this physical space of the underground tunnel "our friend" begins to "muse" and directs his physical sight "inwards", which is one of the first moments when the formation of an endless horizon of the utopian "territory" commences.

The environment through which "our friend" travels can be interpreted as an epitome of his vision of the "organic" new world in which everything is bound together in the harmonious utopian polyphony of human and natural voices or colours. Yet, his "dream" of a better future is foreshadowed right after he leaves the train, right after "he formed the words" ("If I could but see it!"; 4). The "ugly suspension bridge" representing the city that makes one feel "discontented and unhappy" (4) strongly contrasts with "a beautiful night of early winter, the air just sharp enough to be refreshing after the hot room and the stinking railway carriage" as well as with "a young moon halfway up the sky" (5) – still unblemished natural world that pushes the artificiality of the city in the background and opens up the new space of "peace and rest, and cleanness and smiling goodwill" (5). This very first moment foreshadows a set of parallels between "the natural" and "the manmade" that unfold in the course of the story and mirror a strict opposition between "the private" and "the public" (cf. 3.2.1). Interestingly enough, the feeling of a "vague hope, that was now become a pleasure" (5) is first experienced behind the closed doors of "our friend's" home, in the *private* sphere separated from the outside world represented by the symbol of "bed", the place of dreaming and seeing "the entanglements" that "began to shape themselves into an amusing story" (5), which is actually the story of the Blochian "New" of which "our friend", who has not yet become a "guest" of the restful *Nowhere*, is still not conscious.

However, everything changes right after the narrator, soon to be renamed "Guest", wakes up "at home in my own room" (7) into an idyllic and "beautiful bright morning seemingly of early June" (7) although he went to bed in winter. Unsurprisingly, he leaves the isolated room located near Thames in haste and enters the medieval, yet refashioned London area performatively nicknamed "Nowhere" which does not boast of factories and slums anymore but, respecting the idea of the picturesque landscape, rather of "fresh air and pleasant breeze" (7) and crystal-clear water with salmon swimming in it. The Thames

is not a filthy river anymore but rather calls for a nice morning swim. An active imaginative process of dreaming is not highlighted; the dream world is truly unfurled in front of Guest's and reader's eyes in the form of a conscious sensuous experience characterized by a direct contact with the environment, strongly represented by "the Thames sparkling under the sun, and near high water, as last night (...) seen (...) under the moon" (7).

### 3.2.3 The City and the Countryside

Intertwining of nature and urban life is the most prominent feature of "Nowherian" spatiality, which goes well hand in hand with Morris's wish expressed in his lecture "Town and Country" (1894): "I want the town to be impregnated with the beauty of the country, and the country with the intelligence and vivid life of the town."[213] Guest wakes up in the red-brick Guest House (actually Morris's Hammersmith family home) surrounded by a lovely garden and finds out that "the great clearing of houses in 1955" has changed the face of the country in favour of green vegetation in the northeast London suburbs of Walthamstow and Woodford (15-19). All the areas through which he passes (from Hammersmith in West London, eastward through Kensington, Charing Cross, Piccadilly, and Trafalgar Square) are filled with gardens and forests encircling newly-designed buildings embracing "the best qualities of the Gothic of northern Europe with those of the Saracenic and Byzantine" (26) or old remnants of the Victorian architecture (such as the Houses of Parliament). Guest and his guide walk along the Hammersmith main road that runs through "wide sunny meadows and garden-like tillage" (25) tightly knit with edifices of immeasurable beauty that correlate well with the natural habitat. And it is the visual experience of such a scene that is able to bring utmost joy to the passer-by:

This whole mass of architecture which had come upon so suddenly from amidst the pleasant fields was not only exquisitely beautiful in itself, but it bore upon it the expression of such generosity and abundance of life that I was exhilarated to a pitch that I had never yet reached. (26)

This quality of utopia, in which the sights, sounds and smells of nature play its central part, counteracts the shabbiness and oppressiveness of the town life devoid of anything natural and organic. There is a clear reference to the whole tradition of

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[213] Mackail, 321.

picturesque with its roughness, variety or Gothic architecture (3.1) that the novel both reflects and challenges. On the one hand, it is obvious that Guest moves through the country that shares its geographical features with England (not only the place names but also, as Nathanael Gilbert demonstrates, "an aura of that traditional 'Englishness' about it, a pastoral sense of the rural lifestyle"[214]), yet this country is strongly idealized in fashion of the 17th and 18th century landscape paintings. All the murkiness and drabness intertwined with factory production is lost now: "The soap-works with their smoke-vomiting chimneys were gone; the engineer's works gone; the lead-works gone; and no sound of riveting and hammering came down the west wind from Thorneycroft's." (10) In terms of the atmosphere, "the sensual" also brings a positive feeling of joy and friendliness, "delight in the life of the world" (135) counterbalancing the dreariness and secludedness of the 19th century London.

There is a constant aspect of interaction with the surroundings, communion of man and nature in the novel. Although there are "artificial" man-made buildings in *Nowhere*, the prominence of "a pretty little brook that ran across a piece of land dotted over with trees" (24) in the midst of them is unmistakable. Dick's description of Kensington is much revealing in this respect: "This is Kensington proper. People are apt to gather here rather thick, for they like the romance of the wood; and naturalists haunt it, too; for it is a wild spot even here, what there is of it." (24) Another example, a depiction of haymakers whose clothing adds to the picturesqueness of the entire scenery, proves that there is not only the close bond between an individual and his environment but also the centrality of work bringing about pleasure and merriment:

The majority of these were young women clad much like Ellen last night, though not mostly in silk, but in light woollen most gaily embroidered; the men being all clad in white flannel embroidered in bright colours. The meadow looked like a gigantic tulip-bed because of them. All hands were working deliberately but well and steadily, though they were as noisy with merry talk as a grove of autumn starlings. Half a dozen of them, men and women, came up to me and shook hands, gave me the sele of the morning, and asked a few questions as to whence and whither, and wishing me good luck, went back to their work. (160)

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[214] Gilbert, 26.

And finally, during the walk from the Piccadilly Market to Trafalgar Square, Guest passes "a region of elegantly-built much ornamented houses" each of which "stood in a garden carefully cultivated, and running over with flowers." It is not surprising that "amidst all these gardens and houses it was (...) impossible to trace the sites of the old streets: but it seemed to me that the main roadways were the same as of old." (43)

These examples, in which man-made objects or structures are counterbalanced by the omnipresence of nature, demonstrate a strong reflection of the idea of the picturesque (3.2.1) and echo the initial contrast between the fresh air and the airlessness in the dark and smelly London underground. With this in mind, the reader is able to fully appreciate a sharp distinction between "Trafalgar Square" and the scenery, composed of "the sunlight", "the whispering trees and odorous blossoms," (44) that opens up right before Guest spots the place of a great battle of 1952. The same applies to the "orchard (...) chequered over with the shadow of tall old apple trees" and "the Parliament House" turned into a "Dung Market" (43), which does not have to be taken in line with the critical tradition just as a political satire but can be viewed in a wider perspective, with reference to the "stinking railway carriage", as a direct juxtaposition of the natural and artificial, wild and orderly, private and public.

London seems to be turned into a garden city, yet, as Nathanael Gilbert and Christine Bolus-Reichert comment, Morris challenges and revises the idea of the picturesque in the novel.[215] First of all, it was made clear that the landscape tradition negates any productive activity, which is so central for *Nowhere*. In the landscape paintings, any type of labour is concealed, which leads into praising inactivity as a right way of life. Quite on the contrary, work is the highest pleasure in the Nowherian society and all the activities can be actually joined into "one productive activity – that of living itself."[216] So, "Nowhere may look like the pastoral, English garden of popular imagination but its social structure is radically different."[217] On the surface level, it may resemble Bedford Park, but, as Bolus-Reichert exemplifies, its association with the culture of "middlingness" (i.e. preference for commercial products) does not match Morris's high socio-cultural and aesthetic standards.[218] Whereas the residents of Bedford Park "were

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[215] For a comparison between Ebenezer Howard's or Frederic Osborn's views on the garden city and William Morris's depiction of *Nowhere* see Florence S. Boos, "*News from Nowhere* and ʿGarden Cities': Morris's Utopia and Nineteenth-Century Town-Design," *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 7.2 (Fall 1998): 5-27.
[216] Gilbert, 32.
[217] Gilbert, 33.
[218] Christine Bolus-Reichert, "Everyday eclecticism: William Morris and the suburban picturesque," *The Free Library.com*, Farlex, Ltd.

shameless consumers" favouring rather mere "appreciation", Morris puts "practice" in the foreground and thus challenges the notion of the picturesque with preference for "a historical, organic picturesque" reflecting Ruskin's admiration for (picturesque) buildings "imbued with collective memory." [219] As Old Hammond puts it, when distinguishing the "tumble-down picturesque" related to the "tokens of poverty about [our villages]" from the revised picturesque of *Nowhere*:

Such things do not please us, even when they indicate no misery. Like the mediaevals, we like everything trim and clean, and orderly and bright; as people always do when they have any sense of architectural power; because then they know that they can have what they want, and they won't stand any nonsense from Nature in their dealings with her. (75)

In this way, Morris portrays rather the "landscape of resistance,"[220] to borrow from Gilbert, which does not allow for the general trends in landscape art and the traditional idea of the picturesque abnegating the social relationships of labour. Quite on the contrary, he substitutes it with a truly "human element" (of work and close social contact), as Reichert points out.[221] Furthermore, Morris, in his land of "nowhere", resists the traditional ways of landscape depiction analogical to the scientific examination (such as "Cartesian perspectivalism, descriptive distance and self-conscious observation") in order to introduce a dream resisting the "temporal perspective"[222] through which he transforms the image of London the reader believes to know well. He makes use of the entire socio-cultural experience of the world that can actually be *seen* (the topography of London) and creates an imaginary space inviting the visitor to *see* the city afresh, to recognize the potential of change hidden under the burden of "tradition" ( when we borrow from Schama).

The sensual experience is significant for the dreaming and the dream formation itself, as already suggested. Actually, one of the first things the reader learns about *Nowhere* is that "it was hot and the sun (was) shining brightly", that the air was fresh and warm and that "the river-side trees" stood next to the sparkling Thames (7). And it is the course of the river that, quite traditionally, leads the narrator through the yet unexplored land and provides a spatial frame for the story. Moreover, it is the crystal clear water

<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Everyday+eclecticism%3A+William+Morris+and+the+suburban+picturesque.-a0208109701> 12 Feb 2017.
[219] Bolus-Reichert.
[220] Gilbert, 34.
[221] Bolus-Reichert.
[222] Gillbert.30.

running in the same river that demonstrates a "dividing line" between the Thames and this "Nowherian" watercourse and that points at the dissimilarity between the 19<sup>th</sup> century capital and the idealized picturesque landscape of *Nowhere*. And it is the visual aspect that marks the difference.

So, not only work but also *sight* represents the true human factor, the most evident aspect of interaction with the surroundings which can be experienced and communicated – one of the few things that remain constant after the imaginative "rebirth" of the narrator. As it was made clear in the preceding chapters (2.2), notably Ruskin harshly criticised dehumanisation of a worker and stressed the spiritual value of his endeavour (which was also emphasized by Carlyle); Morris makes it evident (although indirectly) that what inseparably belongs to man (his senses) cannot be taken away from him, and so he does not lose the capacity to see or hear neither when awake, nor when asleep. It is through the interaction with the narrator himself, with *his* visual experience, that the dialogue between the reader and author commences and as such should never cease. Finally, the reader might find his own way how to incorporate the *new vision* into the space through which he physically moves and can potentially change the dreary city of London or its environs into a pleasurable and beautiful place similarly to Guest himself who, in the final passage of the novel, expresses the hope of "returning back" to the Victorian Age with a "message" from the "land of hope", a forward-looking "vision" than can change the state of things:

'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 - but not before. Go back again, then, and while you live you will see all round you people engaged in making others live lives which are not their own, while they themselves care nothing for their own real lives - men who hate life though they fear death. Go back and be the happier for having seen us, for having added a little hope to your struggle. 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.' Yes, surely! and if others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream. (220)

## 3.3 Beauty in *Nowhere*

Evidently, the physical beauty that is given to the eye in its various forms (nature, human body, man-made products) becomes omnipresent in *Nowhere* and can be

interpreted as the basic characteristics of the "Nowherian" society and the environment itself. Guest is awestruck by the sheer gracefulness of both the country and its people, which is the first quality communicated by the narrator after he wakes up: "If I was astonished with my sight of the river banks, I was no less astonished at my waterman, (...) a handsome young fellow, with a peculiarly pleasant and friendly look about his eyes, – an expression which was quite new to me then, though I soon became familiar with it." (9) His eyes are not used to such good looks of an ordinary worker who resembles "some specially manly and refined young gentleman," finely clothed, and thus he quite amusingly concludes that the man is "playing waterman for a spree". (9) A similar situation repeats itself a number of times throughout the novel, characteristically in relation to females and their garment: "Almost everybody was gaily dressed, but especially the women, who were so well-looking, or even so handsome, that I could scarcely refrain my tongue from calling my companion's attention to the fact." (25)

Reflecting the tradition of the picturesque, it is clear that this aspect is supposed to be aimed against the appearance of the 19th century city which should have been planned rather in fashion of garden cities of the time (3.2), when the critical undertone of the novel is taken into account. Consequently, also the Victorian society and its inhabitants are viewed critically, as there is a direct link between one's character and the surroundings in which one lives. Whereas More had criticised the state of the 16th century England, Morris focused on the country as he witnessed it in his time and attempted to invest his commentary with a strong prophetic undertone.[223] Moreover, he stayed faithful to the tradition of utopia looking up to the land similar to paradise, characterized by abundance and sheer beauty (i.e. Cockaygne or the traditional "Epoch of Rest"). Equally, preoccupation with excellence in *News from Nowhere* could be ascribed to the (revised) tradition of the picturesque, as demonstrated above (3.2). Still, the ubiquity of the visual aspect of pulchritude makes it stand out not only among the famous utopias of its time (mainly S. Butler's *Erewhon* and E. Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, which *News from Nowhere* directly criticises) but also earlier ones (such as Bacon's *New Atlantis*). Therefore, it is worth considering this particular feature in order to find the intersecting points also with other areas prominent in Morris's work (such as nature, art or work).

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[223] It is noteworthy that in his 1893 Kelmscott Press edition, Morris criticised More's *Utopia* for lacking any practical value and having just historical interest for his contemporaries. William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, ed. James Redmond (London: Routledge, 1970) xxvii.

### 3.3.1 Communion with Nature and People

The first question that should be addressed is related to the main source of this ever-present beauty. In his long conversation with Guest, Old Richard Hammond identifies the reason why there are so many good-looking people in *Nowhere*:

Now, there are some people who think it not too fantastic to connect this increase of beauty directly with our freedom and good sense in the matters we have been speaking of: (...) A child born from the natural and healthy love between a man and a woman, even if that be transient, is likely to turn out better in all ways (...) than the birth of the respectable commercial marriage bed, or of the dull despair of the drudge of that system. (65)

Simply said, "pleasure begets pleasure" (65), which cannot be attained in times when the cash nexus between people is more important than freedom and love. Unlike its Platonic precedent prescribing a strict system of begetting and marriage bonds (which also inspired More[224]), Morris praises liberty in relationships and institutions of any kind – on the example of Clara and Dick we learn that there is nothing comparable to the official bond between man and woman, as divorce would be just one of the "quarrels about private property "that could not go on amongst us in our days." (59) Neither is there any government that would protect property "by means of the law-courts" which "really existed for the destruction of wealth" in the past. (80)

As a result, what is of utmost importance for "Nowherians" and what imparts such physical perfection to them is, as Hammond explains, life in "reasonable strife with nature, exercising not one side of ourselves only, but all sides, taking the keenest pleasure in all the life of the world." (60) Put differently, living amidst beauty is conditioned by the fact that they "have plenty to do, and on the whole enjoy doing it," which is the most that can be expected of life. (74-75) It is as if the whole country was born anew and everyone began to love the place they lived in ("The spirit of the new days, of our days was to be delight in the life of the earth."; 135), which brings a democratic element to the society that used to be usurped by the materialism of the Victorian Age.

What is at stake here, is the question of ownership of landscape which was one of the main issues that actually divided some theoreticians of the picturesque – whereas Gilpin and Price put focus on optical qualities (variousness, irregularity, roughness),

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[224] See Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. George M. Logan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) Book II, 78-81.

Richard Payne Knight established the picturesque "as an exclusive taste available to only a few."[225] Simply, Knight, in his materialism, believed in the right of a wealthy class to own the land and only through this ownership, a bond between landscape and man could be created.[226] Yet, there was also another main difference between the early and later thinkers, as to whether the landscape should be adjusted or not. Gilpin was convinced that the picturesque quality had to be attained – in other words, it was necessary to cultivate and aestheticize nature and the natural.[227] On the contrary, Knight expected the aesthetic and structural attributes to be already present in the landscape, the emotional effect of which should have been induced directly by its naturalness.[228] So, the clash between egalitarianism and elitism became more prominent in course of time, which could be seen on the example of a different approach toward the landscape. Once the picturesque became popularized (mainly through Gilpin's guidebooks), anyone with a sketchbook could "own" a scene taken from the English countryside. However, the picturesque nature likewise "embodied the values and worldview of the wealthy landowning class" who possessed sufficient means to literally "own" the part of land or alter it in a certain way. [229]

In *Nowhere*, there is no property whatsoever – everyone has the same share both in the products of the country and in the landscape itself. Furthermore, there is no government or a class system and thus, when speaking of democracy (when one is allowed to express the love of the country one lives in), not the political one, but *visual*, related to the act of *seeing* and perceiving the environment in which one lives without restraint, is referred to. More importantly, the individual perception is not merely passive – it is intertwined with an active participation in the creative process and, moreover, with taking responsibility for the "public property" that "Nowherians" share, the preservation and further development of land. As Morris asserts in "Art and the Beauty of the Earth" (1881), "when you have accepted the maxim that the external aspect of the country belongs to the whole public, and

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[225] Bermingham, 71.

[226] "Love may be extinct, and friendship buried in the grave with deceased contemporaries: but, nevertheless, both will be replaced by habitual attachment to inanimate objects:–to the trees, that we have planted or protected:–to the lands, that we have purchased or improved:–to the books, that we have studied or admired:- to the curiosities, that we have collected or valued: – and even to the money, that we have ammased." Richard Payne Knight, *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (London, 1927) 462, quoted in Bermingham, 71

[227] "[W]hy does an elegant piece of garden-ground make no figure on canvas? The shape is pleasing; the combination of the objects harmonious (...) but the *smoothness* of the whole, tho right, and as it should be in nature, offends in picture. Turn the lawn into a piece of broken ground: plant rugged oaks instead of flowering shrubs (...) in a word, instead of making the whole *smooth*, make it *rough*, and you make it also *picturesque*. "William Gilpin, *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty* (London: Strand, 1782) 8.

[228] Bermingham, 72-73.

[229] Bermingam, 83.

that whoever wilfully injures that property is a public enemy, the cause will be on its way to victory."[230] In this way, not only the "the aesthetic" becomes interrelated with "the political" and "the social" but also a challenging aspect is introduced to the tradition of the picturesque – as there is no need to debate upon the issue of private property, only the visual quality of the country is what matters. As the picturesque landscape is not "pre-given" in *Nowhere*, the whole society must participate in creating it, and the individuals do so in harmony with the environment, in an organic communion with the landscape they inhabit.

Consequently, it can be summed up that there are actually two aspects highlighted in relation to attractiveness: firstly, beautiful surroundings and their effect on man ("The town invaded the country; but the invaders (...) yielded to the influence of their surroundings, and became country people." 74); and secondly, the pleasure in labour that man experiences. Quite expectedly, the two areas are closely related, although it seems that the lush countryside has an undeniable impact on people who become affected by it. Yet, the main impulse for change comes as if from "nowhere", from the human nature itself, "from a kind of instinct amongst people, no longer driven desperately to painful and terrible over-work, to do the best they could with the work in hand." (137-138) A desire to beautify one's life is awakened quite spontaneously and leads men to "ornament the wares which they made." (138) Simply, the very Platonic idea according to which everything we come into direct contact with leaves an indelible impression on us rests in the very core of Morris's thinking. Therefore, he is convinced that "those who are to make beautiful things must live in a beautiful place,"[231] which leads to the requirement of an appealing living space that will become essential for assuring pleasurable high-quality (decorative) work.

The main proposition here is not anarchy, the state of things which leads to unbridled liberty to do what one has in mind, as there is lack of any monitoring apparatus in the form of centralised state authorities, legal, political, or educational system, each of which would have an effect of an (in)direct control (a Foucauldian or Benthamian disciplinary discourse, as outlined in 1.2.2). Quite on the contrary, Morris suggests a fully responsible approach to the common ownership of land and handmade products, which goes hand in hand with the ideals of communist society in which the only check to a

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[230] William Morris, "Art and the Beauty of the Earth," *Marxist Internet Archive.org*, The William Morris Internet Archive: Works <http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1881/ earth.htm> 12 Jan 2015.
[231] William Morris, "Art and the Beauty of the Earth".

potential harm done comes directly from common sense strengthened and cultivated by both becoming part of nature and mutual relationships among "Nowherians".

### 3.3.2 Beauty in Art

Morris is still fully aware of the fact that societal life requires artificial products (buildings, tools, decorations); yet these must be incorporated in the natural habitat. The only way how to attain this goal is to raise "artists" or artisans whose philosophy of life would be to beautify the world in which they spend every second of their lives. As Morris makes clear in the third part of "Hopes and Fears for Art" titled "The Beauty of Life" (1882): "You cannot educate, you cannot civilise men, unless you can give them a share in art."[232] However, this striving is inevitably related to the redefinition of the term "art" which is no longer to be understood in the narrow sense of the word, as a sort of *technē* that only highly specialised individuals are able to grasp and perform, or as the activity which incites just imagination. Adversely, it is what Morris labels as "The Lesser Arts of Life" (in order to show a distinction from "The Greater Arts of Life") that are not altogether disinterested but arise from bodily and material needs.[233] However, as he points out in the first part of "Hopes and Fears for Art", "the lesser arts" such as "the crafts of house-building, painting, joinery and carpentry, smiths' work, pottery and glass-making, weaving, and many others," must not be completely separated from what is traditionally understood as the "fine arts" (painting, sculpture and architecture). Morris calls for putting the "Decorative Arts" under one heading with the "Higher Arts", as the craftsman must try to work "in accord with Nature" in order to attain the highest beauty, and only then can "the web, the cup, or the knife, look as natural, nay as lovely, as the green field, the river bank, or the mountain flint."[234]

Generally said, decoration has two primary uses aimed at joy in life – "to give pleasure in the things they [people] must perforce USE" and "to give people pleasure in the things they must perforce MAKE", or in other words "to make our toil happy, our rest fruitful."[235] Morris expects everybody to take part in art (either as a producer or at least as

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[232] William Morris, "Hopes and Fears for Art" ("The Beauty of Life"), *Marxist Internet Archive.org*, The William Morris Internet Archive: Works <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1882/hopes/hopes.htm#chap-3> 12 Jan 2015.
[233] William Morris, "The Lesser Arts of Life," *Marxist Internet Archive.org*, The William Morris Internet Archive: Works <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1882/life1.htm> 12 Jan 2015.
[234] William Morris, "Hopes and Fears for Art" ("The Lesser Arts").
[235] William Morris, "Hopes and Fears for Art".

a spectator/user) that is "a good thing which all can share, which will elevate all."[236] These ideas highlighting the notion of *utility* are very close to the philosophy of pragmatism, a digression to which could demonstrate Morris's proto-pragmatist approach. As it will be shown later, such a relation is not haphazard but should help support the *democratic vision* argument. Briefly, pragmatism of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century searched for the way how to merge rationalism and empiricism, which led to the redefinition of the term "truth" formerly conceptualised as something stable and unchangeable in order to highlight its *eventful* and *instrumental* character. Therefore, what is "true" and "false" does not depend upon any outward principle transcending the community of arbiters (or upon a single individual usurping his right to pronounce a verdict) but is inherent in the *process* itself – it is not just the outcome but the actual *bond* bringing together humans who are willing to unite upon what is beneficial and useful for them.[237] This stand has an impact on the re-definition of the notion of experience – according to John Dewey we do not live *in* an environment but "in interaction *with* that environment."[238] Consequently, neither art should be segregated from the everyday life, enclosed in galleries, as these just "testify to the growth of economic cosmopolitanism."[239] An artist (not necessarily a specialist) should thus "achieve a unified experience"[240] which "signifies heightened life and active engagement with the world" or "an identification of self and world."[241] The result of such unification is the "balance" between "action, feeling and meaning."[242]

This position was prefigured by Morris in his concept of art which annihilates any strict distinction between "fine" (or higher) and "decorative" (or "lesser") arts in order to emphasise its practical dimension. It is a radical outcry against the long-lasting "truth" secluding the sphere of art from everyday human experience dating back to the period of late antiquity. Morris asks for art that must be part of one's daily life in which it will have a positive influence on the quality of work and one's mood: "You will have it with you in

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[236] William Morris, "Hopes and Fears for Art" ("The Art of the People").
[237] Pragmatism criticizes the correspondence theory of truth according to which truth is a correspondence with a fact (advocated by B. Russell or G.E Moore). On the contrary, pragmatism highlights the changeable nature of truth and its instrumental character (i.e. its practical role in life). Cf. Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (November 1877): 1-15. Cf. William James, "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth," *Pragmatism* (London: Dover Publications, 1995): 112-125.
[238] John Dewey, *Art and Experience* (New York: A Wideview/Perigee Book, 1934) 13.
[239] Dewey, 9.
[240] Dewey, 16.
[241] Dewey, 19.
[242] Dewey, 16-17.

your sorrow as in your joy, in your work-a-day hours as in your leisure."[243] Therefore, an anti-elitist attitude towards art (also shared by Dewey) according to which art shall be shared by all appears to be central: "By gentle and simple, learned and unlearned, and be as a language that all can understand."[244]

### 3.3.3 The Intelligibility of Beauty

In the chapter 1.2.1, Nietzschean relativism denying the unity of truth was introduced, which goes well together with Morris's innovative delineation of the boundaries of art in anticipation of a pragmatic definition of art. In opposition to a single concept of what should be regarded as "art", there is a category of beauty merged with utility and individual human experience. Searching for "truth" (i.e. what is "true" art and what is not) is therefore a sort of a democratic *social (contr)act* which might appease possible wrath or hostility among people (possibly caused by contradictory definitions of "art") and lead into a peaceful co-existence provided that all the parties are willing to accept its utilitarian dimension. With stress on the importance of work for a content and fruitful life, Morris echoes Carlyle and his despise of a dandy, a member of indolent aristocracy, who is not willing to get involved in any creative activity for the public good (2.1.2). He actually comes close to the Hegelian master-slave relationship that permeates the pragmatic moment of inter-action both with the environment that surrounds an individual and people with whom this individual comes into contact. Such a direct link unavoidably expects mutual understanding that results into unified and rewarding experience, the *experience* that shows the right way to understanding the nature of "art".

On the example of *Nowhere,* it becomes evident that in order to attain beautiful and peaceful life, not only the surroundings in which one lives must be esteemed but all "Nowherians" must also show due respect to each other in their society. Firstly, the land "is neither prison, nor palace, but a decent home,"[245] and so it must be cultivated in such a way that it will be not harmed but rather developed and its beauty will be underlined and not suppressed. Analogically, "Nowherians" address themselves as "neighbours", which best exemplifies the nature of the society in which they live. Being one's good neighbour equals showing mutual respect for one's privacy on the one hand and an active participation in maintaining the friendship on the other. It is an instance of a social bond based on the ideals of shared values in the centre of which there is beauty. However, such

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[243] William Morris, "Art and the Beauty of the Earth".
[244] William Morris, "Art and the Beauty of the Earth".
[245] William Morris, "The Lesser Arts of Life".

quality is not exclusive, unattainable or distant – its omnipresence in a variety of its forms (physical beauty of "Nowherians", buildings, surroundings or beauty of character) confirms its collective nature. Neither art as such (traditionally regarded as something unique is beyond reach – it is compared to a language everybody understands, and so both Guest coming from distant past and masses without classical education are able to fully embrace the ornaments or visual scenes painted on the walls. Although the visitor from the past is stunned at the sight of wall-pictures inspired by the mythical history only little number of "Nowherians" knew anything about, Dick retorts angrily: "What *do* you mean, guest? I think them very beautiful, I mean not only the pictures, but the stories; and when we were children we used to imagine them going on in every wood-end, by the bight of every stream...." (104)

In reference to beauty, Morris's notion can be contrasted with Ruskin's and Walter Pater's, who defies Ruskin's moralism. First of all, Ruskin comes with the concept of the "Law of Help" (according to which all parts of an organism cooperate) and distinguishes between typical and vital beauty – the quality of bodies which represent a divine attribute and "the appearance of felicitous fulfilment of function in living things."[246] So, in Ruskin's view, the beauty of Gothic buildings in Venice reflected an organic way of life or, in other words, a certain moral order. In his preface to *The Renaissance*, Pater however defines beauty with reference to the individual viewpoint of a spectator and renounces any abstract notion of this aesthetic category: "To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics."[247] Whereas Ruskin is looking for an abstract idea of beauty, Pater rejects its altogether – he rather highlights a specific sensuous manifestation of it in its form. When he later talks about a critic, he expects him to "analyse" the work of art and present its beauty to others:

And the function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book,

[246] John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. II, Part III, Chap. XII, Par. 1.
[247] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, ed. Donald L. Hill (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980) xix.

produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced.[248]

And finally it is Morris, who comes with his idea of art as a force of social change and aspiration towards beauty as a way to happiness. He retains not only the "ethical" aspect of art, which he learned from Ruskin, but also highlights its sensual and physical dimension.

In *News from Nowhere*, Dick's words prove that through the visual experience and imagination, beauty in art, nature or everyday world are accessible to all without exception. In other words, "the art we are striving for is a good thing which all can share, which will elevate all."[249] It is through the ability to *see* that "Nowherians" can freely participate both in the production and perception of beauty and it is the nature of this very ability that allows us to use the term *visual democracy* to describe the state of things in *Nowhere*.[250] Speaking of democracy, I have the original meaning of the Greek term δημοκρατία (demokratia) in mind which, as a compound of δῆμος (demos; "people") and κράτος (kratos; "power"), refers to the "the collective strength and ability to act (...) to reconstitute the public realm through action" rather than to "majority rule", as Josiah Ober points out in his paper.[251] The omnipresence of beauty only proves the existence of such "power" of people in terms of their "capacity" to make beautiful things which fill them with (creative) energy to further activity. The essential tenets of pragmatism highlighting the ideas of *utility* and *cooperation* then serve as a sound interpretive background substantiating the arguments concerning mutual open relationships standing in the centre of re-definition of the concept of beauty and subsequently the work or art that will be further discussed in more detail.

## 3.4 Art, Work and History in *Nowhere*

It has been already demonstrated that the sensuous experience of beauty not only characterizes the utopian space of *Nowhere* but it can also serve as a key to the transformation of society that abounds with happiness and in which equality of

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[248] Pater, xxx.
[249] William Morris, "Hopes and Fears for Art" ("The Art of the People").
[250] Although Isabelle Anscombe introduces the term "visual democracy" in the context of modernism, I believe that it can be used also in reference to Morris's work, as it will become clear later. Isabelle Anscombe, "The Search for Visual Democracy," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* Vol. 4 (Spring 1987): 6-15, JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1503955?seq=7#page_scan_tab_contents> 12 Jan 2015.
[251] Josiah Ober, "The original meaning of democracy: Capacity to do things, not majority rule," *Stanford University.edu*, September 2007 <https://www.princeton.edu/~pswpc/pdfs/ober/090704.pdf> 12 Jan 2015.

opportunities is ascertained. Expectedly, art and work play the central role in this change, as beautiful things produced by "Nowherians" create (together with nature) the most suitable environment for pleasurable long life devoid of trouble contrasting with the hardship of man living in the industrialized Victorian Britain. Although Ruth Levitas (together with Thompson) correctly argue that "art itself plays little role in the transition to communist society,"[252] it should not be concluded that it is a passive element within society. The period of change might have been characterized by the production of objects which, in turn, created the appropriate surroundings for the already "transformed" inhabitants who could use them and become influenced by the beauty around themselves. Characteristically, Bloch considers the artworks which are already produced in his delineation of *Not-Yet*, whereas Morris focuses on the process of production of art (in the widest sense of the word) itself. In this chapter, attention will thus be paid to Morris's alternative approach of how to deal with the rising technological development and the "unsuitable" value system of the Victorian Age through the medium of art, work and history, each of which finds its place in his utopian thinking. And it is the term *visual democracy*, embracing all these areas, that can explain the nature of this utopianism.

### 3.4.1 Against Industrialism and Capitalism

In the first part of this thesis (mainly in 1.2), centrality of vision among Victorians was highlighted together with the idea of power directly related to knowledge and the ability to *see*. Such attitude has quite naturally propelled not only the spread of science but also technological progress both coming under the heading of the first Industrial Revolution which stimulated (together with the French Revolution) the rise of utopia as a genre.[253] As a result, it is no wonder that utopias of the time were largely forward-looking in their propagation of the industrial progress that permeated all areas of life.[254] Especially

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[252] Levitas, 128.

[253] James Redmond, "Introduction," *News from Nowhere or an Epoch of Rest: Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance*, William Morris (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) xxxv.

[254] S. Butler's and E. Bellamy's utopias can serve as an example of this tendency: "I learnt that about four hundred years previously, the state of mechanical knowledge was far beyond our own, and was advancing with prodigious rapidity, until one of the most learned professors of hypothetics wrote an extraordinary book (from which I propose to give extracts later on), proving that the machines were ultimately destined to supplant the race of man, and to become instinct with a vitality as different from, and superior to, that of animals, as animal to vegetable life." Samuel Butler, *Erewhon and Erewhon Revisited* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2015) Chapter IX, 58. "Now that industry of whatever sort is no longer self-service, but service of the nation, patriotism, passion for humanity, impel the worker as in your day they did the soldier. The army of industry is an army, not alone by virtue of its perfect organization, but by reason also of the ardor of self-devotion which animates its members." Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward 2000-1887*, ed. Mathew Beaumont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 57.

the fact that the artificial supplanted the natural (or the human) irritated Ruskin and subsequently also Morris, for both believed in uniqueness of human abilities and highly valued inaccuracies that were created by the human hand. Simply, man is the only measure in life and machinery poses a substantial threat to this fact.

Morris's review published in *Commonweal* in 1889 castigating Bellamy's *Looking Backward* reveals the main reason of his disdain for the book: "In short, a machine life is the best which Bellamy can imagine for us on all sides; it is not to be wondered at then that his only idea of making labour tolerable is to decrease the amount of it by means of fresh and ever fresh development of machinery."[255] Bellamy's picture of the "Golden Age", the period when the entire life will be dominated by machines and specialists in various professions (coming hand in hand with rules to be obeyed, such as four stages in one's life[256]) is unacceptable for Morris, as it suppresses individuality and uniqueness. It has already been outlined above that the only way how to change the state of things is to make life pleasurable through human work, which is only possible in society where the master-slave relationship is nullified and turns into a relationship between two equal individuals. Such environment is pervaded with freedom of expression and perception that must, nevertheless, have also its limits set by the ideals of mutual respect and camaraderie. So, openness, as the prerequisite of any social contact, secures absence of negative emotions, which further gives way to the feeling of delight and gratification: "Each man is free to exercise his special faculty to the utmost, and every one encourages him in so doing. So that we have got rid of the scowling envy...." (84)

First of all, the focus on the transition from a society based on commerce to communal freedom in *Nowhere* unveils the need for a radical "cut" that came in the form of a bloody uprising instigated by Socialists taking place at the Trafalgar Square, as there was no peace "amongst those poor confused wretches of the nineteenth century." (109) Understandably, "the great motive-power of the change was a longing for freedom and equality," (110) which was attainable only when "the management of the whole natural resources of the country, together with the machinery for using them" was handed over into "the power of the Combined Workers, and the reduction of the privileged classes into the position of pensioners obviously dependent on the pleasure of the workers." (114)

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[255] William Morris, "Looking Backward," *Commonweal* 5.180 (1889): 194-5.
[256] In *Looking Backward*, Bellamy proposes four stages in human life each inhabitant of his utopian country must go through – compulsory education until the age of 21, forced work for the following three years, a job of one's choice for another 21 years and the final "retirement".

Although the nature of the coup might be questioned, it certainly stays faithful both to Carlyle's fierceness and ideals of the radical socialists of the time.

Notably, this chapter of the novel is rephrased by most critics in order to highlight Morris's affiliations to the Anarchist branch of Communists and their plea for gory revolution. Yet, these claims are too strong to be true – many lectures on Socialism or letters in which Morris distances himself from the most radical socialist groups prove that he was in favour of more moderate and peaceful change.[257] In his 1892 talk on Communism he makes it clear that he des not "believe in the possible success of revolt until the Socialist party has grown so powerful in numbers that it can gain its end by peaceful means, and that therefore what is called violence will never be needed". He is rather in favour of democratic elections "unless indeed the reactionaries were to refuse the decision of the ballot-box and try the matter by arms; which after all I am pretty sure they could not attempt by the time things had gone so far as that."[258] Simply, the "massacre of Trafalgar Square" of 1952 was modelled upon the real event that Morris witnessed himself ("Bloody Sunday" of 1887), which affected him so strongly that he highlighted this moment as the beginning of a bigger change.

Nonetheless, it is more important to stress the fact that after the revolution in *Nowhere* it came to what is termed as the "second birth" of the world when an absolutely different "spirit of the new days, of our days, was to be delight in the life of the world intense and overweening love of the very skin and surface of the earth on which man dwells, such as a lover has in the fair flesh of the woman he loves." (135-136) Put differently, human ability to sense the world around remained untouched and became only strengthened by pleasurable work labelled as "art" that "sprung up almost spontaneously, it seems, from a kind of instinct among people." (137) Yet, what had to be changed was the way in which senses were used and in which the surroundings were perceived, i.e. the nature of *love* had to be altered. Joy simply "bubbled" directly up from ordinary experience, from the belief "in the continuous life of the world of men" and the ability to

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[257] "[In] good truth I would almost as soon join a White Rose Society as an Anarchist one; such nonsense as I deem the latter." William Morris, *The Collected Letters of William Morris, Volume III: 1889-1892*, ed. Norman Kelvin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 240. "All genuine Socialists admit that Communism is the necessary development of Socialism; but I repeat, further than this all must be speculative; and surely in speculating on the future of society we should try to shake ourselves clear of mere phrases: especially as many of them will cease to have a meaning when the change comes that we all of us long for." William Morris, "Socialism and Anarchism," *Marxist Internet Archive.org*, The William Morris Internet Archive: Works <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1889/sa/index.htm> 12 Jan 2015.
[258] William Morris, *Communism, - i.e. Property [portions]*, *Marxist Internet Archive.org*, The William Morris Internet Archive: Works <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1892/property.htm> 12 Jan 2015.

"add every day of that common life to the little stock of days which our own mere individual experience wins for us." (136)

As outlined in the previous chapter on the example of (sensual) beauty, Morris obviously highlights everything that is natural for man, which should bring him closer to both his human nature and natural habitat. When it comes to art, craving for beauty came up absolutely spontaneously among "Nowherians" and they "began rudely and awkwardly to ornament the wares which they made; and when they had once set to work at that, it soon began to grow." (138) Ruskin's praise of organicism is echoed in Morris's proposal of "country-life" in which squalor or stupidity have no place and where only full awareness of happiness may ensure its further proliferation: "Thus at last and by slow degrees we got pleasure into our work; then we became conscious of that pleasure, and cultivated it, and took care that we had our fill of it; and then all was gained, and we were happy. So may it be for ages and ages!" (138) In this way, sordidness of life in the 19th century (together with despicability of the entire system) was overpowered and a new period devoid of industrial inventions and capitalist thinking could commence.

When it comes to work or art, practical experience aimed at further development not only of one's thinking but also of the very natural human skills appears to be essential in *Nowhere*. In Morris's words, "general cultivation of the powers of the mind, general cultivation of the powers of the eye and hand" should ensure establishment of the Decorative Arts rooted in man's own desire to beautify one's life.[259] Therefore, classical schooling can easily disappear from *Nowhere*, as the main stress is put on manual work learned mainly through imitation of elders, and so there is no need to have "too many book-learned men." (31-33) In short, practice outweighs theory, for it is a direct physical contact with the material being shaped that brings contentment rather than mere pondering upon the ways of how this could be done.

One of the many examples of not only how the product of such decorative work looks like but also of the way it is intertwined with societal life, are tobacco, the bag and the pipe Guest "buys" at the market in the vicinity of the Houses of Parliament at the beginning of his journey through *Nowhere*. These objects together with the place they are "obtained" at (the market) symbolically testify the absence of the institution of money or commerce and the significance of utility and open friendly relationships securing the stability of the "Nowherian" society. Surprisingly for Guest, all these artifacts are lavishly

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[259] Cf. William Morris, "The Lesser Arts of Life".

ornamented, especially the pipe "carved out of some hard wood very elaborately, and mounted in gold sprinkled with little gems" (39), which demonstrates the significance of the visual aspect of ordinary objects. Yet, it is not only the visible "surface" that matters – more importantly, it is the actual stress on one's pleasure, usefulness and open "good-neighbour policy" relationships that become highlighted in the ensuing conversation, after Guest expresses his worries about losing the pipe, to which the seller responds: "(...) Don't trouble about losing it. What will it matter if you do? Somebody is sure to find it, and he will use it, and you can get another."(39) In short, Guest gets it for free together with a glass of fine wine for refreshment that symbolizes hospitality and life of ease so emblematic for the entire society both of which contrast well with the cheap "rotgut" suitable for working classes in Victorian Britain (40).

Generally, what is mainly stressed in relation to art is the idea of *freedom* that, as made clear in "Art and the Beauty of the Earth", could be traced back to the ancient times – in the Greece of Pericles slavery existed, yet "art had no share in it."[260] Simply, (mainly applied) art(s) could be seen as a sort of refuge, a space in which an individual can set himself free from any hardships of everyday life and freely express his feelings and views. The realm of architecture in particular provides a feeling of anonymity – a single worker cooperates with others on some greater project and thus the final work is a product of "collective rather than individual genius."[261] As a result, division of labour so prevalent in the 19th century England is rejected in favour of collaboration bringing pleasure and contentment both to artist and spectator who are completely *free* in their activities.

Again, it is the visual aspect that is prevalent in all "the lesser arts" – let it be the "hand of the workman" visible in architecture or his skill distinguishable in the art of dyeing. Obviously, art in general is defined as "some creation of man which appeals to his emotions and his intellect by means of his senses."[262] However, whereas greater arts appeal rather to imagination, the stress on the highest perfection in visible qualities (such as finish, ornamentation or colouring) is to be seen in "the lesser arts" in particular mostly in form of simplicity, cleanliness and use. These should again produce pleasure that, in effect, "makes [our] toil happy, [our] rest fruitful."[263]

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[260] William Morris, "Art and the Beauty of the Earth".
[261] Cf. William Morris, "Art and the Beauty of the Earth".
[262] William Morris, "The Lesser Arts of Life".
[263] William Morris, "Hopes and Fears for Art" ("The Lesser Arts").

### 3.4.2 "Re-Reading" History

Further, it is also important to consider Morris's medievalism, so emblematic for *News from Nowhere* as well as for his own designs, in which the very tenets of his utopian vision are expressed. It is clear that Morris read avidly Carlyle and Ruskin whose writings became a sort of gospel for him and that he wholeheartedly endorsed their praise of the past ages (which can be easily explained with respect to the tradition of the picturesque, 3.2.1 or his childhood experience, 3.2.2) in order to provide a kind of alternative to the degraded morals of the 19th century Britain. Nonetheless, what is the role of vision in the process of imagining the past?

Focusing on the nineteenth-century historical imagination, Hayden White illustrates, in what he calls "the poetics of history", that historical facts are a mere construct. What we actually work with when we speak of history are *historical narratives* usually presented as facts, and thus there is no boundary between historical *truth* and literary *fiction*.[264] From this perspective, medievalism creates stories of the past worthier than the present with the aim to re-create and re-shape it. On the edifices of Gothic cathedrals, Ruskin "saw" medieval workers cutting out gorgeous ornaments with their chisels, far better than those produced in the 19th century factory (2.2.2). This was not a scientific observation by any means, yet it allowed for an imaginative re-interpretation of the process of erecting a cathedral that would highlight the morale and personal traits Ruskin believed the Victorian society lacked or suppressed. Put differently, introspection replaced "objective", hard-facts-based examination; imagination took place of rational observation; *utopian vision* was favoured over detailed scrutiny.

Simply, Ruskin was deeply convinced that the positive values could be "inscribed" in the material of the building itself and then re-read again and again by a casual observer. Such "reading" is actually an interpretative process of "unveiling" something hidden, a search for deeper "truth" that is neither evident, nor plain or general, and thus comes very close to the already introduced pragmatic notion of truth established by the community of arbiters after a procedure of negotiation (3.3.2). Truth is not a correspondence with the single fact (in the world) anymore – what matters is the interplay of "beliefs", a sort of context that generates the final "belief" (the "truth"). Ruskin invites his readers to participate in such a "quest for truth", nonetheless, sooner or later, they may find out that it is the narrative that takes control and decides what is "true" and what should not be

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[264] Cf. Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975) 1-42.

believed in. Still, the "reader" living "here and now" partly adopts the narrative and partly invests it with his own *vision*, enriches it with his own *observation*, and so re-structures the present moment, sees it in a new light and imaginatively transforms it with the view of the imagined past.

Similarly, Morris invites his readers to interpret the history and change "their" own history by re-reading the past and adopting what *utopian vision* mediates to them. It should be understood that the concept of history was not new for Morris – the stories of other romances and (longer) epic poems that he had published before *News from Nowhere* take place in various historical and mythical settings which are mostly dissimilar with this utopian novel. The reason for the difference lies mainly in the fact that for these earlier works, Morris drew inspiration largely either from legends or specific historical situations. A quick overview of some of his main works will demonstrate this claim.

Although Morris provides his readers with an idealized image not only of love but also of medieval times in his first volume of poems, *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems* (1858), it is the Arthurian romance he takes as a literary precedent and that makes it possible for, as most critics argue, "a complete escape into the Middle Ages, a true imaginative realization of the life of medieval times."[265] Through associations with Guenevere and Lancelot ("The Defence of Guenevere"), John Bonne Lance ("Concerning Geffray Teste Noire"), Ozana Le Cure Hardy ("The Chapel in Lyoness") or Galahad ("Sir Galahad, A Christmas Mystery")[266], this idealization is confined within the limits of classical narratives Victorian reading public was acquainted with.

Strict adherence to Arthurian medievalism was abandoned in *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-1870), a collection of twenty-four tales formally modeled on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which takes Arabian, Celtic, Greek and Scandinavian myths and legends as its sources. Later, Morris's fascination with Icelandic sagas prevailed and became strongly reflected either in *The Volsung Saga* (1870) or the subsequent re-working of the main theme in a grand epic poem *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs* (1876). And finally, a fantasy novel incorporating also larger passages of poetry, *A Tale of the House of the Wolfings and All the Kindreds of the Mark* (1889), takes the reader to the world of diligent or modest Germanic Gothic tribes and Teutonic heroes who demonstrate their ability to unite against Romans and prove to be worthy

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[265] Thompson, 72.
[266] Cf. William Morris, *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*, ed. Margaret Lourie (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981).

predecessors of the 19th century English. A strong sense of togetherness and solidarity that stands in the centre of society of "barbaric" people (as they were labelled by the Romans) is thus symbolically echoed in Thiodolf's speech: "To live for the House of the Wolfings, and at last to die for their need (...) with them is my joy and sorrow, and my life, and my death in the end."[267]

I agree with Dinah Birch that the reason why Morris was so fascinated with myth is "its anonymity, its ahistoricism, its concern with the sacred" together with its aesthetic and ideological agenda.[268] Generally, myths and legends praise valour, courage and companionship which Morris admired and felt to be lacking in the Victorian society. Yet, a reflection of a specific referential point in the English history, the Great (Peasants') Revolt of 1381, his later novel *A Dream of John Ball* (1888) was based on, proves that the sense of history was still quite important for Morris, as it allowed him to bring otherwise distant and largely supernatural world of mythical heroes more closely to the experience of the 19th century English reader. Finally, the notion of imaginary past in the Arthurian romance tradition, the heroism of legends and the medieval historical frame synthesize in his utopian project of *News from Nowhere* that refers neither to any particular point in the past (excluding the incident of "Bloody Sunday") nor to any specific myth or legend. Yet, it is informed by earlier Morris's works in a way that it strongly relies on the notion of collective memory (characteristic for myths) that preordains a whole range of activities shaping our everyday lives (e.g. work, art, relationships). Moreover, as it will be demonstrated later, especially "ahistoricism" is a point of reference between the mythical and utopian narrative. In *News from Nowhere,* it then takes its specific form in a way that it re-fashions and enriches the inherited landscape myths that form an inseparable part of the national identity and belong to, as Schama claims, the idea of "homeland" (cf. 3.2).

Reposing after the feast in the Hammersmith Guest House, Guest, surrounded by the beauty of the medieval works of art, discloses his nightmare of having to live in the midst of wretchedness he could witness in the Victorian Britain:

The evening passed all too quickly for me; since that day, for the first time in my life, I was having my fill of the pleasure of the eyes without any of that sense of incongruity, that

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[267] William Morris, *The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by His Daughter May Morris. Volume 14: The House of the Wolfings; The Story of the Glittering Plain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 112.

[268] Dinah Birch, "Morris and Myth: A Romantic Heritage," *JWMS* 7.1 (Autumn 1986): 6 <http://www.morrissociety.org/JWMS/07.1Autumn1986/AU86.7.1.Birch.pdf>.

dread of approaching ruin, which had always beset me hitherto when I had been amongst the beautiful works of art of the past, mingled with the lovely nature of the present; both of them, in fact, the result of the long centuries of tradition, which had compelled men to produce the art, and compelled nature to run into the mould of the ages. Here I could enjoy everything without an afterthought of the injustice and miserable toil which made my leisure; the ignorance and dulness of life which went to make my keen appreciation of history; the tyranny and the struggle full of fear and mishap which went to make my romance. (146)

In his confession (which might even be interpreted as an instance of *ekphrasis*), Guest discloses the moment in which the "past" is transformed by the "present" – the ancient artworks found in the contemporary setting attest to the fact that no "truth" is static in the process of "reading" the past, that the "tradition" they manifest is actually the "history" imagined as the corrective of "the ignorance and dulness" of life in the present. "History" actually becomes "his-story" or rather "their-story", the story of the past nations, of our ancestors, the story imagined from the standpoint of "here and now" in the act of observing the objects and looking for their place in the present. Through this performative act not only "here and now" is altered, but, through the "his-story" of the people who lived long ago, the observer becomes organically united with them. As a result, the imagined Middle Ages happen to be not so distant, intangible, but arise in front of one's eyes, they become vivid and ready to be grasped. The (Neo-)Gothic ornament (or another "medieval" product) is their solid (physical) representation impersonating both Ruskinian notion of freedom and conditions of creation and the "invisible" value system of its producer (2.2.2, 2.2.3). It plays its focal part in the formation of the "imaginary community" that re-shapes not only history but also the already known space (3.2). Furthermore, a (Neo-)Gothic ornament becomes a referential point to turn to when "compiling" a new set of beliefs.

Seemingly, medievalism is a doctrine that does not allow for a multitude of explanations. Yet, the practical, utilitarian aspect of the Arts and Crafts products should be taken into account. A vase, a bench or a plate were meant to serve in the first place and their aesthetic function was only complementary ("Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful."). The actual *usage* as such presupposes a wide variety of situations, contexts in which one comes into contact with the object itself and realizes its different features. In society, each individual has different experience with the object (one may undervalue or overvalue its aesthetics or "message")

which finally generates the scope of "truth" as a set of multiple beliefs. Ignoring Morris's "inscribed" message, one may just appreciate a well-crafted pipe which would serve its purpose well. On the other hand, a "user" may ignore its physical appearance and focus rather on the ideas standing behind its production. Still, the pipe as such represents a sort of stimulus that invites its user into an alternative world of utopia, the space of the "dream world", but just in case he willingly accepts the invitation or gets persuaded by the (*ekphrastic*) description of a long forgotten object of an everyday experience or art.

According to Jameson, utopia cannot denounce corporeality and thus the physical demonstrates itself in the form of "corporeal transcendence".[269] This ensures that the whole environment, objects and also the body invested with its bodily sight minutely observing the utopian city lose their strictly corporeal status and help provoke the utopian impulse. In a similar fashion, existential experience ("in which questions of memory seem to predominate") and historical time ("with its urgent interrogations of the future") confound into the notion of non-existent temporality ("the end of time, the end of history").[270] Therefore, no past, no present and no future actually exist in the totality of utopia. In both Carlyle's and Ruskin's works, the past represents only an *ideal image* (an inspiration) and it never becomes the final stage.

In view of this, Gothic architecture and Gothic ornament are manifestations of the necessary totality of history at the moment of "Nonsynchronism" (*Ungleichzeitigkeit*) when the past proves to be "effective in the present" and anticipates future development.[271] As unfinished products of a dream, both of them "step out" from both their time and the present moment and carry the transformative potential reaching out to the utopian future, which is a dialectic process at last. Utopia (as an aspect of human activity) transcends the materiality of the present moment and re-shapes it into the ideal where all boundaries are torn down, where everything becomes possible and where each action and each object retains an absolutely new meaning. Vision then gets its incorporeal role as a mediator of information and, in the form of a utopian vision, as a way looking beyond the horizon of

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[269] Jameson, 6.
[270] Jameson, 7.
[271] Douglas Kellner highlights Bloch's notion of *Ungleichzeitigkeit*: "This concept points to the fact that residues and traditions from the past continue to be effective in the present, even though it might appear that they are completely archaic and historically surpassed. (...) But *Ungleichzeitigkeit* also points to elements from the past which anticipate future development, which appear before their time, which point ahead to the future (...) and which have yet to be realized." Douglas Kellner, "Ernst Bloch, Utopia, and Ideology Critique," *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, ed. Jamie Owen Daniel and Tom Moylan (New York and London: Verso, 1997) 94.

the present. With the help of imagination, it partakes in the formation of what extends there, the approximation of the real possibility of *Not-Yet-Conscious*.

### 3.4.3 *Visual Democracy* and Activity

In summary, art is not only a human product but its main aim is to please people on the one hand[272] and also to improve their character on the other: "[The] art we are striving for is a good thing which all can share, which will elevate all."[273] In this way, Morris comes close to Ruskin's concept of art as one of the means of how to regenerate moral values of society. Its transformative potential lies manly in the fact that it is accessible through the physical medium everybody can understand (shapes, colours) and potentially even (re)produce in honest and free work (cf. Carlyle).

In my opinion, the term *visual democracy* adequately captures this proto-pragmatic approach to artistic production and perception, both of which encompass not only the common ground on which the works of art can be produced and perceived (human ability to *see* ensuring intelligibility), but also the feelings that individuals have (pleasure). Secondly, the idea of *democracy* bears wider societal connotations elucidating the nature of the relationship among "neighbours" in the perfect society of distant future. Interestingly, Morris bases his assumptions on the same premise that is used by Dewey in the first chapter of his *Art as Experience* – communion ensuring the central position of art in people's collective life.[274] In other words, art is nothing distant or exclusive for "Nowherians", as it is something they are daily surrounded by and they use. As such, it is a means of uniting people, welding them closer together (art is a collective product) and setting them free in honest work free of hardships and toil. This idea reflects Carlylean (and Hegelian) praise of human activity which could be seen as the primary "life force" moving the human race forward without which no progress is possible (2.1.2), and it also follows the organicist principle of cooperation (2.2.1, 2.2.3) that is contrary to the individualism of the age. Importantly, all of this has a single aim – to change the Victorian value system and provide an alternative to its orientation towards progress and prosperity.

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[272] "(...) [In] short the whole civilised world had forgotten that there had ever been an art made by the people for the people as a joy for the maker and user." William Morris, "Hopes and Fears for Art" ("The Beauty of Life").

[273] William Morris, "Hopes and Fears for Art" ("The Art of the People").

[274] Cf. John Dewey, *Art and Experience*, 7-8.

It may seem inappropriate to introduce the notion of democracy when analysing the work of one of the foremost 19th century socialists.[275] Generally, both medievalism and the new process of production were primarily intended to become an immediate remedy for the state of things in Victorian Britain, and so the issue of "social regeneration", that sets the ideas of the Arts and Crafts apart from what could be termed *visual democracy* according to Isabelle Anscombe, is unquestionably present.[276] Yet, there is no place left for any sort of government in the world of *Nowhere*, nor there is any wish for improvement, as the society appears to be almost a paradise. Indisputably, the "Nowherian" society is based on the principles of socialism illustrated by common ownership, equality and absence of any market, which are the beliefs exemplified in all Morris's major works. However, strictly political terms (democracy, socialism) denoting a certain system of government cannot be properly understood in the political context by "Nowherians" and thus have to be used rather to describe fine societal bonds and the nature of "new art", both of which serve their purpose only in case producers as well as spectators *act* (or work) freely, responsibly and give utterance to their creative powers. Such an approach to life then serves as an example for the Arts and Crafts workshops.

It is in this sense that Ober's definition of democracy highlighting collective *action* that leads to the changes in the public sphere (3.3.3) should be understood. Within Morris's utopianism, this kind of *democracy* is strongly *visual*, as it is concerned with the way in which a maker or spectator observe the surface of objects that are produced. Its key feature is the idea of unity or harmony between the producer and material he uses, the producer and consumer or the producer and society he lives in, which makes it partly de-politicised. And it is through the ability to *see* that these come into direct contact and share common beliefs and views that have potential to change the status quo. Visual art is a medium, a sort of bond between people that enables individuals to communicate without using words, just through shapes or colours. Although there is no need for other sort of social organization – the main role of the utopian narrative is to stir up the change in society (or at least stimulate the change in mind) and a different point of view.

Both the maker and "end user"[277] of the product (of art) are free in their activity of production and perception, which nonetheless does not mean that they are deprived of the feeling of responsibility towards oneself, each other and community. Quite on the contrary,

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[275] Actually, it was Morris himself who made a speech titled "Democracy and Art" in 1883 at University College, Oxford. Mackail, 118.
[276] Anscombe, 12.
[277] This contemporary term reflects the notion of utility which lies in the centre of Morris's definition of art.

their *vision*, neither exclusively subject-oriented nor object-focused, takes into account society, its hardships and looks for the tiny "openings" in which *Not-Yet* and its potential of change lurks. As in the Carlylean plea for honest and creative work (2.1.3), cooperation between individuals partaking in the utopian project of transformation necessarily requires mutual understanding and respect for other's views. However, this understanding does not necessarily entail linguistic communication – it is a result of a truly pragmatic and democratic exchange of ideas inspired by a visual medium.

Such *respect* for others is not enacted, as there is a lack of any legal system in *Nowhere* whatsoever. It is built on the values of *mutual understanding* that form the cornerstone of *visual democracy* leading to unity and harmony. In his *William Morris's Utopia of Strangers: Victorian Medievalism and the Ideal of Hospitality*, Marcus Waithe makes it clear that Morris's conception of hospitality (modelled upon the medieval precedent) has a dual character – on the one hand, it suggests "order" and "social unity", yet it retains its means to bring "grumblers and obstinate refusers" articulating "dissent" to reconciliation.[278] Importantly, in both of these cases the community and the feeling of belonging to the larger group of individuals sharing common values stay in the centre of interest. Although there are no prisons in *Nowhere,* a potential criminal is prevented by the majority to cause any trouble unless he assimilates: "If the ill-doer is not sick or mad (in which case he must be restrained till his sickness or madness is cured) it is clear that grief and humiliation must follow the ill-dead." (85) Similarly, there is no "artificial coercion" when it comes to work and everybody is secured "freedom (...) to do what he can do best, joined to the knowledge of what productions of labour we really wanted." (96)

The key to peace and openness lies simply in "recognizing the persistence of informal laws and customs"[279] that nobody can violate and that actually made it possible for Guest to be accepted in the foreign country of *Nowhere*. He, a visitor, has to accommodate to the ways of behaviour "Nowherian" society believes in, which he learns in conversations with different inhabitants or by simple observation in the course of time. The novel lists a series of surprises and mishaps that help Guest get to know *Nowhere* and become one of the "neighbours", which is another way of how the pragmatic notion of experience (3.3.2) manifests itself not only in art but in society as such. Individuals interact among themselves or with the environment and this not only results into the state of

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[278] Marcus Waithe, *William Morris's Utopia of Strangers: Victorian Medievalism and the Ideal of Hospitality* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006) ix-x.
[279] Waithe, 169.

equilibrium ensuring the ever-present joy, security or hospitality, but also ensures the *visual democracy* principle.

In this way, Morris's approach to visuality differs from Guy Debord's concept of *spectacle* in the modern society according to which "what appears is good; what is good appears."[280] Debord describes a development of a modern society in which the "social relation between people" is replaced by representation, as it became "mediated by images" that "become real beings."[281] In contrast to Morris, Debord comments upon the modern aspects of material culture such as "news, propaganda, advertising, entertainment" which attract people so much that they are turned into passive percipients, whereby any activity is precluded.[282] Yet, Debord comes very close to Carlyle in his claims that society had been first transformed by "degradation of *being* into *having*", which was followed by "a general shift from *having* to *appearing*" that led into degradation of critical thinking.[283] Nonetheless, there are parallels that can be drawn also with Morris, especially when it comes to Debord's critique of lacking authenticity and state of life that had been impoverished.

To conclude, Miguel Abensour's concept of "the education of desire" must not be omitted, as it describes the forward-looking and open character of Morris's utopia outlined above. Abensour speaks about the ability of utopia to "teach desire to desire, to desire better, to desire more, and above all to desire in a different way,"[284] which brings it close to Blochian *hope* and *Not-Yet-Conscious* (3.1.1). Further, he highlights the transformative power of *News from Nowhere* which

signifies exactly the desire to make a breakthrough, to risk an adventure, or an experience, in the fullest sense of the word, which allows one to glimpse, to see or even to think what a theoretical text could never, by its very nature allow us to think, enclosed as it is within the limits of a clear and observable meaning.[285]

Even though Abensour is interested mainly in the political dimension of desire, he also mentions its *visual* dimension when he describes the process of introspection. Yet, he does

[280] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Canberra: Hobgoblin Press, 2002) Thesis 12.
[281] Debord, Thesis 4, 18.
[282] Debord, Thesis 6.
[283] Debord, Thesis 17. "In the course of this development, all community and all critical awareness have disintegrated." Debord, Thesis 25.
[284] Miguel Abensour, "Les Formes de L'Utopie Socialiste Communiste" (Paris, 1973), quoted in Edward P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, 791.
[285] Miguel Abensour, 791.

not take into account the role of art and cooperation both of which participate in the desire to make changes. Therefore, it would be possible to speak not only of the utopia as "the education of desire" but also of utopia as a means of *mutual understanding* where everybody has access to whatever means of production (and products) on the condition that he accepts his role in society, works with others and *for* others and does his best to make them content in order to be finally satisfied himself.

# 4 CONCLUSION

It can be argued that the work of three Victorian thinkers presented in this thesis bears features of utopianism despite the fact that only one of them wrote a truly utopian novel. Such a label is justified by the fact that "utopia" does not necessarily have to be understood only as a literary genre but can, in a wider sense, encompass any human activity aimed at transforming the given state of things. As a result, "utopia", interpreted as space, is then located quite close, literally within arm's reach. Characteristically, the forward-looking utopian dream stretching on the horizon of man's endeavour has a distinctive visual character, which makes the "land of hope" unfolding in front of one's eyes accessible for any potential traveller. And it does not matter whether this visitor of the *Not-Yet-Conscious* space is aware of exploring the truly physical territory or of just penetrating his own mind and letting the imagination do its own work. In general, both these spheres, the physical and mental (imaginary), are inseparable and influence one another, which is the case not only of Victorian approach to vision but also of both Ruskin's and especially Morris's literary and non-literary efforts.

In the first chapter, I demonstrated in what way the notion of vision was transformed from Romanticism to the Victorian Age. It should be noted that there was no linear or dialectical development of the concept but rather a conglomerate of different (even contradictory) perspectives, which was also exemplified on the example of Carlyle's and mainly Ruskin's thinking (in the second chapter). Nietzsche's perspectivism (1.2.1) expresses the spirit of the age to a large extent – on the hand there was a strong belief in science and scientific progress, yet there were voices abnegating any epistemic certainty and clang rather to the Romantic heritage. A metaphoric image of the horizon, stretching in front of the Victorian observer and leading his sight not only to the yet invisible distance (analogical to future) but also to his immediate surroundings and mind, represents the way Victorians comprehended the notion of vision. Building upon the Romantic precedent of an incorporeal "eye" and being scared of losing physical sight (equalling ignorance), some of the 19th century inhabitants of large cities could see that there was more than evolutionary Darwinism or Bentham's concept of "knowledge" and "power" offered. Simply, there were still invisible spaces that could not be explored directly and for which any sort of disciplinary discourse did not apply.

In the second chapter, Ruskin, one of Morris's "teachers", was introduced as an exemplary figure who made it possible to bring together Romantic organicism, the all-governing "Spirit" and sacredness of work (strongly shared by Carlyle) in order to propose

a utopian project of transforming society not through science (in fashion of Bacon's *New Atlantis*) but through art. And it is his endeavour in particular, together with Carlyle's stress on the productive activity and the omnipresent "invisible" (immaterial values) underlying the perceptible, that inspired Morris to develop the large-scale project of a practical social and artistic reform, of which "Nowherian" society is a vivid portrayal. Understandably, Carlyle's and Ruskin's plans of curing the ills of Victorian society could work only on the basis of organic analogy (represented by the notion of the Hegelian master-slave dialectics) and not the market economy promoting constant progress and prosperity. Both were unsatisfied with the condition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century society in Britain, both proposed some steps that should have reformed it. On a more general level, these two men can be viewed as "visionaries" who, through the material form of the objects that surrounded them (let it be nature, works of architecture or even society as such), were able to "see" the deeper spiritual foundations (or the real "truth") not only of these objects but also of the social order as such which (as they felt) called for a substantial change.

Put broadly, utopia is a vast territory that can be represented in various ways. However, as shown in the third chapter, the notions of "dream" and "vision", intermingled in Bloch's concept of utopian "hope", symbolize recognizable borders of this region and help, in my opinion, grasp the very tenets of Morris's utopianism. All the major areas (work, art and beauty) defining the ideal society of *Nowhere* that is modelled upon both the medieval precedent and Victorian London, are determined by "vision" (or "seeing") in all of its possible "readings" (physiological, intellectual, emotional, spatial; cf. 1.2). As such, they have, in fashion of Wegner's concept of the "imaginary community", a potential to change the historical presence and the spatial environment of the actual physical territory through the experience of the (visual) space of *Nowhere* (cf. 3.2.2). Moreover, they make it possible to explore the inherited landscape myths and memories which help to understand landscape as a "product of shared culture" (cf. Schama).

In 3.3, it was made clear that the omnipresence of beauty is, on the one hand, the primary distinguishing mark of *Nowhere* that makes it stand out among other utopias of the time and, more importantly, it also represents the central feature welding "Nowherian" society together. It is the essential quality that everybody can rely on and that, in turn, springs to the surface right from the human nature that is imperfect, yet unique. Morris put stress on the irreplaceability of human work and situated man in the middle of things similarly, as it was done a few decades later by Dewey who highlighted the significance of (unified) experience. Quest for beauty is just another way of looking for the right state of

"equilibrium" with the environment, of communicating with others and coming into contact with them, as *beauty* represents something everybody can not only understand but also produce, which reflects Carlyle's praise of work as well as Ruskin's notion of art as the agent of social change.

And it is this nature of Morris's utopianism for which the term *visual democracy* is used in the last chapter. The concept of "vision" and "democracy" refer to the specific character of society in which all its main features are defined by unity and harmony attained both through work (production) and perception of the products of these works on the basis of a common ground – human ability to *see* that ensures absolute intelligibility. Morris struggled against elitism (both in society and art) and so looked for the principles and qualities that would unite people rather than divide them. In the 19th century Victorian Britain, overflowing with the ideas of evolution, progress and prosperity, he was unable to find anything but strong individualism and independence, which motivated him to look for instances of communion, unity and friendship.

Unquestionably, socialism came as a coveted first-hand remedy, but I would suggest that it should be viewed just as a framework for Morris's other activities that truly communicated his efforts to come closer to a society in which individuals would be allowed to fully develop their creative potential. First and foremost, Morris was an artist, a designer or an architect and not a political figure. So, he tried to employ the means he knew well, the ("lesser") art(s) and the notion of honest work, in order to "draw up" a plan of social order different form that of the 19th century, yet not completely dissimilar. *News from Nowhere* is a utopian novel and as such, it is characterized by timelessness, as clarified in 3.4.2. Yet, Morris, an avid medievalist and devotee of Gothic, makes use of history in order to turn it into a "story" of the past ages, a "narrative" to be woven into Victorian society. This "narrative" is not just put down in writing or spread by spoken word – its medium is also *visual*, it is carried by shapes and colours that "speak" the language everyone can understand and, moreover, enrich by their own sincere endeavour. Morris's "story" might then represent an impulse not only for "re-reading" the past but also re-interpreting the present, for perfecting our mental and physical capacities to be able to *see* virtually invisible in the world that surrounds us, for becoming *visual utopianists* in our everyday lives.

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