

**WILLIAM MORRIS AND EDWARD CARPENTER:
BACK TO THE LAND AND THE SIMPLE LIFE
1880-1910**

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Abstract:

This thesis focuses on the influence of William Morris and Edward Carpenter on aspects of the back-to-the-land and simple-life movements between the years 1880-1910. Specifically, it seeks to define and explore the convergence and divergence of both writers' return-to-nature ideology, and considers their influence on the development of particular groups, who represented some of the multiplicity of back-to-the-land ideas and experiments current during this period. The thesis is divided into three main parts; the intellectual framework for the study is broad, and takes into account the historical context, the cultural significance and the character of the material in each section.

The first part of the thesis undertakes an expository evaluation of key texts from Morris's and Carpenter's political journalism, lectures and imaginative writing, examining how both writers developed an appropriate language to convey their social and political ideals. The critical method employed uses detailed textual analysis, identifying and discussing the individual qualities of Morris's and Carpenter's back-to-the-land writing, and reflecting on the differing emphases of their utopian rhetoric. The second part of the research explores the take-up of Morris's and Carpenter's ethos in four diverse and little known late-nineteenth-century journals, concerned with simple-life issues and a return to the land, namely *Seed-time*, *The New Order*, *Land and Labor* and *Land and People*. It employs the thinking of Pierre Bourdieu and Mikhail Bakhtin to establish an appropriate balance between critical theory and empirical study. Lastly using a historical and descriptive method the thesis uses archival material to examine the nature and extent of both writers' influence on two Cotswold back-to-the-land experiments - the Whiteway Colony and the Chipping Campden Guild of Handicraft. These provide a particular opportunity to consider and compare the practical outcomes of return-to-the-land and simple-life ideologies.

The study extends scholarship in this area by significantly re-appraising the relationship between Morris's and Carpenter's back-to-the-land writing, and re-instating Carpenter as a germinal influence. It also increases our understanding of the values and function of the journals in the study, and establishes an insight into the wider cultural assimilation of both writers' ideals.

Declaration:

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed

Date 10.3.2002

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father

Denis Henry Leapman

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Introduction

This thesis focuses on the influence of William Morris and Edward Carpenter on aspects of the back-to-the-land and simple-life movements between the years 1880-1910. Specifically, it seeks to define and explore the convergence and divergence of both writers' return-to-nature ideology, and considers their influence on the development of particular groups, who represented some of the multiplicity of back-to-the-land ideas and experiments current during this period. The thesis is divided into three main parts; the intellectual framework for the study is broad, and takes into account the cultural significance and the particular character of the material in each section.

The first part of the study undertakes an expository evaluation of key texts from Morris's and Carpenter's political journalism, lectures and imaginative writing. The critical method employed uses detailed textual analysis, identifying and discussing the particular qualities of Morris's and Carpenter's back-to-nature ideals, and arguing that the distinction between journalistic and imaginative utopian writing was a necessary differentiation for both writers. The initial chapter outlines the historical context for late nineteenth-century anti-urbanism and the subsequent search for alternative values. The following chapter examines Morris's and Carpenter's Socialism in relation to their views about work, art and nature, focusing on Morris's vision of an integrated and socialised landscape, and Carpenter's views about manual work and the simple life. Chapter three reflects on both writers' ideas concerned with sexuality and the senses, concentrating on their empathy with particular sensory emphases; it explores how this sensibility affected their back-to-the-land idealism, and was reflected in the language of their argument. The influences that specifically affected Morris's and Carpenter's response to nature are outlined, and similarly the take up of their ideas in the back-to-the-land movement are indicated. As Morris's and Carpenter's utopian rhetoric was employed to educate and inspire, the literary, cultural and historical background of the writing is naturally important in establishing an interpretative framework to specify and differentiate their ideals. This context is described initially in chapter one, and is an integral consideration throughout the thesis.

The second part of the study uses archival material to consider and evaluate the reception and dissemination of Morris's and Carpenter's ideas in four diverse and

little known journals, produced by groups advocating their own particular version of a return to the land and the simple life. The journals selected, while reflecting a broad spectrum of back-to-the-land ideas, are notable for their clearly defined and differentiated ethos. They range from the utopian organ of The New Fellowship, *Seed-time* (1889-98), to the avowedly Tolstoyan *The New Order* (1895-1900), and from the campaigning arm of The Land Nationalisation Society, *Land and Labor* (1893-1915), to the utilitarian journal of The Allotment and Small Holdings Extension Association *Land and People* (1886-1894). In addition to considering the nature and extent of Morris's and Carpenter's influence, mediated through these periodical forms, the thesis presents a recuperative history of the individual journals, describing their relationship to and within the back-to-the-land and simple-life movements.

The critical investigation of the material in this second part of the dissertation addresses some of the issues surrounding nineteenth-century periodicals research, as argued in Shattock and Wolff's *The Victorian Press: Sampling and Soundings* (1982) and in *Investigating Victorian Journalism* (1990) edited by Brake, Jones and Madden. The accounts of an appropriate balance in the relationship between empirical work and theoretical discourse discussed in the 'Special Critical Theory' issue of the *Victorian Periodicals Review* (1989) are significant in the theoretical approach in this section of the thesis.¹ For example, the critical framework builds on Lyn Pickett's description of nineteenth-century journals as an 'inescapable ideological subliminal environment, a constitutive medium of a Victorian culture which is now seen as interactive'.² Consequently, the journals are viewed, not simply as primary sources expressing or reflecting nineteenth-century culture, but as interrelated historical, cultural and textual productions.

In this context, Pierre Bourdieu's contention that meaning is determined by the production, circulation and reception of cultural practices provides a significant starting point for journals research. The consideration of questions of influence, crucial to this section of the study, is also informed by Bourdieu's arguments about taste, the relationships between high and popular culture and notions of 'habitus'. As a result, the theories concerned with cultural practices, perception and social structures that Bourdieu put forward in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1983) have provided a relevant model which I have interpreted loosely. Equally, despite his patently dissimilar approach, Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas relating to heterogeneity and

polyphony elaborated in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963) proved cogent in understanding the construction and operation of the journal form.³ In particular, I have adopted a polyphonic view of the correlation between the multiple voices of the different texts within a journal, and their relationship to each other and the editor/narrator. The thesis then addresses notions of direct and indirect influence in relation to Morris's and Carpenter's writing and aspects of the back-to-the-land movement. However, it also argues that an analysis of the transference of concepts from one cultural form to another (i.e. from imaginative writing to instructional articles or practical handbooks) brings into sharp relief interpretations of Morris's and Carpenter's writing, as well as an insight into the wider cultural assimilation of their ideas.

The third section of the thesis reflects on the extent of Morris's and Carpenter's influence on C. R. Ashbee's back-to-the-land experiment at Chipping Campden and the Whiteway Colony at Stroud. The method used in this section is empirical, historical and descriptive, and utilises contemporary documents listed in the indicative primary material. To some extent, the chapter which examines the Campden experiment builds on Alan Crawford's erudite study, *C. R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (1985), and Fiona MacCarthy's *The Simple Life* (1981). However, these informative secondary sources are used to support the indicative primary material in highlighting the particular interaction between, as well as the nature of, Morris's and Carpenter's influence on C. R. Ashbee's venture.

In most of the literature concerned with back-to-the-land and utopian communities, including *Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1830-1914* (1961) by W. H. G. Armytage, and *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in Victorian England from 1880 to 1914* (1982) by Jan Marsh, Whiteway Colony is referred to as largely Tolstoyan in inspiration. This perception of Whiteway also ranges from early newspaper articles to Joy Thacker's recent account of the colony, the subtitle of which is *The Social History of a Tolstoyan Community* (1997).⁴ While it is clear that Tolstoy's ideas had a significant effect on the colony, the thesis contends that Whiteway's ethos was the result of a wide variety of influences, and that this included strong elements of Morris's and Carpenter's thinking. The particular sensibilities of the community today, and the resulting difficulties in obtaining primary material, are discussed in the chapter relating to Whiteway.

Nonetheless, Nellie Shaw's *Whiteway: A Colony on the Cotswolds* (1935) provides a first-hand account of the philosophy and evolution of the early community. Consequently, it has been used in conjunction with the Alan Maxfield archive, early reports from the *Stroud Journal* and 'Colony Notes' from *The New Order*, to obtain a multi-layered view of the influences that significantly affected the setting up and development of the colony.⁵

The polarity of the experiments at Campden and Whiteway demonstrates some of the physical diversity of back-to-the-land projects under way at the close of the nineteenth century. However, they also reflect the disparate underlying ideological perspectives evident in attitudes to a return to the land. As well as contributing to our understanding of the influence of Morris and Carpenter in a wider context, this section of the thesis also examines the metamorphosis of their ideas in these contrasting practical *fin de siècle* experiments. While Ashbee's influential utopian venture was short-lived, the relatively obscure Whiteway Colony has survived to this day, providing a unique opportunity to consider the longer-term outcomes, interpretation and evolution of Morris's and Carpenter's back-to-the-land ideology.

Although, patently, Morris and Carpenter were both highly influential in their lifetime, the twentieth century has viewed them in differing ways. While all of Morris's work is still in print, Carpenter is virtually forgotten and he has been consigned to relative obscurity. Moreover, although their influence has been considered critically in general terms, very little has been written that focuses specifically on the interaction between Morris's and Carpenter's return-to-nature writing and its subsequent influence. And while both writers were undoubtedly key figures in the development of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century back-to-the-land and simple-life movements, the different reception of their work and ideas has resulted in a discrepancy in the critical attention they have received. The dissertation acknowledges this asymmetry, and despite the different weight given to the importance of their writing and example, seeks to effect a re-evaluation of the importance of back-to-the-land themes in the work of these two writers. Thus the thesis indicates, via primary archival research, the specific and contrasting influence that their writing exerted, and demonstrates the nature of the inspiration that they provided in practical back-to-the-land ventures. The study therefore aims to extend scholarship in this area, significantly re-appraising the relationship between Morris's and Carpenter's writing, and re-instating Carpenter as a germinal influence.

The unevenness with which Morris and Carpenter have been viewed is reflected in the quantity of material that deals with the development of their ideas and work. Consequently, the influences that affected William Morris's response to nature and formed an inherent part of both his creativity and his Socialism are widely documented. Notably, both Fiona MacCarthy in *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (1994) and E. P. Thompson in *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1977) present detailed and scholarly studies of Morris's early influences, the development of his work and his path to Socialism. MacCarthy particularly skilfully portrays a youthful Morris transported by Gothic romances, deeply sensitive to the details of nature and acutely aware of a sense of place.⁶ Similarly, E. P. Thompson locates the early influence of Carlyle and Ruskin on Morris in a broad historical and cultural framework.⁷ Both MacCarthy's and Thompson's analyses of Morris's Oxford days are illuminating in their account of his relationship to Edward Burne-Jones and the Pre-Raphaelites, and the development of his medievalism.⁸ However, also importantly for this thesis, E. P. Thompson's chapter 'Necessity and Desire' and his 1977 'Postscript' offer an erudite and contextual exposition of Morris's utopianism. Morris's own letters provide us with an invaluable record of his thoughts, preferences and reactions, as well as demonstrating the scope of his energy and the force of his commitment to Socialism. The William Morris Society, numerous critical studies of his writing and politics, and the many exhibitions of his visual work justly serve to stimulate and reinforce interest in his ideas and reputation.

Edward Carpenter, on the other hand, has received only limited critical attention; significant exceptions to this are Chushichi Tsuzuki's *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929: Prophet of Human Fellowship* (1980) and *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism* (1990) edited by Tony Brown. The thesis builds on many of their observations and arguments.⁹ Carpenter's own autobiography, *My Days and Dreams* (1916), also provides a revealing view of his own development, his Socialism and his famous simple-life experiment at Millthorpe. His biography, *Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation* (1931) edited by Gilbert Beith, is a unique and little known source of first-hand impressions of Carpenter's work and ideas. Because relatively little has been written about Carpenter in relation to the main themes of the thesis, and because his work is largely neglected today, it is worth indicating briefly the contemporary position of Carpenter's work and the importance of his alternative ideas at the end of the nineteenth century.

Prophetically, E. M. Forster wrote of Carpenter, his friend and early mentor, that 'If my impression of him is correct, he is not likely to have much earthly immortality... He will not figure in history'.¹⁰ Forster proved to be all too correct and it was not until the last quarter of the twentieth century that a select number of Carpenter's writings were re-published by the Gay Men's Press, contemporary concerns about gender issues and the environment having provoked a limited revival of interest in Carpenter's life and work. However, his writing, which was always a reflection of his own concerns and ideals, remains fraught with seeming contradictions and stylistic inconsistencies. Keith Neild put the 'case' as it appears to stand against Carpenter thus:

He was an eccentric, isolated figure on the fringes of the labour movement and the late-nineteenth-century literary scene, whose work was amorphous, intangible and therefore inconsequential, and whose life was devoted fundamentally, if not continuously, to the subsequently stereotyped pursuits of the wealthy progressive.¹¹

Even in his own time, Carpenter's life provoked accusations of escapism and desertion from the Socialist and progressive cause, by no less a sympathetic observer than William Morris. Bernard Shaw referred to him sarcastically as the 'Noble Savage', and Carpenter's writings elicited only a fleeting response from the literary press of the day.¹² Apart from several scathing articles, *Towards Democracy* (Part 1), his most famous and influential work, was hardly acknowledged by the literary establishment when it was first published in 1883.

Yet Carpenter's life and his writing cannot be easily dismissed as the work of a fringe eccentric, for it was widely, avidly and almost fervently read, and he was clearly a renowned and revered figure in late-nineteenth-century radical circles.¹³ If the appeal of his message was not found in its obvious literary value or its political exactitude, then it may have been located in the relevance of its message to his audience. That the content of his writing was embedded within a utopian and mystical form has been used as a criticism of Carpenter's literary oeuvre and his lack of radical clarity. But the original reception of his ideas and writing suggests, rather, that he specifically used his utopianism and his mysticism as an opposition to capitalism, urbanism and middle-class culture, and that he was fully aware of the totality and density of the cultural hegemony he opposed. That Carpenter's work was received almost ecstatically by those seeking alternative values and an escape from

bourgeois conventions is not surprising; that it was forgotten so quickly is perhaps more so.

It is also important, despite their different standing today, to recognise the connections that existed between Morris and Carpenter in the 1880s. Both had grown up in conventional middle-class families, both were larger than life figures, multi-faceted, competent and highly organised. In addition, they were both committed front-line Socialists, who also expressed their political and utopian ideals through fiction, journalism and lectures. They contributed to *Justice* and *Commonweal*, and toured the country tirelessly lecturing and spreading the ‘word’. Over the decade, their lives were interconnected regularly, but not intimately; their paths crossed on the lecture circuit and at Socialist meetings, and they communicated briefly by letter. Carpenter also supported Morris financially and morally in the setting up of the Socialist League in 1884. But perhaps above all they were connected through their passionate belief in the power of nature and brotherhood to redeem civilization.

What Carpenter and Morris thought of each other is difficult to ascertain, but a letter written by Morris to Georgiana Burne-Jones in 1884 describes their meeting at Millthorpe:

I went to Chesterfield and saw Carpenter on Monday and found him very sympathetic and sensible at the same time. I listened with longing heart to his account of his patch of ground, seven acres: he says that he and his fellow can almost live on it: they grow their own wheat, and send flowers and fruit to Chesterfield and Sheffield markets: all sounds very agreeable to me. It seems to me that the real way to enjoy life is to accept all its necessary ordinary details and turn them into pleasures by taking interest in them: whereas modern civilization huddles them out of the way, has them done in a venal and slovenly manner till they become real drudgery which people can't help trying to avoid. Whiles I think, as in a vision, of a decent community as a refuge from our mean squabbles and corrupt society; but I am too old now, even if it were not dastardly to desert.¹⁴

Although, in the last phrase of this letter, there is the obvious implication that Carpenter's way of life was opting out of the Socialist struggle, Morris was clearly affected by the concept of a return to the land evident at Millthorpe. And certainly, Fiona MacCarthy has suggested that his vision of a decentralized society in *News from Nowhere* (1891) may ‘have been sharpened by his envious visit to Carpenter at Millthorpe’.¹⁵ Carpenter too was indebted to Morris, and when he described his

simple-life experiment in *My Days and Dreams* as representing ‘a new society which was arising and forming within the structure of the old’, he acknowledged Morris’s centrality in this new order, writing:

William Morris represented this new society more effectively and vitally than any one else of that period; because away and beyond the scientific forecast he gave expression to the emotional presentment and ideal of a sensible free human brotherhood - as in *John Ball*, or *News from Nowhere*.¹⁶

During the years 1880-1910 Morris and Carpenter were regarded as highly influential thinkers and writers, and indeed considered as founding figures of the Socialist Movement. And while Morris entertained many a young follower at the dinner table at Hammersmith, the list of visitors hanging on Carpenter’s words at Millthorpe is a long one. E. M. Forster linked them together when he wrote in Carpenter’s biography:

The two things he admired most on earth were manual work and the fresh air, and he dreamed like William Morris that civilization would be cured by their union ... What he wanted was *News from Nowhere* and the place that is still nowhere, wildness, the rapture of unpolluted streams, sunrise and sunset over the moors, and in the midst of these the working people whom he loved, passionately in touch with one another and with the natural glories around them.¹⁷

While this passage demonstrates some of the more obvious similarities in Morris’s and Carpenter’s idealism, this dissertation focuses on their more subtle and illuminating responses to nature and a return to the land.

‘Nature’ and ‘the land’ are emotive words, engendering a multiplicity of meanings. The term ‘back to the land’ was first coined during the upheaval of the 1840s, but it sums up ideas that have represented the concept of a return to a ‘golden age’ dating back at least to the seventeenth century.¹⁸ Nevertheless, in relation to the late nineteenth century, the juxtaposition of ‘nature’ and ‘the land’ suggests the search for alternatives to urban industrialism, and an attempt to reinvent ‘traditional’ organic values to counter materialism and commercialism. ‘Back to the land’ and ‘the simple life’ as collective terms for that search represented unhappiness with the city and with the ethics and conditions associated with it. Amongst contemporary literature concerned with anti-urbanism and a corresponding return to nature, William Morris’s and Edward Carpenter’s writings stand out as significant texts. The

first chapter of the thesis outlines the context in which their ideas came to represent such a powerful force for change.

¹ These issues are developed in chapter four which introduces the journals section of the thesis.

² Lyn Pickett, 'Reading the Periodical Press: Text and Context', in *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, ed. by Brake, Jones and Madden (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1990), p.7.

³ Both Bakhtin's and Bourdieu's ideas and their relationship to journal's research are considered in chapter four of the thesis.

⁴ An unfavourable article in the *Social Democrat* in 1901 was entitled 'My Visit to the "Tolstoyan Colony" at Whiteway'. Joy Thacker is a current member of the colony, the full title of her book is *Whiteway Colony: The Social History of a Tolstoyan Community* (1997)

⁵ The Alan Maxfield archive in Gloucester Records Office was donated by a colony member and contains primary material about Whiteway, mainly relating to the years 1910-45. However, it does also contain useful newspaper reports about the colony during its early years. The use of this archive and other sources for Whiteway colony is discussed in chapter nine of the thesis, pp. 204-206.

⁶ See Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), pp. 1-52. Further references to this edition are given in brackets after quotations in the text.

⁷ See E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd, 1955), pp. 22-60. Further references to this edition are given in brackets after quotations in the text.

⁸ For an account of Morris's medievalism in relation to his Socialism, see Margaret Grennan, *William Morris: Medievalist and Revolutionary* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1945).

⁹ See bibliography for other useful texts in relation to Edward Carpenter.

¹⁰ E. M. Forster, 'Some Memories', in *Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation*, ed. by Gilbert Beith (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), p.80.

¹¹ Kieth Nield, 'The Uses of Utopia' in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, ed. by Tony Brown (London: Frank Cass, 1990), p.19.

¹² Carpenter acknowledged the lack of response to his writing in *My Days and Dreams* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1916), p.193.

¹³ In *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, p.12, Tony Brown points out that in the 1890s Carpenter's lectures attracted as many as two thousand people. Also, see Stanley Pierson, 'Edward Carpenter, Prophet Of A Socialist Millennium' *Victorian Studies* 13 (1970), 301-318, pp. 315-318, for an indication of the influence of Carpenter's work in relation to Socialism between 1880 and 1900.

¹⁴ William Morris, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, ed. by Norman Kelvin, 4 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984-1996), II, p. 353.

¹⁵ MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, p. 546.

¹⁶ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.216.

¹⁷ E. M. Forster, in *Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation*, p. 78.

¹⁸ For a history of back-to-the-land ideas before 1880, see Peter Gould, *Early Green Politics: Back to Nature, Back to the Land, and Socialism in Britain 1880-1900* (Sussex: Harvester, 1988), pp. 7-13.

Part 1

**William Morris and Edward Carpenter,
A Context for Back to the Land**

Chapter One

Anti-urbanism and Alternative Values

I never wander in the stuffy sordid London streets, nor in the squalid gruesome Northern slums, but I think of the dancing sea waves, of the flower-starred meadows, and the silky skies of England. And by the same token the sweet air, and sunny landscapes, and the still green woods bring up before my eyes with painful vividness the breathless courts and gloomy lanes, the fever beds and the vice traps of horrible Liverpool, and horrible London, and horrible Manchester, and horrible Glasgow. Robert Blatchford, 'The Two Nations', *The Scout*, June 1895.

The ideological roots of the pastoral impulse, the underlying vision of the back-to-the-land and simple-life movements, between 1880-1910, lay in the extraordinary economic, political and cultural development of the century and the resulting polarisation of the rural and the urban. It has been well documented that, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the growth of industrial capitalism and a decline in agriculture had transformed England from a primarily pastoral nation, into one based on commerce and an urban industrial system. During the 1880s, the momentum of this trend became irreversible, resulting in a further decline in the rural population, and a corresponding increase in the numbers crowded into the rapidly developing urban industrial centres.¹ This unprecedented demographic shift, driven by economic factors and unsupported by appropriate social structures, inevitably led to appalling squalor, poverty and disease among the labouring classes.²

Nevertheless, by the mid-nineteenth century, cities came to be seen by the vast majority of the populace as engines of wealth, inventiveness and progressive scientific thought. The catalogue of physical, moral and spiritual problems associated with the poverty and the conditions of the working class were seen as solvable through legislation, philanthropy and the prevailing notion of self-help. The Great Exhibition of 1851 celebrated the successes of urban capitalism and the self-confidence of Victorian Imperialism. To some extent, this confidence was paralleled in the country by a recasting of 'traditional' paternalistic relationships, brought about by the increased economic power of landowners, the gentrification of tenant farmers and technical improvements to agricultural practices.³ Alternative attitudes to land issues were essentially conservative, reflecting a reinvention of laissez-faire beliefs. During the 1860s and early 1870s, the predominant proposals for land reform among

Radical opinion were based on notions of Free Trade and freeing or nationalising the land market.⁴ Nevertheless, the 1870s did see elements of dissent in the rural areas, witnessed at the beginning of the decade by the foundation of the first agricultural labourers' union in 1872.

The 'great depression' in agriculture in the late 1870s saw many arable farmers bankrupt and a consequent devastating cut-back in the rural labour force. This was exacerbated by new and improved farm machinery which required less manpower; farm workers who could migrated to the towns and cities in the hope of better wages and shorter working hours. However, urban unemployment was also high in the 1880s and there was little amelioration of slum conditions. Philanthropy and notions of the 'deserving poor' were clearly unequal to the circumstances of urban poverty. Both Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and The London Poor* (1861) and Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People of London* (1886-1902) were witness to the despair and desperate conditions of the poor. Thus from the middle of the century on social reform became an important element in the newly developing middle-class consciousness. Liberal reformers introduced new legislation, starting with Chadwick's public health reforms in 1848, followed by Joseph Chamberlain's campaign for education during the 1860s. By 1874, Chamberlain had pledged himself to 'Free Labour, Free Land, Free Church, Free Schools, Free Breakfast table'. However, despite Liberalism's claim to want to make society's outcasts 'healthier, better and happier', the revival of Socialism at the beginning of the 1880s saw Liberal attitudes to reform and the poor as essentially conservative, and as a reflection of middle-class interests.⁵ Socialist thinking, supported by the ideas of Marx and Engels, provided not only a structure for social criticism and reform, but also the hope of working-class empowerment through revolution.

The rise of Socialism during the 1880s and the development of aspects of the back-to-the-land movement go hand-in-hand, and the roots of this relationship are ably discussed by Peter Gould in *Early Green Politics: Back to Nature, Back to the Land, and Socialism in Britain 1880-1900* (1988). Gould points out that nature and the rural came to be seen as intellectual and emotional defences against the threats of existing social problems and apprehensions about the future.⁶ Concerns over the predicament of the urban poor were also mirrored in some sense by a growing anxiety over the plight of the countryside, where village communities were depleted and depressed. Despite the changes to farming and the landscape caused, earlier in

the century, by land enclosures and expanding commercialisation, the almost total collapse of agriculture in the second half of the 1870s resulted in a serious and a nostalgic concern for the fate of a 'traditional' rural way of life. This was apparent throughout the rest of the century in a variety of ways that influenced back-to-the-land ideas. Among Liberal radicals, the problems of rural poverty and collapse were addressed by the sponsorship of allotments and smallholdings schemes to supplement meagre wages. Concern for the countryside was also expressed in literary terms; an example of this was the account of rural decline and social decay portrayed by Thomas Hardy in his discomfiting later novels such as *Jude the Obscure* (1896). However, it was also evident in concerns described by Alun Howkins in *Reshaping Rural England* (1991) as rooted in Social Darwinism. In this context, urbanism was seen as posing a the threat of 'racial degeneration' to the 'pure' and healthy characteristics of the countryman, through contamination by the city, and by mixing with the urban population.⁷ By the 1890s, the social and cultural dislocation felt by sections of the middle class, over concerns about urban industrialisation and the corresponding rural decline, acted not only as a catalyst for reform, but also as a pressing stimulus to seek alternative values.⁸

Although anti-industrialism and anti-urbanism climaxed between the years 1880 and 1900, they were pervasive themes throughout the century, affecting urban/rural discourses in politics, art and literature. Indeed, even as changes to what were seen as 'traditional' patterns of employment and rural life had taken place, voices of dissent could be heard, condemning the ugly sprawl of the new industrial towns, the social conditions of the slums and the uncontrolled growth of the metropolitan areas. Clearly, industrial capitalism had brought both benefits and casualties, and despite the apparent economic progress, the main thrust of some of the most influential thinkers of the century had been deeply critical of the resulting industrial social conditions and rural decline.

An example of this concern was voiced at the beginning of the century by the contradictory and Radical figure of Robert Owen. Both paternalist and authoritarian, but a visionary, a model employer and factory owner, Owen saw small self-sufficient communities, village-like in nature but benefiting from the advantages of technology, as the way forward: brotherhood and co-operation replacing competition and conflict. Another example, evident in the 1840s, was provided by sections of the Chartist movement. Feargus O'Connor, perhaps the most charismatic but

conservative of the Chartist leaders, responded to the problems caused by urban industrialism and rural enclosures with a proposal to buy up plots of land to be let at affordable rents to the labouring poor. O'Connor saw The Land Plan as a way of restoring the people to the land, and through security of tenure reviving a sense of independence.⁹ Henry George's thinking expressed in *Progress and Poverty* (1881) was yet another instance of ways in which land, in this case specifically private property, was seen as a central issue in rural depopulation and the consequent slum conditions in the city.¹⁰ Nonetheless, three key figures, William Cobbett, Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin, stand out as particularly influential in the development of anti-urban and anti-industrial feeling over the century.

For instance, in *Rural Rides* (1830), written during the 1820s, the radical journalist William Cobbett recorded his observations of the state of the countryside. His controversial account articulated the threat to rural England and the agricultural labourer of unbridled materialism, which he claimed elevated the middle class to 'mock gentlefolks' and turned the work-people into 'slaves'.¹¹ Like Robert Owen, Cobbett held up the example of the medieval social order as being vastly superior to the results of contemporary industrial capitalism. Cobbett's writing also documented the intimate details of early-nineteenth-century rural culture and relationships, recording a disappearing organic social structure, a particularly poignant image that was to become a pervasive characteristic of back-to-the-land utopian ideals and Arts and Crafts architecture and design.

Equally, Thomas Carlyle, writing during the hungry forties, was also influential in later approaches to land issues and ideas about meaningful labour. Despite his darkly pessimistic and often prejudiced attitudes, he railed against the iniquities of materialism. In *Past and Present* (1843), in which he preached a Calvinistic indictment of the present in relation to the past, he launched a blistering attack on the position and the treatment of 'The Practical Labourer of England' within the industrial system. His assertion that 'Industrial work, still under bondage to Mammon, the rational soul of it not yet awakened, is a tragic spectacle', and 'All true work is sacred; in all true work, were it but true hand-labour, there is something of divineness', anticipated the attitudes, if not the spirit, of later Socialist return-to-the-land ideals.¹²

It is clearly impossible to imagine the aesthetic development of the back-to-the-land and simple-life movements, later in the century, without the thinking of

Ruskin, and this is indicated in relation to Morris and Carpenter in the following two chapters. However, it is worth outlining here the basic tenets of Ruskin's views about craftsmanship and work, expressed in 'The Nature of Gothic' from *The Stones of Venice* (1853), because of the impact they had on anti-industrial feeling. Ruskin attacked the dehumanisation of the factory system and illustrated the principles that he believed should replace mechanistic, industrial production. These guidelines called for nothing to be manufactured that was not necessary or inventive, for work to be driven by practical or noble ends rather than finished for its own sake, and for imitation and copying to be discouraged except for preservation or as a form of record.¹³ Ruskin also argued eloquently against the traditional view that a designer should not carry out the making of his own designs. In these precepts, Morris later saw the possibility of recuperating the position of the working classes, restoring to them something of the pleasure, dignity and freedom of the craftsmen of the middle ages. Morris's early lectures on art and design also demonstrated his hopes that Ruskin's principles might rescue aesthetics from the 'barbarous luxury' and the 'barbarous waste' of nineteenth-century manufacturing.¹⁴ These principles, developed and mediated by Morris, inspired the repositioning of the craftsman in the Arts and Crafts ethos, and as I will argue later in the thesis, were particularly influential in attitudes to the simple life.

Ruskin's writing was also significant across a wide spectrum of ideas concerned with physical alternatives to urbanism and colonising the land. In 1871 Ruskin published a series of letters addressed to the 'Workman and Labourers of Great Britain' entitled *Fors Clavigera* in which he discussed a wide range of social and economic issues. Despite Ruskin's failure to get a wide readership for *Fors* at the time of publication, and his patently authoritarian and paternalistic attitude to the labouring classes, the letters became inspirational texts at the end of the century for self-educated young Socialists and artisans, some of whom became exponents of back-to-the-land ideals.¹⁵

In *Fors*, Ruskin expressed his loathing of railways and steam power as symbols of industrialism. He argued that manual work was dignified rather than degrading, and that industrial employment was debasing and unjust. Ruskin asserted that the necessities for life were clean air, water and earth, and he considered access to the natural landscape to be an essential element to spiritual health. In the first of his letters, Ruskin described his hope for an ideal society:

We will take some small piece of English ground, beautiful, peaceful and fruitful. We will have no steam engines upon it and no railroads ... we will have plenty of flowers and vegetables in our gardens, plenty of corn and grass in our fields - and few bricks.¹⁶

Setting an example that was to be repeatedly interpreted throughout the next forty years in return-to-the-land experiments, Ruskin put his anti-urban ideals into practice through the inception of the St. George's Guild, which set up a communal farm at Totley near Sheffield. Although primarily agrarian, a mixture of manual work, cultural activities and education was advocated. Despite the failure of the farm, caused mainly by its impracticality, lack of expertise and disorganisation, Ruskin's back-to-nature philosophy, as well as his practical ideals, became deeply ingrained in many strands of the back-to-the-land movement. In particular, his vision of landscape as essential to spiritual development was influential in what Edward Carpenter described as 'wider or larger Socialism' and the search for values beyond the material, expressed as the 'higher life'.¹⁷ Equally, Ruskin's interest in rural crafts such as weaving and spinning, and the celebration of 'traditional' country festivals such as May Day, encouraged early twentieth-century 'ruralist' enthusiasts such as Geoffrey Blount and Cecil Sharp to promote peasant arts and collect and document rural folk songs and dances.¹⁸

The anti-industrialism and anti-urbanism expressed by Cobbett, Carlyle and Ruskin among others was reinforced by representations of urban squalor and the exploitation of the working classes in nineteenth-century literature and art. However, novels and paintings depicting the horror of the cities also engendered an imaginative as well as a moral anti-urbanism among sections of the middle class. Amongst the most potent were such famous examples as Elizabeth Gaskell's Manchester in *Mary Barton* (1848) and Charles Dickens' Coketown in *Hard Times* (1851), which graphically illustrated the nightmare conditions and the exploitation endured by factory workers. In visual terms, the city was also depicted as degrading and corrupting. An instance of this was Gustave Doré's uncompromising etchings which portrayed the metropolis as criminal, melodramatic and threatening, by virtue of the mass of its inhabitants. Nevertheless, perhaps more than any representation of the nineteenth-century city, George Gissing's *The Nether World* (1889), in its grim descriptions of Clerkenwell and the 'terrible barracks' of Farringdon Road Buildings, acknowledged the physical reality of the urban environment as part of the

process of the de-humanisation. Recognising the anti-urbanism of the literature of the period, Raymond Williams, in *The Country and The City* (1973), identified a Leviathan quality when he observed that ‘the sense of the great city, was now, in many minds so overwhelming, that its people were often seen in a single way: as a crowd, as “masses” or as a workforce’.¹⁹ To a minority of the urban middle classes, to regain a sense of individuality in relation to society became imperative in the search for values to replace industrial urbanism. And to revivify the countryside, idealistically, metaphorically and in reality, became the context for attempts to put alternatives to industrialism and materialism into practice.

Towards A Rural Vision: Back to the Land

If the city was seen as a locus of ‘evil’, then the country became the key to a better life, and increasingly growing numbers of the middle class and working-class artisans searched for ways to escape from an urban environment. Richard Jefferies’s country books, published during the late 1870s and 1880s, including *Wild Life in a Southern Country* (1879) and *Hodge and his Masters* (1880) were influential in promoting the kind of rural vision the urban middle class aspired to. Jefferies presented an idyllic but informed and detailed view of the rural world, and his elemental and bucolic representations, summed up by ‘let us be out of doors among trees and grass and rain and wind and sun’, became extremely popular, inspiring alternatives to city life.²⁰

Yet there were other important factors in the desire for change, and these centred on the perception that, rather than its particular social conditions, the very existence of the city posed a serious threat to the English landscape and rural way of life. These factors contributed to what Martin Wiener in *The Decline of the Industrial Spirit* (1981) described as the two types of anti-urbanism evident in the late nineteenth century. The first he identified as ‘a powerful current of distaste for cities and resistance to their growing economic and political predominance on the part of the country dwellers, especially the lesser heights of the landed interest’; this was underpinned by straightforward economic interests, ‘agrarian versus industrial’.²¹ The second form of anti-urbanism, which relates directly to many back-to-the-land attitudes discussed in this thesis, Wiener located within the cities themselves, its explanation to be found ‘in less obvious social and psychological realms’ (p.48). He observed that this type of anti-urbanism did not decline with the

growth of the cities but rather became even stronger. The fact that rural society no longer existed as a separate entity did much to stimulate a sense of loss for a rural world, and more importantly, in terms of a return to the land, it inspired the need for replacement. Wiener concluded that

more than elsewhere, in England the later nineteenth-century countryside was “empty” and available for use as an integrating cultural symbol. The less practically important rural England became, the more easily could it come to stand simply for an alternative and complementary set of values, a psychic balance wheel. (p.49)

Evidently, despite the countryside’s own problems, for many in the city the rural came to stand not only for alternative values, but also for a sense of national identity. This was represented by an England of picturesque country cottages, gentle rolling southern landscapes and pastoral tranquillity, an uncharacteristic version of ‘Englishness’ clearly outside the experience of the majority of town or country-dwellers. Nevertheless, this vision of rural England, supported by a declared love of nature, was widespread and became a predominant trope in ‘ruralist’ and back-to-the-land literature, ranging from the proliferation of country books in the 1870s and 1880s to the work of ruralist poets such as Edward Thomas and Robert Frost.²² In a wider context, this metaphor of rural England became a persistent motif in the ‘half-timbered’ houses and the ‘ye olde’ coaching inns that repeatedly appeared in the suburban architecture of the twentieth century.

Even in the North of England, back to the land suggested an ‘Englishness’ that reflected anti-urbanism and fears for the countryside. Most typically, it was characterised by the Socialist, Robert Blatchford, author of the intensely patriotic and popular *Merrie England* (1893). Blatchford’s alternative to urbanism hinged on a Socialism that enhanced the quality of English life, and his frequent articles for the *Clarion* and *The Scout* encouraged young Socialists to commune with nature through rambling, walking and cycling.²³ Evidently, for many exponents of a return-to-nature, the rural was synonymous with ‘Englishness’.²⁴ Indeed, Martin Wiener has even suggested that the emphasis on the relationship between national identity and the rural counterbalanced forward-looking innovation and expansion, and contributed to industrial decline at both the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Less negatively, Alun Howkins, in ‘The Discovery of Rural England’, casts attitudes to Englishness and the rural in a different light. He

traces their beginnings in the anti-urbanism of the 1880s, through a gradual popularisation, exploring representations in art and literature, and culminating in an account of the outdoor movement of the interwar years that 'completed the process by making the countryside an accessible and popular site of leisure'.²⁵

Clearly, it was not coincidental that in the 1880s and 1890s most of the land reform and back-to-the-land pressure groups were based in large urban centres, indeed mostly in London. Rural England, as an available cultural symbol, was plainly a contributory factor to many of the initiatives that involved re-colonising the countryside or adopting 'ruralist' values.²⁶ In her wide-ranging and detailed study, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in Victorian England from 1880 to 1914* (1982), Jan Marsh catalogued and examined some of the diverse strands of back-to-the-land, focusing mainly on the practical details of the utopian and idealistic elements of the movement. By the nineteenth hundreds these encompassed experiments in self-sufficiency and cultivation as disparate as agrarian communes, cottage farms and farm colonies. Equally, they were concerned with reviving rural arts and crafts, creating vernacular architecture, reclaiming the commons and establishing rights of access to land. Utopian advocates of a return to the land, many of whom were active or ethical Socialists, considered that their new ideal of life required an equally new attitude to education, simplified forms of dress, a revolutionised diet and reformed approaches to animal rights and environmental issues.²⁷

Nevertheless, taking a wider view of back-to-the-land, other groups not included in Marsh's study were involved with land issues and notions of a return to the land. Many of the movement's most pragmatic exponents were represented by the largely Liberal and down-to-earth Land Nationalisation Society, led by A. R. Wallace and deeply influenced by Henry George's ideas, and the prosaic and conventional Allotment and Small Holdings Extension Association.²⁸ Aspects of the development of these groups are ably discussed in Peter Gould's informative study of the roots of the ecological movement, *Early Green Politics*. To some extent, the focus of this thesis builds on the extensive framework for considering a return to the land laid out by both Marsh and Gould. However, it also seeks to extend and significantly deepen our knowledge of facets of the movement, contending that Morris's and Carpenter's influence was not limited to Socialist and ethical attitudes to land issues; it was also evident in the ethos and development of groups

affiliated to Liberalism, and what have been described as Tolstoyan land communities.²⁹

Of course, only a minority of those with a millenarian vision actively migrated from the city to the country, but the persuasiveness of the image of rural living was patently witnessed in a compromise: the growth of the suburbs. In fact, Alun Howkins, in *Reshaping Rural England*, suggested that the suburban version of back to the land, which escalated in the 1900s, was clearly more important in reinventing English rural life than the more extreme and purist elements of the movement (pp.230-231). Equally, for those could not leave the city permanently, a return to the land was represented by excursions and weekends in the country, which for many became a substitute for an actual return to the land. From the 1880s onward, rambling, cycling and nature clubs became extremely popular, providing a temporary escape from the urban environment. Nonetheless, it is clear that some of these enthusiasts also had a decidedly political agenda, and until its closure in 1896, the *Clarion's* journal, *The Scout*, avidly recorded the activities of these proselytising Socialist clubs. Harvey Taylor, in his comprehensive study of the history of the British outdoor movement, *A Claim on the Countryside: A History of the British Outdoor Movement* (1997), reinforced the essentially anti-establishment nature of this seemingly innocent aspect of back-to-the-land.³⁰

Other exponents of weekend visits to the countryside were equally unorthodox, and, drawing on pantheist elements in Christian theology, viewed their visits as an alternative to traditional Sunday observance, and as a fulfilment of spiritual needs not met through conventional religious practices. Indeed, nature clearly fulfilled a spiritual void for Edward Carpenter. And in *Towards Democracy* Part1 (1883), which Peter Gould described in *Early Green Politics* as ‘the most passionate work of the 1880s in which Nature featured as the grand alternative to industrial civilisation’ (p.21), Carpenter extolled the transcendental qualities of nature:

O the splendid wind careering over earth and ocean, the sun darting
between the great white clouds! O lifting of arms to Nature - heaven
wrapped around one's body.³¹

Excursions to the countryside to experience and commune with nature were also important in extending the range of back-to-the-land thinking. Not only did they

reinforce sympathy with the rural and increase concerns over environmental issues among the middle classes, they also made the country accessible to a section of the working class. This extension of the remit of back-to-the-land was reflected, as I shall argue later in the thesis in the Land Nationalisation Society's claim that land was the people's birthright, a solution to social evils and a means to a better life.

Clearly, beyond the suburban and part-time character of many return-to-nature activists, the most notable and extreme manifestations of the movement were reflected in physical attempts to re-colonise the countryside. These ventures had a practical as well as ideological history in the nineteenth century in experiments in the re-distribution of land initiated in the 1840s, and were designed as an attempt to alleviate poverty and overcrowding in the cities and to encourage small-scale farming. As we have seen, Owenism and Chartism had a stake in land reform and left their mark on later experiments in a return to the land.

In *Heavens Below* (1961), under the title of the 'Owenite Apocalypse', W. H. G. Armytage gives an illuminating explanation of Owen's experimental villages and his dream of communal living. Armytage's account of this early Socialist utopianism, while pointing out its evident paternalism and condescension, illustrates how Owen's idealism set the tone for much of the reforming zeal of the later utopian and land ventures.³² Indeed, John W. Derry in *The Radical Tradition* (1967) reinforced this view of Owen's legacy largely as a reforming utopian. And while pointing out the failure of his practical ideals, Derry concluded that Owen's influence was above all else as 'a prophet calling the nation to repentance, affirming - as in other religions - that repentance would lead to paradise' (pp.153-154). The links between this millennial vision and later return-to-the-land experiments are clear. Back-to-the-land was, after all, an endeavour to redress the balance, a search for improvement and change, and it was also the promise of at least an attempt at paradise that motivated many of its exponents to brave the hardships of, and ridicule attracted by, practical experiments such as the Whiteway Colony. Another aspect of Owenism, important to the development of aspects of back-to-the-land practice, is elaborated in Barbara Taylor's highly informative study of feminism and Socialism in the nineteenth century, *Eve and the New Jerusalem* (1983). Taylor discusses the position and the nature of the role of women, including 'communal housework', in the Owenite communities; and while Owenism clearly did not revolutionise the lives of women, its inheritance is manifest in the concepts of social reform, community

and sexual inclusivity, that are prominent features in many Socialist-inspired late-nineteenth-century back-to-the-land projects.³³

Chartism, too, had a significant influence on the way in which return-to-the-land experiments developed practically. The Chartist smallholdings at Corse and Lowbands in Gloucestershire, in their concept of a vision of self-sufficiency on a small piece of land, bear a remarkable resemblance to later back-to-the-land settlements epitomised by cottage farmers, whose ideals were to cultivate the land but not engage in communal living. And despite the defeat of Chartism, the idea of creating a physical rural alternative to counter urban social conditions grew stronger as the century progressed. Charles Fourier's grandiose utopian schemes developed in the 1820s in France, advocating sexual freedom and communal living and encompassing the concept of attractive labour, were also influential in the development of radical practical ideas about sexuality and community. Equally, in America, Henry Thoreau's experiences documented in *Walden* (1886), and Walt Whitman's poetry in *Leaves of Grass* (1855), mediated through the writing of Edward Carpenter, were noteworthy in raising English middle-class awareness of the possibilities of simplicity, collective endeavour and manual work.

Despite the diverse histories evident in the multiplicity of strands that made up the back-to-the-land movement at the end of the nineteenth century, attitudes to a return to the land and sensibilities to the urban/rural debate were still coloured by the imaginative and emotional fall-out of the Romantic Movement. Although the last eddies of the movement, which had communicated a sense of sublime awe and wonder for wild places, had in many cases degenerated into a nostalgic love of the rustic, the influential poets of the day, Tennyson, Arnold, Meredith, and Swinburne, still communicated a belief in the spiritual qualities of nature. For both William Morris and Edward Carpenter, the work of the Romantic poets played a fundamental part in the way that they reacted to nature, wrote about it and viewed it as essential to the development of a meaningful life. Chapter three of the thesis examines the differences in emphasis in Morris's and Carpenter's response to Romanticism and the particular inflection that this lent to their back-to-nature writing. And as we shall see later in the thesis, through both writers' influence, the spirituality in nature celebrated by Romanticism, became a significant theme in the context for a return to the land and particularly important for those searching for a 'higher life'. The next

chapter, however, examines in more detail Morris's and Carpenter's Socialism in relation to nature and a return to the land, and it is to this that we now turn.

¹ Alun Howkins in *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850-1925* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 93-113, gives a full account of the crisis in the rural areas. Particularly, he discusses the role of poor harvests, the importation of cheap foreign corn, the continued demand for urban labour and the rise of the itinerant farm worker as contributory elements in the pressure on the paternalist status quo in the country areas.

² For a social history of nineteenth-century England, including the increase in population, demographic change and new industries, see G. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 1994). For an analysis of the rise of industrialism, see François Bédarida, 'Industrialism Triumphant' in *A Social History of England 1851-1990* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 3-31. For a study of the growth of urbanisation, see Eric E. Lampard, 'The Urbanizing World' in *The Victorian City*, ed. by H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, 2 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), I, pp. 3-57.

³ For an account of rural life in the 1860s and 1870s that examines the relationship between supply and demand and increased profits for the elite in the mid-nineteenth century, see G. E. Mingay, 'The Landowners' in *Rural Life in Victorian England* (London: Heinemann, 1977), pp. 29-51.

⁴ For an interesting account of 'Ideas of Nature and Life on the Land before 1880', see Peter Gould, pp. 1-13.

⁵ Joseph Chamberlain, quoted in John W. Derry, *The Radical Tradition: Tom Paine to Lloyd George* (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 314.

⁶ See Peter Gould, pp. 16-17.

⁷ See *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 226, where Howkins quotes Henry Rider Haggard to support this idea. However, W. A. Armstrong in 'The Workfolk' in *The Vanishing Countryman* ed. by G. E. Mingay (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 37-40, describes the poor nutrition and poverty of the agricultural workforce, stating much that much of the rural population lived at or below the poverty line causing ill health and low productivity.

⁸ For an analysis of attitudes to the urban/rural debate see Alun Howkins 'The Discovery of Rural England' in *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, ed. by Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 62-84. Also see Jan Marsh *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in Victorian England from 1880 to 1914* (London: Quartet Books, 1982), pp. 1-6.

⁹ For an account of both Robert Owen's and Feargus O'Connor's ideas and the relationship between Owenism and Chartism see John W. Derry, pp. 119-182. Also see Barbara Taylor, *Eve and The New Jerusalem* (London: Virago, 1983), for an account of feminism in the early Socialist movement.

¹⁰ Some of Henry George's ideas and their influence on the back-to-the land movement are discussed in greater detail in chapter seven of the thesis.

¹¹ William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 127.

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- ¹² Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1905), pp. 152-155.
- ¹³ 'The Nature of Gothic' in the *Stones of Venice* (Part 2) *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen; New York: Longmans Green and Co, 1903), X, pp.196-198.
- ¹⁴ *Collected Works of William Morris*, ed. by May Morris 24 vols (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1910-15; repr. London: Routledge / Thoemmes Press, 1992), XXII, p. 205. Subsequent references to this edition are given in brackets after quotations in the text.
- ¹⁵ C. R. Ashbee's young students in the Ruskin class at Toynbee Hall are an example of this. For a discussion of the late nineteenth-century working-class culture of self-improvement, see Simon Dentith, *Society and Cultural Forms in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), pp. 58-63.
- ¹⁶ *Fors Clavigera*, *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, XXVII, Letter 51, p. 96.
- ¹⁷ 'Wider or larger Socialism' were terms used by Edward Carpenter to designate non-aligned Socialist individuals and groups such as The New Fellowship. The 'higher life' referred to a search for values beyond the material and formed a distinct strand in return-to-nature idealism. Aspects of 'wider Socialism' and the 'higher life' are discussed in detail in chapter five of the thesis.
- ¹⁸ In *Back to the Land*, Jan Marsh traces Ruskin's legacy, examining 'Folk Song Restored', pp. 72-93, which looks at the work of Cecil Sharp and the Folk Song Society founded in 1898. The chapter on the 'Peasant Arts', pp. 158-170, includes an account of Ruskin's influence on Geoffrey Blount's work and details the output of the Simple Life Press.
- ¹⁹ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1973), p. 222.
- ²⁰ Richard Jefferies, *The Amateur Poacher* (1879), quoted in *Back to the Land*, p. 34. Also see Peter Gould p. 69 for Jefferies' relationship to Hardy and a reference to their attempts to recuperate the image of the rural labourer.
- ²¹ Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), p. 47. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
- ²² The list could also include the pamphlets produced by the Peasant Arts Society in the 1900s, *Merrie England* (1893) by Robert Blatchford, *Old West Surrey* (1904) by Gertrude Jekyll and *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) by Kenneth Grahame.
- ²³ Robert Blatchford was the founder and editor of the *Clarion* newspaper and its back-to-nature journal *The Scout*. For an analysis of Robert Blatchford's Socialism see Gould, pp. 36-44.
- ²⁴ For a discussion of notions of Englishness in relation to the rural during this period, see Howkins, *Englishness: Politics and Culture*, pp.62-88. Also see John Lucas, 'Afterword' in *England and Englishness: Ideas of Nationhood in English Poetry 1688-1900* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1990), pp. 201-205. For an account of Morris and notions of England and Englishness, see Peter Faulkner, *William Morris and the Idea of England*, Kelmscott Lecture (London: William Morris Society, 1991).
- ²⁵ Howkins, *Englishness: Politics and Culture*, p.63.

²⁶ For an account of late-nineteenth-century 'ruralism' see Dentith. *Society and Cultural forms in Nineteenth-Century England*, pp.97-102.

²⁷ Henry and Kate Salt, influenced by Edward Carpenter, started the Humanitarian League which advocated vegetarianism, argued against hunting and cruelty to animals. See Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land*, for the development of vegetarianism during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, pp. 197-201. Also see Dan Weinbren, 'Against *all* Cruelty: the Humanitarian League 1891-1919', *History Workshop Journal*, 38 (1994), 86-105, for an article that links Robert Blatchford, Henry Salt, W. J. Jupp of the New Fellowship and Edward Carpenter by the work of the League.

²⁸ Interestingly, a letter from Morris dated November 13th 1882 to Jenny Morris details that Morris had read Wallace's book on Land Nationalisation, and stated that 'It is not nearly such a good book as George's but there are some things to remember in it'. *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, II, p. 135.

²⁹ W. H. G. Armytage, in 'J. C. Kenworthy and the Tolstoyan Communities in England', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 16 (1957), pp. 400-405, includes both Purleigh and Whiteway. Chapter six and chapter nine of the thesis argue that this is an over-simplified view of the ethos of the groups concerned and the influences that contributed to both experiments.

³⁰ Harvey Taylor, in *A Claim on the Countryside: A History of the British Outdoor Movement* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997), provides a detailed and wide-ranging account of the late-nineteenth-century outdoor movement. In relation to the *Clarion's* clubs, see particularly pp. 157-189, 'The Outdoor Movement on Wheels'. Also, Martin Wright discusses the *Clarion* movement and Socialism in 'Robert Blatchford: The *Clarion* Movement, and the Crucial Years of British Socialism 1891-1900' in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, pp. 74- 99.

³¹ Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy* (London: G. M. P., 1985), p. 89.

³² See 'The Owenite Apocalypse', W. H. G. Armytage, *Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1560-1960* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), pp. 77-145.

³³ Barbara Taylor, pp. 238-260.

Chapter Two

William Morris and Edward Carpenter: Socialism, Work, Art and Nature

This chapter examines the convergence and divergence of aspects of Morris's and Carpenter's Socialism, and considers this juxtaposition in relation to their views about nature and a return to the land. In particular it focuses on Morris's vision of an integrated and socialised landscape and its relationship to work, fellowship, art and simplicity. In parallel, it also explores Carpenter's ideas about contact with nature, physical activity, manual work and the simple life. The chapter will indicate how these ideas were absorbed into strands of the back-to-the-land movement, some of which are discussed at length later in the thesis.

Morris and Carpenter: Socialism and Nature

To understand Morris's and Carpenter's effect on the back-to-the-land movement, it is worth looking in some detail at the relationship between their ideas about a return to nature and their Socialism. Clearly, although images and representations of nature are fundamental elements in all Morris's imaginative work, it is in *News from Nowhere* (1890) that the concept of a transformed life in touch with and surrounded by nature is fully articulated as a central element of Morris's Socialism. Nature becomes the context and a reflection of the revolutionary Socialist message of the narrative. Similarly, in *Towards Democracy* Part 1 (1883), Carpenter represents nature as an integral part of his conception of a revolutionised life. However, unlike *News from Nowhere*, *Towards Democracy* represents not the zenith of a Socialist vision, but the inspiration of all Carpenter's later political and social ideals. Despite this, in both Morris's and Carpenter's texts (and throughout their political lectures), social revolution is intrinsically linked with a return to nature and the land, and it is not surprising, therefore, that they were highly influential in many wider Socialist and ethically inspired back-to-the-land initiatives.

Morris and Carpenter became committed Socialists in 1883, in the decade when nature and the simple life, as Peter Gould has observed, became a 'grand alternative' to urbanism and a powerful symbol of opposition to industrialism.¹ Both writers' social criticism during this period was significantly linked to their love of nature. In Morris's case, his conversion to Socialism was not, as it is sometimes

viewed, a contradiction of his earlier work as an artist, poet and craftsman, but rather, as A. L. Morton noted, ‘a fulfilment and an enlargement. For this reason his political writings need to be understood in the light of his whole background and development’.² The associations between Morris’s love of nature, his empathy for its forms, rhythms and imagery, and his visual and literary response are clear. Initially then, Morris’s work as a writer and designer was manifestly a protest against the ugliness and squalor of industrialism and urbanism. His conversion to Socialism came with the full realisation that capitalism was a system of class exploitation that destroyed not only the lives of the working classes, but also the environment and the earth’s natural resources. This consciousness was fused with Morris’s Ruskinian stance about craftsmanship, art and nature, a union that was fundamental to his development as a Socialist. In the light of this, his lectures and journalism, whatever their particular focus, contributed to his utopian message of social revolution. In terms of his utopianism, then, it deserves stressing that his concern was above all that people should lead free, fulfilled, and happy lives, and to this end he wrote as follows in ‘The Society of the Future’ (1887):

So, then, my ideal is first unconstrained life, and next simple and natural life. First you must be free; and next you must learn to take pleasure in all the details of life ...³

Consequently, Morris’s activist writing, whether directed at political opposition, as in his work for *Justice* and *Commonweal*, or at motivating concern for art and craft in ‘Art and Socialism’ (1884), was directly aimed not only at breaking down class divisions and inequality, but also at promoting his stated ideal of a free, simple and natural life. In this sense, his principles were important to the development of certain ruralist elements within English Socialism, as well as potent components in many politically non-specific ideas and initiatives concerned with a return to the land.⁴ Although obviously Carpenter’s route to political involvement was quite different to Morris’s, his adoption of Socialism was equally informed by an abhorrence of urban capitalism and a passionate love of nature.⁵ However, it was also the consequence of many years of teaching, soul-searching and seeking for a life outside the constraints of middle-class society. His final realisation of his sexuality and his ideas about homogenic love also deeply affected his highly personalised concept of Socialist brotherhood. In spite of his idiosyncratic views, Carpenter was, like Morris, a front-

line Socialist activist, and part of the group that broke away from Hyndman and the Social Democratic Federation in the mid 1880s.⁶ His financial contribution to *Justice* in 1883, and his support for the Socialist League, through their connection with Morris, are ironically perhaps the most remembered factors of his Socialism. Despite this, Carpenter wrote and delivered political lectures indefatigably for over ten years, and campaigned with the 'Sheffield Socialists', describing himself how they 'organised lectures, addresses, pamphlets, with a street-corner propaganda', many of which brought them into direct confrontation with the police and town crowds.⁷

Although Carpenter records the importance of his active commitment to the Socialist cause, the mystical and sexual significance of life and nature extolled in *Towards Democracy* (Part1) remained the wellspring of his particular vision of Socialism. This component of his Socialist ethos is significant in considering the character and the influence of his back-to-nature utopianism, for even in political terms, democracy for Carpenter did not signify a doctrine or creed; rather it suggested the heart of an idealistic metaphysic, centred on his belief in the theory of exfoliation. Much of Carpenter's inspiration was drawn from Lamarck's theory of evolution, which, unlike Darwin's external view of variation, suggested there was a force at work within creation which urged each type of life 'onward into new and newer forms'.⁸ Walt Whitman, Carpenter's mentor, had written about exfoliation describing it as 'Creation's incessant unrest'.⁹ In *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure* (1889) Carpenter interpreted this organically, stressing that life-forms evolved through a desire or need for change: 'desire precedes function', he wrote, explaining that 'desire, or inward change, comes first, action follows, and organisation or outward structure is the result' (p. 133). Only through inward change, Carpenter expounded, could mankind enter into an era of freedom, unity with nature, and enlightenment. This subjective context for change provided an unaligned framework for wider Socialist groups such as The New Fellowship in their search for a more spiritual life. In terms of practical back-to-the-land experiments, this was closely related to a central element of Carpenter's Socialism, his faith in the liberating power of physical engagement with the natural world.

Carpenter evolved and incorporated his beliefs in exfoliation into his political writing, and made his main point in his lecture, 'England's Ideal' (1884), that there should be 'in the first place a cry for Justice and personal Honesty, and in the second place only for Social Re-organisation'.¹⁰ Arguably, Morris would have rearranged

this sentence. Indeed, A. L. Morton makes the point that ‘Morris always held the Marxist view that socialism could only come by the seizure of power by the working class, which is what he always meant by revolution.’¹¹ Carpenter’s Socialism differed essentially from Morris’s in his insistence on the importance of personal actions, individual ideals and motives as the means of social change. References to personal responsibility and honesty appear throughout Carpenter’s texts in relation to his condemnation of nineteenth-century society, and its salvation through collective endeavour. Although Morris equally passionately denounced the state of the country, the appeal in his lectures and journalism was directly to a sense of brotherhood, equality, political co-operation and Socialist struggle. Specifically in relation to a return to nature, these differences are evident, as I shall argue later in this chapter, in their attitudes towards meaningful work, self-sufficiency and manual labour.

Morris’s and Carpenter’s standing within the Socialist movement also affected the way in which their utopian writing was received. Unlike Morris, Carpenter always took a non-conformist attitude to party doctrine, describing this as taking the ‘Socialist line with a drift as was natural, towards Anarchism’.¹² Although revered by many individual Socialists, Carpenter remained essentially a maverick figure in the Socialist movement and was often condemned for not identifying himself with any particular wing of the party. However, it was this individualism and lack of conformity that made Carpenter’s ideas so attractive to many on the fringes of Socialism. This was particularly reflected in the thinking of the ethical movements, and influenced issues that were important to back-to-the-land advocates, including progressive education, animal welfare, questions of sexuality, dress and diet reform. Carpenter’s ideas in these areas resonated with such notable ethical reformers, anarchists, and return-to-nature devotees as Kate and Henry Salt, Robert Blatchford, Peter Kropotkin and Havelock Ellis. Diverse non-Socialist groups involved with land issues and a return to the land also took up elements of his non-conformist beliefs, and aspects of these developments are discussed in part two and part three of the thesis.

Despite their different political engagement, a fundamental part of both Morris’s and Carpenter’s response to the Socialist struggle was to utilise their literary skills in an outpouring of lectures and journalism to condemn industrial urban capitalism. In many ways, the subjects of their political writing in the early 1880s ran parallel.¹³ Both writers’ lectures were also clearly intended to be didactic

and to stimulate action, and the particular form they took, and the language they used, sought to maximise this. In differing ways, Morris and Carpenter identified the idleness of the rich and their lack of any physical engagement (apart from recreation) or productiveness as not only exploitative, but as an integral part of society's sickness and the root cause of middle-class ennui.¹⁴ Both also stressed the importance of involvement in the natural world as an inevitable part of social change. However, despite their similar concerns, there are clear distinctions in the focus of their ideas about change. This was particularly evident in Morris's and Carpenter's concepts of meaningful work, and the simple life. And while Morris gave prominence to the importance of meaningful creative work within a natural context, Carpenter stressed the significance of tangible contact with the land and the elements.

Using 'England's Ideal' primarily to draw a picture of injustice and personal irresponsibility, Carpenter suggested a possible solution to society's ills in terms of the simplification of life. Alongside this, he condemned what he called 'cheap-jack education', as being responsible for the artificiality of a society. Conjuring up the self-sufficient ethos of Henry Thoreau, Carpenter called for what he described as true education. 'Education does not turn a man into a creature of blind wants, a prey to ever fresh thirsts and desires - it brings him *into relation with the world around him*' (p. 15). Here, Carpenter was referring to what he called 'the real world of humanity, of honest Daily Life, of the majesty of Nature, and the wonderful questions and answers of the soul' (p. 18). This claim describes the synthesis of transcendentalism and practicality that epitomised Carpenter's ideal of a simplified and complete life in touch with the natural world. His own example of self-sufficiency, digging and planting and living the simple life attuned to nature, lent authority and authenticity to his writing.

Morris, too, saw simplification of life as an inherent part of Socialism. But although he found the idea of rural retreat seductive, Morris was not seriously drawn to a back-to-the-land, simple-life existence; in fact, he viewed it as desertion from the cause.¹⁵ Simplification of life for Morris related initially to ideas, artefacts and aesthetics in relation to meaningful work and nature, demonstrated when he wrote in 'Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil' (1884), 'ornament is now but one of the follies of useless toil, and perhaps not the least irksome of its fetters' (XXIII, p. 114). However, Morris also clearly identified simplification, a reduction in conspicuous

consumption, as an inherent constituent of his Socialist ideal of a free and empowered life. This was exemplified in 'The Society of the Future':

When our opponents say, as they sometimes do, How should we be able to procure the luxuries of life in a Socialist society? answer boldly, We could not do so, and we don't care, for we don't want them and won't have them; and indeed, I feel sure that we cannot if we are all free men together. Free men, I am sure, must lead simple lives and have simple pleasures:¹⁶

In terms of political action, Morris always saw simplicity of life as the inevitable result of the adoption of Socialist ideals and class struggle, rather than the means of change. Carpenter, conversely, believed that the espousal of the simple life itself would lead to personal liberation, and thereby collective salvation. Despite these significant distinctions in their conceptions of the simple life, some of Carpenter's stance about physical contact with nature found its way into Morris's vision of a return to the land. This is evident in Morris's expression of such Carpenterian sentiments as 'the pleasure of lying on the hill-side under a rushen hut among the sheep on a summer night' and the joy of 'the piping of the wind and washing of the waves'.¹⁷ Carpenter, on the other hand, in *My Days and Dreams*, fully acknowledged the debt he owed to Morris as a great Socialist and writer, without whom he recognised he would have been unable to transform his highly personal view of democracy and nature into his later political writings.¹⁸

It is, then, not surprising that Morris's and Carpenter's names are to be found linked in many texts concerning early Socialism, the simple life and utopian back-to-the-land initiatives. Their combined ethos was a heady and idealistic mixture, elements of which influenced a wide spectrum of return-to-nature ideas and experiments. However, the inspiration for these ventures was not solely both writers' political work, it was equally, if not more powerfully, drawn from Carpenter's ideas about a transcendental involvement with nature and the simple life expressed in *Towards Democracy*, and Morris's vision of a revolutionary and socialised landscape exemplified in *News from Nowhere*.

Morris's Vision of an Integrated Landscape: Work, Fellowship, Art and Simplicity

We can begin to consider Morris's vision of an integrated and socialised landscape by looking at his utopian idealism, and the values he championed as a meaningful

alternative to the exploitation and monopoly of the capitalist system. Class struggle leading to revolution and the abolition of all classes were, as Morris like Marx understood it, the only possible means of achieving Socialism. Morris's view that the state was an inherent mechanism of capitalist power which must be destroyed, rendered the call for revolution without class struggle that Carpenter and other middle-class Socialists espoused an 'an absurdity and an impossibility'.¹⁹ Morris's Marxian stance on the means of social change was reflected in his political journalism, his lectures and his fiction. But as E. P. Thompson has so accurately observed in *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, his utopian writing was neither a social model, a doctrine or paradigm for the future society; rather it was a speculation on 'how we might live' after the 'subversion of bourgeois society and a reversal of the whole order of life' (p. 790). As such, *News from Nowhere* and lectures like 'The Society of the Future' were not presented as solutions to a problem. Instead, they offered an opportunity to speculate freely, detached from conventional values. Thompson summed up Morris's utopianism thus: 'when it succeeds [it] liberates desire to an uninterrupted interrogation of our values and also to its own self-interrogation' (p.791). The very reappraisal of values that Morris stimulated in his utopian writing, appealed directly to those deeply idealistic exponents on the fringes of the Socialist Movement who espoused a return to nature, and as we shall see in subsequent chapters, a reflection of this was the response to his work in the journals *Seed-time* and *The New Order*.²⁰

Morris's hatred of capitalism was aroused as much by its wanton destruction of the natural world as by its exploitation of the working classes. From its inception, his Socialism called for people to live in a cooperative and sustainable relationship with each other and the environment. This sense of accord with nature was an intrinsic element of Morris's perception of the value of art and craft, expressed in 'The Lesser Arts' (1877) as 'beautiful if it is in accord with Nature, and helps her; ugly if it is discordant with Nature, and thwarts her' (XXII, p.4). In calling for sensitivity to nature, Morris proposed a re-generated landscape as an innate part of equality and freedom for the working classes. To highlight the need for this transformation, he set out in lectures such as 'Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil' to expose the iniquity and ugliness of the entrepreneurial system. He began his lecture by decrying those who lived on the labour of others. Using a Ruskinian argument, Morris appealed for meaningful work, and for the earth's resources to be used in

creative, relevant production. In an unwavering tone, he identified social dislocation and hopelessness with the exploitation of ‘useless toil’. Morris’s language as well as his descriptions of the work of ‘factory slaves’, the production of ‘gimcrack goods’ and adulterated food are an indictment in themselves, and are cited as the reasons for the cycle of social despair:

Thus worthy work carries with it the hope of pleasure in rest, the hope of the pleasure in our using what it makes, and the hope of pleasure in our daily creative skill. All other work but this is worthless; it is slaves’ work – mere toiling to live, that we may live to toil. (XXIII, p. 100)

It was this argument about the nature of work, with all its implications of spiritual as well as physical needs, that Morris used as the lynch-pin of his appeal for social change. Indeed, in this context, Peter Gould in *Early Green Politics* points out that ‘Morris was concerned above all with the spiritual poverty of capitalism’ (p. 32). Although this point was always a focus of Morris’s political writing, it is arguable that it was only in the message and imagery of his fiction, that he was able to develop an alternative to capitalism to the full. In *A Dream of John Ball* (1888) it was hinted at in the simplicity, beauty and brotherhood of mediaeval life, and in *The Earthly Paradise* (1868) it was evoked by the juxtaposition of industrial destruction spreading across the land and an idealised and interrelated landscape of Chaucerian England. This point was also suggested by May Morris in the introduction to Morris’s *Collected Works* when she wrote:

There was always, in the earliest of his lectures on Art, that hope, that vision of the future that is felt for in *The Dream of John Ball* and that has its final expression in *News from Nowhere* (XV1, p. xvj)

She went on to identify this hope for the future in *News*, with Morris’s breaking down of the boundaries between rural and urban; presenting the continuity and simplicity of nature as a context and an exemplar for meaningful art and life, and as a viable alternative to the terrible conditions of late-nineteenth-century society.

Gould reinforced May Morris’s observation about her father when he suggested that *News from Nowhere* enunciated most vividly of all Morris’s writing his particular vision of a ‘challenge of a Socialism, which was centred on a social system designed to satisfy emotional and spiritual needs’ (p. 34).

We can get a sense of Morris’s argument about the inequality of contemporary society and his suggestion for social change from the rest of ‘Useful

Work *versus* Useless Toil'. Here, he stated forcibly that the rich and the middle classes consumed far more than their due share, that they produced nothing in return, and that their greed contributed to both rural depopulation and urban squalor. This was a view he shared with Carpenter, and while berating the rich for their acquisition of capital, Morris took the argument further, locating this as the reason for the pointlessness of overproduction. In uncompromising language, he expressed these ideas thus:

For all our crowded towns and bewildering factories are simply the outcome of the profit system. Capitalistic manufacture, capitalistic land-owning, and capitalistic exchange force men into big cities in order to manipulate them in the interests of capital; There is no other necessity for all this, save the necessity for grinding profits out of men's lives, and of producing cheap goods for the use (and subjection) of the slaves who grind. (XXIII, pp. 114-115)

This was Morris secure in his belief in the need for radical and revolutionary politics, his arguments rooted in the reality he saw around him, and with his commitment to Socialism and socialist agitation firmly established.

Like much of Morris's political writing, 'Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil' is devoted to focusing attention on the need for change, and on the wanton waste of lives exploited by an iniquitous system. But towards the end of this lecture, Morris described the changes he saw as essential to any form of civilised living. He called for an end to 'the perpetual strife of opposing classes', and that 'the work of the world might be carried on in hope and with pleasure' (XXIII, p. 119). He alluded gently to a more 'natural' life, implying that it is not only what is needed, but also what is wanted:

There are few men, for instance, who would not wish to spend part of their lives in the most necessary and pleasantest of all work – cultivating the earth. (XXIII, p. 112)

In a moving passage, Morris evoked a better world in which a natural context is implied through the language rather than specifically stated:

If the cripple and the starveling disappear from our streets, if the earth nourish us all alike, if the sun shine for all of us alike, if to one and all of us the glorious drama of the earth – day and night, summer and winter – can be presented as a thing to understand and love, we can afford to wait awhile till we are purified from the shame of past corruption, and till art

arises again amongst people freed from the terror of the slave and the shame of the robber. (XXIII, pp. 116-117)

These passages serve to emphasise the sense in which the natural world is wholly part of Morris's overall vision of Socialism; the way in which it is employed acts as a metaphor for what is glimpsed as a complete and just society. Morris was more explicit about this vision in his lecture, 'The Society of the Future'; here, he linked sensual pleasure with nature and freedom, calling for 'the utter extinction of all asceticism'.²¹ In this context, explaining that luxury is 'the sworn foe of pleasure', Morris clearly outlined the opposition between opulence and overproduction, and simplicity, pleasure and nature:

What brings about luxury but a sickly discontent with the simple joys of the lovely earth? What is it but a warping of the natural beauty of things into a perverse ugliness to satisfy the jaded appetite of a man who is ceasing to be a man – a man who will not work, and cannot rest?²²

Stressing that he was not seeking to replace working-class poverty with middle-class luxury, he continued pointing out the alternatives in a free and Socialist society as brotherhood and simplicity.

In the sentiments Morris expressed in 'The Society of the Future', we can trace the core of his fight against industrialism's and materialism's effect on both the land and the people. However, in *News from Nowhere* we find his most complete response, delivering a message of imagined revolution in which capitalist manufacture is replaced by an equitable and simple life, and Socialism and nature form a visionary alternative to industrialism and materialism. This revolutionary life was innately bound up in a re-generated and inclusive landscape in which everyone had free and equal access to the beauty and bounty of nature. The influence of these arguments was evident in a multiplicity of late-nineteenth-century land issues, affecting ideas about rights of access to land (reflected in the fight to reclaim the commons and secure rights of way), and the work of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (1877) and the development the early National Trust. However, as I shall contend later, Morris's arguments about land issues also permeated attitudes among more conservative groups such as The Land Nationalisation Society and The Allotment and Small Holdings Association.²³ The relationship between the environment, Socialist revolution, meaningful work and leisure expressed in *News* was also highly influential in many practical back-to-the-land experiments,

determining the political if not aesthetic vision of agrarian colonies, including those of the avowedly Tolstoyan Croydon Brotherhood Church. Morris's transformation and unification of life and nature in 'Nowhere' was, and still is today, a persuasive image, and it is to this that we now turn.

First serialised in *Commonweal* in 1890, *News from Nowhere* was published in book form in 1891. As well as its uncompromising revolutionary stance, it expressed much of Morris's passion for nature and his plea for brotherhood and simplicity of life, particularly of ornament and dress. Since his university days, Morris had read utopian literature, from Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), to Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872). But it was the American writer Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) which was the catalyst for *News from Nowhere*. Primarily an urban and mechanised vision of a utopian state, Bellamy's book enraged Morris, provoking him to respond. Where Bellamy's concept of utopia was static and rigid, Morris's was fluid and open-ended.

The location of place in *News from Nowhere* is, like Carpenter's in *Towards Democracy*, uncertain. However, unlike *Towards Democracy*, it operates within a consistent and particular landscape. We may be unsure quite where we are, but Morris's unfailing sense of place firmly locates us in the landscape, and forms a clear part of his narrative intentions. Morris, unlike Carpenter and other writers before him, gives his utopia a real history born out of revolutionary struggle and suffering. As Stephen Coleman has pointed out, Nowhere's history has a past, present and future and allows 'us to move through time, making us look upon ourselves as strangers and at strangers as ourselves transformed'.²⁴ This is also patently true of the landscape and images of nature in *News*, which are at once familiar and at the same time unnerving and disorientating, England but not England. In relation to Morris's idea of England, Peter Faulkner has stressed the significance of the English landscape and English history. In this context, in the Kelmscott Lecture (1991), he made the important point that 'Morris's "dream" or "hope" of a better future depends on his vision of the English past, and is one with his sense of the beauty of the English landscape'.²⁵

Against a background of Morris's image of a past and future 'England', *News from Nowhere* takes us into a world where nature becomes a shared pastoral landscape, and notions of ownership and exclusion become irrelevant; powerful themes which became central to most Socialist back-to-the-land thinking.

Distinctions between rural and urban no longer exist; England has become an almost continuous garden. The urban centres including London are reinvented. Guest, the hero of *News from Nowhere*, describes the transformed landscape he sees on reaching the centre of the old city: ‘I opened my eyes to the sunlight again and looked round me, and cried out among the whispering trees and odorous blossoms, “Trafalgar Square!”’ (XVI, p. 42). Guest’s description of a row of riverside houses makes it clear that private space has been redefined: ‘There was a continuous garden in front of them, going down to the water’s edge, in which flowers were now blooming luxuriantly...’ (XVI, p. 9). Morris extends the rural into the city and revivifies the country by a migration of people from the town. This is illustrated later in the narrative when Guest gets into conversation with the old man, Hammond, who remembers ‘the period of change’, and describes how there was an

exodus of the people from the town to the country, and the gradual recovery by the town-bred people on the one side, and the country-bred people on the other, of those arts of life which they had each lost. (XVI, p. 177)

The landscape of Nowhere exists in equilibrium with its inhabitants and is represented as a series of Edenic gardens, in which the country has been repopulated and revived, and the city has been impregnated by the country. Indeed Fiona MacCarthy has observed that ‘Morris had great feeling for interflowing spaces’.²⁶ This is profoundly so in *News from Nowhere*, where apricot orchards are growing in Trafalgar Square and gardens surround the mills along the banks of the Thames. The country too is visibly and politically changed, as Guest describes: ‘the fields were everywhere treated as a garden made for the pleasure as well as the livelihood of us all’ (XVI, 191). These were compelling images indeed at a time when rural depopulation and urban squalor were paramount problems, and most of the population were excluded from the majority of the land. Not surprisingly, elements of these integrated spaces are recognisable in the forerunners of the early garden cities, and in particular, Ebenezer Howard’s blueprints in *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1898) owe a debt to Morris’s vision.

By breaking down the barriers between urban and rural, Morris established a society embedded with qualities which form the basis of an idealised pastoral setting, in which human life, having struggled through revolution, acquires purpose and meaning. This environment, represented by a series of integrated gardens, is

reinvented as a symbolic landscape. To make this transformation, the 'garden' undergoes a change in the accepted sense of ownership to encompass the whole community. Michael Waters in *The Garden in Victorian Literature* (1988) suggests that Morris realised that the garden, 'both as a concept and as a topography, had to incorporate those features of the landscape to which it had previously been both physically and symbolically opposed'.²⁷ The concept of 'garden' then in *News from Nowhere* is metamorphosed, and becomes inclusive rather than exclusive, a complete and socialised landscape, in which people can live in fellowship with each other and in a practical and sustainable relationship with nature.

We are able to perceive throughout the narrative that the images and the language of this utopian landscape reflect the construction of Morris's design work, in which structure and harmony provide a framework for movement and growth. Morris's intense observation and unfailing attention to detail make this a convincing if romantic landscape. [Wild] nature in *News from Nowhere* is tamed, cultivated, beautiful, superabundant and always for the benefit and edification of the people. It exists only where people have decided to allow it, and then only as part of a harmonious symbiosis conceived as part of an overall garden. Hammond illustrates this when Guest is questioning him about the land being a garden:

'My friend', he said, 'we like these pieces of wild nature, and can afford them; so we have them; ... As to the land being a garden, I have heard that they used to have shrubberies and rockeries in gardens once; and though I might not like the artificial ones, I assure you that some of the natural rockeries of our garden are worth seeing'. (XVI, p.74)

However, the environment in *Nowhere* is also redolent of the medieval era, which for Morris brought to mind a time when elements of geographical and cultural identity were integrated and unfragmented. As such, he evoked a pre-industrial world, in which empathy for the land evidenced sympathy for the works of man, and in which the imaginative model for his utopia symbolised a society in which art, simplicity, nature and handwork were synonymous. In *Nowhere* therefore there is no longer any need for ostentatious possessions or elaborate clothes, and the inhabitants clothe themselves in simple, practical but aesthetically pleasing garments, allowing freedom of movement and sensual pleasure. The architecture is organic and in sympathy with the landscape; inside, the furniture and ornament are both functional and beautiful.

This new state of integration and simplicity becomes the context in which Morris represents attitudes to work when he describes the ‘Obstinate Refusers’ in *Nowhere*, working deep in an idyllic landscape. They so enjoy their work that they refuse to take part in the fun of haymaking. The description of a once backbreaking job as fun in itself exemplifies Morris’s redefinition of work and pleasure. The female master mason (a radical idea at the time) is deeply intent on her carving; without stopping work she says:

‘Thank you for coming to see us, neighbours, but I am sure that you won’t think me unkind if I go on with my work, ... this open air and the sun and the work together, and my feeling well again too, make a mere delight of every hour to me; and excuse me, I must go on.’ (XVI, p174)

The attitudes to work epitomised in *News* reflected the kind of society that Morris had called for earlier in ‘Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil’, in which simplicity, joy in work and contact with the natural world were to be an inherent part of life. Only in this milieu, he had stated, would meaningful art and craft arise anew. Morris had also outlined the context for this revival in his first lecture, ‘The Lesser Arts’ (1877).

Anticipating attitudes to work and art in ‘*Nowhere*’, he wrote:

Then having leisure from all these things, amidst renewed simplicity of life we shall have leisure to think about our work, that faithful daily companion, which no man any longer will venture to call the Curse of labour: for surely then we shall be happy in it, each in his place, no man grudging at another, no one bidden to be any man’s *servant*, every one scorning to be any man’s *master*: men will then assuredly be happy in their work, and that happiness will assuredly bring forth decorative, noble *popular* art. (XXII, pp. 26-27)

Morris went on to conclude, in what is a summary of his later utopian vision, that the reinvention and repositioning of work and art, and the resulting happiness, would impact on man’s relationship to nature and his environment, architecture and artefacts:

That art will make our streets as beautiful as the woods, as elevating as the mountain-sides: it will be a pleasure and a rest, and not a weight upon the spirits to come from the open country into a town; every man’s house will be fair and decent, soothing to his mind and helpful to his work: all the works of man that we live amongst and handle will be in harmony with nature, will be reasonable and beautiful: yet all will be simple and inspiriting, not childish nor enervating; for as nothing of beauty and splendour that man’s mind and hand may compass shall be wanting from

our public buildings, so in no private dwelling will there be any signs of waste, pomp, or insolence, and every man will have his share of the *best*. (XXII, p. 27)

News from Nowhere was the imaginative realisation of this revolutionary hope, and in its creation, Morris evoked a millennial society that showed up the poverty of industrial capitalism. In parallel, *News* was an image of a journey into the future, but it was also, as Clive Wilmer has observed, ‘a journey into the past into the depths of England, towards the physical roots from which life might begin again’.²⁸ Nowhere grew out of real class struggle, of Bloody Sunday in Trafalgar Square, and despite its mediaeval imagery, society’s metamorphosis in *News* looks forward to an egalitarian, post-Christian era in which we are shown a dream, the possibility of a better world.

Morris never intended Nowhere to be an exemplar, but rather an inspiration to others who dreamt and hoped for a new life. Because of its visionary and open-ended nature, Morris’s utopia inspired a remarkable and varied legacy, aspects of which are discussed in part two and part three of the thesis. In parallel to Morris, Edward Carpenter was equally influential in the development of late-nineteenth-century approaches to nature, work, and simplicity; the rest of this chapter considers the Carpenterian concept of the simple life and the importance of contact with the land.

Carpenter: The Simple Life, Self-Sufficiency, Manual Work and Contact With Nature

To understand the development of some of the main themes of wider Socialist and ethical thinking in relation to a return to the land, we need to reflect on Carpenter’s emphasis on the simple life, the importance of manual labour and physical involvement with the earth. This ethos was a central tenet in both his imaginative writing and his journalism, and it was an expression of his belief in the essential oneness of the universe, fellowship, and man’s connectedness with nature. The influence of his writing in this area was reinforced by Carpenter’s practical example in a return to the land at Millthorpe, where his name became synonymous with digging, planting and self-sufficiency. Carpenter’s search for a more natural and simple life, an escape from the rigid sexual and social mores of the time, had led him to live and work on the land. This experiment was entirely a voyage of self-

discovery, and he freely admitted it was never part of any conscious attempt to find a utopian model for society. Indeed Carpenter said in *My Days and Dreams*: ‘the motive was in the main a purely personal one ... my thought was my own need’ (pp. 110-111). However, alongside this he also expressed the wish for what he described as ‘a more honest life ... in touch with the great body of the people’ (p. 111). He concluded that his contact with nature and working people had given him what he called ‘the quietude and strength necessary to sustain any more or less original work’ (p. 111). Manual labour, work normally associated with the labouring poor, became for Carpenter an agent of social change as well as a means to personal salvation.

In *Towards Democracy*, the relationship between physical work and involvement with nature forms the centre of Carpenter’s ideal replacement of middle-class values. However, he not only presented nature as the only meaningful alternative to industrialised urban society, but also embraced it as the source of revelation and democracy. It was Carpenter’s ‘coming out’ (a phrase frequently used in his writing), an emotional outpouring that represented years of tension and pent-up repression where he faced openly for the first time his own homosexuality. Democracy for Carpenter was, as Gilbert Beith explained, ‘a thing of the heart rather than a political creed’.²⁹ Carpenter’s vision of nature was also an innate part of his voyage of self-discovery, interwoven with a form of utopian revelation, and his intuitive and highly individual response to nature was reflected in the structure and the language, as well as the meaning, of his utopian writing. Where Morris in *News* was explicit in the ideal of his conceived society, Carpenter’s ethos was hidden within his language of mystical imaginings. Simon Dentith locates the context of their idealism when he says:

Carpenter is profoundly and confessedly idealistic in a way that Morris is not. For the latter, the statement of an ideal is simply educative, and can only assist in directing social change, which is caused fundamentally by material conditions. For Carpenter, by contrast, the articulation of new ideals is the driving force of revolutionary change.³⁰

It is not surprising then, that their most influential imaginative works reflect this difference in position, and that nature is endowed with differing qualities. Indeed, where Morris in *News from Nowhere* created a structured, romantic and idealistic society, Carpenter evoked a world in *Towards Democracy* that is anarchic, intuitive and rooted in the elemental. Nature in *Towards Democracy* is more than a context

for a transformed life; it becomes fundamentally interconnected with humanity. Nature is wild and organic, not always benign, but intrinsically an integrated and essential element of human life. Carpenter envisioned himself as part of the substance of the earth, and only in total immersion could any change be possible.

Despite the different emphasis concerning the relationship between nature and a utopian society, Carpenter believed like Morris that the practical simplification of life was fundamental to the success of the Socialist struggle. The pragmatic language of his lectures and journalism for the Socialist cause demonstrates this, and his simple-life rhetoric was clearly intended to provoke social as well as personal change. The mystical significance of nature in *Towards Democracy* was transfigured in Carpenter's lectures and journalism, and presented as an attempt to live a simple and self-sufficient life in touch with the land. His personal knowledge of cultivation and domestic management lent his political rhetoric a pedagogic character, and at times something of the qualities of an instructional handbook.³¹ However, in relation to the inspiration behind his lectures, Carpenter recalled that after reading Thoreau's *Walden* in 1883, whatever simplification he had already made in his life seemed negligible. He felt there was a need to encourage widespread literature on the subject, relating directly to everyday life, but finding no one who would take up the challenge, he was in his own words 'reduced to writing on the question myself - in *England's Ideal* and elsewhere'.³²

Carpenter's most influential model of back-to-the-land and simple-life education is apparent in his essay 'Simplification of Life'. This was written originally for *The Times* in 1886 (reprinted in *England's Ideal* in 1887), and Carpenter gave a simple practical guide - using his own experience as an example - to a simpler form of living. He discussed diet and gave a detailed instance of how a family of five might live on half an acre of land. Suggesting that food should be simplified to what could be grown, he advocated a mainly vegetarian diet. Carpenter's message was twofold: growing food not only provided a healthy and affordable diet, it also engaged the grower in what Carpenter described as the most valuable of all activities, manual labour. However, this statement about the value of physical work and contact with the earth was directed as much at the middle as the working classes, and reflected Carpenter's conviction that manual work could solve middle-class ennui and replace greed by alleviating the need for excess possessions.

That Carpenter's Socialism in terms of a simplification of life was aimed at a varied audience is evident in his advocacy of the advantages of a vegetable plot, not only to the unemployed poor or the jaded middle classes but also to the average working family. This compromise between a self-sufficient return to the land and paid employment was portrayed as a development towards Socialism:

In the more or less socialistic state of society towards which we seem to be tending, the normal condition would probably be for a man to have a cottage and sufficient land- say no less than a rood- to grow a good deal of food for his own daily use, while daily labor at a really adequate rate of wages would be secured to him outside in workshop, design-room, school, warehouse, or whatever it might be.³³

As well as suggesting digging and planting that were feasible in after work hours, Carpenter recommended planting up an acre of land, growing wheat, and hand-milling it, thus providing wholemeal bread for a family of five for a year. We will see in succeeding chapters that Carpenter's suggested compromise between work and self-sufficiency made his ideas accessible to a larger audience than the wider Socialist fraternity.³⁴

Another important aspect of Carpenter's Socialism was his concern over food production. This was related mainly to ethically motivated ideas about animal husbandry, and in some respects, in this area he was preaching to the converted. Enthusiasm for vegetarianism spread through the 1880s and by the 1890s there were numerous vegetarian and health restaurants in most of the major cities. Even those who did not actually take to the land could share in the back-to-nature diet. Hugh Mapleton, a disciple of Carpenter's, former leader of the Norton Colony and founder of Mapleton's Nut Food Company, declared: 'Animal Food is dangerous in any form and just now the Cow is under suspicion. Nuts and Fruit are man's natural diet'.³⁵ Carpenter's advocacy of a mainly vegetarian diet and his active support of Henry Salt and the Humanitarian League meant that vegetarianism became a central tenet in many practical back-to-the-land experiments.³⁶ In relation to this ethical position, Jan Marsh observed that most of the hard-line agrarian communes 'were as firmly committed to no meat as to self-sufficient cultivation'.³⁷

Carpenter's simple-life ideals in relation to food were not restricted to matters of health and animal welfare alone. In relation to the development of Socialism, and in particular communal living, it is worth considering the elements of his writing

about diet and health that focused on the position of women as domestic drudges. In 'Simplification of Life' in *England's Ideal*, listing foods such as 'bread and cheese, figs, raisins, oatmeal cakes, and fresh fruit' along with soups, omelettes and rice. Carpenter insisted that their nutritional value was complemented by their simplicity to prepare. Anticipating later concerns of the Women's Movement, he related the matter of food preparation to 'the question of women's work', exclaiming, 'woman is a slave, and *must remain so* as long as ever our domestic system is maintained' (p. 86). Carpenter also linked his writing about the simplification of interiors, possessions and dress to the position of women in the home and their possible future development.

It was in this context, then, that Carpenter also discussed simplifying furniture and furnishings; using a ship as an example, he explained that 'it is necessity that makes the ship beautiful' (p.90). Although Carpenter appears to have been little interested in aesthetics or art, his identification of the relationship between form and function in 'Simplification' echoes some of Morris's precepts. Using the analogy of the ship, Carpenter compared the inside of a simple cottage to an 'aesthetically furnished mansion'. There followed a passage in which he described an old country cottage, an image that became synonymous with the aspirations of many urban artisans and clerks who were not attracted by the idea of communal living, but aimed to return to the land and cultivate cottage farms. Carpenter ascribed its values thus:

Or again, after you have been the round of aesthetically-furnished mansions, and seen all that taste and wealth can in this direction, does it not happen to you at last to turn by chance into some old fashioned cottage by the wayside and find that, for pure grace and beauty, this interior without the least effort or intention whatever, has beaten all the rest hollow? Yet, with the exception perhaps of a few plants in the window, everything here is for use. The eye rests on nothing but what suggests a train of thought. Here is the axe hanging, there the gun; here over the dresser a row of plates, there the kettle boiling on the fire; and there behind the door, the straw hat which the rosy-cheeked girl puts on when she runs to look to the fowls. Everything is alive, and transparent too with cleanly human life. (p. 90)

The powerful equation of honesty and organic simplicity with beauty that Carpenter implied in the text echoed many of the aesthetic principles espoused by Morris and later Arts and Crafts artists and designers. Although Carpenter suggests a link

between form and function, his choice of artefacts and their context celebrate a stereotypical and backward-looking image of rural iconography, alien to Arts and Crafts aesthetics. This clichéd perception of the country cottage has remained a pervasive icon in the national consciousness of the rural ‘good life’. In relation to interiors and the simple life, Carpenter concluded his argument in ‘Simplification’ by stating that beauty cannot be bought, and that only by living an honest life will a room or a house ‘grow beautiful in proportion as it comes to answer to the wants of such a life’ (p. 90). There is clearly a subtle distinction here between Carpenter’s homespun vision of a country cottage and the aesthetically aware and self-conscious interiors espoused by the Arts and Crafts Movement.

‘Simplification of Life’ followed with a plea for simplicity of dress, a concept central to Carpenter’s views about health and bodily freedom. On taking up the simple life, Carpenter had celebrated by ridding himself of his formal clothes, growing a beard and adopting loose and practical garments of his own design. The remembrance of this is marked in italics in his autobiography.³⁸ Worries over unhealthy, elaborate and restricting fashion in the late nineteenth century made dress a subject of widespread interest among sections of the middle class concerned with reform. To some extent, this was ably dealt with by the advent of The Rational Dress Society in 1883, whose aims were that ‘Clothing should follow, and Drapery not contradict, the natural lines of the body’, and that it should promote health, comfort and beauty.³⁹ However, the Society was essentially conventional, and sought to promote its objectives without exacerbating the anxieties that dress reform aroused. The restrictions of conformist attitudes to dress were clearly incompatible with notions of the simple life, and Carpenter’s ideas, unlike the Society’s, reflected the symbolism as well as practical advantages of simplified dress, and as such, dress became a representation of difference. He argued for a reduction of the layers of clothing worn, the wearing of wool and natural fibres and dyes, and advocated styles that allowed the body to ‘breathe’. Famously, he championed the wearing of sandals, as he himself did, and recommended the pleasures of ‘grasping the ground – the bare earth - with his bare feet’.⁴⁰ The beard and sandals image, although often subjected to ridicule, and lampooned in cartoons and literature, became a symbol of individual and social protest, and remained for much of the twentieth century emblematic of an alternative life-style, vegetarianism, progressive education and the notorious ‘crank’.⁴¹

Carpenter completed his view of simplification by advocating the re-cycling of clothing, suggesting that items no longer able to be worn should be used as cloths or bandages and finally composted and returned to the land. This view clearly anticipates twentieth-century ecological and green issues. The main concerns of 'Simplification of Life' - food production, diet, the household, dress, and re-cycling - all found their way into the ethos of diverse back-to-the-land ideas, and food production and diet became highly important aspects of most communal experiments searching for a better and healthier life. Carpenter's own health had so benefited from manual work and his own adoption of a simpler diet that was virtually meat and alcohol free that he felt bound to communicate it. For Carpenter, over-consumption by one class that caused exploitation of another took diet into the realms of political struggle. That elaborate and luxurious eating was an inherent part of middle-class respectability made it equally a target for attack. In *Towards Democracy*, he condemned it as part of 'The puppet dance of gentility' (p. 30). If you simplified your diet, Carpenter expounded, you could grow most of your food, reducing the need for exploitation of labour and overproduction.

Clearly, part of Edward Carpenter's appeal was his own example; patently a middle-class, educated man, he was living proof that it was possible to throw over the traces of established convention and embrace a form of Socialist brotherhood through simplicity and a return to nature. He actually lived the simple life, tilling the earth and cultivating the land in a shared community with those around him. Nevertheless, central to his life at Millthorpe remained the democratic spirit of *Towards Democracy*, seeking to convey a 'community of life' and the 'instinctive kinship of each individual to Nature'.⁴² Strangely, Carpenter's work as a writer and speaker did nothing to destroy the myth that he lived entirely from the land. Millthorpe became the paradigm for back-to-the-land and simple-life ventures, and by the 1890s, Carpenter's name had become widely known, and he began to attract the status of prophet and guru. He recalled, in a chapter in *My Days and Dreams* he titled 'Millthorpiana', the endless string of visitors who came to seek inspiration and advice. He related that at one point he attracted 'faddists of all sorts ... Vegetarians, dress reformers, temperance orators, spiritualists, secularists, anti-vivisectionists, socialists, anarchists - and others of very serious mien and character' (p. 167).

At the dawn of the twentieth century, back-to-the-land experiments were at their height, their advocates known as pioneers of the 'New Life', a new life that was

undoubtedly influenced by the Socialism and return-to-nature ideas central to both Morris's and Carpenter's work. If Carpenter had found it difficult to find simple-life literature at the beginning of the 1880s, by the end of the century, a plethora of practical guide-books and pamphlets appeared to guide urban dwellers in a return to the land. These contained little of either Morris's Socialist principles or Carpenter's transcendental and practical philosophy. Despite this, they adhered closely to Morrisian and Carpenterian views about the importance of meaningful work and physical contact with the land. Among the books that proliferated on the subject were titles such as *Life on Four Acres* (1906) by F. A. Morton and *The Lore of the Honey Bee* (1908) by Tickner Edwards. These offered an Arcadian view of a return-to-nature but still held to the principles of simplicity and self-sufficiency.

Between 1900 and 1910, Morris's back-to-nature ideals still flourished, expressed in ventures such as C. R. Ashbee's utopian experiment at Chipping Campden and the Gimson and Barnsleys' workshops at Pinbury and Sapperton. At the other end of the back-to-the-land spectrum, dwindling but uncompromising agrarian communes continued to carry out Carpenterian principles of tilling the earth, self-sufficiency and equality. There were of course overlaps in the take-up of both writers' ideas within specific experiments and agendas, and these will be discussed later in the thesis. The next chapter, however, examines how the particularity of their emphases contributed to the nature of their ethos, and how this was reflected in differing return-to-nature ideals.

¹ See Gould, pp. 15-28.

² *Political Writings of William Morris*, ed. by A. L. Morton (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973), p. 11.

³ William Morris, 'The Society of The Future', *Political Writings of William Morris*, p. 194.

⁴ See Howkins, *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, p. 68.

⁵ Carpenter's analysis of his adoption of Socialism, including his reading of Hyndman's *England for All* (1881), and Morris's influence on his ideas are discussed in *My Days and Dreams*, pp. 124-136.

⁶ Carpenter had given the SDF £300 towards the setting up of *Justice*. He was not wholly convinced of Morris's position over the breaking-up of the Federation and his split with Hyndman, but eventually joined the Socialist League in 1885 and came to regard Morris as the most significant representative of the new society.

⁷ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p. 130.

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- ⁸ Edward Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1889), p. 137.
- ⁹ Walt Whitman, cited in Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p. 129.
- ¹⁰ Edward Carpenter, *England's Ideal* (Manchester: John Heywood, 1885), p. 3.
- ¹¹ A. L. Morton, *The English Utopia* (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd, 1978), p. 219.
- ¹² Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p. 115.
- ¹³ Morris's 'Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil' (1884), and Carpenter's 'England's Ideal' (1884), are examples of this.
- ¹⁴ See 'England's Ideal' (1884) for Carpenter and 'How We Live And How We Might Live' (1887) for Morris.
- ¹⁵ Morris expressed this opinion in a letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones written at Kelmscott in December 1884. *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, II, p. 353.
- ¹⁶ William Morris, 'The Society of the Future', *Political Writings of William Morris*, p. 194.
- ¹⁷ William Morris, 'The Society of the Future'. *Political Writings of William Morris*, p. 202.
- ¹⁸ Carpenter acknowledged his debt to Morris in *My Days and Dreams*, p. 125.
- ¹⁹ A. L. Morton, *Political Writings of William Morris*, p.22.
- ²⁰ *Seed-time* was the journal of The New Fellowship, while *The New Order* was produced by The Croydon Brotherhood Church. These organisations and journals are discussed in detail in part two of the thesis.
- ²¹ William Morris, 'The Society Of the Future', *Political Writings of William Morris*, p. 192. Some ethical socialist groups, such as the New Fellowship, took issue with Morris over this idea. For a detailed discussion of this, see chapter five of the thesis.
- ²² William Morris, 'The Society Of the Future', *Political Writings of William Morris*, p. 193.
- ²³ See chapter seven of the thesis for a full discussion of Morris's influence on these groups.
- ²⁴ Stephen Coleman, *William Morris and News from Nowhere: A Vision for Our Time*, ed. by Stephen Coleman and Paddy O'Sullivan (Devon: Green Books, 1990), p. 13.
- ²⁵ Peter Faulkner, *William Morris and the Idea of England*, Kelmscott Lecture 1991 (London: William Morris Society, 1992), p. 12.
- ²⁶ MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, p. 32.
- ²⁷ Michael Waters, *The Garden in Victorian Literature* (Cambridge: Scholar Press, 1988), p. 220.
- ²⁸ *William Morris: News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, ed. by Clive Wilmer (London: Penguin Books, 1993), p. xxxv.
- ²⁹ Foreword to *Towards Democracy*, p. 11.
- ³⁰ Simon Dentith, *The Rhetoric of the Real* (Hertfordshire: Harvester, 1990), p. 134.
- ³¹ For example, see 'The Simplification of Life', in *England's Ideal and other Papers on Social Subjects* (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co, 1887), pp. 83-93, in which Carpenter gives

categorical advice on diet, cooking, domestic interiors, cleaning, decorating and re-cycling. Further references to this edition are given in brackets after quotations in the text.

³² Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.165.

³³ Carpenter, 'Simplification of Life', in *England's Ideal*, p. 98.

³⁴ Carpenter's views about allotments and the compromise between self-sufficiency and paid employment are considered in chapter seven of the thesis. His influence on the Allotment and Small Holdings Association and cottage farms is also discussed in this chapter.

³⁵ Hugh Mapleton, *The Open Road* (1907), quoted in Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land*, p. 200.

³⁶ The Humanitarian League was set up by Henry and Kate Salt in 1891. The Salts, influenced by Carpenter's writing and example, settled in a cottage near Tilford in Surrey and grew their own vegetables, wrote and lectured. This combination of activities mirrored Carpenter's own suggestions and way of life. Morris also made the suggestion that work should be multi-dimensional, advocating combining employment with 'raising food from the surrounding country to the study and practice of art and science' (XXIII, p. 115).

³⁷ Marsh, *Back to the Land*, p. 198.

³⁸ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p. 149.

³⁹ *Rational Dress Society Catalogue of Exhibits and Gazette* (London: Hatchards, 1883), p. 2. From a facsimile, originally published by Garland Publishing, London, 1978.

⁴⁰ Carpenter, *England's Ideal*, p. 94.

⁴¹ The connections between Morris and Carpenter and this theme are discussed in chapter nine of the thesis. For a detailed account of dress reform and back to the land, see Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land*, pp. 187-196. Also see Elizabeth Wilson, 'Utopian Dress and Dress Reform', in *Adorned in Dreams* (London: Virago, 1985), pp. 208-227, for a history of the nineteenth-century dress reform movement and a survey of dress in utopian literature.

⁴² Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.142.

Chapter Three

On Sexuality and The Senses: William Morris and Edward Carpenter and a Return to Nature

This chapter considers Morris's and Carpenter's writing concerned with ideas about sexuality and the senses within the context of nature and a return to the land. It deals with Carpenter's writing on sex, love and marriage, his views about homosexuality and comradeship, and his belief in homogenic love. It also examines Morris's attitude to gender and sexuality in *News from Nowhere*, and his emphasis on the visual in representing nature. It focuses on how both writers' empathy with particular senses affected their back-to-the-land idealism, and shows how this was reflected in the language of their argument. It also considers the different character of language both writers employed in their imaginative work, and in their political writing and journalism. It begins by exploring how Morris's and Carpenter's relationship to nature was mediated by their sensitivity to particular sensory emphases, and reflects on their derivation.

Nature and The Senses

As the introduction has suggested, the return to nature that both Morris and Carpenter sought was nature firmly located within the imaginative and emotional grip of the Romantic Movement. In both writers' early association with nature there were overtones of the movement's engagement not only with beauty, but also with the sublime in nature. This influence permeated the language that Morris and Carpenter employed to represent nature, and contributed, in different ways, to the emphasis on the senses within that language. The attitude with which they first engaged with 'nature' and nature in poetry and literature was also different, and this was reflected in the ways their relationship with nature developed.

In *My Days and Dreams*, Carpenter recalls that although he was familiar with Mozart and Beethoven, he did not read any poetry until he was eighteen. The influence of Tennyson, Wordsworth and Shelley, when at last he read them, was grafted onto Carpenter's already established emotional and physical relationship with nature. His mature reflections on his childhood isolation, also described in *My Days and Dreams*, bear a striking resemblance to the atmospheric and elemental imagery in Wordsworth's poetry.¹ Carpenter's reading of the Romantic writers as a young

man clearly influenced the sensory quality and the timbre of his imaginative writing about nature. *Towards Democracy* is saturated with the physical, mental and spiritual relationship between the individual and nature, which Wordsworth famously expressed in *The Prelude* as ‘Fostered alike by beauty and by fear’.²

Writing about the Romantic Movement in *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971), M. H. Abrams established that a prime concern of ‘Wordsworth as bard, and Coleridge as metaphysician and bard, [was] to help redeem man by fostering a reconciliation with nature’.³ Carpenter’s own metaphysic seems to owe much to what Abrams described as ‘Wordsworth’s annunciation of a paradise to be achieved by a union between mind and nature’ (p. 145). Carpenter’s corresponding equation of salvation with a return to nature took him into the realms of Romanticism, pantheism and nature worship; not an uncommon stance in a time when scientific progress and theories of evolution had undermined established religion and ‘traditional’ ways of life. However, Carpenter’s call for a more ‘natural and primitive’ life, was neither reactionary nor nostalgic; rather, it was a reinterpretation of the Romantic tradition to support his utopian vision.

Despite the obvious influence of the Romantic poets on Carpenter’s physical and emotional response to nature, when he read Tennyson, whom he described as ‘the poet of the day’, nowhere did he reveal any admiration or identification with the medieval world or the great chivalric romances. There seems to have been little sense of the medieval past, made fashionable by the Gothic revival, in Carpenter’s immediate and very physical yearning for the natural world. In contrast Morris, as we know, was already reading Gothic stories by the time he was four, and by seven he had read all of Scott’s novels. He discovered in them the poetry of the medieval romance, and he grew up with an awareness and sensitivity to history, pageantry, heraldry, and with an enduring empathy for their sense of difference. Morris embedded this brightly-coloured, emblematic landscape, with its ethos, its emotion and its highly visual language, into his rapport with nature. This was later developed and politicised by the central influence of Ruskin on Morris’s response to architecture and craftsmanship. Unlike Carpenter, Morris had a sensibility about architecture and buildings, and could deploy a discourse of landscape within nature. Morris’s understanding of landscape as part of nature is evident in the juxtaposition of nature and landscape in *The Earthly Paradise*, and in the iconography in *A Dream of John Ball* and *The Story of the Unknown Church*. Equally evident is a sense of re-

birth through Morris's linking of history, nature and the future in the imagery of *News from Nowhere*.⁴

Unlike Carpenter, Morris seems to have felt little attraction to Wordsworth, and while E. P. Thompson discusses Keats's and Shelley's effect on the youthful Morris, Wordsworth is not mentioned. Indeed, in an account of Morris's Oxford reaction to the Romantic poets, Fiona MacCarthy recalls that Morris confessed in later life that he had only pretended to like Wordsworth and that his 'later conclusion was that Shelley had no eyes'.⁵ However, in Keats the young Morris discovered what E. P. Thompson described as a 'heightened sensitivity to every shade of subjective experience' (p18), and a new meaning in words such as 'Beauty' and 'work of art' (p.19). For Morris, Keats's work was an inspiration to the world of the imagination, in which art and aesthetics could confront the poverty of reality.

In her study of Morris, MacCarthy also points to the qualities in Keats that made Morris refer to him as one of his masters. She identifies Keats's 'supreme visual quality' as the element in his writing that most deeply affected Morris (p.77). Perhaps here, in Morris's response to the visual, lies one of the most pertinent differences between Carpenter's and Morris's relationship with nature. For both it was a youthful refuge from a world in which they felt alienation from their families, their class and most of their peers. But for Morris, nature was a theatre in which he could engage his visual and romantic imagination to the full, where history and poetry could challenge contemporary values and aesthetic judgements. For Carpenter, on the other hand, nature was the context within which the human spirit could unfold, and where he felt he could achieve a true understanding of himself and fellowship with other men. Reflecting these different emphases, then, it is not surprising that the language of their most influential back-to-nature texts stress different senses; where *Towards Democracy* is essentially tactile, *News from Nowhere* is primarily visual.

Morris and The Visual

For Morris the visual was clearly the most important and highly tuned of his senses. This was reflected in Morris's extraordinary ability to design and draw, and his intuitive sense of colour. Much of the power of his writing, and the force of his argument about the value of landscape and the beauty and significance of nature, were conveyed by the intense visual quality of his language. This passage from *The*

Story of the Unknown Church (1856) describing the abundance of nature celebrates the visual, which in itself becomes the vehicle for the descriptive quality of the language:

Then farther from the Church, and past the cloister and its buildings, were many detached buildings, and a great garden round them, all within the circle of the poplar trees; in the garden were trellises covered over with roses, and convolvulus, and the great-leaved fiery nasturtium; and specially all along by the poplar trees were there trellises, but on these grew nothing but deep crimson roses; the hollyhocks too were all out in bloom at that time, great spires of pink, and orange, and red, and white, with their soft, downy leaves. I said that nothing grew on the trellises by the poplars but crimson roses, but I was not quite right, for in many places the wild flowers had crept into the garden from without: lush green briony, with green-white blossoms, that grows so fast, one could almost think that we see it grow, and deadly nightshade, *La bella donna*, oh! so beautiful; red berry, and purple, yellow-spiked flower, and deadly, cruel-looking, dark green leaf, all growing together in the glorious days of early autumn. (I, p. 151)

Through detailed observation of nature, an innate sense of place, sensitivity to colour and organic forms, Morris is able to evoke a world in which nature and artifice, landscape and architecture are able to co-exist in harmony. This interrelated image of the natural and constructed world later became the symbol and the context for his vision of a revolutionised life.

The intensity of Morris's attunement to the visual, and his ability to express and manipulate it, resulted in texts that could be 'seen' as well as read. This quality is clearly apparent in the imagery and colour of his imaginative utopian writing as well as his poetry, and it is perhaps one of the reasons he could write it so spontaneously and fluently. The emphasis on the visual in his imaginative writing suggests a crucial difference between this language and that of many of his political lectures and much of his journalism. Unlike his imaginative work, which Morris was able to write at ferocious speed, his lectures took him sometimes a month to complete. There is a sense in which, despite their eloquence, these lectures reflect his struggle for an appropriate language, as well as the evolution of his political and social thought. He said himself, 'I know what I want to say, but the cursed words go to water between my fingers'.⁶

E. P. Thompson records that Shaw wrote of Morris's writings about Socialism that they 'really called up all his mental reserves for the first time' (p.252).

Thompson goes on to say that in his lectures, 'Morris was exercising and disciplining his mind in a way he had never done before' (p.252). Morris's political writing, then, can be seen as a struggle to find a language of argument and analysis, rooted in the reality he saw around him, and involved with the process and means of Socialism and the reality of Socialist action. His imaginative writing, while it operated as an agent for social change, was concerned above all with imaginative ends rather than means. It was perhaps this difference in the intention and character of language that was one of the reasons, as we shall see later, why *News from Nowhere* and *A Dream of John Ball*, rather than Morris's political writings, were so often referred to by back-to-the-land advocates as influential texts in their development.

It is arguable that the part of Morris's vision that concerned a return to the land was given only a limited voice in his lectures and public writing. Within this genre, he used the rhetoric of the revolutionary Socialist to spell out the inequality and evils of contemporary society. However, even in his political lectures, which dealt with the realities of capitalist exploitation and class war, Morris employed an evocative visual language when writing about the threat of capitalism to the natural world. On November 13th 1887, the evening of Bloody Sunday, he delivered 'The Society of the Future' to the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League; talking of the evils of industrialisation and materialism, he argued thus:

I tell you what luxury has done for you in modern Europe? It has covered the merry green fields with the hovels of slaves, and blighted the flowers and trees with poisonous gases, and turned the rivers into sewers; till over many parts of Britain the common people have forgotten what a field is like, and their idea of beauty is a gas poisoned gin-palace or a tawdry theatre.⁷

In contrast, it is notable that in much of Morris's writing for both *Justice* and *Commonweal*, in which he was involved with recruiting for the party, political lobbying and the process of social change, the visual descriptive language of his imaginative writing becomes a language of action, of political agitation, and the rhetoric of the campaigner. This was demonstrated in an editorial for *Commonweal* written in January 1887. Calling for new recruits in 'the warfare against class-rule and social wrong,' Morris wrote:

We call upon all men who desire to see the solution of the great problems that befront the labouring people to help us in our task. What we can do

shall be done, but there exist a thousand places into which the light of Socialism has not penetrated, millions of men it has not reached. Everyone can in some way spread the light. Let each one do his best. Circulate the *Commonweal*, push Socialist literature, speak a word in and out of season for Socialism. Let pass no opportunity of helping on the overthrow of capitalism and the substitution for it of a system of united free labour and fraternal enjoyment.⁸

In relation to Morris's views on land issues in *Commonweal*, Joseph Chamberlain's allotment scheme, as Nicholas Salmon observed, incurred Morris's 'particular wrath' (p. xvii). This was articulated in a language of opposition and confrontation, with Morris describing Chamberlain's land plans as a swindle and 'feeble attempts at peasant-proprietorship' (p. 261). Morris's reaction to, and influence on, this particular strand of the back-to-the-land movement is discussed later in the thesis, in the section on The Allotment and Small Holdings Association's journal, *Land and People*.

A significant exception to the character of the language Morris employed in most of his contributions to *Justice* and *Commonweal* was of course *News from Nowhere* itself, serialised first in *Commonweal* before publication as a book. This is also true of 'Under an Elm Tree; or Thoughts in the Country-side', published in 1889, in which Morris while on holiday allowed himself to speculate on the plight of nature and the possibilities of sustainability. A. L. Morton rightly observed that in 'Under an Elm Tree', Morris showed 'his passionate love of the earth as it had been shaped by thousands of years of co-operation between man and his environment, and his conviction that Socialism would renew that brutally interrupted co-operation'.⁹ However, it is clear that unlike much of his journalism, Morris emphasised this conviction through the use of a highly visual and coloured language, describing the 'cottage gardens bright with flowers', the river 'sapphire blue under this ruffling wind and cloudless sky', 'the grey ridges of the hay', the downs 'rising over the sea of green and blue-green meadows' and an old roan 'ugly Roman-nosed horse'.¹⁰ And set amid the landscape of 'Under an Elm Tree' is the figure of an ancient White Horse cut from the chalk hill (in Morris's time thought to commemorate Alfred's victory over the Danes at Ashdown in 871).

Resting under the elm tree, Morris discusses how this bucolic vision belies the downtrodden, disfigured and exploited land-workers who people this landscape. He forcibly uses the visual qualities of the imagery of a seemingly unspoilt, beautiful

world to highlight the threat of capitalism and urbanism to the natural environment, and to emphasise that inequality and exploitation are as relevant in a rural context as anywhere. The image of the White Horse is employed as an historical symbol of the resistance of the ordinary people to injustice. Anticipating *News from Nowhere* written two years later, Morris implies that if ‘a new Ashdown had to be fought (against *capitalist* robbers this time), the new White Horse would look down on the home of men as wise as starlings in their *equality*, and so perhaps as happy’.¹¹

Through the juxtaposition of the visual qualities of nature and social inequality, Morris eschewed a sentimental approach to the rural and a return to nature. Because of his finely-tuned visual sensitivity, his imaginative writing created an image, as well as dream, of a utopian return to the land. Despite his celebration of the beauty and importance of nature, Morris believed passionately that only through the defeat of capitalism would man return to a state of co-existence with the natural environment, which would then become the rightful context for a meaningful life. In *News from Nowhere*, he demonstrated that victory and the resulting equality of life. The emphasis on the visual in his language, and the aesthetic qualities of *Nowhere*, reinforced Morris’s vision of a Socialism in which a return to nature and simplicity went hand-in-hand. But it also represented an ideal and an image that reflected a holistic view of the environment and man’s relationship to it. This ethos, as I shall argue in later chapters, was reflected in back-to-the-land ideas and experiments during the 1890s and 1900s. These ranged from the particular aesthetics and utopianism of ruralist exponents of the Arts and Crafts Movement, the reform dress of simple-life followers, such as Janet Ashbee and Louise Powell, to the development of the Garden City Movement, and to the domestic architecture of C. F. A. Voysey and Edwin Lutyens. The next part of this chapter examines how, in contrast to Morris, Carpenter’s emphasis on the tactile evoked a different focus in a representation of nature.

Carpenter and The Tactile

Unlike Morris, for Carpenter tactile contact with nature, including a physical return to the land was a fundamental element in his life and writing. It was the practical expression of his belief in the essential oneness of the universe and man’s connectedness with nature. As we have seen in the previous chapter, it was the writing and example of Henry Thoreau and the poetry of Walt Whitman that exerted

such a direct and powerful influence on both his language and his need for a palpable relationship with the natural world. The mystical and transcendental qualities of the *Bhagavat Gita*, which Carpenter read for the first time in 1881, inspired him to what he described as a kind of ‘super-consciousness’. This nexus of ideas, combined with Carpenter’s realisation of his own homosexuality, resulted in the outpouring of *Towards Democracy*, a celebration of sensuality and sexuality articulated through a language which emphasises the tactile. Carpenter described the period before ‘the birth of the book’ as a time of ‘gestation and suffering’, writing that ‘the child, conceived and carried in pain and anguish, was at last brought into the world’.¹² The use of language connected with pregnancy and labour is not accidental and *Towards Democracy* clearly represents Carpenter’s physical and spiritual re-birth into nature, and into a meaningful relationship with mankind.

A journey into nature, then, represented for Carpenter a journey into himself; to communicate the physical and thereby spiritual nature of this was the radical and redemptive message of *Towards Democracy*:

The scene changes; the sun and the stars are veiled the solid earth alone is left. I am buried (I too that I may rise again) deep underfoot among the clods. (p. 23)

This reference to resurrection through immersion in nature reflected Carpenter’s perception that the contemporary denial of nature was symptomatic of man’s fall from a state of grace; primitive bliss had been replaced by ‘Civilisation’, resulting in individualism, isolationism and urbanisation. This conviction was mediated by what Christopher Shaw has described as Carpenter’s ‘systematic idealist philosophy, which supported a critique of contemporary science and a distinctive epistemology’.¹³ However, it must also be remembered that Carpenter had been an ordained curate in the Church of England, and that his identification of unhappiness and injustice with ‘the fall’ was located within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Consequently, his language was often biblical, and his ideas were frequently expressed in terms of salvation and despair; this dichotomy he identified with the rural/urban debate. In *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure* (1889), referring to ‘a return to nature and the community of human life’, Carpenter described them as ‘the way back to the lost Eden, or rather forward to the new Eden, of which the old was only a

figure... Nature must once more become his home, as it is the home of the animals and the angels' (p. 35).

Carpenter's back-to-nature philosophy, first articulated in *Towards Democracy*, and later politicised in his lectures and journalism, appeared as a powerful antidote to establishment values. Yet it also provided an alternative to the isolation and emotional repression, felt by many people living within the unbending and rigid social order of late-nineteenth-century society. In poems such as 'A New Life' Carpenter expounded his message of transcendental democracy with a recognition of the necessity for a physical move to the land:

Henceforth I propound a new life for you - that you should bring the
peace and grace of Nature into all your daily life - being freed from
vain striving:

The freed soul, passing disengaged into the upper air, forgetful of
self,

Rising again in others, ever knowing itself again in others...

Out of the houses and closed rooms, out of the closed prison of
self which you have inhabited so long;

Into the high air which circles round the world, the region of
human equality,...

So passing enfranchised shall you regain after long captivity
Your own native abode. (p. 286)

These anti-establishment sentiments and Carpenter's alternative vision of personal enfranchisement through a return to nature certainly fell on receptive ears. This is borne out in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism* (1990), when Tony Brown makes the point that in the last decade of the nineteenth century, 'Carpenter's lectures sometimes attracted as many as two thousand people at a Sunday meeting of a Labour Church or large town hall'.¹⁴ However, Carpenter's response to nature and the simple life reflected and expressed a deeply physical as well as an intellectual and spiritual need. His emphasis on the tactile, and a physical engagement with the land, therefore influenced not only aspects of Socialist thinking but also a multiplicity of simple-life ventures, ranging from the development of agrarian communes to the inauguration of progressive schools, from a belief in sexual freedom and organic humanitarianism to dress reform and vegetarianism.

Carpenter's conviction of the importance of contact with nature and physical work is reflected in the tactile and sensual qualities of much of *Towards*

Democracy's language. Through an emphasis on the tangible, and by positioning himself within the elements, Carpenter evoked contact with nature as the path to individual freedom, national re-awakening and cosmic awareness. References to a physical engagement with nature and a sense of touch abound in the text:

I touch you lightly. I am the spray.
I touch you that you remember, and forget not who you are.

I am the ground; I listen the sound of your feet. They come nearer. I shut my eyes and feel their tread over my face.

I am the trees; I reach downward my long arms and touch you, through you heed not. (pp. 16, 59)

By touching and embracing the earth, by becoming part of nature, Carpenter implies that freedom and democracy are inherently waiting to be revealed. His identification of himself with nature is complete when he writes:

I, Nature, stand and call to you though you heed not: Have courage, come forth, O child of mine, that you may see me. (p. 16)

Carpenter ascribed this use of 'I' and nature as an integral element of the emotional language of the text, writing in 1894, 'If I have said "I Nature" it was because at the time, at any rate, I felt "I Nature"'.¹⁵ Through the interplay of a language embracing the tangible to suggest the metaphysical, Carpenter breaks down the boundaries between man and nature, and the physical and spiritual. Throughout *Towards Democracy*, he also celebrates his newly discovered sexuality and his awareness of its relationship to nature and comradeship:

Lovers of all handicrafts and of labour in the open air, confessed passionate lovers of your own sex, Arise! (p.33)

In this particular overtly sexual emphasis Carpenter's back-to-nature ideology was markedly different to Morris's. This was not limited to sexual orientation, but rather, as we shall later in this chapter, was symptomatic of the different attitudes to sexuality and gender issues evident in both writers' work. However, despite Carpenter's homosexuality, he was never exclusive in his call for democracy and he pleaded for an inclusive liberation.

Primarily autobiographical, *Towards Democracy* was Carpenter's utopian gospel for the re-establishment of a state of grace, his message of salvation and a

catalyst for individual and social change. The first part of the book was written in what Carpenter described as a mood of exaltation. It did not inform in any practical sense as Carpenter's later lectures and journalistic writing did, but rather it generated a mood that became the theme for a 'Grand Alternative'. In passages such as the following, Carpenter demonstrated his vision of that alternative; a society of democracy, sexual liberation and life lived in the open air:

Freedom! The deep breath! The word heard centuries and centuries
beforehand; the soul singing low and passionate to itself: Joy! Joy!

Blessings and thanks for ever for the sweet rain; blessings for the fresh air
blowing, and the meadows illimitable and the grass and the clouds. (pp. 14, 32)

With such sentiments, *Towards Democracy* became, from the 1880s on, the simple-life 'bible', a fundamental and central text to many involved within the diverse strands of the back-to-the-land movement. Part of its influence lay in the conjunction of the various 'voices' or emphases Carpenter allowed to flow through the text. In considering the mood of the work, Carpenter reflected that it had 'been necessary to, write in the open air' to sustain a sense of exaltation; an 'impression' of, and sensibility to, an organic order is always present in the text.¹⁶ This is demonstrated by his references to, and observation of, growth and the elements. For Carpenter the natural world was rarely still:

The caddis worm leaves the water, and takes on wings and flies in the
upper air; the walking mud becomes amorous of the winged sunlight, and
behaves itself in an abandoned manner.

The Earth (during its infancy) flies round the Sun from which it sprang,
and the mud flies round the pond from which it sprang.

The earth swims in space, the fish swim in the sea, the bird swims in
the air, and the soul of man in the ocean of Equality- towards which all
the other streams run.¹⁷

Here the sense of a fleeting glimpse attempts to demonstrate the organic qualities and the relationships at work in the process of exfoliation. This passage also illustrates the spontaneous, almost received, quality of the writing, which Carpenter recognised when he recalled in *My Days and Dreams* that 'It seemed to be already there. I never hesitated for a moment' (p. 106).

The ethos and spontaneity of *Towards Democracy*, Carpenter's first sustained piece of writing, became the wellspring of all his later political and social work. The utopian form of his writing was always located within the framework of his philosophy of a 'unified cosmos'. Within this philosophy, Carpenter manipulated the shape, the texture and the emotional quality of his language, enabling him to illuminate the content of his utopian message in a multiplicity of ways. Changing emphasis made it possible for him to communicate his ideology to a particular audience in a specific way. This also served to facilitate the emotional, as well as intellectual appeal of his argument, allowing him to juxtapose the intention of a particular 'voice', altering the form of his utopian writing but retaining a consistent core of the content. By constructing and using a variety of 'voices', Carpenter was able to exploit the different emphases in his writing for public consumption (his lectures and journalism) and that intended for private contemplation such as *Towards Democracy*.

Despite the transcendental qualities of Carpenter's call for a return to nature, the power of his message was not limited to his imaginative writing alone. Keith Neild summed up Carpenter's position as a utopian mediator 'between the structural requirements of capitalism and the world of human needs' when he wrote: 'Carpenter's "other world" was not some alternative ideal of mental or ecstatic harmony. It was this one, transformed and humanised'.¹⁸ However, this transformation could only take place within 'nature', humanity and nature being part of an indissoluble whole. In *The Art of Creation* (1904), Carpenter described his belief in a cosmic underpinning of human identity and political change:

All Nature - all the actual world, as known to us or any being - we have to conceive as the countless interchange of communication between countless selves; or, if these selves are really identical, and the one Ego underlies *all* thought and knowledge, then the Subject and Object are the same, and the World, the whole Creation, is Self-revelment.¹⁹

Like Morris, Carpenter also developed a form of language that differentiated his political writing and journalism from his imaginative work. To campaign for Socialism and produce lectures and political writing intended to educate and inspire, Carpenter developed, pragmatized and demystified his highly personal and transcendental view of democracy. Indeed, it is striking that his writing on social reform became the bulk of his literary output. In contrast to his early imaginative

work, in his later political writing, he was able to present his call for a simpler, more natural life through concrete, practical advice based on his own physical experience at Millthorpe. His advice was avidly received by back-to-the-land groups, who used it as the basis for setting up agrarian communes, self-sufficient communities and for developing educational ideas.²⁰ However, despite the effect Carpenter's political writing had on practical back-to-the-land experiments, it was the transcendental spirituality of *Towards Democracy* that remained the zenith of his influence.

To sum up, Carpenter's emphasis on the tactile and the physical in relation to nature was two-fold. Firstly, it suggested salvation through spiritual communion with nature and the elements, and secondly, it promoted manual labour as a cure for society's ills. Unlike Morris's vision of a utopian return to the land as the context for Socialism and a revolutionised life, Carpenter offered a tangible involvement in nature and the land as an agent of personal and social change. His call for personal liberation, and thereby collective freedom, was inherent in his utopian Socialist politics, and despite its often romantic and anarchic alignment, it made a direct appeal both to the working and disaffected middle classes for over thirty years. Also unlike Morris's, Carpenter's utopianism - his call for tactile contact with the natural elements - was rarely about the means of change. Instead, it focused on the need for change itself, and as such, it spurred many of those seeking alternative life-styles into a practical and physical return to the land: cultivating food, and living in sexual equality, co-operation and comradeship.

Aspects of Carpenter's emphasis on the tactile were particularly evident in the educational ideas that promoted manual labour, nature rambles and nude bathing in the progressive schools designed to encourage back-to-nature ideals, at Abbotsholme and Bedales. They also became common currency in attitudes to simplified dress that allowed contact with the elements, the basic homegrown food and the co-operative cultivation that typified many radical ventures, including the Whiteway Colony, the Starnthwaite Co-operative and the Norton Communal Colony near Sheffield.²¹ Distinct from those endeavours deeply affected by Morris's sensibility to the visual, the concerns of most communal experiments influenced by Carpenter's emphasis on a tangible involvement with nature displayed a decided lack of interest in aesthetics.²²

As we have seen, it is clear from his writing that for Carpenter, the tactile was the most highly tuned of his senses, and that this sensibility palpably contributed to

his celebration of the sensual. The next section of this chapter examines his ideas about sexuality in relation to nature and a return to the land.

Sexuality, Homogenic Love and Comradeship

Patently, Carpenter's homosexuality, and his belief in homogenic love, affected the nature of his ideas about comradeship and a return to the land. An obvious part of his need for brotherhood stemmed from a desire to live with, and make relationships with, other men. Yet his sympathy for the position of women in society and their sexuality was demonstrated in his pamphlets, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society* (1894), *Woman: and her Place in a Free Society* (1894) and, published in the same year, *Marriage in a Free Society*.²³ He also went so far as to discuss women and same-sex relationships in *The Intermediate Sex* (1906), which he described in a sub-title as 'a study of some transitional types of men and women'.²⁴ In *Love's Coming-of-Age* (1896), Carpenter had produced a series of papers with titles such as 'The Sex Passion', 'Woman, The Serf', 'Woman in Freedom', concluding with a wider outlook called 'The Free Society'. In this last paper Carpenter contextualised the subjects covered in the rest of the book. Demonstrating that his views on sexuality were an integral element of the central themes of his thinking, he elaborated his ideas in the context of a return to nature and the simple life:

Again it is easy to see, if the sense of cleanness in sex ever does come in, if the physical body ever becomes clean (which it certainly is not now-a-days), clean and beautiful and accepted, within and without—and this of course it can only be through a totally changed method of life, through pure and clean food, nakedness to a large extent, and a kind of saturation with the free air and light of heaven; and if the mental and moral relation ever becomes clean, which can only be with the freedom of woman and the sincerity of man, and so forth; it is easy to see how entirely all this would alter our criticism of the various sex-relations, and our estimate of their place and fitness.²⁵

Carpenter's identification of the body, beautiful and wholesome, with sexuality, is mediated by contact with nature. Female sexuality is also perceived as a basic need and fundamental to any development in sexual relations and healthy marriage. Despite his obviously inclusive and sympathetic attitude to women, Carpenter was not surprisingly, as Tony Brown points out, 'still trapped in the gender stereotypes of his age'.²⁶ The following quotations demonstrate this:

Woman is the more primitive, the more intuitive, the more emotional...

Woman tends more to intuition and man to logic...

Generally it will be admitted, as we are dealing with points of mental and moral difference between the sexes, Man has developed the more active and Woman the more passive qualities.²⁷

Nevertheless, as much as Carpenter's view that gender was determined biologically ignores ideas about the construction of gender, his writing was still extremely challenging to late-nineteenth-century concepts and understanding of sexuality.

Love's Coming-of-Age, despite being written a year before the Oscar Wilde trial, and suffering numerous publication difficulties, proved to be one of his most influential and popular books. And as Tony Brown also suggests, 'it was read by working-class women, active in the women's movement, as well as by middle-class radicals'.²⁸ Yet despite its contribution to women's suffrage and heterosexual relations, the position of women in *Love's Coming-of-Age* reflects and symbolises Carpenter's main focus on indeterminate sexuality and homogenic love.

It may be that Carpenter's homosexuality disposed him to be sympathetic to the notion that women had sexual desires of their own.²⁹ We also know from *My Days and Dreams* that he discussed this and related issues with a circle of Socialist and radical female friends who visited Millthorpe; these included Edith Lees, a member of the New Fellowship, Olive Schreiner, the campaigning feminist, and Kate Salt, the humanitarian and ethical Socialist.³⁰ Carpenter also made it clear that he understood that sexual repression and rigid gender definitions were means of social control, and that struggle against them was a central part of the fight of the Women's Movement. Echoing the earlier French Socialist, Charles Fourier, Carpenter believed that the degree of emancipation of women in society, including sexuality, was an indicator of emancipation in general. Writing in *Towards Democracy* of the trap of respectability, he described what he saw as the barren and tedious lives of upper-middle-class women whose natural sexual and emotional impulses were stultified by polite society and ennui:

I see avenues of young girls and women, with sideways flopping heads, debarred from Work, debarred from natural Sexuality, weary to death with nothing to do, (and this thy triumph, O, deadly respectability discussing stocks). (p. 30)

The questions and issues Carpenter raised in his writing about the position of women and ways of forwarding their cause became enmeshed with the central themes of his simple-life philosophy. As well as stressing the importance of simplifying women's clothing, and freeing them from domestic drudgery by adopting simpler food and artefacts, he urged in *Love's Coming-of-Age* that if women were to find their equal and rightful place in society, sexual impulses and bodily functions should be seen as natural and wholesome (p. 190). Only in this context he believed would a woman be able 'to face man on an equality: to find self-balanced, her natural relation to him; and to dispose of herself and of her sex perfectly freely, and not as a thrall must do' (p.52). Plainly, Carpenter saw that sexual freedom was a political issue as well as an emotional and physical one. In 'The Free Society', harking back to *Towards Democracy*, he described a culture in which 'love in all its variety of manifestations' is a possibility, and in which 'there are different forms and functions of the love-sentiment' (p. 142). This is a society in which numerous permutations of relationships exist, being both comradely, and sexually open and flexible. Carpenter was convinced its advent would see the end to 'the marriage custom which, as to-day expects two people to live eternally in the same house', and recognise 'the deep delight and happiness of a permanent spiritual mating'. Carpenter even went as far as to suggest that 'in some cases, a woman's temporary alliance with a man for the sake of obtaining a much needed child' was legitimate and desirable (p. 142).

Carpenter's vision of a free society aimed to break down the rigid and oppressive sexual mores enforced by late-nineteenth-century attitudes to gender, sexuality and marriage. In its place, Carpenter advocated a sexually tolerant society, made up of a multiplicity of unions, sexual identities and relationships. These ideas, as well as contributing to the sexual context for the Women's Movement, were also highly influential, as I will argue later, in the 'free unions' and sexual behaviour of the back-to-the-land colonists at Whiteway. Carpenter's call for the advancement of female sexuality and women's health through simplicity of dress, fresh air and exercise were also reflected, in part, in The Rational Dress Movement's emphasis on health education, and their advocacy of outdoor pursuits.³¹ Nevertheless, it is clear that Carpenter's central purpose in his writing on sexuality and gender issues was to proselytise for a wider understanding of homosexuality.

In both *Love's Coming-of-Age* and *The Intermediate Sex*, Carpenter argued, against the prevailing morality of the time, that homosexuality was neither deviant

nor an aberration. Rather, he was adamant that it is natural, and that the male homosexual has the best qualities of male and female, resulting in the 'Uranian' type of male who is both strong and sensitive, courageous and caring. Comradely and spiritual relationships between 'Uranian' men Carpenter described as homogenic love, his stated ideal of a homosexual relationship.³² In 'The Homogenic Attachment' in *The Intermediate Sex*, he quoted Walt Whitman's democratic ideals and used them to justify the social function of 'Uranian' relationships, as 'the personal and passionate attachment of man to man'. He followed this by quoting from *Democratic Vistas* (1876):

I look for the counterbalance and offset of materialistic and vulgar American Democracy, and for the spiritualization thereof..... I say democracy infers such loving comradeship, as its most enviable twin or counterpart, without which it will be incomplete, in vain, and incapable of perpetuating itself. (p. 76)

Here, Carpenter uses Whitman's authority to express the idea of 'loving comradeship' as an alternative to materialism and capitalism. The values of a new sexual and emotional climate, then, were integral to Carpenter's view of democracy and his vision of Socialism. Understandably, Carpenter's outspoken ideas on homogenic love and Socialism were not always popular or understood within the Socialist Movement. Robert Blatchford in particular, in a correspondence with Carpenter, stated that 'the whole subject is nasty to me'.³³ Blatchford concluded that Socialism was not ready to deal with questions of sex. Bruce Glasier, editor of the *Labour Leader*, was also aghast at the pamphlet 'Homogenic Love', and according to Chushichi Tsuzuki, found it "villainous", for it sounded as if Carpenter had justified sodomy'.³⁴

However little sympathy Carpenter's ideas about homosexuality received in the Labour Movement during the 1890s and 1900s, this area of his writing has been the most influential aspect of his life and work during the later part of the twentieth century. It has also been a focus in the relatively small amount of literature about him. For example, in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, Parminder Kaur Bakshi has dealt ably with the relationship between Carpenter's homosexuality and Orientalism, stressing in 'Edward Carpenter's Journey to the East' that in the *Bhagvat Gita* the mysticism is openly erotic, and that the dialogue is easily open to a homoerotic reading. He also points out that despite the influence of Hinduism's

instruction to ‘the individual to aspire for detachment from material involvement’. both Whitman and Carpenter reversed this trend, ‘in that for them the physical supersedes the spiritual’ (p. 33). In the same collection but reflecting on another theme, Beverly Thiele, in ‘Coming-of-Age: Edward Carpenter on Sex and Reproduction’, explores the contrast between ‘his treatment of sex, with the account of reproduction implicit in his discussions of sex, woman and marriage’ (p. 101). She focuses on Carpenter’s theory on sex-love and his assumptions about reproduction. Thiele leaves aside ‘Carpenter’s description of women’s position in Capitalist society, and what he hoped would be “her place in free society”’ (p.101). And while Sheila Rowbotham reflects on Carpenter’s influence on Socialist women, Chushichi Tsuzuki discusses Carpenter’s sublimation of homosexuality.³⁵ In the light of these studies, it is worth considering Carpenter’s writing about sexuality in relation to his involvement with nature and his back-to-the-land ideals.

Carpenter located the ‘Uranian’ man at the heart of his beliefs about comradeship, manual work and physical contact with nature. It is possible to argue that his first positive reaction to outdoor manual work was partly that it provided a release from his pent-up sexual frustration. From his first declaration in 1879 that ‘he felt the absolute necessity for a more open-air life’, and his awareness that he wanted to live permanently outside of a town, Carpenter began to confront his long-sublimated homosexuality.³⁶ In *My Days and Dreams*, he described how along with his desire to live a more active and natural life came the recognition that he was seeking friendships outside of his own class, the society of manual workers:

...[I] was beginning to knit up alliances more satisfactory to me than any I had known. Railway men, porters, clerks, signalmen, ironworkers, coachbuilders, Sheffield cutlers, and others came within my ken, and from the first I got on excellently and fully at home with them - and I believe, in most cases they with me. I felt I had come into, or at least in sight of, the world to which I belonged, and my natural habitat. (pp. 101-102)

Carpenter admired these men physically, but he also related to their earthiness, their traditions and their practical commonsense. However, he only fully came to understand the nature of his identification with working men within the physical context of a return to the land. This was reflected in his meeting with Albert Fearnough, a scythe-maker, and Charles Fox, a farmer from Bradway, whose way of life appeared to Carpenter as a form of salvation after his years of anguish and

mental confusion. His visits to the farm at Bradway became more frequent, and in 1880, Carpenter came to live with Fox and Fearnhough, working on the land with them and continuing his lecturing from a distance. They represented what he described as ‘a deliverance from the idiotic fatuous life I had been submerged in’, and he summed them up as symbolising:

A life close to Nature and actual materials, shrewd, strong, manly, independent, not in the least polite or proper, thoroughly human and kindly, and spent for the most part in the field and under the open sky. (p. 104)

The link between Carpenter’s ‘deliverance’ through manual work, fresh air and the society of comrades is clearly elucidated from this point on. His mission became to communicate his ideal of male comradeship, physical, emotional and spiritual, as an inherent element in a return to nature. It remained the central theme of much of his later work, and as we shall see, influenced Charles Robert Ashbee in recognising his own sexuality and in setting the ideological tone for his return-to-the-land experiment at Chipping Campden. It was given a powerful poetic voice when Carpenter wrote *Towards Democracy*; here, his earlier patent admiration of working men became overtly sexual. Chushichi Tsuzuki suggests that Carpenter was probably finally able to achieve sexual fulfilment at about this time.³⁷ This is borne out by the open and clearly biographical descriptions and sexual allusions in *Towards Democracy*. In part one of the text, young working men are clearly admired for their physical attributes, but they are also frequently positioned in the context of nature:

The railway lamp-foreman, tall, strong, fleet of foot, with gentle voice—lover of the fields and flowers, going for long walks Sundays or late evenings by moonlight...

The ragged boy with rare intense eyes not to be misunderstood—in the midst of much dirt and ignorance the soul enfranchised, exhaled—here too shining like the sunlight, redeemed justifying all it lights on;

The good-natured fair-haired Titan at work in the fields. (pp. 64-65)

Carpenter continues in a passage openly celebrating the indissoluble link between contact with the earth, working men and his sexual liberation:

I will be ground underfoot and the common clay;

The ploughman shall turn me up with his plough-share among the roots
of the twitch in the sweet-smelling furrow;

The potter shall mould me running his finger along my whirling edge (we
will be faithful to one another, he and I);

The bricklayer shall lay me: he shall tap me into place with the handle of
his trowel;

And to him I will utter the word which with my lips I have not spoken.
(p. 66)

Here, Carpenter clearly used the relationship between the workman and his physical work as a metaphor for the sexual act, a union that was at the very centre of his writing about a return to nature. His beliefs about simplicity of dress and food, humanitarianism and education, were adjuncts to this. His advocacy of nudity and minimal clothing, for example, although intended to promote health, were also intended to dispel inhibition and encourage sexual freedom. Yet despite his unguarded celebration and encouragement of explicitly erotic homosexual relationships, Carpenter contradictorily always insisted that his ideal attachment was the 'intense and loving comradeship' between men he described as the 'Uranian' ideal.

Carpenter was also always emphatic that sexual relationships were the province of adulthood and maturity, and writing in *The Intermediate Sex*, he stated: 'all experience shows that a too early outlet towards sex cheapens and weakens affectional capacity' (p.94). However, he followed this by demonstrating that he believed that young people needed to experience intense and loving friendships, and be informed about 'the natural curiosity of sex'; this became part of the language of his pedagogy (p.95). He reflected on this theme later in *The Intermediate Sex* in an important chapter entitled 'Affection in Education'. Here, Carpenter blamed the contemporary education system for ignorance about sexual matters, particularly homosexuality. He quoted Shelley's 'Essay on Friendship' and ancient Greek custom to support his theories that platonic but physical and sensitive relationships, including Spartan communing with nature, should be encouraged between boys, stimulating comradeship and allowing sexual orientation to develop naturally. He also forcefully encouraged the same ideas for girls and promoted open sex-education. Prophetically, he wrote:

Possibly the co-education of boys and girls may be of use in making boys less ashamed of their feelings, and girls more healthy in the expression of them. (p.109)

Carpenter's ideas about the importance of sex-education, youthful affection and comradeship went hand-in-hand with advocacy of manual work and physical activity as central elements in school life. These ideas were inspirational in the 1890s in the educational philosophy of the new progressive back-to-the-land schools at Abbotsholme and Bedales, and as we shall see, were important influences in the pedagogic philosophy of The New Fellowship and the Whiteway Colony's school.³⁸ Carpenter's extensive writing on sexuality and its 'intermediate forms', both in fiction and non-fiction, was hugely influential in the development of issues relating to gender and sexual freedom.

Despite the understandable reticence of the Socialist Movement during the 1890s to acknowledge Carpenter's writing on homosexuality, his work on marriage and gender issues contributed to the equality of the Socialist ideal at a time when the 'Women Question' was an issue of growing importance. However, his identification of homosexuality and comradeship with nature formed much of the force of his uncompromising argument on questions of gender. More acceptable to the Socialist Movement was Morris's vision concerning sexuality and relationships.

Morris, Gender and Nature in *News from Nowhere*

In his later lectures and journalism, Morris described a future in which, in a freer, simpler Socialist society, there would be equality of life, work and relationships for both sexes. He illustrated this in 'The Society of the Future':

Men (and women too of course) would do their work and take pleasure in their own persons, and not vicariously: the social bond would be habitually and instinctively felt, so that there would be no need to be always asserting it by set form: the family of blood-relationships would melt into that of the community and of humanity.³⁹

In the same lecture, Morris also advocated an inclusive attitude toward gendered work, suggesting that the 'elementary' arts of cooking, baking and sewing should be taught to everyone. He went on to argue that in this society sensual pleasure and healthy animal passion would be natural and unashamed. This state of things, Morris explained, would only come about within the context of 'the freedom and cultivation of the individual will'; he also demanded 'a free and unfettered animal life for man

first of all' and 'the utter extinction of all asceticism' (p.192). This attitude was the emotional and sexual basis for his utopian society in *News from Nowhere*. Its advocacy of sexual freedom and personal responsibility was highly influential in the development of the New Fellowship's ideas about personal relations and a return to the land. It was also, as we shall see later in the thesis, mirrored in the way settlers at the Whiteway Colony approached communal attitudes to sexuality, work and nature.

In *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, Fiona MacCarthy described Nowhere as 'a place of real sexual equality', where gendered work is a thing of the past and ideas of sexual and marital ownership have long been ousted (p. 588). However, taking another point of view, Jan Marsh, in 'Concerning Love: *News from Nowhere* and Gender,' has justly pointed out that the images of women in the narrative are problematic for feminists today, with their seeming contentment with domestic activities and their romantic appearance.⁴⁰ Indeed, the journal *Seed-time* in 1891 was also critical of Morris's 'emancipated' women in Nowhere for their continued desire to be involved with domestic activities. Clearly, despite our perception today, gender relationships in Nowhere reflected a great step forward for the Women's Movement in the late nineteenth century, and suggested a reversal of domestic power relationships. For in Nowhere, although gender relationships are described and defined through Guest's reaction and desire for the women he meets, we are made aware that the balance of power lies with the women. The heroines of Morris's utopia call the tune; they are intelligent and healthy, sensual and independent, and although Nowhere is mainly monogamous, it evokes a freedom of emotional and sexual activity through its open delight in representing a society in which human relations, physical needs and joy are recognised and celebrated. A. L. Morton observed of Morris's writing of *News*: 'What interested him was not the complication of things, but the new productive relations of *people* and the transformations of human relations and human nature which they entail'.⁴¹ The men and women in Nowhere relate to each other in ways that demonstrate the new state of trust and joy that has become common currency in Morris's Socialist utopia. However, mediating these associations, nature, free, sensual, unspoilt and accessible, acts as a metaphor for the spirit of the time. It is also the desirable context for human relationships and symbolic of sexual love. This is exemplified in Hammond's explanation to Guest about the beginning of the new life:

“The 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; this, I say was to be the new spirit of the time”. (XVI. p. 132)

Sensual and sexual encounters take place within the context of a return to nature. Dick, in describing the beauties and pleasures of the hay-harvest, includes ‘the women looking so pretty at it’ as one of its chief attractions (p. 143). Ellen is portrayed by Guest in the garden with obvious desire, as enhanced by the lovely weather and ‘shading her eyes against the sun as she looked towards the hay-field, a light wind stirring her tawny hair’ (p. 155). The equality and naturalness of relationships in Nowhere are reflected in the clothes and appearance of the men and women, and Morris’s identification of them as part of nature:

I came to the hurdles and stood looking over into the hayfield, and was close to the end of the long line of haymakers who were spreading the low ridges to dry off the night dew. 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 steady, though they were as noisy with merry talk as a grove of autumn starlings. (p. 154)

This is a scene that the Rational Dress movement would undoubtedly have approved of, calling as they did for clothes that were light, allowed freedom of movement and were aesthetically pleasing. However, this bucolic setting, and the joy and equality evident in Morris’s hay-field, are contrasted in the text with a painful description of rural women workers oppressed under capitalist exploitation:

... the images of the women engaged in the work rose up before me: the row of gaunt figures, lean, flat-breasted, ugly, without a grace of form or face about them; dressed in wretched skimpy print gowns, and hideous flapping sun-bonnets, moving their rakes in a listless mechanical way. (p. 143)

And again, as Guest stands dreaming at the end of the river journey, he is returned in his mind’s eye to reality, and instead of seeing the ‘gay-clad’ company of beautiful men and women, he is confronted by a group of down-trodden land workers, ‘spindle-legged back-bowed men and haggard, hollow-eyed, ill-favoured women, who once wore down the soil of this land with their heavy hopeless feet’ (p. 200).

Through the opposition of these passages, Morris re-enforces the fundamental ethos of his vision, that a return to the land was not just a matter of physical relocation, but an integral element to, and outcome of, revolutionary struggle. Morris summed this up when he described the revolutionised landscape, full of beautiful villages, rivers, plains and uplands, and populated by 'happy and lovely folk, as a society that had cast away riches and attained wealth' (p. 200).

As we have seen, while both Morris and Carpenter called for a more emotionally open and sexually inclusive society, the personal as well as political focus of their writing in this area differed. This is reflected in the feeling and the language of *Towards Democracy* and *News From Nowhere*. In *Towards Democracy* a current of erotic energy flows through Carpenter's revelation of human interaction, and sexuality is embraced as a central element of brotherhood, inherently bound up with nature, and a precursor to personal and collective freedom. By contrast, in *News from Nowhere*, Morris creates intense and charged images of relationships in the context of nature and Socialism, in which eroticism is secondary to the joy of human fellowship.⁴² Despite the dissimilarity in their perspective in relation to sexuality, the combined influence of Morris's and Carpenter's writing in this area, expressed through their particular sensory emphasis and located within a return to nature, were far-reaching. Not only did they affect the ways in which back-to-the-land communities organised their social and sexual relationships, they provided an alternative to the rigid moral code through their plea for tolerance and understanding, and their celebration of open, joyous partnerships. In a wider context, their writing laid down the groundwork for much of the thinking of the gay and feminists groups active from the second part of the twentieth century onward.

Thus far, the thesis has outlined the nineteenth-century context to back-to-the-land, considered some of the differences and similarities in Morris's and Carpenter's Socialism in relation to a return to the land, and focused on their writing concerned with nature, sexuality and the senses. In the following part of the dissertation the reception and dissemination of their return-to-nature ideas is explored through a study of four journals concerned with back-to-the-land issues.

¹For Carpenter's reflections on the influence of the Romantic poets, and his descriptions of his childhood relationship to nature, see *My Days and Dreams*, pp. 25-28.

² William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, in *Poetical Works* (London: OUP, 1904), p. 636.

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- ³ M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 1971), p. 145.
- ⁴ In 'The Lesser Arts', Morris discusses 'Nature and History' as pedagogic examples, *Collected Works*, XXII, p. 15.
- ⁵ MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, p. 77.
- ⁶ Quoted in E. P. Thompson, p. 252.
- ⁷ William Morris 'The Society of the Future', *Political Writings of William Morris*, p. 193.
- ⁸ William Morris, *Political Writings: Contributions to Justice and Commonweal 1883-1890*, ed. by Nicholas Salmon (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994), p. 218. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
- ⁹ *Political Writings of William Morris*, ed. by A. L. Morton, p. 27-28.
- ¹⁰ Morris, *Political Writings: Contributions to Justice and Commonweal 1883-1890*, pp. 426 –427.
- ¹¹ Morris, *Political Writings: Contributions to Justice and Commonweal 1883-1890*, p. 430.
- ¹² Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p. 192 and p. 108.
- ¹³ Christopher Shaw, 'Identified with the One', in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, p. 33.
- ¹⁴ Tony Brown, 'Introduction', in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, p. 12.
- ¹⁵ Carpenter, 'A Note on Towards Democracy', *Towards Democracy*, p. 413.
- ¹⁶ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p. 107.
- ¹⁷ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, p. 17.
- ¹⁸ Kieth Nield 'The Uses of Utopia', in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, p. 30.
- ¹⁹ Edward Carpenter, *The Art of Creation* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1904) p. 44.
- ²⁰ Both Ashbee and Harold Cox refer to Carpenter's simple-life writing as influential in their back-to-the-land ventures. There are also references to Carpenter's writing about practical return-to-the-land issues in discussions about the possibilities of communal experiments in the journal *Seed-time*.
- ²¹ Whiteway Colony is the subject of chapter nine of the thesis. Starnthwaite Colony in the Lake District, started in 1892, was listed in *The Labour Annual* for 1896, 1898 and 1899 under its Directory of Co-operative Colonies and Communities. In *The New Order* (May 1898), it was described as an experiment in co-operative village life. Cultivation included vegetables and greenhouse culture, and the community were described as self-supporting. It was also reported that visitors were taken on trips to enjoy the local landscape. The Norton Colony established in 1896, reported in *The New Order* (October 1896) that they were attempting to 'Return to Nature', live without rules, and become self-sufficient in simple vegetarian food. Jan Marsh in *Back to the Land* states that they were influenced and encouraged directly by Carpenter, p. 101.
- ²² This will become apparent in the comparison between Ashbee's Chipping Campden experiment and the Whiteway colony discussed in part three of the thesis.

- ²³ Carpenter's pamphlets written in 1894 concerning issues about sexuality were discussed in the New Fellowship's journal, *Seed-time*; see chapter five of the thesis for an account of this.
- ²⁴ Despite Carpenter's inclusion of women in his writing on sexuality and gender issues, Tony Brown and Beverly Thiele, in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, argue that he treated lesbian sexuality poorly; see pp. 9-11 and p. 110.
- ²⁵ Edward Carpenter 'The Free Society' in *Love's Coming-of-Age: a series of Papers on the Relations of the Sexes* (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co. Ltd, 1906) p. 139.
- ²⁶ Tony Brown, *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism* p. 9.
- ²⁷ Carpenter, *Love's Coming-of-Age*, pp. 40,50,52.
- ²⁸ Tony Brown, *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, p. 9.
- ²⁹ See Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp. 97-98. For a wide-ranging analysis of attitudes to Victorian sexuality see Michael Mason *The Making of Victorian Sexual Attitudes* (1994) and *The Making of Victorian Sexuality, Sexual Behaviour and Its Understanding* (1994).
- ³⁰ See Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, chapters XII and XIII.
- ³¹ The Rational Dress Movement advocated clothes that were aesthetic, healthy and rational. For a detailed account of the movement, see Stella Mary Newton, *Health, Art and Reason: Dress Reformers of the 19th Century* (London: John Murray, 1974).
- ³² For an exposition of Carpenter's views on the Uranian temperament, see 'The Place of the Uranian in Society' in *The Intermediate Sex* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1908), pp. 107-129.
- ³³ Quoted by Beverly Thiele in 'Coming-of-Age: Edward Carpenter on Sex and Reproduction', in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, p. 100.
- ³⁴ Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929: Prophet of Human Fellowship* (Cambridge: CUP, 1980), p. 145.
- ³⁵ See Sheila Rowbotham, 'Commanding the Heart: Edward Carpenter and Friends', *History Today*, 9 (1987), pp. 41-46, and Chushichi Tsuzuki, p. 121.
- ³⁶ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p. 101.
- ³⁷ Tsuzuki, p. 42.
- ³⁸ For an account of Abbotsholme, Bedales and other educational initiatives involved with return-to-the-land ideas, see Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land*, pp. 204-219.
- ³⁹ 'The Society of the Future', *Political Writings of William Morris*, pp. 201-202.
- ⁴⁰ Jan Marsh, 'Concerning Love: *News from Nowhere* and Gender', in *William Morris and News from Nowhere: A Vision for Our Time*, pp. 117-121. Also see 'Concerning Love', *News from Nowhere*, XVI, pp. 52-63, in which attitudes to housework and rearing children in *Nowhere* are explained.
- ⁴¹ A. L. Morton, *The English Utopia*, p. 214.
- ⁴² See MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, pp. 67-68, for a discussion of Morris's attitude to male relationships.

Part 2

William Morris and Edward Carpenter, Land Journals of the 1880s and 1890s

Chapter Four

Journals and Methodology

Samplings and Soundings¹

This short chapter develops the introduction by describing the journals to be discussed in this section of the thesis, and expanding on the method employed.

The unprecedented growth of minority journals and periodicals over the nineteenth century was facilitated by improvements in literacy and technical innovations in high-speed printing processes. It also reflected an expanding economy, which in turn stimulated a growing demand for information, education, and opinion and debate at a grass-roots level. Written by amateurs and professionals alike with a conviction to educate and inspire, the journal became a forum for social engagement, argument and discussion, as well as a reflection of, and catalyst for, practical and political change. Indeed, the journal as a form of communication and a badge of identification for minority and interest groups became widespread during the second half of the century.²

The journals selected for this study were chosen primarily because they were directly involved, either ideologically or practically, with back-to-the-land and simple-life ideas, or concerned with land reform. Secondly, they represented the journals most commonly mentioned in the literature surrounding the land question and back-to-the-land idealism. Thirdly, the journals belonged to groups, some of whom were likely to be sympathetic, and some unresponsive, to Carpenter's and Morris's work. Within these parameters, four journals stood out as significant: *Seed-time*, published by the New Fellowship (1889-98), *The New Order* published by The Croydon Brotherhood Church (1895-1900), The Land Nationalisation Society's *Land and Labor* (1893-1915), all produced monthly, and The Allotment and Small Holdings and Extension Association's journal *Land and People* (1886-1894), produced weekly.³ Bearing in mind that little information is available about these relatively obscure journals, the following chapters will, where possible, examine their ethos, detail their editorial remits, readership and distribution, and indicate their position in relation to each other.

The journals have been sampled with as much effort at consistency as possible by examining a similar number of issues from each publication during the

period 1885-1900, an important era for simple-life and return-to-the-land initiatives and ideas. Significantly, this was the period in which vegetarianism and ethical and ecological ideas developed, and in which diet and dress reform flourished.⁴ It was the era that saw the advancement of the Van Campaigns, run by the Land Nationalisation Society, aimed at popularising land nationalisation and land reform issues. In 1894 the Parish Councils Act was passed, empowering the compulsory purchase of land for allotments, the Smallholdings Act having been ratified in 1892. The 1890s also saw the development of experimental land colonies, and the rise of ruralist Arts and Crafts workshops.

There were, of course, other journals related ideologically or politically to those chosen. Publications such as *The Cable* and *The Humanitarian* were involved in subsidiary areas relating to return-to-the-land ideals, but their focus was directed at their primary concerns, vegetarianism and animal rights. Publications such as the anarchist journal *Freedom* and the Socialist *Commonweal* were active in land politics, but their main object centred on political campaigning. In the journals selected, however, 'nature', or the simple life, or land issues and reform, featured as regular and central themes of their output. The variety of articles, letters and advertisements evident in the journals under consideration offer a first-hand insight into the lives and opinions of the ordinary unknown men and women who made up the majority of back-to-the-land exponents. However, it is evident that they also functioned as interrelated cultural productions, influential in informing and shaping social dynamics. To understand the nature and the role of the journals considered in the thesis, and Morris's and Carpenter's influence on their ideas, it is worth outlining some of the considerations of the method used.

Methodology: Pierre Bourdieu and Mikhail Bakhtin

Periodicals study poses a variety of questions about approach, but it also precipitates inquiry into authorship/ contributors, form and content, ownership, context, audience and, perhaps most elusive, but important for this thesis, influence.⁵ Lyn Pykett's assertion of the pervasive and interactive nature of journals outlined in the introduction positions them securely within the realm of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the field of cultural production. The underlying premise in Bourdieu's work contends that accepted and established ideas about cultural practices are themselves an inherent part of the structures through which we perceive and consider art.

literature and all their related forms. Bourdieu claims that systems of domination are expressed in nearly all cultural practices, and that these classify and sanction social differences.⁶ These arguments provide a useful starting-point in considering notions of influence relating to the highly rhetorical and campaigning journals involved with nineteenth-century land issues. For example, it becomes clear that through the medium of the journal *The New Order*, the Croydon Brotherhood Church was able to express alternative and radical concepts which appeared to reside with relatively little threat to established politics or economic structures. Later land experiments practising these same ideas were on the other hand seen as a decided hazard to the establishment, and indeed, to national security.⁷

In the *Field of Cultural Production* (1983), Bourdieu observed of the literary field that ‘the important fact, for the interpretation of works is that this autonomous social universe functions, like a prism which refracts every external determinant: demographic, economic or political events are always retranslated according to the specific logic of the field, and it is by this intermediary that they act on the logic of the development of works’.⁸ This is a relevant observation in relation to examining both the utopian rhetoric of groups such as The New Fellowship and the conservative and paternalistic views of The Allotment and Small Holdings Association.

Bourdieu’s outline of the literary field also presents us with another point in terms of understanding the ways in which nineteenth-century land journals operated. His analogy of the literary field as a ‘prism which refracts every external determinant’ and does so with the particular ‘logic of the field’, contains specific implications. These involve inquiry into the ways in which events, texts and ideologies are reinterpreted in the journal form, and demand analysis of how reinterpretations use the language, canonicity and authority of the literary field to authorise themselves. As the next chapters will demonstrate, reinterpretation of ideas and canonicity through appropriation of language and authorial authority made up a part of *Seed-time*’s and *The New Order*’s character and ethos. In the light of this, Bourdieu’s exposition of the role of writers and intellectuals, and the relationship between high culture and popular culture, examining the ways in which texts are manipulated and repositioned, is also relevant.⁹ This is significant in considering how the journals in this study represented what might be identified as high culture, for example a poem by William Morris, in the context of popular journalism, or imported literary canonicity, by employing the symbolic capital of a writer such as

Edward Carpenter, whose work met with little economic success or critical acclaim. We are even forced to ask how popular is popular in terms of some of the smaller, more elite and self-conscious journals such as *Seed-time*.

In *Distinction* (1986) Bourdieu developed a theme highly pertinent to periodicals research, that 'culture contributes to domination and to the process of social reproduction'. In relation to this, he argued, 'taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier'.¹⁰ The composition of an audience who read a particular nineteenth-century journal tells us as much about the journal as it does about its market. The social positioning, the language and ideology of a periodical such as *Land and Labor* is as much a reflection of its audience as it is of its ethos. And *Seed-time* which operated in many ways as a group reflection like many minority publications, seems to have spent much of its time preaching to the converted and engaging in literary and ideological flag-waving. Bourdieu also suggests that meaning in works of art or literature exists only for those who possess cultural capital; this enables the initiated to access the codes with which a work or text are encoded, and to perceive its symbolic production. This is particularly important for suggesting the cultural and symbolic nature of opinion about land in the journals under study, and clearly, both *Seed-time* and *The New Order* ignored or reversed the language of economic argument used in discussions of land reform in *Land and Labor* and *Land and People*.

While Bourdieu's methodology provides a stimulating and cogent approach to the contextual and sociological interpretation of nineteenth-century journals, focusing on the way meanings are conveyed, another writer whose work is suggestive for periodicals research is Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin's theories focus primarily on the concept of dialogue, and on the idea that language - that is, any form of speech or writing - is always a dialogue.¹¹ The central emphasis of dialogic relationships exists around the notion that form and meaning emanate from interaction amongst people. As the rationale of the journal form is overtly to establish communication and meaning between contributors or authors and their ideas and the audience, this element of Bakhtin's thought is especially helpful in understanding the relationships within any periodical publication.¹² That dialogue for Bakhtin is ultimately situated in a real and identifiable social and historical situation, renders it particularly relevant to journals. This is pertinent when we consider that a periodical exists only for a limited time-span, before its context and multiplicity of

meanings are changed by subsequent issues. Bakhtin's emphasis on the dialogic relationship suggests approaches for considering ways in which language in periodicals operates in a continuing dialogue - and how they are directed towards a response – within, for example, an argument or discussion of ideology, through articles and the letters pages. This consideration is especially relevant to reading the contentious 'Colony Notes' from Whiteway in *The New Order*.

Although Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia applies specifically to the novel, the idea of dissonances among competing languages is suggestive in thinking about the linking together of voices, subjects, issues and images in the periodical press. If we apply this to the rhetoric of a journal such as *Seed-time*, we can see that contributors use the language of other voices to serve a double purpose. This allows them to present their ideas and aims directly through their own voice, and indirectly through other voices. This has a particular bearing on any analysis of influence or disavowal. The recognition of dialogic relationships operating in journals in some way accounts for and legitimises the highly rhetorical, utopian nature of much of the writing in a journal such as *Seed-time* or *The New Order*. And at the same time, it sanctions the pragmatic utterances and practical function of land journals such as *Land and People*.

While periodicals research has been particularly taken with the notion of heteroglossia, as the suggestion that every text operates as a dialogue with other texts, it is worth examining how we might relate Bakhtin's notion of polyphony to an understanding of nineteenth-century journals. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963), Bakhtin asserted that Dostoevsky's novels were polyphonic in that they represented the balance of voices within a dialogic relationship. Transferring the idea of polyphony and relating it to journals, we could describe the editor as narrator, actively engaging with the voices of the journal and the contributors' voices as the main characters. By adopting a polyphonic view of the construction and operation of journals, we would then be able to reflect on the ways in which the multiple voices of the different texts within a journal interact and relate to each other. Of course, within different journals, we have to be aware of the extent to which the editor / 'narrator' operates as an authoritarian or complementary voice within the text. This in itself precipitates a consideration of the negotiation between the balance of voices with a journal. It will become clear that this interpretation of Bakhtin's polyphony is particularly relevant in helping to understand the relationship between the use of

anonymous pseudonyms for contributors such as 'Clodhopper', 'A Plebian' and 'Fair Play' and the paternalistic editors of *Land and People*.

While it is clear that Bourdieu's and Bakhtin's approaches do not sit very comfortably together, and that Bourdieu's carefully modelled analysis could be said to be at odds with Bakhtin's more suggestive approach, an amalgamation of some of their ideas has proved to be significant in terms of a relevant theoretical approach to nineteenth-century land journals. Indeed, a 'loose reading' of two such diverse critical approaches has facilitated the development of a positive relationship between empirical research and critical theory. Within this framework, then, the next chapter will consider the first of the journals selected, The New Fellowship's *Seed-time*, and suggest its relationship to Morris and Carpenter.

Bibliographical Note

The journals which form the focus of next three chapters were all accessed under different conditions and presented in different ways. *Seed-time* and *Land and Labor* were studied at the Bodleian Library in the form of copies of the original journals, both publications being bound in groups of six or twelve issues. In some of these editions, the page numbering corresponded to the journal and in others to the book form. Each copy of *Land and Labor* and *Seed-time* was designated by an issue number, but not a volume number. For clarity, the issue number and page number as it appeared printed in the bound edition has been given in the referencing.

The New Order was examined at The British Library and produced in similar form to *Seed-time* and *Land and Labor*. Although *The New Order* did have a volume numbering system, this was difficult to use as it only appeared on certain copies. However, *The New Order* had a consistent issue number, and a page numbering system that conformed to the bound format rather than the individual journals. Consequently, the same procedure used for *Seed-time* and *Land and Labor* was used in referencing *The New Order*.

Land and People was studied at The National Newspaper Library in the form of microfilmed copies of the originals, and in some cases microfilmed copies of bound collections of the journal. Again, some copies had a volume and issue number and some only an issue number. Page numbering for some years appeared to correspond to the journal, for others to the book form. For consistency the issue number and the page number as they appeared on the microfilm has been used in the

referencing. To avoid confusion, where the year and month of a particular article or letter has been given in the text, it has been referenced using an issue number and appropriate page number in brackets after the quotation. Where it is not absolutely clear, the quotation has been referenced in full in the endnotes.

¹ Shattock and Wolff used the term ‘Samplings and Soundings’ to refer to a collection of essays reflecting approaches to journals research in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982).

² This was discussed by Michael Wolff who suggested minority interest groups came of age with the inauguration of a journal; ‘Charting the Golden Stream’ *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 13 (1971), 23-38, p. 26. Wolff also gives figures to support the enormous growth in periodicals and journals over the nineteenth century, p. 29.

³ *Seed-time*’s publication seems to have been very inconsistent: it appeared quarterly for the first few issues, then monthly, but tailing off randomly towards the end of its production. With virtually no information about its publication, it is difficult to get a clear picture of how frequently it was produced.

⁴ For an interesting view of the development of vegetarianism and ethical ideas in the 1890s, see Jan Marsh, ‘Rational Dress and Diet’, in *Back to the Land*, pp. 187-203.

⁵ For a wide range of approaches to and arguments about nineteenth-century journals and periodicals research, see ‘Special Critical Theory Issue’, ed. by Laurel Brake and Anne Humphreys, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 22 (1989).

⁶ See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 29-73.

⁷ Later developments show that the Home Office saw the ‘New Lifers’ as a decided threat to the establishment. This is borne out by an article by Richard Ford, *Times*, 3 March 2000, which reported that Whiteway had been infiltrated by Home Office spies in 1925, in an attempt to close the community down. The community was described as “‘a plague spot on morality”, where free love, vegetarianism, and pacifism were rife’.

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 164.

⁹ See Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, pp. 46-52.

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 21.

¹¹ Simon Dentith describes ‘dialogue with another’ as the key to Bakhtin’s thinking, *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 3.

¹² See M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p.115, concerning ‘authorial speech’ and the recognition of dialogue as ‘filled with the words of others’.

Chapter Five

***Seed-time*, The New Fellowship: William Morris and Edward Carpenter**

For the great idea, the idea of perfect and free individuals.¹

The New Fellowship and Its Manifesto

Seed-time, originally called *The Sower*, was the quarterly journal of the New Fellowship (formerly the Fellowship of the New Life); it was the most influential of the periodicals dedicated to the idea of inculcating a ‘higher life’.² It was based on the subordination of the material world to the spiritual, and aimed at ‘the cultivation of a perfect character in each and all’.³ The New Fellowship came into being as the result of an ideological split in 1884 between two polarised groups within the Fellowship of the New Life. Its opposite wing in the original Fellowship was committed to direct political action and became the notable Fabian Society. Some of its members, including George Bernard Shaw and many mainstream Socialists, regarded the New Fellowship with suspicion if not outright derision.⁴ However, it attracted the interest and support of many individuals who were highly critical of late-nineteenth-century society, and who were searching for a new, alternative and ‘ethical’ way of life. Socialists, radicals and humanitarians were among the New Fellowship’s initial members, including such luminaries as Havelock Ellis, Olive Schreiner, Edith Lees, Edward Carpenter, Cecil Reddie and J. Ramsay Macdonald.

After the split, the New Fellowship’s general activities were organised by Maurice Adams and J. F. Oakeshott, and between 1884 and 1889 they worked with the support of other Fellowship members, privately spreading their ideas to a network of like-minded enthusiasts.⁵ At this time their philosophy ran parallel to the American Branch of the New Fellowship, which was closely associated with Thomas Davidson and Percival Chubb, both of whom later contributed to *Seed-time*’s output.⁶ Davidson had been a member of the original Fellowship of the New Life, but had left England for America and had established an educational community at Glenmore in the Adirondac Mountains in 1888. Chubb gave up his job in local government to join Davidson in his experiment and became an active member of the American Fellowship.

By 1889, the Fellowship decided that the time had come to move out of the private sphere and make their aims and principles known to a wider audience. *Seed-time* was initiated to fulfil this function and, as we shall see, its content, especially in its early years, closely reflected the ethos of the New Fellowship's manifesto. This document was published by the New Fellowship Press in 1885, revised in 1886, and was sold for three pence a copy. Its remit was to establish the Fellowship's principles and aims, and to act as a statement reflecting a cohesive and identifiable group. The manifesto evidenced a mode of thought that, as we have seen in chapter one, was common in late-nineteenth-century radicalism: a critique of society coupled with a strong emphasis on the need for a fundamental change in all areas of life. From the outset, the change called for by the New Fellowship reflected their approach to nature and the land, and their attitude to the simplification of life. Also palpable within their manifesto was a utopian collective spirit, influenced by aspects of William Morris's and Edward Carpenter's lives and writing.

Although it is clear that the Fellowship and *Seed-time* gradually became suffused with Tolstoyan rhetoric through the influence of John C. Kenworthy of the Croydon Brotherhood Church, their initial manifesto and the journal existed solely to promote and reflect the Fellowship's ideas, and to stimulate new membership.⁷ In the light of this, and because the manifesto was intrinsically related to *Seed-time's* content, we need to consider briefly the main points of its philosophy and its relationship to *Seed-time*, particularly focusing on the connections with Morris and Carpenter. The preface to the manifesto opened by describing the nineteenth century as 'retrospective' and appealing for contemporary society to behold 'God and Nature face to face', and to 'enjoy an original relation to the universe'. It called for a revolutionary approach to basic principles, and asked:

Why should we not have a poetry of insight, and not of tradition; and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works, and laws and worship. (p. 1)

The emphasis on man's relationship to 'God and Nature', combined with the concept of regeneration and the need to develop a new form of life was at the heart of the Fellowship's ethos, and there are strong links to Carpenter's early writing here. In poems such as 'In a Manufacturing Town' from part one of *Towards Democracy*,

Carpenter established the theme of regeneration as a key element in his vision of individual redemption and social change. In lines such as 'The free sufficing life - sweet comradeship, few needs and common pleasures - the needless endless burdens all cast aside', he articulated the underlying sentiment that pervaded the Fellowship's manifesto (p. 124). Carpenter's sense of revival was also reflected in early issues of *Seed-time*.

Regeneration, then, was inherently tied up with the Fellowship's ethos of brotherhood, fellowship and community, and at this fundamental level, *Towards Democracy* was a central text in informing the opinions of many in the Fellowship movement. W. J. Jupp, a leading member of the Fellowship and a regular contributor to *Seed-time*, expressed this when he wrote of *Towards Democracy*: 'This book is one which appeals to us as of intense and vital significance for the age'.⁸ Indeed, poetry later printed in *Towards Democracy* appeared in *Seed-time*'s pages throughout its existence, sometimes under enigmatic headings such as 'Recognition'.⁹ Henry Binns also referred to the book in an article in *Seed-time* in October 1894 called 'A New Fellowship'; describing his life and ideology 'on the land', he asserted that 'we are democrats, and are working "Towards Democracy", trying not to "hurry, but have faith"' (22, p. 7). Carpenter's millennial vision, of humanity regenerated through brotherhood, democracy and nature, was a sentiment that sustained the Fellowship movement until it disintegrated in 1898, resulting in the closure of *Seed-time*. Carpenter's basic tenets of simplicity and contact with nature were also essential elements in The Fellowship's view of renewal for the individual and for collective development.

The Fellowship took a spiritual, ethical and, later in its development, overtly Christian Socialist view of regeneration, which it saw as the means to its goal, 'the social ideal of Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood'.¹⁰ The message of the Fellowship's manifesto was quite clear, and like those of both Morris and Carpenter, had little to do with the machinery of political or economic change.¹¹ Instead, it offered a utopian vision of a society, in which the Fellowship's emphasis on moral and ethical change would play the part of the 'forerunner and faithful ally' of the Socialist 'economic revolution' (p. 6). As the manifesto declared, 'Our faith is not in an improved social mechanism, but in the power of a new moral and religious inspiration' (p. 14). However, the Fellowship, like Carpenter and Morris, was attempting to translate Socialism into what Stanley Pierson described 'as a new and

comprehensive view of life'.¹² Despite the manifesto's disavowal of involvement in active political change, *Seed-time*'s support for the Socialist struggle was recognised by *The Labour Annual* (1896) under its list of 'Labour and Reform Newspapers', when it was described as: 'A well-written strong and helpful little sheet'.¹³

In J. F. Oakshott's obituary for Morris published in *Seed-time* in January 1897, he recalled the importance of the Morrisian concept of brotherhood to the Fellowship's view of the new ideal of life. At the time the Fellowship was revising its manifesto, *A Dream of John Ball* was being serialised in *Commonweal*. Oakshott described in the journal how the Fellowship had taken a passage from the narrative to represent their ethos: 'we at once pitched upon a passage in John Ball's sermon as one of our mottoes' (31, p. 1):

Forsooth, brothers, fellowship is heaven and lack of fellowship is hell: fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death: and the deeds that ye do upon earth, it is for fellowship sake that ye do them, and the life that is in it, that shall live on and on for ever, and each one of you part of it, while many a man's life upon the earth from the earth shall wane.¹⁴

This was printed un-attributed at the top of the revised edition of the manifesto published in 1886. In *A Dream of John Ball*, Morris linked the lessons of the past with the possibilities of the future. Fellowship is a recurring theme within the story, where it is coupled with the rebel priest John Ball and the past, and situated in opposition to the corruption and exploitation of the present. Morris famously uses John Ball's struggle against injustice, set against vivid and glowing descriptions of the medieval world, to act as a metaphor and exemplar for contemporary Socialist revolt. Indeed, in relation to this, Fiona MacCarthy points out that *John Ball* rapidly became part of Socialist history, and that its focus on fellowship had lasting impact on the development of the labour movement.¹⁵ It is not surprising then that the Fellowship found itself in sympathy with one of the few pieces of Morris's writing that employs an overt, if radical, religious figure to make its moral point. The Fellowship was committed to support Socialism, but believed in a spiritual ideal, being deeply attracted to an active expression of non-denominational religious action, stating in the manifesto that their ideals were:

In the main those professed by every follower of Jesus of Nazareth and of all the other great religious teachers. We are really only pleading for a serious attempt to put their doctrines into practice. (p. 11)

In later articles in *Seed-time* Morris was taken to task for what was seen as his atheism. Despite this, the theme of fellowship as expressed by the passage from John Ball was to remain a central precept of what the Fellowship described as 'pursuit of the Common Good'.

The Fellowship's ideals were not only to be spread by word of mouth or, later, through *Seed-time*'s pages. The manifesto urged members to communicate their beliefs through 'the example of their lives', and 'by its embodiment as far as possible in all social institutions and relationships' (p. 3). This conviction of the importance of example was central to the concept of engendering the higher life and was carried forward into *Seed-time*'s output. In the journal, Morris was lauded for 'his ideal of a noble, simple life ... and his own example [which] added a thousand force to his eloquent expression of that ideal.'¹⁶ Similarly, *Towards Democracy* was hailed as 'one of those rare books, which are not so much the record of a man's thinking and beliefs, as of his actual experience and manner of life.'¹⁷ Despite the apparent simplicity of these statements, it will become evident later in this chapter that *Seed-time* interpreted and re-presented both Morris's and Carpenter's writings, using the cultural capital surrounding their work and their reputation to legitimise the Fellowship's own beliefs.

Using the concept of personal example, the Fellowship's aim was specifically to create a moral imperative for men and women to live 'a daily life of co-operation based on freedom and equality'. The co-operative ideal was to be the pragmatic realisation of their philosophy of brotherhood and fellowship. Initially, this was seen as vital to urban salvation, through 'the furtherance of various kinds of simple industry, under the best conditions and on co-operative principles'¹⁸ But this also encompassed the idea of cultivation, manual labour and joy in work - themes which became a regular feature of discussion in *Seed-time*'s pages. The co-operative ideal was viewed as part of the stance against the existing social order, acting as a catalyst for the adoption of a simpler form of life. In *My Days and Dreams*, written some quarter of a century later, Carpenter recalled that the early meetings of the New Fellowship were 'full of hopeful enthusiasms - life simplified, a humane diet and a rational dress, manual labour, democratic ideals, communal institutions' (p. 225). He alluded to efforts towards colony groups that were made at the time, and these were later reported in *Seed-time*. One such group, which was initiated in response to the manifesto's call for co-operation, was also described briefly in *My Days and*

Dreams. Carpenter relates how Edith Lees, later secretary of *Seed-time*, helped to organise a co-operative boarding house near Mecklenburgh Square in London. Here eight or ten members of the Fellowship lived in what Carpenter described as ‘a kind of communist Utopia’ (p.225).

The concept of co-operative or communal ventures was by no means new or exclusive to Carpenter. W. H. G. Armytage records in *Heavens Below* that the New Fellowship’s predecessor, the Fellowship of the New Life, had invited Robert Owen’s granddaughter to come and discuss the topic of ‘community’ with them at their London meetings. He also noted that E. R. Pease, in whose rooms the group met, viewed Davidson, the leader of the American Fellowship, as ‘spiritually descendant of the Utopians of Brook Farm’ (p. 331). Undoubtedly, the spirit engendered by Ruskin’s writing and his communal experiment, St. George’s farm at Totley, also contributed to the Fellowship’s view of community and co-operative life. However, the Fellowship saw themselves, if not as mainstream Socialists, then as morally and spiritually aiding the Socialist struggle.¹⁹ Carpenter’s and Morris’s lectures of the early 1880s, such as ‘Co-operative Production’ (1883) and ‘Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil’ (1884), with their emphasis on a utopian vision of Socialism, would have contained much that was relevant to the Fellowship’s initial development.

Having stated the Fellowship’s fundamental ideals of brotherhood and co-operation, the manifesto turned its attention to the question of work, individualism and what it described as ‘the commercial mammonite conception of life’. It expressed its loathing for social and industrial evils and the degradation and exploitation of the mass of the people. While Morris and Carpenter had both lectured and written on this subject, it was also, as we have seen earlier, a central theme in the work of other influential nineteenth-century thinkers such as Carlyle, Ruskin and Marx. And it can be safely assumed that the middle-class, educated and deeply idealistic members of The Fellowship would have been familiar with a wide range of writing that challenged the social order. Nevertheless, in examining *Seed-time*, it is unambiguous that elements of both writers’ specific ideals about work found their way into the Fellowship’s conception of a higher life. In the manifesto, one paragraph anticipates later discussions in the journal on the theme of work and social order, and it stands out as truly both Morrisian and Carpenterian in spirit:

So long as men, losing the end of life in seeking the means of living are dominated by the desire of merely “getting on”, and find satisfaction in the acquisition, with the least possible work (and above all, no manual work), of material possessions for which it is possible to compete; so long as their object is to secure all they can grasp and retire as soon as possible to live, supported by the labour of others, a life of idleness and luxury, which must have its inevitable counterpart in a life of grinding toil and destitution for a large section of the wealth-producers; so long must merely mechanical expedients fail to secure social harmony. (p. 6)

This sentiment directly reflected many of the themes, and indeed phrases, repeatedly and harshly expressed in Carpenter’s exposition of the relationship between poverty, labour and materialism in *Towards Democracy* Part 1.²⁰ It is also remarkably reminiscent of Morris’s lectures dealing with the relationship between meaningful work and the dynamics of individualism, laissez-faire and commercialism, delivered at the time the Fellowship was developing its manifesto.²¹ In ‘Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil’, Morris had also emphasised the equation between waste and adulteration, and poverty and exploitation, in such scathing words as: ‘Adulteration laws are only needed in a society of thieves’ (XXIII, p. 118). The Fellowship’s manifesto echoed Morris’s judgement of capitalist society and resonated with his language in such condemnatory passages as:

Our social and industrial evils are symptomatic of moral baseness and stupidity; of mean selfishness and greed of gain, of lust of power, the spirit of exciting gambling, and above all of a false, contemptible criterion of human worth. (p. 6)

As we have seen, Morris’s and Carpenter’s political writing was patently didactic, and repeatedly stressed the importance of relevant education in the fight against exploitation and the factory system. Like both writers, the Fellowship saw a pedagogic element as essential in social change and instrumental in political reform. It saw its role in social reform as essentially educative, laying the groundwork for a fundamental Socialist transformation to come. Individualism was to be replaced by a collective spirit and competition with co-operation and interdependence. Echoing Carpenter’s holistic view of education, the manifesto stated that life also called for the establishment of a radical institution, to give children the benefit of an education that would empathise and develop the Fellowship’s beliefs. The school’s environment was to allow the total development of the total person, emphasising the

relationship between ‘heart, head and hand’.²² Carpenter’s back-to-nature ideals were to play a direct and important part in the resulting Fellowship experiment.

Within the context of the Fellowship’s ethos, the individual could only develop in a society in which all were equal. From this followed a demand for the simplification of life, which inevitably forbade servitude. The manifesto declared that such simplicity would free ‘the servant class and the so-called “hands” in all spheres of industry’, and was ‘an essential condition of worthy and joyous work for all’ (p. 10). Reiterating a central Morrisian concept, the Fellowship concluded that under the radical new conditions of work and simplicity, ‘art, which is the expression of man’s joy in his work, would flourish once again’ (p.10). Simplification of life extended beyond the servant question and became for many a search for a comprehensively simplified life. This aimed at self-sufficiency and engaged in basic activities such as cultivation and attempts to live off the land. Articles on this theme later appeared regularly in *Seed-time*’s pages. While it is tempting to see Carpenter as the guru of simplicity and self-sufficiency, and indeed he was often seen as such, it needs to be remembered that many Fellowship members had read, and indeed were followers of, other influential advocates of the simple life; among those quoted in *Seed-time* were Thoreau, Whitman and Tolstoy.

The manifesto concluded by stating its practical aims and plans. Initially, it aimed through discussion and study to understand the nature of social organisation and consider the problems of religion and ethics. Subsequently, it would encourage a co-operative spirit among individuals and families living in the same locality. Finally, as well as setting up an educational establishment, it intended to inaugurate a colony of adults living a life of co-operative effort. The manifesto did not state whether the co-operative colony was to be a back-to-the-land venture or not, but an anonymous poem printed on its last page makes it plain that manual labour and contact with nature were clearly on the agenda:

To exult the present and the real,
 To teach the average man the glory of his daily walk and trade,
 To manual work for each and all, to plough, hoe, dig;
 For every man to see to it that he really do something, for every woman too.
 All occupations, duties broad and close,
 Whatever forms the average, strong, complete sweet-bloodied man or woman

the perfect longeve personality,
And helps its present life to health and happiness, and shapes its soul. (p. 14)

Despite the poem's anonymity, its message and imagery, and its language, sentence construction and rhythm, are inescapably similar to Carpenter's *Towards Democracy*. Indeed, the repeated use of the preposition 'to' at the beginning of a line, the use of the phrases 'sweet-bloodied man' and 'longeve (*sic*) personality', together with the imperative to 'plough, hoe and dig', make it a reasonable supposition that Carpenter, as a member of the Fellowship, could have written this poem himself.²³ However, Morris's conviction that joy in work was essential to a meaningful life is evident here as well.

The Fellowship had developed their ideals and their manifesto during the 1880s, and the inauguration of *Seedtime* in 1889 was their response to growing interest in their work. During this decade, Morris's and Carpenter's Socialism, incorporating a vision of a return-to-the-land, was of current and compelling interest to ethical Socialists in their search for an alternative to the existing social order. Not surprisingly then, and recognising the Fellowship's ethos as a complementary moral development of Socialism, it is clear that both writers exerted a strong and contemporaneous influence on the Fellowship's manifesto. The extent to which this was carried into their journal will be the thesis's next point of focus.

Seed-time: A Journal of The Higher Life

We know relatively little about *Seed-time*'s contributors or its readers, but for the most part they appear to have been from comfortable, well-educated, middle-class backgrounds. This is borne out by several factors. Firstly the comparatively high price of the journal; at three pence a copy, it was considerably more expensive than *Land and People*, which sold for one penny.²⁴ Secondly, the concerns of its articles also point to a middle-class readership; frequent topics included ways of coping without servants and eliminating the extravagances of life, a luxury not afforded the labouring poor. Its readers and contributors were, in the main, also attempting to support social reform and alleviate working-class poverty, a middle-class preoccupation in the late 1880s and 1890s. Lastly, as we shall see, *Seed-time*'s articles and editorials were patently involved with a search to find new and more ethical ways of living and develop alternatives to urbanism. Although little is known

about the journal's editorial management and publication, it is worth recording what is evident from the journal itself, from the *Labour Annual*, and from W. H. G. Armytage's observations in *Heavens Below*.

Over its life-span, *Seed-time* had a wide variety of contributors, including both men and women; however, certain names did recur frequently. Maurice Adams remained the editor throughout the publication's life, and articles by Percival Chubb, W. J. Jupp, Herbert Rix, J. F. Oakshott and Henry Binns appeared regularly. There is scant documentation about Maurice Adams, but perhaps significantly at the time of *Seed-time*'s inception, Adams published an edition of Thomas More's *Utopia*. Adams was also based at Thornton Heath and like many of the Fellowship was part of the radical community centred at Croydon. Percival Chubb was involved with the American Branch of the Fellowship and a member of the Ethical Church in New York, having previously given up a job as a clerk in local government. W. J. Jupp, another little-known figure, established 'a free religious movement' at Croydon in 1890, and lectured on such subjects such as 'The Sources of Moral Enthusiasm'. Jupp and his wife also helped to run the Fellowship's Kindergarten School at Thornton Heath, which endeavoured to spread the Fellowship's educational aims and was linked ideologically to Abbotsholme. Herbert Rix, who frequently contributed articles on the theme of simplicity in *Seed-time*, also wrote 'The Later Works of Count Leo Tolstoy' in 1893. J. F. Oakshott, a staunch supporter of the Fellowship and regular contributor to the journal, followed J. Ramsay Macdonald as secretary of the society in 1892. Henry Binns wrote articles primarily about a return to nature and self-sufficiency; an example that appeared in 1894 makes it apparent that he was one of the few journal contributors engaged in a practical back-to-the-land experiment.²⁵ Edith Lees, who later married Haverlock Ellis, and was described by Carpenter in *My Days and Dreams* as 'one of the most active and vigorous' of the group, acted as *Seed-time*'s secretary throughout its history (p. 225).

As well as regular editorials, letters, simple-life articles, uplifting poetry, and discussions of lectures and group meetings, *Seed-time* advertised the Fellowship's activities, which were designed to put their manifesto ideas into action. In the summer months, the Fellowship ran rustic gatherings in the open air, at which papers on subjects of interest were read. In the winter, as well as inviting guest speakers to give lectures on 'ethical, religious or social subjects' followed by discussion, an evening was devoted once a month to the study of a book of 'vital interest to the

individual and society'. At the outset of the journal, there was a great deal of interest, encouraged by the American arm of the movement, in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards*. Both *Towards Democracy* and *News from Nowhere* were later selected for group study. Members of the Fellowship also offered via *Seed-time* to give lectures to societies, clubs and institutes on subjects such as 'Moral and Social Reform, Individualism and Socialism and "Utopia", or Socialism in the 16th Century'.²⁶

The make-up and reception of the lectures and meetings listed in every issue of the journal is significant, because much of *Seed-time*'s content involved reporting and analysis of them and their relationship to the Fellowship's ethos. Morris and Carpenter both lectured for the Fellowship, Morris being among their first reported speakers, delivering 'How we shall live then' in December 1890. Morris attended Fellowship debates and gave other lectures in later years, often followed by what the journal described as 'lively argument'. Morris's intellect and example were held in great respect, even if the Fellowship was not, as we shall see, always in agreement with his ideas. Similarly, Carpenter was also a regular, respected and influential speaker during *Seed-time*'s early years, giving papers on 'The Future Society' in 1890 and 'How to make a living on the Land' in 1893. He also contributed articles and poems to *Seed-time*. However, as the journal came under the influence of John C. Kenworthy and the Croydon Brotherhood Church, Carpenter's input and influence appeared to wane.

We have seen from the manifesto that regeneration through spirituality and fellowship was the rock on which the Fellowship hoped to build a society of the 'higher life'. Increasingly, this came to feature as a vision of the simple life and back to the land, which drew in part on Morris's and Carpenter's ideals. However, the different emphases in both writers' approach to fellowship, a return to nature and their distinctive visions of Socialism clearly elicited different responses from *Seed-time*'s contributors and readers. Undoubtedly, Carpenter's view of fellowship and regeneration met with far more enthusiasm and sympathy than Morris's in the journal's pages, and in general, *Seed-time* viewed Morris's vision of brotherhood as distinctly lacking in spirituality. The sense of the divine or spiritual in the individual and nature that was intrinsic to the Fellowship ethos was, in fact, loosely allied to aspects of Christian Socialism, and against this background, Morris's relationship with the Fellowship was often decidedly acrimonious.

In a wider context, Morris's convictions about spirituality and religion were also too extreme for many Socialists, and he was forced to keep his views on Christianity low-key, for the sake of the movement. However, he overtly did not share any of the ideology of Christian Socialists such as Percival Chubb; for Morris, fellowship was not to be found in religion or a nebulous Christian spirituality, but rather in the implementation of Socialism. This was evident in his contribution to *Commonweal* (1890) on the subject of 'Christianity and Socialism':

Christianity has developed in due historic sequence from the first ... its last form moulded by the sordid commercialism of modern capitalism being the bundle of hypocrisies which ... Christian Socialists condemn. When this beggarly period has been supplanted by one in which Socialism is realized, will not the system of morality, the theory of life, be all-embracing, and can it be other than the Socialist theory? Where then will be the Christian ethic ? - *absorbed in Socialism*. No separate system of ethics will then be needed ... ²⁷

Morris's belief that the advent of Socialism would render both Christianity and capitalism obsolete, by providing both the practical and spiritual sustenance needed for a life of purpose and meaning, was apparent in all aspects of life in *News from Nowhere*. His perception of a utopian but secular society - in which nature represented not the divine, but the context for human happiness and development - was alien to Fellowship views.

This was borne out in an article for *Seed-time* in October 1891 that discussed Morris's Socialist dream in *News from Nowhere*. Percival Chubb took Morris to task for what he described as 'the absence in it of anything like a belief in a divine purpose running through nature and history, or in the divine essence of man' (10, p. 6). On the one hand, the same article demonstrates *Seed-time*'s interest in Morris's back-to-nature ideals through its acknowledgement of *News*'s opposition to 'urbanism and mechanism', and its acceptance of Morris's 'doctrine of work' as revolutionary and far-reaching; but it also condemned the lifestyle of *Nowhere* as 'frankly aesthetic and pagan' (10, p. 2). Chubb quoted a passage from *News*: 'We are too happy, both individually and collectively, to trouble ourselves about what is to come here after'. He followed it by describing what he viewed as the self-satisfaction and lack of any impulse towards self-renunciation or questioning, in the sense of fellowship, among the citizens of *Nowhere*. Despite his criticism, Chubb recognised in *News* a reflection of the necessity for 'a truer and vivider appreciation of the pagan

theorem of the “Livableness of Life” ’ (10, p. 2). Nevertheless, Chubb continued to be critical of Morris; despite *News*’s ‘delights of companionship’ and ‘love of nature’, he accused Morris’s citizens of Nowhere of being so absorbed in the beauty of the world that they were ‘little if at all, concerned about the inward spiritual life’. Comparing Morris to Mazzini, Chubb went on to chastise Morris for his lack of inclusion of any of the Christian virtues in his Socialist Utopia. However, despite his conclusion that the new life in Nowhere was incomplete and one-sided, Chubb affirmed

that Morris’s prescription of paganism approves itself to my mind as likely to correct some of the chief ailments of modern society. But I should say that man cannot live by paganism alone; and this neo-paganism must be grafted on a pruned Christianity. (10, p. 4)

Morris in turn, in a debate reported in *Seed-time*, accused the Fellowship of asceticism. Regardless of this fundamental disagreement between him and the Fellowship over the characteristics of fellowship, *Seed-time*’s farewell issue in February 1898 still stated that Morris’s words from *John Ball* continued to express most simply the faith of the Fellowship (34, p.9).

In contrast, Carpenter’s dream of regeneration and fellowship expressed in *Towards Democracy* and his lectures and journalism received an almost ecstatic reception in *Seed-time*. In the first issue of the journal, Carpenter’s poem ‘The Meaning of it all’ was printed straight after the editorial preface.²⁸ (As this was published in July 1889, and did not appear in *Towards Democracy*, [Part Three], until 1892, it is possible to speculate that Carpenter first wrote the poem for the Fellowship and *Seed-time*).²⁹ The poem equates humanity’s need for regeneration with its painful evolution in the distant past:

Ages and ages back,

Out of the long grass with infinite pain raising itself into the upright position,

A creature - fore-runner of Man - with swift eyes glanced around.

Now to-day once more,

With pain, pain and suffering - driven by what strange instinct who can tell?

Out of the great jungle of Custom and supposed necessity, into a new and wonderful life,

Surpassing words, surpassing all past experience - the Man, the
 meaning of it all,
 Uprears himself again. (1, p. 2)

The sense of re-birth within this poem was at the heart of Carpenter's message. It was located within the context of his critique of the social, cultural and political environment of the late nineteenth century, and like all Carpenter's work, it reflected his own concerns and ideals. The Fellowship shared much of the sentiment expressed in 'The Meaning of it all', and empathised with the sense of brotherhood in nature often described as 'Equality' in *Towards Democracy*. In *Seed-time* in April 1893, an article by W. J. Jupp reflected the movement's interest in Carpenter's ideas. Where the lack of a divine presence in Morris's sense of regeneration was unacceptable to the Fellowship, Carpenter's aura and example, as well as his writing, suggested to Jupp a spiritual dimension. He wrote effusively describing Carpenter as

A man who has somehow found his way into a serene and noble peace.
 "Come to me, here is rest, here is deep and real life" that is what his
 presence, his voice, his manner seem to say. There is a sense as of
 reconciliation with himself, with man, with nature, and with God. (16, p.
 2)

It was Carpenter's expression of a cosmic regeneration starting with self and working out to include humanity, nature, God and salvation that was deeply influential within the movement. Despite his dislike of institutionalised religion, it must be remembered that Carpenter had been an ordained curate in the Church of England. In his writing, he never lost the imagery of religion or his identification of unhappiness and injustice with 'the fall' located at the heart of the Judeo-Christian tradition. This inevitably struck a chord with the Fellowship's identification of Christianity and ethics with Socialism.

Later in the same article, Jupp referred to Carpenter's sense of fellowship in *Towards Democracy*: 'we are first struck by the writer's profound sense of the unity of mankind, of the fellowship of all men despite outward circumstances or inward peculiarity'. Jupp recognised that Carpenter's message of cosmic fellowship and salvation were intrinsically linked to a return to nature, and that Carpenter saw this as the centre of universal cohesion. Explaining this, Jupp wrote:

The secret of this deliverance is in Man and in Nature ... The secret by which this hidden good is discernible is not new: it is the old one for which the great words Freedom and Equality stand; Freedom from the bonds of isolation and selfhood; Equality of soul with the Universal Soul which is in all men- the life that makes all one. (16, p. 3)

Urging his readers to adopt Carpenter's 'superb Optimism', Jupp quoted from *Toward Democracy*: 'The earth swims in space, the bird swims in the air, and the soul of Man in the Ocean of Equality'. Jupp concluded that Carpenter's faith lay in his belief that to 'fall in with the great spiritual law of Freedom and Equality [is] to find that all is well with you'. This Carpenterian message deeply affected the emphasis of the Fellowship's Christian Socialism, and distinguished it from the Socialism of the Brotherhood and Labour Churches. It was, then, a theme that became central to much of their back-to-the-land and back-to nature rationale.

The sexuality and homosexuality underlying elements of *Towards Democracy* and Carpenter's relationship to nature were naturally not alluded to in Jupp's article. However, the sexual and emotional liberation that Carpenter expounded in the pamphlets, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society* (1894) and *Woman: and Her Place in a Free Society* (1894), were discussed in the July 1894 issue of *Seed-time*. The article also referred to Walt Whitman, and acknowledged both his and Carpenter's contribution to the subject of 'sex-relationships'. Carpenter was praised for expressing the idea of sexual passion and the liberation of women within the context 'of the whole nature of things'. Women, it seems, were to be included within the fellowship of man. However, in the October 1891 issue of *Seed-time*, Percival Chubb, in an article on *News from Nowhere*, had been critical of Morris's 'emancipated women' for their continued desire to be involved with domestic activities. The article made the somewhat unrealistic point 'that women are free and can do what they like. Whether their present aptitude and affection for culinary affairs will survive must be a moot point' (10, p. 3). It went on to suggest a radical idea for the 1890s, that 'cooking, at least in its simpler forms, is accounted one of the desirable accomplishments for men as for women' (10, p. 3). Carpenter had made a similar point in *Simplification of Life*, in which he had also taken a very different attitude to Morris in regard to women and domesticity. Discussing simplification of food and cooking, he had written, as we have seen in a previous chapter, exposing the relationship between the position of women as household 'slaves' and the contemporary domestic system. Articles in *Seed-time* on the

liberation of the sexes, and its connection to simplifying life, in the main concurred with Carpenter's opinions.

Themes of gender and sexuality in the context of fellowship in 'a new life' were taken up again in the October 1894 issue of *Seed-time*, when 'Our Library Table' discussed *Woman: and her Place in a Free Society* (1894) and *Marriage in Free Society* (1894), both by Carpenter. The article suggested that relationships between the sexes could be improved by Carpenter's pleading for greater freedom, and that 'nature should be trusted to bring about spontaneously a better type of union' (22, p.12). Subscribers to *Seed-time* were urged to read Carpenter's output concerning marriage and relationships. In relation to aspects of gender, Morris's description of the attributes of the women in *News* also met with approval. In October 1891, an article in *Seed-time* approved of their qualities, stating that they were: 'Without the "least affectation of shyness"; lovers of work because it "knits up [their] muscles, and makes them prettier to look at and healthier and happier"'. The item concluded that, concerning Morris's view of marriage in *News*, 'whether or not we agree with Morris's solution to the problem of marriage, we shall most of us admit, I think, that many wise and admirable words are said about it. There is a frank recognition of the fact that while passion drives human beings, disasters in marriage are inevitable' (10, p. 4). Both Morris's informal robust relationships in *News* and Carpenter's pamphlets legitimising spontaneous natural associations helped to lay the groundwork for radical initiatives in sexual relationships. One such included the scandalous 'free unions' that developed as part of the back-to-the-land venture at the Whiteway Colony near Stroud. Some of its founding members were initially part of the radical community at Croydon, and as this included members of the Fellowship, it is possible to suggest that their introduction to Carpenter's and Morris's views about sexuality and gender might have been through *Seed-time*.

Fellowship, freedom and equality, including equality between the sexes, demanded a simplification of life, and this was a repeated theme throughout *Seed-time*'s life. It was seen as a fundamental element in a return to nature, as well as integral in breaking down the elaborate and stifling conventions of late-nineteenth-century society. There were, however, voices of dissent among the Fellowship about simplification, mainly concerned with the particular emphases that the simple life should take. In relation to simplicity, the journal suggested a range of inspirational sources which included Wordsworth, Emerson, Thoreau, Tolstoy, Jesus of Nazareth,

Plato and Socrates.³⁰ Despite the impressive range of this list, the next section of this chapter demonstrates that Morris and Carpenter also motivated the Fellowship's attitudes to the subject of simplification.

Seed-time: The Simple Life and a Return to Nature

We have seen that Carpenter's argument about simplification of life was two-sided. Firstly, to rid society of superfluous artefacts and codes of behaviour would act as a catalyst for the salvation of rich and poor alike; secondly, by shedding elaborate clothes and furniture, by simplifying manners and food, the need for domestic servitude and the scourge of respectability would be ended. Adopting the simple life, Carpenter contended, would release the rich and middle classes from the paucity and artificiality of their lives, and at the same time, by eradicating the need for profits to support an elaborate lifestyle, end the exploitation of the poor. In the place of respectability, Carpenter offered daily contact with nature, manual work and self-sufficiency. In this context the April 1893 issue of *Seed-time* gushingly described him as 'absolutely free from the fetters of conventionality, ... or man become part of Nature and yet still man!'(16, p. 1).

We have seen that in 'Simplification of Life', Carpenter had described his own experiences, outlining the daily communal manual work that had released and saved him from despair and middle-class ennui. This had coincided with his adoption of simple food and dress, and thus simplification of life for Carpenter and his devotees became intrinsically and physically linked to back-to-the-land. Not as extreme as Thoreau's experiment in self-sufficiency at *Walden*, Carpenter's simple-life beliefs and advice were readily received by the idealistic middle-class readers of *Seed-time* anxious to find ways to embark on a new and 'higher life'. It was reported in the April 1893 issue that Carpenter had given an address on 'How to Make a Living on the Land' to a crowded audience. His listeners were impressed by Carpenter's practical advice on combining agricultural work with other activities to minimise the difficulties arising from climate, bad seasons and failure of crops. Carpenter's perception - that 'real zest would be added to life, without necessitating excessive toil or the deprivation of social intercourse with one's fellows which so often accompanies a life on the land' - also met with appreciation (16, p. 14).

For the Fellowship, life on the land was always considered as a co-operative activity, in which a simple life could be provided for through an element of self-

sufficiency within community. Like Carpenter, they saw the simple life as doing without unnecessary belongings and conventions, but rich in companionship, and intellectual, spiritual and physical development. Henry Binns re-enforced this when he wrote in *Seed-time* in October 1894, outlining his life 'on the land' fruit farming. Describing his need to develop a simple co-operative life of fellowship, he wrote:

I think, then, as I hoe the weeds and break up the soil anew among the growing plants, and as I gather the midsummer fruit - that we will lease a plot of land somewhere, with a big farmhouse on it, or better, several and a great barn. We need not herd ourselves together. There is a continence in fellowship: we will draw together of free-will, chastely. (22, p. 7)

At the end of this article, Maurice Adams, the editor of *Seed-time*, added his hope that members would respond to Binn's appeal: 'to join hands in some simple and co-operative life as sketched by the writer of the article, and thus realise an ideal which has always been an aim of the New Fellowship' (22, p. 7).

In July of the same year, W. J. Jupp contributed an article called 'Field and Sky', employing Carpenter's imagery and arguments; using the analogy of the wealth of nature, he suggested the wealth of the simple life to come:

For one day, surely, man too shall live on the earth, untrammelled and self contained, rooted freely in great Nature, breathing deep in the breath and sunlight of God; and yet brotherly, communal, playful and glad with his fellows. (21, p. 4)

The practical details of Carpenter's simple-life philosophy were expressed in *Seed-time* in April 1892, when he wrote an article for the journal called 'Health a Conquest'. He recommended to his readers the advantages of mental and physical exercise, light rational dress and the benefits of nudism and vegetarian food. He also stressed that the central point of practical simplification was to 'effect the body making it whole under the stress of a single impulse' (12, p. 10). This was an example of his theory of the unification and oneness of man and nature, an article of faith that became a dominant theme among the simple-life fraternity and was reflected in the ethos of later practical back-to-the-land experiments suggested in *Seed-time*.

Although the concept of simplification was from the outset fundamental to the Fellowship's idealism, there was surprisingly little discussion in *Seed-time* of practical initiatives relating to food or clothes or exercise, and no sense in which the

journal acted as a manual or hand-book for the simple life. One notable exception was Henry Binns's description of his hopes for a co-operative venture in which he speculated on the amount of land and the types of crops needed to support a community. He noted that sheep would be needed for wool for home spinning, and that the community would be vegetarian. Despite the report of this worthy effort, *Seed-time*'s commitment to simplification evolved little from their manifesto ideas and remained for the most part on an ideological level. It is important to remember in this context that the majority of *Seed-time*'s readers and Fellowship members did not in fact migrate to a simple commune on the land but continued to live, albeit idealistically, in the suburbs and cities. Many of them probably did adopt vegetarianism and reformed dress, but the reality of back-to-the-land and the simple-life remained for the majority symbolic of a dream of the ideal life, and the details of Carpenter's simple-life ethos became symbolic capital in *Seed-time*'s pages.

While all contributors to *Seed-time* acknowledged the doctrine of simplicity, some questioned an extreme approach to the subject. Herbert Rix wrote regularly on the subject in the journal. He referenced his views widely including allusions to the works of Ruskin and Wordsworth, and only referred to Carpenter as an example of the principle of simplicity among others. In October 1895, discussing the theory of simplification, he declared that the 'extremists perhaps carry their doctrine too far' (26, p. 3). Examining the simple-life equation that fewer goods meant more liberty, he maintained that choices depended on the nature and circumstances of the individual involved, concluding that simplicity was not just a matter of renunciation of goods but rather the adoption of sincerity as a kind of simplicity. Taking a Carpenterian position, he wrote: 'sincerity lies at the root of that simplicity of manners which renders the elaboration of ceremony and etiquette unnecessary and even hateful' (26, p. 3). However, echoing both Carpenter's and Morris's views, he completed his argument by using nature as an exemplar for simplicity:

Our whole subject may be summed up in a single word - be natural. Keep near to nature, for the heart of nature, beneath all her variety, is always simple and sincere'. (26, p. 3)

In the farewell edition of *Seed-time* in 1898, Rix was still expounding the concept of simplicity by comparing the original message of the Fellowship's manifesto to his

latest version of simplification, the idea of simplification as the 'reunion of process and result'; but this still operated at a theoretical level.

Morris's influence on the Fellowship's view of simplicity was less obvious than the reception of Carpenter's ideas in this area. However, Morris's emphasis on simplicity in art, ornament and dress, as well as human relationships, did find its way into *Seed-time*'s pages. In 'The Lesser Arts', he had discussed the need for decoration and design to be rooted in necessity and fitness for function. Decrying decoration for show, Morris called for simplicity 'if art is not to come to an end among us':

Simplicity of life, begetting simplicity of taste, that is, a love for sweet and lofty things, is of all matters most necessary for the birth of the new and better art we crave for, simplicity everywhere, in the palace as in the cottage. (XXII, p. 24)

Here, Morris recognised that simplicity was a matter for all classes and that it reflected an honesty and clarity of thought which could only flourish in a just society; this mode of thought anticipated his Socialist utopian vision in *News from Nowhere*. The Fellowship was in sympathy with Morris's view that simplicity would eliminate inferior and unnecessary artefacts. In *Seed-time* in October 1895, Herbert Rix echoed Morris's point about beauty and utility when he wrote:

In a simpler state of society the frippery-monger would probably disappear, bric-a-brac might vanish from our midst, beauty, on the whole would be less divorced from utility, the general tendency would be rather to make the useful beautiful than to crowd the home with beautiful inutilities. (26, p. 2)

Although much of *Seed-time*'s simple-life rhetoric remained at an idealistic level, the journal's output suggests that many of the Fellowship members adopted a simple-life wardrobe and diet. How much they simplified their homes and aesthetic sensibilities, and lived without servants, is difficult to ascertain.

Morris's vision of the simple life in *News from Nowhere*, achieved through revolutionary struggle, created a society in which Socialism and the resulting simplicity begets a new art. In *Nowhere*, as Hammond explains to Guest, under the new conditions of life, love of work, simplicity and art are synonymous:

The art or work-pleasure, as one ought to call it of which I am now speaking, sprung up almost spontaneously, it seems, from a kind of

instinct amongst people, no longer driven desperately to painful and terrible overwork, to do the best they could with the work in hand. (XVI. p. 134)

Seed-time empathised with the concept of simplicity in relation to art and work, and in October 1895 stated that ‘art would be the very last thing to suffer in a New Republic’ (26, p.2). The journal also recognised the relationship between ‘freedom from want and care’ and the citizens of Nowhere’s vitality and joy in work and art. In *Seed-time*, in October 1891, Percival Chubb, reviewing *News*, praised the link between simplicity in private life and a splendid public life (10, p. 3). However, Morris’s simple joyous life in *News* was not achieved through denial or moderation, and in this point of emphasis lay the largest rift between Morris and the Fellowship. It was recalled by Herbert Rix that in a heated debate following a paper on simplification, Morris ‘accused the New Fellowship of asceticism, and declared that asceticism was “the most disgusting vice that afflicted human nature”’.³¹ Morris had attacked the core of Fellowship principles, for in *Seed-time*, asceticism had been described as ‘the backbone of every worthy and redeeming movement’. Rix having summed up its place in the Fellowship’s aims and objectives in an article in October 1895:

That moderation, that self-discipline, that wise economy of force which is often foolishly confounded with fanatic gloom, is in fact the very salt of human character and the very soul of social reform. (26, p. 2)

Clearly the Fellowship vision of simplicity born of self-restraint, self-discipline and moderation was opposed to the empowered life of Nowhere and met with little sympathy from Morris.

We saw that education had appeared as a priority in the Fellowship’s manifesto. In the first issue of *Seed-time*, an article written in 1890 by Roland Escourt discussed the setting up of a Fellowship school. Carpenter was directly involved with the plan, and his ideas on physical exercise and manual labour influenced a large part of the school’s ethos. In what was a radical initiative in terms of education at the time, Escourt declared that manual work awakened ‘a sounder conception of the conditions of labour and the process of handcraft’. He continued: ‘The promoters rightly believe that “training in manual work produces a manipulative dexterity, a steadiness of concentration of mind and will, and a habit of

exactness in practical matters, which scholarship seldom supplies". the experience so gained developing powers of resource and of self-reliance' (1, p. 7).

When the school was inaugurated, a project inspired and to some extent directed by Carpenter, it involved the boys in growing potatoes and other crops for the sake of contact with the earth, experience of manual labour and life in the open air. In terms of education generally, the Fellowship was clearly influenced by Carpenter's writing about the development of the whole person, and this was reflected in *Seed-time* where their educational priorities were recorded in the following order: '1. physical and manual: 2. artistic and imaginative; 3. literary and intellectual studies; and 4. moral and religious'(1, p. 7). The school that later resulted from this remit was Abbotsholme, and *Seed-time* invited particulars about it to be requested from, among others, Edward Carpenter at Millthorpe. Abbotsholme became a favourite progressive school for the children of middle-class simple-life idealists wishing to educate their children in back-to-nature and alternative principles.³²

Like Carpenter's pedagogic ideas, Morris's conviction of the value of handwork and his notion of 'due education' also met with a sympathetic reception in *Seed-time*. In January 1890, Morris had delivered a lecture to a crowded audience of the Fellowship called 'How we shall live then'. *Seed-time* reported that it was received enthusiastically and that Morris had explained that

In the promised-land of Socialism as he foresaw it ... A new educational equipment would be necessary. Everyone would learn two or three elementary crafts, outdoor co-operative work, and indoor artistic work would be shared by all. (3, p. 10)

Several years later, in October 1894, Henry Binns was moved to describe his ideal co-operative community, explaining that craft-work would be an integral part of life on the land and self-sufficiency. Echoing Morris, he wrote in the journal:

We will take land and we will live on it. We will each learn some fellow craft beside: - spinning, weaving, wood-work, smithing and smelting, tanning and leather-work (clog and sandal making), building, china and clay-working, basket making and straw plaiting---- How great to be able to do all one needed with one's own hands! (22, p. 5)

The value of handwork remained at the centre of the Fellowship's back-to-nature philosophy and was recognised in *Seed-time* as one of the great strengths of *News*

from Nowhere. The Fellowship demonstrated that beyond the realms of idealism, they clearly understood the Marxian context for Morris's views on education: they reported in *Seed-time* in October 1891:

In truth educational reform is so dependent upon social reform that the two cannot be considered apart; and Morris's wise word to those who would mend our educational faults is that they must perforce mend our whole social economy. (10, p. 4)

By late 1894, The Fellowship's headquarters had moved from central London to Croydon, where many of its supporters became involved with The Croydon Brotherhood Church. When the Fellowship had started life in 1882 its members had seen themselves as lone pioneers of a new and 'higher life'. But by the middle of the 1890s they were philosophically part of a much larger movement, made up of the Labour and Brotherhood Churches. As they became more closely allied to the Brotherhood Church, the Tolstoyan propaganda of John C. Kenworthy began to appear in *Seed-time*. An article by Kenworthy called 'A Gospel of Reconstruction' featured on the front page of the October 1894 issue; it introduced the concept of 'Socialist faith' and invited the Fellowship to 'emancipate themselves by the power of association'. From this time on, references to and articles about Morris's and Carpenter's ideals diminished. Increasingly, the talk was of alliance with Brotherhood and Labour Churches. 1894 also saw the passing of the Parish Councils Act, fought for by The Allotment and Small Holdings Extension Association. This was reported in *Seed-time* and was another indication of the changing climate surrounding back-to-the-land concerns.

Kenworthy was both charismatic and unstable, but his genuine and heartfelt message attracted support among the Fellowship members because he extended their vision of the new life beyond the theoretical into the practical. Even in his introductory letter to *Seed-time*, he described the setting up of 'self-supporting industrial communities'. He also promised that land would be purchased, and suggested 'that members of the Fellowship may be drafted off to the "colonies"'. Perhaps it was no coincidence that this initiative would have fulfilled one of the Fellowship's original manifesto declarations. A further letter from Kenworthy to *Seed-time* in April 1895 recorded the progress of the Church's work, and described a collective shop opened in Croydon in which dealings were 'as honest in goods and prices' as they could be (24, p. 15).

When *Seed-time* closed and Kenworthy's *The New Order* in some respects took its place, the Croydon Brotherhood Church shop was advertised in its back pages as a fully fledged co-operative venture, selling whole and vegetarian foods, rational clothing and radical and progressive literature. Kenworthy also recorded that members of the church were seeking a piece of rural land of about five acres on which to pitch a 'Brotherhood Camp'. Its function was to 'inaugurate our longed-for exodus to a life of honest labour in the country'. Kenworthy's moves towards practical back-to-the-land experiments hammered another nail in the Fellowship's coffin. However, its demise was essentially rooted in a changed cultural and political context, in which its ideology was no longer isolated. This was summed up in a retrospective article by J. F. Oakshott which appeared in the July 1896 issue of *Seed-time*:

When the Fellowship of the New Life was first started in 1882 it stood alone as the mouthpiece of a great idea, and as the representative of a great principle..... And when the first number of SEED-TIME appeared in July 1889, it had no rivals in the press as the advocate of reform all in morals, in politics and economics, as well as of all the general progressive intellectual movements of the day.....The fourteen years that have passed have produced a remarkable change both in the Socialist movement and in the attitude of other movements, notably the Christian Churches towards it.... We are no longer isolated as a society or as a journal. (29, p. 1)

The work and ideas of Morris and Carpenter had been instrumental in the Fellowship's recognition of social injustice, and their realisation of the need to stimulate change. As this chapter has demonstrated, a synthesis of elements of both writers' particular vision of a Socialism embracing back-to-nature and simple-life ideals played a significant role in the development of the New Fellowship and *Seed-time*'s ethos. It is also clear that Morris's and Carpenter's influence remained a noteworthy element of the group's principles while it maintained a single identity, and that when the Fellowship lost its distinct individuality, and in part merged with the Croydon Brotherhood and Labour Churches, different influences, among them Tolstoy and anarchist groups, exerted an irresistible force. Despite this, Morris was described in the journal as late as 1897 'as one of our best inspirers' (31, p. 1). In *Seed-time*'s farewell issue, a poem by Carpenter was featured; with this, was a tribute to him, part of which summed up the Fellowship's view of his influence:

Of him whose love--his spirit's legacy-
 Could overpay his age's debt of shame. (34, p.11)

Even in the face of Morris's death, and Carpenter's retreat to Millthorpe, the legacy of their return-to-nature writing continued to affect the character of the many back-to-the-land initiatives that flourished at the 1890s, and it was no coincidence that their advocates were known as pioneers of the 'New Life'. Within this context *Seed-time* and the Fellowship became subsumed into the general radical community that flourished at Croydon at the end of the century. The journal's natural successor appeared in the guise of *The New Order*, the journal of the Croydon Brotherhood Church, and it is to an exploration of its ideology that we now turn.

¹ This was the motto on the front cover of the manifesto of *The New Fellowship* (London: New Fellowship Press, 1886).

² The title is possibly an allusion to Wordsworth's lines, 'Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up/
 Fostered alike by beauty and by fear', *Prelude*, Book 1, 301 (London: Oxford University Press, 1904) p. 636.

³ *The New Fellowship*, p. 6.

⁴ Bernard Shaw allegedly described the split in the Fellowship of New Life into the Fabian Society and the New Fellowship as one group going 'to sit among the dandelions, the other to organise the docks', cited in Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land*, p. 103.

⁵ Maurice Adams was author of *Ethics of Social Reform* (1887), an edition of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1890), an exposé of *The Sweating System* (1896), and a biography of *Giordano Bruno* (1905). Information quoted by W. H. G. Armytage in *Heavens Below*, pp. 327-342.

⁶ Thomas Davidson was a graduate of the University of Aberdeen. He became Rector of Aberdeen Grammar School and sessions clerk of Old Machar Parish. He edited the *Western Educational Review*, and wrote nine articles for it between 1870 and 1871 called 'Self government in the classroom'. Davidson emigrated to Canada, moved to America, and in 1888 established an educational community at Glenmore in the Adirondac Mountains. Percival Chubb, who later contributed regularly to *Seed-time*, gave up his job with a local government board to join him. Information quoted by W. H. G. Armytage in *Heavens Below*, pp. 327-342.

⁷ See Armytage, *Heavens Below*, pp. 327-342, for an account of The Fellowship of New Life and Kenworthy's relationship with The New Fellowship.

⁸ *Seed-time* (London: New Fellowship Press, 1889-98), 16, (April 1893), p. 1.

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- ⁹ See *Seed-time*, 34 (February 1898), p. 8. In 1902, this poem appeared without a title as a preface to 'Who Shall Command The Heart', *Towards Democracy* (Part Four), p. 300.
- ¹⁰ *The New Fellowship*, p.3.
- ¹¹ This view of Morris's utopianism has been challenged, particularly by Perry Anderson who argued that Morris was at his strongest and most convincing discussing political means. See *Arguments Within English Marxism* (London: Verso, 1980), pp. 168-175.
- ¹² Stanley Pierson, *Marxism and The Origins of British Socialism* (London: Cornell University Press, 1973), p. 88.
- ¹³ *The Labour Annual*, ed. by Joseph Edwards (Manchester: The Labour Press, 1896), p. 246.
- ¹⁴ *The New Fellowship*, p. 3.
- ¹⁵ See MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for our Time*, pp. 548-549.
- ¹⁶ *Seed-time*, 31 (January 1897), p. 1.
- ¹⁷ *Seed-time*, 16 (April 1893), p. 1.
- ¹⁸ *The New Fellowship*, p. 13.
- ¹⁹ See *The New Fellowship*, pp. 4-6.
- ²⁰ For examples, see *Towards Democracy*, pp. 27, 29, 47, 48.
- ²¹ For example, see Morris's lectures 'Art and Socialism' (1884), 'How We Live and How We Might Live' (1884), and 'The Hopes of Civilization' (1885).
- ²² *The New Fellowship*, pp. 11-12. Interestingly this phrase became C. R. Ashbee's motto, and was frequently used in discussions of art education, and in relation to his simple-life experiment at Chipping Campden.
- ²³ For example, see *Towards Democracy*, p. 32.
- ²⁴ At the outset, *Seed-time* was sold for one penny. In 1892, its price increased to two pence, but from 1893 on it sold at three pence a copy.
- ²⁵ *Seed-time*, 22 (October 1894), pp. 5-7.
- ²⁶ For a full list, see the end page of any issue of *Seed-time* under the title 'Lectures'.
- ²⁷ William Morris, *Political Contributions to Justice and Commonweal 1883-1890*, pp. 467-468.
- ²⁸ The first issue of the journal was called *The Sower*, but the Fellowship had to change its name because it was already in use.
- ²⁹ 'The Meaning of it all' appears slightly re-worked in *Towards Democracy*, p.219.
- ³⁰ For example, see Herbert Rix's article 'On the Simplification of Life' in *Seed-time*, 26 (October 1895), p. 1.
- ³¹ *Seed-time*, 30 (October 1896), p. 3.
- ³² For a full account, see Jan Marsh, 'New Schools' in *Back to the Land*, p. 204.

Chapter Six

The New Order, The Croydon Brotherhood Church: William Morris and Edward Carpenter

Not by Might, nor by Power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord¹

The Croydon Brotherhood Church

As we have seen, the New Fellowship and *Seed-time* were primarily concerned with hastening the Socialist millennium through the subordination of the material world to the spiritual. *The New Order*, first published in 1895 by The Brotherhood Publishing Company, and priced one penny, also looked to the millennium, but in contrast to *Seed-time* it sought to marry Socialist principles with a regeneration of an overtly Christian religious spirit.² This sense of divine purpose and principle was initially non-denominational and represented a form of Christianity stripped of establishment creeds and dogma. It was a reflection of the thinking and beliefs of the Brotherhood Churches, and was related to the Christianity evident in the Christian Socialist movement and the Labour Churches led by John Trevor.³ As we noted in the previous chapter, at a similar time to the setting up of the Croydon Brotherhood Church in 1894, the New Fellowship moved its base from central London to Croydon; some of its identity and ideas seem to have become merged with the Brotherhood movement. For some of those who had been involved with the work of the New Fellowship, the change in emphasis from an involvement with the spiritual to a defined Christian engagement was seen as a natural and inevitable progression. For others, it was anathema, and it was this divide that in part hastened the end of *Seed-time* and finally the collapse of the Fellowship.⁴

Yet despite their differences, both the Brotherhood Churches and the New Fellowship shared a common commitment to utopian ideals, and a conviction of a great imminent social awakening that would lead to personal and social revolution. Additionally, like the Fellowship, the Brotherhood Churches had little interest in Socialist economic thought, being mainly concerned with self reform leading to collective endeavour and the creation of a utopian society based on brotherhood rather than competition. These concepts, although part of most ethical and Christian Socialist thinking by the late 1890s, clearly owed much to Carpenter's and Morris's

millennial and ruralist vision, and indeed in a wider context this represented one of the most powerful aspects of both writers' influence on early Socialism. Stanley Pierson described it as

providing the emerging movement with a vivid counter image of the existing social order, [which] helped raise the young Socialist converts above the concern with material interests and impart the qualities of self-sacrifice and discipline necessary to sustain the cause in its early years.⁵

However, by the middle of the 1890s, the split that had emerged between utopian Socialists and mainstream activists became ever wider, and by the end of the decade Carpenter's and Morris's influence on the political wing of the Socialist movement had waned. Despite this decline in the sphere of their influence, their utopian vision remained fundamental to the return-to-the-land idealism of many wider Socialist groups, including, as this chapter will indicate, the Brotherhood Churches.

The motivating force behind The Croydon Brotherhood Church and the journal *The New Order* was John C. Kenworthy, their 'honorary pastor'.⁶ To undertake more than a superficial reading of the multi-layered and sometimes contradictory philosophy evident in the journal, we need firstly to reflect on the ideological tensions within the Croydon Brotherhood Church itself. The immediate inspiration and context for the Croydon arm of the church was the Brotherhood movement in London. In *The Labour Annual* for 1896, a short report appeared linking the Brotherhood Churches' principles to the Christian Socialist movement, stating that the churches were 'a pronounced evidence of the activity of Christian Socialism'.⁷ The same unattributed article reported that J. Bruce Wallace, the founder of the Brotherhood movement and author of the penny pamphlet 'Towards Fraternal Organisation', had established the first church at Southgate Road, North London. It went on to describe how Kenworthy had followed suit in Croydon, and how two more churches, in Walthamstow North and Forestgate East, were served by various speakers. Interestingly, in relation to the late-nineteenth-century development of the suburbs as a reinvention of the rural, the topographical location for these churches was similar; all of them were positioned in outer-suburban, middle-class semi-rural areas.

Nellie Shaw, one of the original members of the Croydon Brotherhood and a later Whiteway colonist, outlined the nature of Bruce Wallace's vision for the

Brotherhood Churches. Shaw described him as ‘a man of an intensely devoted and spiritual nature’, who was ‘convinced that it was possible to establish some kind of co-operative system in place of the present capitalist system and commercialism generally’.⁸ Wallace publicised his ideas through lectures and articles and established a Brotherhood Co-operative Trading Society. Many young Socialists and members of the Free Churches were attracted to his views, including members of the Croydon Socialist Society. Indeed, the community at Croydon seems to have played an important role in many radical and back-to-the-land initiatives during the later part of the 1890s. In parallel to Croydon’s rise as a new, prosperous and conventional suburb of London, it also became the location of co-operative ventures and shops, progressive educational experiments and the home of radical printing presses, including for a time the Brotherhood Publishing Company and The New Fellowship Press.

The details of the beginnings of the Croydon Brotherhood Church are confused. While *The Labour Annual* (1896) refers to Kenworthy as the Church’s founder, Joy Thacker in her book on the *Whiteway Colony* asserts that it was formed in 1894 at 46 Tamworth Road by six young Socialists, Nellie Shaw, Mary Grover, Fred Muggeridge, William Gilruth, and Frank and James Henderson (p. 3). Nellie Shaw gave a clear account of the Church’s beginnings when she described how a group of young Croydon Socialists decided to emulate Wallace’s Southgate Road Church group and set up their own Brotherhood. She explained that their use of the word ‘Church’ was ‘in the sense of a number of people inspired by a common aim, but with no religious or theological imputation’.⁹ Despite Shaw’s emphasis on a lack of dogmatic religious sentiment, the group felt they needed a ‘pastor’ for their ‘church’, and through Wallace they met John C. Kenworthy who had recently moved with his wife and family to Croydon. Kenworthy was at this time about thirty-five and had been a successful business-man, but while working in America he had met Ernest Crosby, the Tolstoyan writer, and become convinced of the truth of Tolstoy’s ideas. Consequently, he had given up a lucrative position ‘to spread the word’, and to make a somewhat precarious living through journalism and writing.¹⁰

The Croydon Brotherhood held Sunday afternoon and evening meetings at an old Salvation Army tin tabernacle, where tea was provided. The participants were diverse and came from an eclectic group including Socialists, Atheists, Spiritualists.

Communists, Anarchists, and vegetarians. One of the main attractions of these meetings was that participants were able to air their views on any subject, and be given a serious hearing. It was at these gatherings that John C. Kenworthy, who was at the time well-known in wider Socialist circles for his work including *The Anatomy of Misery* (1893) and *From Bondage to Brotherhood* (1896), lectured or preached to the assembled group on controversial social issues.¹¹ His oratory and commitment singled him out as the leader and dominant influence of the group.¹² In the correspondence column of *Seed-time* in April 1895, prior to the advent of *The New Order*, Kenworthy described these meetings as ‘sharing a meal in the true spirit and understanding of brotherhood [that] is the truest of sacraments’ (24, p.14). Nellie Shaw described them in her book *Whiteway* with equal warmth but more prosaically: ‘under the gentle influence of the “cup that cheers” affinities got together, friendships were formed, barriers of class or shyness were broken down, and a feeling of good fellowship prevailed’ (p. 22). Obviously, from either standpoint, the Brotherhood, like the New Fellowship, empathised with the concept of fellowship as epitomised by Morris’s ‘Fellowship is heaven and lack of fellowship is hell’. We have seen that the New Fellowship took this passage as the motto for its manifesto, and used it as a symbol of their particular vision of Socialist brotherhood. Despite *The New Order*’s Tolstoyan and overtly religious emphasis, it also appropriated Morris’s view of fellowship, and the editor Kenworthy acknowledged his debt to *A Dream of John Ball*.

At the outset, the Brotherhood’s meetings consisted of an address or sermon followed by an open discussion, and the singing of hymns and Socialist songs. Two readings were delivered; one from a writer such as Carlyle or Emerson usually read by a member of the audience, and the other of a prayer delivered by Kenworthy. A good picture of these meetings was given by Shaw in *Whiteway* in which she reported that while some actively liked this prayer, it was barely tolerated by others (p.22). The Croydon Church drew its support from a wide range of beliefs and opinion. Advanced Christians were gratified by the devotional element of the meetings, and moved by the use of Christ’s example as ‘a living reformer’: Socialists, on the other hand, were glad to enlist the example of Jesus in the struggle for their cause. However, these differences resulted in increasing tensions within the group, further exacerbated by disillusionment with Kenworthy’s growing Tolstoyan

fanaticism. This division of opinion was important in the way in which attitudes to a return to the land developed among church members, and it was later to provoke the collapse of the land co-operative at Purleigh and act as a catalyst for the setting up of the Whiteway Colony.

At the inception of the Croydon Church, Kenworthy was avowedly Socialist, but as Shaw observed, it very soon became apparent that his message was in fact 'the gospel of Tolstoy' and 'was nothing more or less than Communist Anarchism'.¹³ Kenworthy began to denounce voting and the political system in general, giving great offence to many Socialists, who left the group. However, those that remained were initially profoundly under the spell of Kenworthy's magnetic personality, and through his influence, Tolstoy now became significant in the group's thinking. Aylmer Maude, a church member and a passionate translator of Tolstoy's work, reinforced Kenworthy's Tolstoyan rhetoric, and numerous pieces by Tolstoy appeared in *The New Order's* pages throughout its short history. Tolstoy's *What is Art?* featured in six instalments in 1898 and *Stop and Think* in 1899. The Brotherhood Church publishing company also produced a range of Tolstoy's work including *Christ's Christianity*, *What to do* and *The Kingdom of God is within You*.

From its first issue, then, *The New Order* espoused the Tolstoyan virtues. Chastity and abstinence were to be considered the ideal; hard work and self-sacrifice were demanded; the land was to be held collectively; commercialism and any connection with the establishment were to be avoided. Tolstoy believed man's first duty was 'bread labour'; thus the exhortation to produce the three necessities of life - food, shelter and clothing. As these were all in some way connected to the land or the produce of the land, Kenworthy urged the Croydon Church to turn its co-operative energies towards land ventures, publishing *The New Order* in the basement of the Brotherhood store to explain and proselytise for these ideas. Yet despite the journal's insistence on the works of Leo Tolstoy as the guiding light for the Brotherhood's inspiration, there remain obvious parallels between their back-to-the-land values and proposals and the work of William Morris and Edward Carpenter.¹⁴

The New Order: From Church to Land Colonies

To understand the nature and extent of Morris's and Carpenter's influence on *The New Order*, we need briefly to examine the Brotherhood's initial ideas about land, and how these eventually led to the development of the land colonies, Purleigh and Whiteway. Even prior to his visit to Russia to see Tolstoy at the end of 1895, Kenworthy described in *Seed-time* in April 1895 the Brotherhood Church's first plans for a back-to-the-land venture. Kenworthy outlined the idea and design for a Brotherhood Camp, the purchase of a piece of land on which members of the church could return to a more natural life, engage in manual labour, cultivate the land and sell the surplus in co-operative ventures:

Some of our members are now seeking for a piece of land, five acres or thereabouts, in our neighbourhood where we can pitch a "Brotherhood Camp". If it is discoverable within the next few weeks, we may, during the summer inaugurate our longed - for exodus to a life of honest labour in the country ... Next year, it is hoped serious cultivation may be begun for the supply of produce, which our store will sell. In such a way a new society, rid of old cruelties and dishonesties, may be built up. (24, p.15)

Kenworthy qualified this statement by defining what differentiated the Church's thinking from other groups seeking a utopian society. It was, he wrote, the 'determination that, let the world go in such a way as it pleases, we, each one for his own part, for "the salvation of his own soul", must live *honestly* and *fraternally* towards all men'. Kenworthy concluded that the seemingly individualistic quality of this statement was 'really the basic principle of that Kingdom of Heaven which Jesus and all prophets have foreseen' (24, p. 15).

While the Brotherhood was searching for a suitable location for their 'camp', Kenworthy went to visit Tolstoy in Russia. During his absence, Arthur Baker, who had travelled widely in America and had been connected with the Salvation Army, conducted the Church meetings. Baker had studied numerous back-to-the-land colonies in America and his ministry included descriptions of some that he had visited. While Baker was in charge of the Church, Arthur St. John, who had worked at the Starnthwaite Colony, was invited to come and manage the expanded Brotherhood Store. St. John, an aristocrat who had given up personal wealth and a career in the army to become a church member, was initially treated with suspicion by some of the Brotherhood. The group only accepted him when they realised that he

had resolved to adopt the Tolstoyan ideal and live by Christ's example as a poor man engaging in useful work. This was an instance of the strength of Tolstoy's religious sentiments among the Croydon Church. However, while Kenworthy was away, Baker and St. John, with their wide experience of land experiments, provided the Croydon group with a different perspective on collective endeavour. Shaw also recalled that through their energy and hard work the Church's prospective land fund was greatly increased, bringing the day they could actually return to the land closer.¹⁵

Kenworthy was welcomed home with enthusiasm, the Croydon Church group being eager to hear first-hand about Tolstoy and his teaching. Despite their initial enthusiasm, it is from this point on that a split over certain Tolstoyan principles appears within the Brotherhood. This divide was evident in the development of the land colonies associated with the group, and their reporting in *The New Order*. The Church members were eager to hear about Tolstoy's vegetarianism and that he lived very simply and frugally and dressed like a peasant (these points could also be made about Carpenter). However, Kenworthy's interpretation of Tolstoy's views on sexuality, abstinence, work, duty and marriage were deeply divisive and caused serious soul-searching, particularly among married members of the group. There was long and earnest discussion about how to try and put Tolstoy's teaching into practice, and finally it was decided to answer this question through a practical initiative, by trying to establish a land colony.¹⁶

The land the Brotherhood settled on was at Purleigh in Essex, and in 1896 three young men volunteered to act as pioneers in cultivation and self-sufficiency. Among them was William Sinclair, a former bank clerk who had already experimented with living on the land, and Sudbury Protheroe, who had given up the business world to grow fruit trees. The following spring they were joined by Arnold Eiloart, who had been a lecturer at the Royal College of Science and had already contributed almost all his money to the Brotherhood cause. Later that year the Hone family, who were members of the Croydon Church, followed: Mr Hone, having been a professional gardener, was seen as a vital element in the success of the enterprise. Although Nellie Shaw herself never joined the colony, being at the time too deeply involved with the Brotherhood's Co-operative clothing venture, she remembered their intense pleasure when a member of the Church did make the move. She wryly

recalled in *Whiteway* that, ‘in those days it looked to some of us as if to gain salvation one must join the Colony’ (p. 32).

Despite the privations of life at Purleigh, other members of the group joined the venture, gradually depleting the body of the Croydon Church. When Kenworthy himself left in October 1897 to live near the Purleigh Colony and concentrate on his work on Tolstoy’s writing, the Church went into decline. The departure of the secretary, Herbert Archer, proved to be the final straw, and when he left to join the community in 1898, the Croydon Brotherhood Church was forced to close. Kenworthy resigned his editorship of *The New Order* but was still influential in the production and output of the journal, and instigated moving the Brotherhood Press to Purleigh. However, from February 1898, the journal’s editorship was taken over by F. R. Henderson, who played a much less intrusive role in its guidance than Kenworthy. Henderson appears to have been a reluctant candidate for the job as well as a self-effacing character, and in his first very short editorial, he wrote, ‘don’t expect me to do much in the way of personal correspondence’ (15, p14). However, he also made a statement that was to reflect a change of emphasis in the journal, evident in its later output, and in opinion emanating from Purleigh. Henderson stated in the March 1898 issue of *The New Order* that, in contrast to Kenworthy’s ‘gospel’, according to Tolstoy

the main question for each of us is not what somebody else must do in order to live up to belief, but what *we* must do. Whether Tolstoy is or is not a saint does not solve *our* problem. (15, p.14)

A subtle shift in the journal’s tone was also evidenced by its presentation, a re-vamping of the banner header, which in 1897 had depicted quasi-illuminated and emphatically religious lettering, superimposed on a design including the Lamb of God with a cross, a dove and a serpent. In 1898, the pictorial element of the header was removed, and the image was replaced by a secular form of lettering in an Arts and Crafts style.¹⁷ The journal continued to be published in this new guise until 1899 when the Purleigh Colony disintegrated, but at some point during 1898 its production and publication seems to have returned to London.

The identity of the group surrounding *The New Order* was always in flux, and in the October 1897 issue, Kenworthy’s leader announced that the name ‘Brotherhood Church disappears from our pages’. This change was justified by

referring to the Purleigh Colony, explaining that the Church had not dissolved, but that as they had made a move towards an 'approximation to the living practice of [their] principle,' they were therefore able to 'dispense with names, as they [did] with creeds' (10, p. 1). Despite the obvious shift in ideas within the Brotherhood and the journal, *The Labour Annual* for 1899, while listing the produce and activities pertaining to other land experiments in its 'Community Directory', simply listed Purleigh as 'mainly controlled by a group of Tolstoyan Anarchists' (p. 115). Indeed, W. H. G. Armytage in *Heavens Below* also explicitly described Purleigh as a Tolstoyan experiment, and it is clear that many of its precepts were indeed founded on extreme Tolstoyan ideas (pp. 351-355). However, these opinions fail to recognise that the colony was not solely Tolstoyan, but rather it was built on a complex, more progressive and multi-dimensional ideology. Reports from the colony, which appeared regularly in *The New Order*, speak of a far wider influence than that of Tolstoy or Kenworthy alone. They also witness the growing ideological split in the colonists' approach to Tolstoyism.

The Purleigh Colony reported the successful development of vegetable and fruit farming, glasshouse cultivation, brick-making and poultry keeping in its notes for *The New Order*. But at an ideological level, it rapidly ran into problems, and it soon became apparent that to be considered a good colonist, not only should a member be a diligent and uncomplaining worker, but also hold the orthodox Tolstoyan line regarding attitudes to sex.¹⁸ Looking back, Shaw commented in *Whiteway* that although there were no set rules regarding work at Purleigh, colonists whose output did not meet expectations were 'treated to severe looks and more or less sent to Coventry' (p. 36). There were frequent earnest and lengthy discussions about the "S. Q.", or sex question, and many colonists found Tolstoy's drastic teaching unacceptable. Despite this questioning, a version of Tolstoyan orthodoxy in relation to work and sex was still required within the Colony, and this led to contentious decisions about who could and who could not join the group.

This rigid remit contributed to the eventual disintegration of the Purleigh experiment, and by 1898, some of the Colony were looking for an alternative way of setting up a back-to-the-land venture; among these were Whiteway's initial settlers, Sinclair, Protheroe and Eiloart. This breakaway group was encouraged in its radical ideas by a Miss Lee, who held 'free discussions' at her cottage near the Purleigh

Colony. Miss Lee was a friend and supporter of Havelock Ellis, whose writings on sexuality were of significant interest to the group.¹⁹ Ellis, of course, was a disciple of Carpenter's, and indeed, when a new Colony was founded at Whiteway, although Tolstoyan in name, and in some of its outlook, it completely rejected Tolstoy's teachings about sex and attitudes to work. These were replaced with views about marriage and sex that were closely related to Carpenter's writing on the subject. Evidence of this dichotomy appears in *The New Order's* pages, for while some contributors, including Kenworthy, conformed to mainstream Tolstoyism, the reports from the colonies showed that a pluralistic and less inflexible attitude existed among the other members of the Church.

The New Order: A Return to the Land and Simple-Life Initiatives, Edward Carpenter and William Morris

By the middle of the 1890s, a general shift in attitudes towards back-to-the-land issues had taken place, and mainstream Socialist opinion ran strongly against utopian and 'back to nature' arguments. A sign of this was the closure of *The Scout* in 1896, the *Clarion*, its parent paper, no longer considering it to be fulfilling its remit as a forum for the exchange of back-to-nature ideas between 'Clarionettes'.²⁰ The optimism and exuberance of the 1880s and early 1890s was replaced by a pragmatism and pessimism, which reflected contemporary fears for the international situation, and effected a revival of imperialism and jingoism. The general malaise in the Socialist movement in the middle 1890s resulted in those groups, still utopian in spirit, becoming more distant from mainstream thinking. Ironically, this actually provoked an emphasis on practical experiments in utopian and co-operative living evidenced in *The New Order*, rather than the high-flown rhetoric that had filled *Seed-time's* pages.²¹

Clearly, both Morris's and Carpenter's influence on the Brotherhood and *The New Order* was not as overtly obvious as it was on *Seed-time*. But if we examine the underlying authorial voices that inform both the group and the journal, we can see intimations of both writers' ideals. And indeed, it would have been hard for anyone who was part of the wider Socialist movement to have escaped their utopianism, which had by the middle 1890s become part of the radical cultural milieu. But we also have to remember that, by 1896, when *The New Order* had only been published for a few months, Morris was dead, and that Carpenter had retired from the front line

of the Socialist struggle, returning to Millthorpe to write, study Eastern philosophy and live out his ideology on the land. Neither writer contributed to *The New Order*, neither of their names appeared much in its pages, but beneath its Tolstoyan rhetoric, elements of their beliefs and writings are recognisable as part of the journal contributors' ethos. In fact in a later issue, even Kenworthy himself devoted two long articles to Morris's work, and they represent a clear indication of Morris's effect on Kenworthy, and thereby through his influence on the group's thinking.

The New Order provides an insight into the layers of influence and belief that constituted the ethos of the Brotherhood's back-to-the-land initiatives. Written by a variety of contributors, they can be viewed in Bakhtinian terms as an example of polyphony. If we then describe the editor (Kenworthy) as the narrator or spokesman, engaging in active dialogue with the voices of the journal (the contributors), we can perceive through this dialogic relationship that *The New Order* operated not simply as a Tolstoyan mouthpiece, but as a platform for complex and diverse opinion. This in turn provokes questions about editorial/narrator authority and its relationship to the heterogeneity of the journal, for within this relationship we need to be aware to what extent the editor operated as an authoritarian or complementary voice in the journal. So, for example, we can see that in *The New Order*, the editorial voice usually proselytised for Tolstoyan thinking, while the contributors' voices engaged in a dialogue with 'authority', evidencing a more miscellaneous approach. This was mediated by a disclaimer that appeared on the front page of the journal stating that 'Articles appearing herein must not necessarily be taken as expressing the views of any other persons than the writer'.²² However, the dialogic relationship was not static, and the positioning of the 'voices' in the journal was dynamic and interrelated; consequently, we are also able to perceive in *The New Order* the language of group reflection and reinforcement, as well as the areas of diversity. Indeed, most of the voices in the journal shared a collective aim, if not belief, which provided a cohesive identity and a justification for their actions. And, as part of its utopian reforming identity, the journal reflected its relationship to a larger context, employing and manipulating its own form of symbolic and cultural capital.

Perhaps the most singular emphasis in the journal reports of the Brotherhood's back-to-the-land and simple-life ventures was their essentially practical nature. describing the harshness of life, what was grown, how the crops fared and the

difficulties involved. But more interestingly, they mostly contained an element of the group's spiritual and social development in relation to the practical. These reports can also be seen to represent a 'sub-polyphonic' dialogue, or a microcosmic dialogue within the central dialogic relationship of the journal. Written by a variety of individuals, in different styles, they interacted with the journal/editor, effecting a series of highly personal and speculative comments. Although these reports operated at a different level from the journal's institutional Tolstoyan view, they were not marginalized; an authority was vested in them, their authors having achieved a form of 'salvation' through a return to the land.

In terms of a practical return to the land, *The New Order's* colony reports provided a regular and reflective view of back-to-the-land experiments among the wider Socialist and Communist communities. The journal included detailed reports every month from its own colony at Purleigh, and short occasional reports on other colonies, including Norton, Clousden Hill Farm Colony, Starnthwaite Colony, Wickford, and later Whiteway. It also carried accounts of experiments in living on the land overseas. In relation to these experiments and the Church's simple-life utopian and co-operative ventures, the *Labour Annual* for 1896 described the objective of the Brotherhood Churches thus:

Their aim is, to apply the principles of the Sermon on the Mount literally and fully to individual and social conduct, which they interpret into action by efforts to found industries and businesses on what may be described as Socialist - Co-operative lines. (p. 44)

The principles of the Sermon on the Mount maybe, but many of the ventures that the Brotherhood Church initiated, and which were represented and reported in the *New Order's* pages, contained much of the simple-life idealism demonstrated in works such as Carpenter's 'Co-operative Production' (1883) and 'Simplification of Life' (1886). And although Carpenter's millennial vision challenged accepted social and sexual values, it was mainly expressed using the familiar imagery and language of the Judeo-Christian tradition, making it easily accessible to the Brotherhood Churches, and, as we have seen previously, The New Fellowship.

The Brotherhood movement set up co-operative stores in each of the centres where their churches were based. Their remit was to stimulate interest in collective and simple-life ideas and provide whole-foods, clothes and literature to those who

were unable or unwilling to leave the suburbs. As such, the co-operative store represented a symbolic, if not actual, attempt at the simple life. Kenworthy had originally reported the opening of the Croydon shop in the 'pastor's' house in *Seed-time*, inviting all who were interested in the venture to visit and join in the co-operative spirit. The shop was featured in *The New Order* every month from its inception, and a regular advertisement appeared describing what the store had to offer:

CROYDON BROTHERHOOD STORE supplies groceries, fruit, vegetables, flour and semolina (which the manufacturers claim to make from pure English wheat). A speciality is made of pulse, grain and other vegetable foods. Books and stationery; labour, socialist, vegetarian and other advanced periodicals and literature. Goods delivered by cart every Friday. Arrangements have been made with a local tailor for clothes to be made with co-operatively produced materials. Also for natural undyed wool clothing.²³

The kinds of food for sale, and the emphasis on vegetarianism and whole-foods, were a litany of Carpenter's advice given in his lecture, 'Simplification of Life', published in *England's Ideal*. As we have seen in previous chapters, in this lecture Carpenter advocated giving up meat and heavy complicated dishes, and adopting a simple vegetarian diet. Along with this, he recommended the use of English wheat, which he asserted was 'actually finer than the American grain' and 'produced a purer taste' (p. 81). In the same lecture, he called for a simplification of clothing; asserting that as well as being simple and unrestricting, where possible, garments should be made of hand-woven cloths and undyed wool (p. 92). The Croydon Brotherhood store could have taken its stock list straight from 'Simplification'. Indeed, next to its advertisement in the March 1897 issue of *The New Order*, the Brotherhood Publishing Company announced the preparation of a catalogue of useful pamphlets, including the work of both William Morris and Edward Carpenter (3, p.24).

For Carpenter, as we have seen earlier, the adoption of simple food and practical clothing was not simply a matter of promoting health and well-being. The simple life also, and most importantly, represented an intrinsic element in his fight against the rigid and elaborate codes of nineteenth-century society, and thus it became a form of symbolic capital. This symbolic capital conferred freedom from the conventions and the intellectual, sexual and emotional restrictions of the late-

Victorian world. It also created a new paradigm with its own forms of communication (the journals) and language, in which those who adopted them could be identified as ‘different’ and at the same time recognise each other. For example, by identifying with the physical manifestations, the details of dress and diet of Carpenter’s holistic simple-life beliefs, the members of the Brotherhood and other groups conferred on themselves an identity that set them outside everyday orthodoxy and mainstream opinion. It was no accident that the members of the Brotherhood group who eventually set up Whiteway conformed to these same anti-establishment and simple-life conventions, adopting the sandal, unconventional clothing, and a basic diet. Indeed, simple-life dress codes and the adoption of vegetarian and whole foods became one of the most recognisable and enduring emblems of alternative lifestyles, and in some instances, acted as a uniform of social protest.²⁴

Part of the remit of the Brotherhood Colony at Purleigh was to establish and extend their sense of fellowship out to the local community. Hubert Hammond, a former city clerk, wrote the ‘Colony Notes’ for June 1897; he lamented that their work on the land had not allowed them ‘to get into touch with the people around [them] as much as we desire’. But by August 1897, the same Hammond reported that work was progressing steadily, and that they were able to borrow a barn and invite their neighbours to a gathering. Over a hundred people came to a meeting at which Labour Church hymns and songs were sung, and three readings were given. The only reading reported by name was a selection from Morris’s *A Dream of John Ball*, which was afterwards summarised and discussed by Arthur St. John. Clearly here, Morris’s work can be seen not only as part of the group’s cultural consciousness, but as an active element in their engagement with ideas and writing, and as an important pedagogic agent for communicating their message.

From the colony reports, it is also clear that some members of the Brotherhood adhered to the Carpenterian imperative stressing the importance of individual responsibility and honesty as the route to personal and thereby collective salvation. In November 1897, the ‘Colony Notes’ in *The New Order* had asserted that ‘most people have schemes for making the world better, but the only certain way of doing any real good is to get one’s own life right’. This counterbalanced orthodox Tolstoyan sentiments about Christian duty and self-sacrifice which embodied

Kenworthy's view of redemption, including the following which appeared in the journal in January 1897:

Jesus has set up the "kingdom of heaven" against the "kingdom of this world"; we who side with him must follow him wholly, warring as he warred. There can be no compromise. "He that gathereth not with me scattereth".

Men in Society shall not struggle to satisfy each one his own needs, but shall study and work to fill each other's needs ... (1, p. 2)

Despite such authoritarian statements in the journal, the idea of self-awareness and personal responsibility was again expressed in an article that appeared in June 1898, called 'Some Impressions of Purleigh' by 'A New-Comer'. This also indicated the plurality of ideas current at the colony. The writer noted with surprise the emphasis that was laid on the freedom for colonists to develop individually. While acknowledging that Tolstoy was 'the modern prophet held most in honour' at the colony, the New-Comer emphasised that no colonist 'calls himself a Tolstoyan or a Kenite (they call him "Ken" for short), for the general idea is that each must develop himself in his own way'. The writer qualified this by stating that colonists used the ideas of a variety of thinkers to help develop their ideas, and among them he included Edward Carpenter.²⁵

Later in the same article, the writer reflected another concept directly attributable to Carpenter's philosophy. He reported that 'the colonists in seeking to get foods out of the earth by the labour of their own hands, are not only drawing near to the poor but are also getting into intimate relations with Nature' (5, p. 60). Carpenter had repeatedly expressed such sentiments in *Towards Democracy* in lines such as:

The growing of flax and hemp, the tending of gardens, - the old sweet excuses for existence, their meaning now partly understood - the faith that grows in the open air and out of all honest work till it surrounds and redeems the soul. (p. 63)

Although Tolstoy, like Carpenter, espoused the benefits of contact with nature, his emphasis on its importance was centred on a simplicity of life that accepted the denial of luxury and self-indulgence.²⁶ Carpenter, on the other hand, embraced an intimate relationship with nature as a means to redemption in itself. His belief in the

power of nature as a healing force was echoed in the 'Purleigh Notes' for May 1899, when William Hone wrote:

Since Purleigh news last appeared in *The New Order* Spring has come and buds are bursting in hedgerow and garden. On hedge banks and in copse woods the spring flowers are blooming profusely. The birds have broken into song; the early builders are about, to hatch their young...Bees of various kinds are humming in the air or extracting honey material from the flowers they find open. On sunny days the vicinity of our hives is full of bee life. Both earth and air begin to teem with insect life again. Now nature's resurrection. Does it appeal to us? are there no Sun-rays of Life that revive us. Without canting, I think it is a poor life that knows no Spring. (16, p. 74)

As well as examples in *The New Order* reflecting Carpenter's emphasis on the importance of physical involvement with the land and the elements, there are indications that Morris's belief in meaningful work within a natural context was also influential in informing opinion expressed in the journal and at the colony.

Evidence of a layering of ideas at work in *The New Order* was not limited to the colonists alone, for despite Kenworthy's avowed Tolstoyism, he did express some sentiments very close to those of Morris. In March 1897, discussing the qualities of 'primitive labour,' Kenworthy invented a dialogue in which a character called Hammond (possibly the former bank clerk of the colony notes, or an allusion to Hammond in *News from Nowhere*) defended Kenworthy's point of view against 'the middle class man', and indeed from 'Socialists and Christian Socialists with whom he [met] the greatest opposition' (3, p.19). It is interesting to note that at this point, Kenworthy obviously saw himself and his beliefs as separated from both Socialism and Christian Socialism; in earlier writing, he had seen his idealism as closely related to both groups.²⁷ His questioners suggest to Hammond: 'But your primitive labour, if shared by others would only produce an equality of barbarism. You would destroy variety of labour and product, and all art'. Hammond answers:

On the contrary. My labour is primitive until I am joined by others. As others will come. And out of our free relations, our 'equality, fraternity and liberty', it is possible an art may spring, pure, from a new root, beside which your present art is but faded weeds. Wise and good external forms, of organization and of art, cannot fail to follow upon this new spiritual union among men. (3, p.20)

Despite its disavowal of Socialism, this passage had much in common with Morris's argument that brotherhood and meaningful work and a return to nature were fundamental elements of a Socialist revolution, and that from this relationship a 'noble and popular art' would spring anew. We have seen earlier that Morris had forcibly expressed this as the conclusion to his lecture, 'The Lesser Arts', published in *Hopes and Fears for Art* (1882). This vision for society was represented as one of the most powerful elements in *News from Nowhere*, in which art and work become synonymous and 'a necessary part of the labour of every man who produces' (XVI, p. 134). It also reflected Morris's fundamental concern for the material as well as spiritual aspects of life. In relation to this, A. L. Morton observed of *Nowhere* that it was 'not only the one Utopia in whose possibility we can believe, but the one in which we could wish to live'.²⁸ A desire to live in such a concrete utopia was frequently expressed in the colony notes. This was evident when doubts were expressed about the infallibility of Tolstoy's philosophy, that the spiritual was paramount and the material secondary.

An example of these doubts appeared in the journal in November 1898, when under the title 'A Colonist's Thoughts', William Hone, the professional gardener among the original colonists, took the opportunity to put his own view of Tolstoyan thinking. He stated clearly: 'I did not feel convinced that the whole Tolstoyan view of life was correct ... some of Tolstoy's conclusions I thought were overstrained and others I did not accept at all'. A practical man involved with the physical aspects of the colony, Hone also expressed the opinion that 'I would not like to be understood as disregarding the spiritual side, but I personally do not admire that kind of spirituality that disregards the material, or only considers its own development' (23, p. 112). In his pleasure and concern for the physical work of the community, Hone had much in common with the cultivators and workers in *Nowhere* for whom

The 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. (XVI, p. 132)

There is, then, some evidence that despite its Tolstoyan nomenclature, *The New Order*, particularly through its colony reports, represented diverse ideas about the function and character of a return to the land. Intimations that others apart from Hone were unhappy with Tolstoyan orthodoxy at the colony appeared in the

September 1898 'Purleigh Notes', when H. P. Archer reported that some members of the group including Sinclair and Protheroe had decided to form a new venture. The dissatisfaction with colony life at Purleigh felt by this breakaway group was later described by Nellie Shaw in her book on Whiteway. And as we shall see later in the thesis, Shaw referred to arguments over attitudes to sexuality and work, leading to contentious decisions about who could and who could not join the community. These differences in approach to communal living on the land were given as a significant reason for the split in the Purleigh experiment. Shaw later confirmed in *Whiteway* that in the new colony, 'all should be welcome and none excluded for their views on sex matters or the output of their work' (p. 38). Later letters and colony notes in *The New Order* also show that she was also right to point out that differences in attitudes to work, sex and marriage were contentious issues for others in the colony.²⁹

Through 1899 till the closure of *The New Order*, reports about Whiteway and correspondence from the Whiteway colonists appeared in the journal. Aspects of these are discussed in the chapter on Whiteway; however, one part of a report by F. R. Henderson clearly indicates the disillusionment with Tolstoy's ideas felt among some of the Purleigh colonists. Referring to an earlier article in the *Stroud Weekly Press*, Henderson wrote:

About two years ago Mr Samuel Veale Bracher a young Gloucester journalist became imbued with the Russian Count Tolstoy's Communist idea, and determined to resign his post and go on a twelve months' visit to a Colony in Purleigh Essex, in order to gain some practical knowledge of the principles professed and carried out there. After spending a few months on the Colony, it became manifest to Mr. Bracher, Mr. Joseph Burt, Mr. Arnold Eilort, Miss Dunn, Miss Shaw and others, that the colony was not being worked in the highest interests of humanity. Accordingly, with a few others, they determined to come West and establish a colony on a broader and less selfish basis.³⁰

Henderson went on to describe the problems of the inception of Whiteway, concluding in the September 1899 issue of *The New Order* that despite the financial and social hardships, 'still, the happiness of the group continues as before, not depending on the extent of their possessions, but based upon goodwill towards men and boundless trust of one's fellow' (19, p.131). He might almost have declared, in Morris's words about Nowhere, that the colony was 'peopled now with this happy and lovely folk, who had cast away riches and attained to wealth' (XVI, p. 200). As

we have seen, the intellectual, emotional and spiritual foundation of those involved with *The New Order* and the colonies at Purleigh and Whiteway was broader and less dogmatic than is often implied. But perhaps more surprising is the extent to which Kenworthy himself was influenced by Morris.

Kenworthy and Morris

In the October and November issues of the journal for 1898, Kenworthy published a long article in two parts as a memorial to Morris. His writing about Morris was not limited to *The New Order*, and in 1896, he had contributed an obituary tribute to the November number of the journal, *Freedom*.³¹ Unlike many at the time, Kenworthy recognised the indissoluble link between Morris's art and his Socialism. Different from his habitually single-minded and fervent style, these articles were measured, perceptive, widely referenced, and deeply appreciative of Morris's life and work.³² It is quite clear from his writing that Kenworthy knew Morris personally and was familiar with his ideas. This is illustrated not only by his critical appraisal of Morris's writing, but by the many quoted remembrances of discussing questions at meetings with Morris, going for walks with him and talking in private with him. As we have seen, it would indeed have been hard for any member of the 'wider' socialist movement to have completely escaped Morris's effect. But in these articles we can see that Kenworthy wholeheartedly acknowledged Morris's influence and actually elevated him to the position of 'brother to Leo Tolstoy', stating that Morris trusted himself 'wholly to the good, to the God, in man'.³³

Undoubtedly, Tolstoy was the primary influence on Kenworthy's ideology and much of his contribution to *The New Order*, but it is also evident that Morris's writing, his poetry, prose and lectures, were an important part of the way in which Kenworthy and the Brotherhood viewed and presented their millennial mission. In the November 1898 issue of the journal, quoting Edward Carpenter in relation to the Socialist League, Kenworthy pointed out that 'Morris's object was to form a national association of individuals and groups for, not political, but fraternal purposes' (10, p. 107). It was this sense of a fraternity fought for by Morris and Carpenter in their work in the Socialist League that Kenworthy used to authorise and sanction his own ideas of brotherhood. This was reinforced later in the same article in Kenworthy's description of the state of Socialism:

And to-day it is a fact that, while the outward form of the League broke in the hand and left Morris apparently adrift, isolated, his purpose of, and work for, "fraternity" survive and grow--the largest idea and greatest vitality in the Socialist movement. He has been the prophet of his day. (10, p. 107)

Kenworthy also took his re-presentation, and sometimes appropriation, of Morris's ideas further. Ever keen to use Morris's authority on his own terms, Kenworthy managed to reposition Morris's atheism and include it in the context of Brotherhood Socialism. Earlier, in *Seed-time*, Morris's atheism was condemned by most of The New Fellowship, who tried to regard it as separate issue from his sense of brotherhood. But Kenworthy insisted that although he too had fought in himself 'the prejudice against Morris as a "pagan" and "a man of the flesh"', he had come to see in his work 'the clear knowledge and inculcation of principles, which are nothing if not spiritual, religious'. Kenworthy went even further, writing that

It may be that the full force and value of his thought is somewhat sunk in the ease and sweetness of his language; but deeply understood, Morris's riper presentments of the truth he saw, are such as humanity has always ranked as religion. (10, p.107)

This representation of religion realigned and spiritualised Morris's identification of Socialist brotherhood as the bed-rock of the physical and necessary revolutionary struggle in *News from Nowhere*. Discussing Morris's vision in *News*, Kenworthy equated him with John the Baptist and 'genuine Christianity', writing that John said concerning the New Jerusalem, 'I saw no temple therein; and so says Morris concerning his Utopia'. Indeed, Morris had not seen any religious institution in *Nowhere* and neither had he seen 'genuine Christianity' either.

Kenworthy summed up *A Dream of John Ball* as Morris's highest and deepest vision, and although he understood its assertion of fellowship, he suggested an interpretation of the story that positioned Morris's narrative within the context of Christian Socialism:

Infinitely better than in any history Morris has here restored the thought, speech, and deed of the English parish priest, the Communist and rebel, and has given them the setting of his own thought and belief. Morris understood nothing of Christianity, you say? I am sure that not all our archbishops and bishops together could give any such faithful account of vital Christianity as Morris has done. To His John Ball, the Church of Christ means Human Good-fellowship; the Communion of Saints means

Communism in practice: the sinners are the selfish oppressors, and lustful; the flock Christ would save is the labouring poor; the king, the lawyer, and the soldier are worst foes; the lordship to be desired is that of “the King’s Son From Heaven”. (10, p. 108)

Here Kenworthy mistook the visionary account of an ideal world for an analogy of Christian revolution. In *John Ball*, Morris used the colourful medieval world to highlight contemporary ills and to explain an account of class struggle, emphasising fellowship as the inevitable result of embracing Socialism. As we have seen before, Morris made his views about the relationship between Christianity and Socialism clear in *Commonweal*, where he had concluded that when Socialism had been realised, ‘Where then will be the Christian ethic? - *absorbed in Socialism*. No separate system of ethics will then be needed’.³⁴ Kenworthy ignored the implication of this statement, and although he always expressed admiration for Morris’s art, writing and politics, he interpreted Morris’s ethos in terms of his own beliefs, which he re-packaged and re-presented to support his own ideology.

Clearly, then, although the ideology expressed by members of the Croydon Brotherhood Church in *The New Order* was influenced by Tolstoyan ideas, both the journal and the Brotherhood’s colony resonated with ideas from a multiplicity of doctrines evident in late-nineteenth-century Socialism, Christian Socialism and the ethical movement. That the Brotherhood, the journal and the colony exercised questions about the relationship between individuality and brotherhood, about sexuality and marriage, and about art and a return to nature, puts them clearly outside Tolstoyan orthodoxy and locates them within Morris’s and Carpenter’s influence. And indeed, this influence was reflected in the diverse outcomes of the journal and the Purleigh colony, for although relatively short lived, they were important in stimulating a range of back-to-the-land initiatives, including the Whiteway Colony. In 1900, The Brotherhood Publishing Company was re-named Free Age Press. It was taken over by Tolstoy’s friend and confidant, Vladimir Tchertkoff, and A. C. Fifield, who later produced ‘The Cottage Farm Series’.³⁵ Although Tchertkoff continued to support Tolstoyan ideals, Fifield went on to produce simple-life publications, ‘for those who dream of a cottage and a bit of land some day’. These consisted not of Tolstoyan rhetoric, but were everyday stories of those who had attempted to live on a smallholding.³⁶ W. J. Jupp of The New Fellowship and J. Bruce Wallace of The Brotherhood Churches combined their

energies to promote Ebenezer Howard's Garden City Movement, the zenith of many nineteenth-century back-to-the-land ideals.

A varied and pluralist outcome then, resulted from *The New Order* and the Purleigh experiment. And despite their obvious sense of mission neither *Seed-time* nor *The New Order* had an exclusive ownership of return-to-nature and simple-life concerns. Neither was the nexus of ideas surrounding back-to-the-land limited to the myriad forms of late-nineteenth-century Socialism. The next chapter therefore considers two organisations allied to Liberal politics, and reflects on their journals *Land and Labor* and *Land and People*.

¹ This was the motto printed under the title on the header of *The New Order* (Croydon: Brotherhood Publishing Company, 1895-1900).

² See Nellie Shaw, *Whiteway: A Colony on the Cotswolds* (London: C. W. Daniel Company, 1935), p. 24. Further references to this edition are given in brackets after quotations in the text. Shaw records that the first issue of *The New Order* was published in November 1895 in the basement of the Brotherhood Store, Croydon. Prior to that, the journal had been known as *The Croydon Brotherhood Intelligence* published from January to October 1895.

³ The Brotherhood Churches and The Labour Churches did not always agree. J. C. Kenworthy stressed the differences in attitude and belief between The Croydon Brotherhood Church and The Labour Churches in an editorial in *The New Order*, 13, (January 1898), p. 103. He took John Trevor of the Labour Churches to task for his critical review of Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata*. Kenworthy also accused Trevor of 'theorism', 'anarchism', of being a 'politician', and importantly of a lack of understanding of Tolstoy's work. This he stated reflected their different stance on 'matters vital to the social-religious movement in the souls of individuals and in society as a whole'.

⁴ For an account of the Fellowship's break up and the development of the radical community at Croydon, see Armytage, *Heavens Below*, pp.336-340.

⁵ Stanley Pierson, 'Edward Carpenter, Prophet of a Socialist Millennium', *Victorian Studies*, 13 (1970), 301-318 (p. 316).

⁶ In *Seed-time*, 24 (April 1895), p. 14, J.C. Kenworthy referred to himself as the honorary 'pastor' of the Croydon Brotherhood, stating, 'though we are revolutionary, we find certain old-fashioned terms are of convenient use'.

⁷ *The Labour Annual*, 1896, p. 44.

⁸ Nellie Shaw, *Whiteway*, p. 20.

⁹ Nellie Shaw, *Whiteway*, p. 20.

¹⁰ This is the way Nellie Shaw recalls Kenworthy in her book *Whiteway*. A similar picture is described by Armytage in *Heavens Below*, see 'The Tolstoyan Communities', pp. 342-354. For a biographical note and photograph of Kenworthy, see the footnote to Morris's letter to Kenworthy, November 6th 1889, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, III, pp. 120-122.

¹¹ In January 1896, these two titles along with *The Christian Revolt* by Kenworthy, appeared in the *Scout* ed. by Maurice Blatchford, in a list of useful reference works available from the *Clarion* newspaper company. The *Anatomy of Misery*, written by Kenworthy in 1893 as the result of his time working among the poor, was intended as a catalyst for action and reform.

¹² Aylmer Maude, a member of the Croydon Brotherhood who translated Tolstoy's works into English, was also influential in the development of the church's Tolsoyan orthodoxy.

¹³ Shaw, *Whiteway*, p. 22.

¹⁴ See chapter nine for an explanation of the approach to Tolstoy's work in the thesis. For a comprehensive study of Tolstoy's life and work, see Henri Troyat, *Tolstoy* (London, Pelican, 1967). Troyat describes Tolstoy's attitudes towards sexuality, cataloguing a list of seven precepts, the first and most important being, 'The best thing one can do with sexual drive is to destroy it utterly in oneself'. p. 773.

¹⁵ Shaw, *Whiteway*, pp. 26-29.

¹⁶ The Brotherhood were also deeply sympathetic to the plight, and inspired by the example, of the Doukhobortsi, a community of primitive Christians, about seven thousand in number, who lived on the land and were much persecuted in Russia for their religion, pacifism and life style. Aylmer Maude wrote about the plight of the Doukhobortsi in *A Peculiar People: The Dukhobors* (1905).

¹⁷ This lettering bears a resemblance to some of Edward Johnston's work. Johnston's skill greatly impressed Lethaby, who put him in charge of the illuminating class at the Central School in 1899. Lionel Lambourn referred to Johnston as 'the arts and crafts figure whose work has most influenced the public', *Utopian Craftsmen* (London: Astrangle Books, 1980), p. 97.

¹⁸ See Shaw, *Whiteway* for a more detailed discussion, pp. 35-38.

¹⁹ Shaw, *Whiteway*, p. 38. Havelock Ellis was deeply influenced by Edward Carpenter's writing on sexuality and gender. Ellis published *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1910), and *World of Dreams* (1911). Carpenter referred to both these texts in *The Drama of Love and Death*. (1912).

²⁰ Robert Blatchford, the editor of the *Clarion*, and influential in the return-to-nature identity of the *Scout*, had been instrumental in spreading Morris's and Carpenter's back-to-the-land Socialism through the medium of popular journalism. See Gould, pp. 53-57 for an account of the change in attitudes to back-to-the-land evident in the 1890s and anti-utopianism in Socialist opinion.

²¹ Every issue of *The New Order* contained reports on the Brotherhood's experimental colony at Purleigh and accounts of the work of other back-to-the-land ventures.

²² For example, *The New Order*, 10 (October 1898), p. 1.

²³ *The New Order*, 3 (March 1897), p. 24.

²⁴ See chapter nine of the thesis, pp. 204-208, for a more detailed account of Morris's and Carpenter's influence on alternative dress codes.

²⁵ Carpenter is directly mentioned here as a prophet along side Tolstoy and Kenworthy, *The New Order*, 5 (June 1898), pp. 59-60.

²⁶ For a nineteenth-century perspective on Tolstoy's ideology, see 'Some Interesting Biographies', 'Leo Tolstoy', *The Labour Annual*, 1896, pp 225-230.

²⁷ See Kenworthy's 'Plain Lectures of Economics', in *The Anatomy of Misery* (1893). Parts of these lectures were reprinted in *The New Order* during the second half of 1899. An example of the content of the lectures was evident in the October 1899 issue of the journal; this focused on the subject of 'Reform' (the subtitle of the lecture) and included sections on 'Violent Revolution', 'Political Action' and 'Personal Conduct'.

²⁸ A. L. Morton, *The English Utopia*, p. 221.

²⁹ See 'Purleigh Notes', *The New Order*, 15 (May 1899), p. 74, and 'About Work', *The New Order*, 17 (July 1899), pp. 100-101.

³⁰ *The New Order*, 19 (September 1899), p. 131).

³¹ In *William Morris: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Peter Faulkner (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 399, Peter Faulkner mentions Kenworthy's tribute to Morris and records that other prose contributors to the November issue of *Freedom* 1896 were Walter Crane and Peter Kropotkin.

³² These articles were re-written and revised by Kenworthy, having been originally published in the *New Century Review*; see *The New Order*, 9 (October 1898), p. 1.

³³ *The New Order*, 10 (November 1898), p. 109.

³⁴ William Morris, *Commonweal*, March 8th, 1890, *Political Writings: Contributions to Justice and Commonweal 1883-1890*, p. 468.

³⁵ See Armytage, *Heavens Below*, p. 347.

³⁶ For an account of 'The Cottage Farm Series', produced by A. C. Fifield, see Marsh, *Back to the Land*, pp. 119-121.

Chapter Seven

Land and Labor and Land and People

The rights of each, bounded by the equal rights of all¹

Land and Labor and *Land and People* were the journals of the Land Nationalisation Society and the Allotment and Small Holdings Association, respectively. These journals represented two strands in the complex nexus of ideas surrounding late-nineteenth-century attitudes to the 'land question'. They also demonstrate clearly that matters relating to land issues were a pertinent issue across a wide spectrum of contemporary politics and culture. In relation to *Seed-time* and *The New Order*, they indicate how differences in approach to questions about land were directly influenced by attitudes to maintaining or destabilising the wider social order.

We have seen that during the years 1880-1900 a call for a return to the land in various guises became an important part of wider Socialist thinking; indeed, that it was the catalyst by which many radicals came to identify themselves with Socialism. It is also evident that the written word in the form of the journal was significant in communicating ideas within this context. *Land and Labor* and *Land and People* illustrate that groups other than utopian Socialists also specifically used the medium of the journal to inform, and to lobby for their specific ideology in relation to land. For the most part, mainstream Socialism took a utilitarian view of land use, and saw the development of society as primarily an urban and industrial question. And, although much contemporary Socialist thought held firmly to the idea that land restitution was purely a practical matter, *Seed-time* and *The New Order* confirm that at a broader level Socialist back-to-the-land ideology was both utopian and spiritual in character. And clearly this utopianism, as much as mainstream Socialist and Marxist activism (although perhaps less effectively), sought to de-stabilise economic power and social and cultural mores through a spiritual revival and a collective return to the land.

In contrast, *Land and Labor* and *Land and People*, although fighting for a re-distribution and re-allocation of land, were firmly rooted within an establishment cultural context and the parliamentary and political system. Neither journal was utopian in character, and neither appears to have displayed much of Morris's or Carpenter's thinking. However, both journals were influential in land-question issues

and had a high profile in the public perception of back to the land. And because they were the mouthpiece for two important land pressure groups, they act not only as a mirror that reflects the overall context of back-to-the-land, but also as a conceptual balancing scale on which the movement's utopian aspects are thrown into sharp relief. Indeed, the differences in attitude evident in the journals present us with a clear reflection of changing values in relation to the existing cultural hegemony, represented until the 1880s by a prevailing spirit of individualism, independence, laissez-faire, and charity for the deserving poor. These different emphases in approaches to land also reflect the obvious class bias within the various strands of back-to-the-land thinking, and indicate the journals' relationship to the urban/rural debate.

Despite their alliance with aspects of Liberalism, and their pragmatism, *Land and Labor* and *Land and People* cannot be viewed as closely related identities. Their aims were similar, but their philosophy and their identity in the public consciousness were markedly different. The language and the tone of these journals reflected this difference as much as their suggestions for land initiatives. What relationship they had to the emotional and cultural value that accrued to land, through Morris's and Carpenter's ideas, is to be seen in their texts. However, before we turn to these, we need firstly to consider the organisations that produced them, which, unlike The New Fellowship and The Croydon Brotherhood Church, were decidedly pressure groups aiming directly at parliamentary legislation.

***Land and Labor* and The Land Nationalisation Society**

The Land Nationalisation Society was launched in 1881 by Alfred Russel Wallace, the naturalist and Socialist, who became its president. Wallace was originally a follower of Henry George, the American land reformer and author of the highly influential *Progress and Poverty* (1881).² George's book stemmed from the observation that despite conditions of material plenty and technological advances, the majority of mankind suffered in the midst of poverty, unemployment and despair. We have seen that this paradox was one of the most powerful stimuli in the call for social and political change in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. George identified land ownership and taxation as central issues in resolving social problems and injustice.³ Uncompromisingly, he wrote:

The widespread social ills which everywhere oppress men amid advancing civilization spring from the great primary wrong - the appropriation by the few of the land on which and from which all must live'.⁴

Blaming private property for rural depopulation and the resulting slum conditions of the cities, George's remedy was not the compulsory purchase of land, but the abolition of all taxation except that on the value of land, and the taxation of rent. George conceived this as central to the public interest. He viewed the organisation of society as mainly urban, industrial and competitive, and he saw land as a resource to be used for the cultivation of food for the benefit of the majority. *Progress and Poverty* displayed little of the utopian sentiments of Morris or Carpenter in its attitude to nature or a return to the land. However, Peter Gould in *Early Green Politics*, points out that by a redistribution of land, 'George hoped that people would be released from urban concentrations. Rural life, would be revived as urban comforts, recreations and stimulus were brought to the rural areas'.⁵ Rural life, then, would be reinvented through public ownership and stimulated by urban ideas and progress.

George and his followers saw the administration of public ownership of land as inherent in social development and re-organisation. Land therefore became not the locus of an agrarian revolution, but the means to stabilise society, by alleviating both the rural and urban crises. Nevertheless, George's call for legislation to restore the land to the people positioned his ideas inextricably within the context of wider back-to-the-land politics. Georgite philosophy stimulated the demand for public intervention over questions of land ownership, and became an important and inescapable theme in 'land question' issues during the years 1880-1900. And indeed in terms of legislation, the Land Nationalisation Society's and the Allotment and Smallholding Association's clamour for land reform were related under this umbrella.

The Land Nationalisation Society (LNS) was originally conceived to solve the land problem in Ireland; but through his experiences, Wallace came to believe that the society's aim should be to initiate a return to the land through nationalisation. In 1880 Wallace published *How to Nationalise the Land: a Radical Solution of the Irish Problem* and in 1882 his book *Land Nationalisation* appeared; both publications demonstrated that, like Henry George, Wallace upheld private

property. Despite Wallace's Socialism, the LNS was in many respects allied to Liberalism, and Gould points out that by 1885 they had toned down their land nationalisation plan to the point where 'the main differences between it and the [Liberal] Radicals would appear to many voters to be over matters of detail'.⁶ However, many mainstream Socialists held views about land in parallel to the LNS, and Marxist Socialists, such as Hyndman, also called for land nationalisation, and these demands, and the calls of the LNS, were publicised in the Socialist journal *Justice*.⁷ For a time the adoption of land nationalisation ideas also became popular among sections of London's workingmen, lending moral, if not actual, support to LNS objectives

Joseph Chamberlain, a leading voice in the Liberal party, saw both Hyndman's and Wallace's land nationalisation plans as a threat to the establishment and middle-class values. Chamberlain's support for land reform was described in his 'Radical Programme' of 1884-5, which included free primary education and financial reform, both however intended to support and preserve the capitalist system and ensure social stability.⁸ Despite George's influence, and the effect of Chamberlain's policies, Wallace developed an inclusive attitude to land, and hoped to attract the mass of the population back to the country. This, he believed, would alleviate social problems, give people a healthy life and a means of access to cheap land. A description of the 'Dundee Slums' in the November 1893 issue of *Land and Labor* epitomised Wallace's and the LNS's view of the relationship between rural depopulation and urban squalor:

Where they [the poor] live on the land they are poor, but not degraded; ignorant, but not vile. Driven off the land into cities, their low standard of comfort enables them to work for low wages, and as the action of landlords keeps up the supply of country folk, the towns people are forced, by the competition for employment to live down to their level; while similar competition for house room sends rents up. Hence, overcrowding and its corollaries, drunkenness, and vice. (49, p. 8)

Despite their condemnation of the conditions and exploitation of the working class, Wallace and the LNS, contrary to Chamberlain's worst fears, saw improvements through land reform operating as part of the existing political and social order. This was always reflected in the journal's language, which frequently cited regulations and legislation to make its point, so that, for example, a piece on

‘Overcrowding’ in November 1893 referred to abuses of local regulations as a measure of the offence (49, p. 8). Unlike much of the revolutionary ideology of the Socialist movement, the LNS stood essentially for evolutionary change. This was continually reinforced in *Land and Labor*; a case in point was the so-called ‘lesson of the Coal Lock-out of 1893’ which was described in the December copy thus: ‘good will arise out of evil if workmen can only be led to see that the settlement of the land difficulty is the only sure basis for a permanent settlement of the labor difficulty’ (50, p. 2). As part of their evolutionary ethos the LNS were inclusive, albeit on their own terms, of ‘land nationalisers of all kinds’. These included ‘Trade Unionists, Socialists and advanced Radicals’ whom they hoped to unite under one banner of land nationalisation. In the February edition of *Land and Labor*, an article on the Land Reform Congress of 1894 demonstrated that the LNS accepted that ‘to Socialists, the nationalisation of the soil is the first big step towards realising the collectivist ideal’. In contrast, the LNS saw land nationalisation as the complete solution and the article concluded that united action should be parliamentary:

Let it be understood that this congress of land reformers means one of land nationalisers. Let the representatives at this congress pledge themselves at the next general election to vote for no parliamentary candidate who does not support land nationalisation. In other words, make the public ownership and control of the land the test question everywhere at the next general election. Do this, and it becomes a burning question of practical politics at once. (52, p. 16)

This approach was in contrast to Morris’s *News from Nowhere*, in which two years of revolutionary struggle had brought about a situation in which the population acted directly to claim the land. ‘People flocked into the country villages, and, so to say, flung themselves upon the freed land like a wild beast upon his prey’ (XVI, p. 72). Land for the LNS was not the physical representation or symbol of freedom and equality, it was the central theme of their legislative campaign for social improvement.

From its outset, the LNS attracted like-minded and dedicated reformers, among them Herbert Moberly, Alex Paine and Joseph Hyder. *The Labour Annual* reported, under the title ‘Some Interesting Biographies’, that Joseph Hyder became the secretary of the Society in 1888, and that he was responsible for founding the journal in 1889.⁹ Hyder was also described as the pioneer of the lecture cart campaigns and the Yellow and Red Van initiatives, which became the hallmark and the public face

of the LNS.¹⁰ *Land and Labor* was listed as the LNS's journal under *The Labour Annual*'s section, 'Labour and Social Reform Newspapers', but without the customary vignette the annual reserved for the progressive Socialist press. In January 1895, *Land and Labor* had welcomed the advent of *The Labour Annual* stating that 'It contains a considerable store of information respecting the men and women in the advanced movement, and we heartily welcome and commend it to our readers' (63, p. 7).

This description is interesting, because it suggests that the LNS saw itself, despite its Liberal elements, as identified with progressive groups. This is reinforced further by an article in *Land and Labor* featuring the *Clarion*'s involvement in and reporting of the Yellow Van campaign, and its encouragement of its cycling corps to support the LNS. The interrelation of land ideas and pressure groups is clearly seen in yet another Socialist journal, *The Scout*, in an article in October 1895 called 'Tracks Towards Socialism' which discusses, alongside the Liverpool Fabian Society's attitude to footpaths and common land, the work of the Land Nationalisation Society. It suggests that

Scouts who desire a thoroughly useful week or ten days' propaganda work in speaking and country working could hardly do better than volunteer their services in this English land campaign. If ever there is any gospel worth preaching, this is surely the best. Its texts abound in every village; its promise is a new England; its fulfilment a truer and nobler race of men and women. (7, p. 112)

It is clear that while the Land Nationalisation Society and *Land and Labor* represented some of the ideals of 'advanced' land politics, its remit to instigate these ideals was located within the existing political system. However, through their stated aim to nationalise *all* land, even if gradually, the Society was establishing land as a vehicle for a vast social change, involving the break-up of the landed estates and rights of inheritance. *Land and Labor* adopted a by-line that summed up this philosophy: 'the rights of each bounded by the equal rights of all'. But in December 1893, in a report from a paper read at the General Meeting of the society, Wallace stated that he was changing the by line in response to criticism at the slowness of the society's progress. Wallace reported that: 'Our new object and programme is "To restore the Land to the People, and the People to the Land"', an aim that can only be

interpreted as an idealistic form of back-to-the-land, even if its ethos was almost entirely a matter of practical and electioneering politics (50, p. 1).

The extent of *Land and Labor*'s circulation is difficult to ascertain. However there are indications of this in the journal itself, which described its sales as national and even reported international subscribers. Agents were sought to maximise marketing, and the journal was obtainable through the post. It is also evident that copies were shared around communities and available in public libraries. The Yellow and Red Van Campaigns in which *Land and Labor* carts toured the country in the summer months, educating working people about the Society's aims, contributed in large measure to the journal's success and widespread distribution.¹¹

Although much of the journal's message was aimed at alleviating injustice and poverty among the working classes, its readers, contributors and its editorial board appear to have been both working- and middle-class.¹² The journal mainly reported questions of land ownership, landlordism and political land reform, but other elements and values relating to land surfaced in its pages, and discussion of back-to-the-land ideas did appear alongside calls for political initiatives. Like *Seed-time* and *The New Order*, *Land and Labor* advertised other journals involved with land issues on its back pages. These included *Land and People*, *Seed-time*, *Labour Co-partnership* and *Brotherhood*, J. Bruce Wallace's Brotherhood Church journal. This certainly suggests that readers of *Land and Labor* were interested in, and even receptive to, a multiplicity of ideas relating to the 'land question'. In contrast, *Land and People* did not advertise any other journals or societies, reflecting its narrower and more specific area of interest. But unlike the utopian journals, *Land and Labor* didn't advertise co-operative ventures, whole foods or progressive literature. However, despite its clearly articulated aims and its parliamentary approach, some of *Land and Labor*'s attitude to land issues resonate with aspects of Morris's and Carpenter's return-to-nature ideas.

***Land and Labor* : William Morris and Edward Carpenter**

Wider and ethical Socialists, and the journals they produced, saw a vision of back-to-the-land as integral to their own personal development and salvation, as well as central to alleviating the plight of the poor and hastening the Socialist millennium. The radical Liberal reform movement, on the other hand, was motivated to release land on behalf of the labouring classes, instigating an evolutionary social change, in

which they played a pedagogic but not necessarily inclusive role. This was particularly marked in the attitude of the Allotment and Small Holding's Extension Association. It is within this context, then, that we need to view ways in which *Land and Labor* reflected elements of Morris's and Carpenter's back-to-the-land ideology.

Like both writers, the journal was profoundly concerned with questions of land ownership, rights of access and the preservation of commons and footpaths. Indeed, in March 1894, an article appeared in *Land and Labor* called "Trespassers Will Not Be Prosecuted", suggesting that the LNS should produce hand-bills to this effect. These were to be used to 'counteract and contradict the notice boards' which the LNS described as 'so common in the country and which frighten so many people from enjoying the beauties of nature by that well-known legend "Trespassers will be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law"' (53, p. 18). This re-phrasing was given the enthusiastic approval of the LNS executive who stated that 'the proposal is excellent'.¹³ Other articles frequently challenged private ownership of land, and in the March 1894 issue of the journal, Alex Payne concluded, in an 'Important Notice' on the front page, that

Private ownership in land has been weighed in the balance of experience and is found wanting. Its doom is sealed, and it is for land reformers to see that there is built up in its stead a system based upon justice and commonsense. (53, p. 1)

Carpenter, using the language of wider Socialism would have most likely replaced these last two words with 'brotherhood and co-operation'. But despite this difference in emphasis, similarities between the journal's attitude to land rights and Carpenter's are evident. Carpenter had made a concerted attack on private ownership of land and the politics of exclusion in 'Private Property', published in *England's Ideal* in 1887. He summed up his views thus:

And what exactly is this legal ownership? In the case of land, it is the power to evict, to prosecute for poaching, to levy rent etc. It is essentially a negative power. It is the power to prevent others from using. (pp. 116-117)

It was such elements as Carpenter's call for inclusivity, including rights of access to land, that members of the LNS grafted on to Henry George's highly legalistic and economic theories about public ownership and the taxation of rents, to produce their particular perspective.¹⁴ This was reinforced by the secretary of the LNS, William

Jameson's view, that George's *Progress and Poverty* had 'passed into current economic literature (a very significant fact) and consequently lost some of its freshness of appeal'.¹⁵ However, it must be remembered that George's land-reform ideas were highly influential at the time Carpenter was writing *Towards Democracy*, and *Progress and Poverty*'s call for public ownership of land made a powerful contribution to the prevailing culture of radical thinking on the 'land question'. Although it is fair to say that Carpenter's influence on *Land and Labor* was not directly immediate in the sense that it was in *Seed-time*, the ideas expressed in his utopian writing on questions of private ownership and access were reflected in LNS attitudes and visible in their journal.

In *Towards Democracy*, Carpenter had expressed his belief in the rights of ordinary people to the land, writing: 'I see a great land waiting for its people to come and take possession' (p. 55). The dynamic of *Towards Democracy* had been to locate mankind firmly on and in the land, empowering those who worked it and lived on it, not those who owned it or traded it:

Do you think that England or any land will rise into life, will display her surpassing beauty, will pour out her love, to the touch of false owners - to people who finger banknotes, who make traffic, buying and selling her, who own by force of title deeds, laws, police - who yet deny her, turning their backs upon her winds and her waves, and ashamed to touch her soil with their hands? (p. 56)

This condemnation of landowners and land speculation is followed by a passage clearly calling for a comprehensive landscape in which the land is held by the people:

Between a great people and the earth springs a passionate attachment ... Owners and occupiers then fall into their places; the trees wave proud and free upon the headlands; the little brooks run with a wonderful new music under the brambles and the grass ... (p. 58)

These are sentiments that the LNS sympathised with. In May 1894 *Land and Labor* reported that 'The people were now convinced that they had too long been robbed of their birthright in the land, and they were determined now to re-assert their ownership in it'. Statements in this vein appeared regularly. In the March 1895 issue of the journal, in an article examining Land Nationalisation in relation to Socialism, Thomas F Walker stated that

Land nationalisation means the transfer to the Nation - through its elected representatives - of unrestricted control of the land with all the powers and privileges involved therein. This does not mean that they will be dealt with directly by a central authority. That is a matter that will be decided by the people, when they have made up their minds to take the land. (53, p.22)

Despite similarities in the LNS's and Carpenter's attitude to ownership of land, there were marked differences in their approaches to the law and to the prohibition of private enterprise. All LNS propaganda, and the purpose of the Van Campaigns, was directly aimed at stimulating a desire for land reform in the populace that could be translated into political pressure and result in the enactment of new legislation. Carpenter, on the other hand, saw the law and the legal system as an integral part of the problem of land ownership. And while he admitted that the law 'was necessary at a certain stage of civilisation', he viewed the institution as 'essentially negative and anti-social', summing up in 'Private Property' in *England's Ideal* that 'it may be seen that mere legal ownership is essentially harmful' (p. 118). In this context, Carpenter saw the use of land and property as central to questions of ownership. So while the LNS stressed that legal redistribution of land would create the fundamental groundwork for a new life, Carpenter contended that it was only through empathy, stewardship and understanding of land that rights to land had any meaning.¹⁶ The LNS's view that nationalisation should be entirely limited to land ruled out any change to private enterprise and delineated the extent of its relationship to Socialism and many of the ideas that had informed Carpenter's thinking.¹⁷ Despite this difference, and the LNS's emphasis on legislation, the following statement from Wallace's presentation to the society in December 1893, entitled 'The Programme of Land Nationalisers' shows that rights of access to land were as intrinsic in its ideology as they were to Carpenter's:

We land-nationalisers have this unfailing test, by which we judge all proposals and all legislation affecting the land:- Does it either directly or indirectly restore any portion of the land to public ownership or popular control; - Does it bring about, or tend to bring about, free and fair access to the land for those who to cultivate it or live upon it? If it does these two things, or either of them, we support it; if it does not do this, or if it does it in such a way as to interfere with the rights of others to equally free access, we oppose it. (50, p. 1)

Morris, like Carpenter, actively supported the preservation of the commons and footpaths, and was involved in the late 1870s with the setting-up of the Commons Preservation Society. He was also instrumental in setting up the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (the inspiration for the National Trust) and the Kyrle Society, both of whose remits involved them in the fight against pollution, squalor and in environmental protection. Morris wrote and lectured extensively on these subjects, bringing questions of aesthetics, conservation of buildings and landscape to the public consciousness. In a lecture 'Art Under Plutocracy', given at Oxford University in November 1883, Morris anticipated many of the concerns of back-to-the-land and the ecology movement and later demands for legislation:

To keep the air pure and the rivers clean, to take some pains to keep the meadows and tillage as pleasant as reasonable use will allow them to be; to allow peaceable citizens to wander where they will, so they do no hurt to garden or cornfield; nay, even to leave here and there some piece of waste or mountain sacredly free from fence or tillage as a memory of man's ruder struggles with nature in his earlier days: ... That loss of the instinct for beauty which has involved us in the loss of popular art is also busy in depriving us of the only compensation possible for that loss, by surely and not slowly destroying the beauty of the very face of the earth. (XXIII, p. 170)

Anxious to assuage the view that the LNS had no concern for aesthetics, an article appeared in *Land and Labor* in December 1893 in connection with the inception of the National Trust which echoed many of Morris's environmental concerns. While the article maintained that the acquisition of places of historic interest or natural beauty should be the business of the state and not an association run by the landed elite, it fully supported the Trust's programme:

Land reformers have often been reproached with want of consideration for the beauties of our native scenery, and with the intention to cut up woodlands and parks, but nothing could be more untrue. What they do object to most strongly is that all these natural beauties should be reserved for the favoured few, who having already more than they can enjoy, are often tempted by greed of gain to hand over to the speculative builder and others, for destruction, natural wealth which centuries of human labor cannot replace. (50, p. 8)

Articles also appeared in *Land and Labor* berating the landed elite for denying public access to places of interest and beauty, and calling for action over pollution and wastage of land.

Despite Morris's involvement with environmental concerns, E. P. Thompson has justly observed that his 'analysis of society was far too profound to suppose that these efforts would do more than scratch the surface'.¹⁸ As we have seen, Morris's conversion and commitment to Socialist ideals and his particular vision of a utopian society expressed in *News from Nowhere* were the result of this realisation. The accessible and socialised landscape in *News*, which was discussed in part one of the thesis, becomes the context for, and part of, a meaningful revolutionised life. This sentiment, perhaps surprisingly, was closely echoed in *Land and Labor*, in the president A. R. Wallace's address for May 1895. Discussing the need for properly organised self-supporting communities, Wallace evokes an environment similar to that in *Nowhere*, emphasising recreation, happiness, responsibility to self and community:

All work would be near at hand. No work permanently injurious to health would be permitted; while the alterations of out-door and indoor work, together with the fact that every worker would be working for himself, for his family, and for a community of which he formed an integral part on an equality with all his fellow workers, would give a new interest to labor similar to that which every gardener feels in growing vegetables for his own table ... Then again, while living in and surrounded by the country and enjoying all the advantages and pleasures of country life, a community of five thousand persons would possess in themselves the means of supplying most of the relaxations and enjoyments of the town. (67, p. 44)

Although this address has much in common with Ebenezer Howard's vision for the future in *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1898), it is also reminiscent of *News*, in which Hammond describes for Guest how the landscape changed with the revolutionary changes in society:

"The difference between the town and country grew less and less; and it was indeed this world of the country vivified by the thought and briskness of town-bred folk which has produced that happy and leisurely but eager life of which you have had a first taste". (XVI, p. 72)

Despite *Land and Labor's* anticipation of a future collective set in an integrated landscape, there is no real sense in which it advocated the concept of the simple life. Here, of course, it has to be remembered that, unlike *Seed-time* and *The New Order*, *Land and Labor* was mainly speaking to the working classes, for whom simplification of life in terms of possessions and servants had little relevance. It is

not surprising, then, that the cultural currency of the simple life was not a part of the LNS's back-to-the-land agenda. Most notably absent from *Land and Labor* is any real sense of a Carpenterian or Morrisian love of nature, or a return to nature. The LNS saw land as a birthright, a solution to social evils, and a means of providing a better life for the working classes without provoking social revolution. Within this context, there was little room to embrace nature for nature's sake.

Although private ownership, rights of access and problems of pollution were the main areas in which we are able to see the possible influence of Carpenter's and Morris's ideas in the journal, there are resonances of other aspects of their ideals. The journal shared Carpenter's and Morris's view, palpable in both their fiction and their public lectures, that the greed of the idle rich was responsible for appalling factory conditions and the despair of the slums. The idle rich were condemned in reports discussing overcrowding, slum conditions and in articles with moralising titles, such as 'London Rookeries'. Poems appeared dealing with injustice, and perhaps most powerfully of all, the journal published cartoons featuring captions such as, 'the wage of the worker can never be what it ought to be until the tribute to the idler is abolished'.¹⁹

In a synthesis of Morris and Carpenter's approach to education, and echoing much of their language, *Land and Labor* described an ideal of a collective colony, proclaiming:

Every child would be taught to help in the simpler agricultural processes, as weeding fruit gathering, and besides this each person would learn at least two trades or occupations, more or less contrasted, one being light and sedentary, the other more active and laborious and involving more or less out-door work. By this means not only would a pleasant and healthful variety of occupation be rendered possible for each worker, but the community would derive the benefit of being able to concentrate a large amount of skilled labor on any pressing work, such as buildings or machinery.²⁰

Although perhaps not directly influenced by Morris's lectures this has much in common with his belief in the value of teaching handwork and his notion of 'due education'. In 'Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil', specifically discussing education, Morris had expressed the view that 'A man might easily learn and practise at least three crafts, varying sedentary occupation with outdoor occupation'. He concluded that most people would wish to spend 'part of their lives in the most necessary and

pleasantest of all work - cultivating the earth' (XXIII, p. 112). As we have already seen, Carpenter had been involved with the New Fellowship in the initiation and development of the progressive school, Abbotsholme. His contribution had been to proselytise for an education that put physical and manual work at the forefront of the curriculum. When this was carried out, Carpenter believed that manual dexterity, self-reliance and a collective spirit would develop, values that *Land and Labor* empathised with. Carpenter's tenet of self-sufficiency is a recurring if un-attributed theme in LNS discussions of prospective colonies.

Indeed, the journal's reporting of such ventures places its overall principles in a definite relationship to the utopian back-to-the-land visions of the New Fellowship and the Croydon Brotherhood Church. Undoubtedly, the LNS's concept of back-to-the-land was pragmatic and at times paternalistic, but there is reason to associate many of their schemes and ideas with the influence of Morris's and Carpenter's utopian rhetoric. However, the LNS and *Land and Labor* remained associated with radical Liberalism and committed to change through legislation. For this reason, it is unlikely that they foresaw a possible destabilising migration from the cities as a desirable or realistic element of back-to-the-land. In a similar but more conservative mode, The Allotment and Small Holdings Association, which ironically became synonymous in the public mind with back-to-the-land ideas, fought its campaign to stem the tide of social unrest.

Land and People and The Allotment and Small Holdings Association

Three Acres and a Cow²¹

The Allotments and Small Holdings Association (ASHA) was started in 1883 by Jesse Collings, with the support of members of parliament, including Lord Carrington, Joseph Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke.²² The association was based in Birmingham, which was regarded at the time by Liberal radicals as the 'metropolis of Liberalism'.²³ The ASHA's campaign was an attempt to alleviate rural depopulation and social unrest, and to give support to impoverished agricultural workers. Its leading propagandist, Jesse Collings, supported by the influential Liberal parliamentarian, Joseph Chamberlain, proposed that allotments and smallholdings, supported by legislation, be made available to halt the flow of rural labourers from the land. The Association's main concern was with rural poverty:

they did not envisage or encourage a mass exodus of workers from the cities or any disturbance of the existing urban middle-class hegemony.

Chamberlain devised a raft of proposals to revive the rural economy, thereby taking pressure off urban migration. The implications of this won him support among urban radicals and moderate liberals alike. However, although the campaign was philanthropic, Socialists saw it as a holding operation, essentially conservative in character and designed to forestall social unrest, delaying radical political initiatives including those based on Henry George's ideas for land reform and single taxation. And while Chamberlain saw the wide circulation of both George's and A. R. Wallace's books as a warning and a threat to social stability, he saw no danger in Collings' allotment campaign. Indeed, peasant landholding was seen as an antidote to worse things to come.²⁴ Detractors of the campaign such as Morris saw its attempts at allotment and smallholdings legislation as a social whitewash, describing it as 'a miserable makeshift a piece of reaction leading nowhere, save down the hill'.²⁵ Despite criticism from the left, Jesse Collings' original plan for legislation had been genuinely motivated. Nevertheless, his idealism was manipulated and appropriated by Chamberlain, and circumvented by parliament, and when Collings was ousted from the Allotment Association in 1888, Morris had little sympathy for him and retorted in *Commonweal* that

Mr Collings manufactured a sort of stage landscape of a happy village, over which, as in other stage landscapes, shone a fatuous moon in the shape of three acres and a cow, a long way off ...²⁶

In 1886, the Association inaugurated its journal, *Land and People*, which was published and printed in Birmingham and sold for one penny. The phrase, 'Three Acres and a Cow', became the journal's motto and appeared on the front page of every issue. Peter Gould stated in relation to the phrase, that it 'came into being in 1885 to make derogatory reference to proposals for legislation to empower local authorities to let and facilitate the purchase of land in the form of allotments and smallholdings'.²⁷ However, the term derived from a pamphlet of that title written by Frederic Impey, secretary of the Association, in which he presented the case for small holdings for 'labourers and others requiring allotments of charity lands, at fair agricultural rents'. Chamberlain, in the preface to the pamphlet, described the information in it as having 'great value on the practical conditions to be observed in

establishing a system of Small Holdings, and on the results that have already followed partial experiments in this direction'.²⁸

The 'Three Acres and a Cow' campaign received mixed notices in the press of the day. Unlike the Liberals, most Tory politicians saw the publication and the Association as a heinous threat. According to *Land and People* in 1886, *The St. James's Gazette* was scandalised, stating: 'Never was a cause worse advocated than is the claim for allotments in this publication', and the *Court Circular* referred to it as 'a foolish and mischievous little pamphlet' (1, p. 1). The Liberal and local press, on the other hand, welcomed the pamphlet's sentiments warmly. So while 'Three Acres and a Cow' represented a very moderate, Liberal-backed element of land reform, despised in the main by the Socialist and ethical movement and radical Liberals alike, it nevertheless presented a concerted threat to the landed elite and the Tories, who continually blocked proposed allotment legislation in parliament. Despite this parliamentary stalling, support for providing smallholdings and allotments was an ongoing campaign, and in the late 1880s and '90s the force of contemporary radical land issues and attacks on rights to private property gave it an additional intensity.

Through wide exposure in *Land and People*, the van initiatives and Liberal propaganda, the 'Three Acres and a Cow' campaign became associated in the public mind with back-to-the-land issues; it engendered debate and articles appearing in both the radical and conservative press. The journal was in the main legalistic in approach, convinced that the need for land for rural workers could be satisfied through extending the legislative powers of the local authorities. It also worked to provide land for urban artisans, believing in the advantages of allotments and cultivation to the urban worker. In this sense, the journal held some views about a return to the land in common with ethical Socialism. The journal's message was specifically aimed at the labouring classes, and most of its readers were working-class and artisans, reflecting its stated aim, 'Land for the Labourer'. By contrast, the editorial board were decidedly middle-class and educated, supported by the committee of the Allotment Association, which was made up almost entirely of members of parliament and justices of the peace.²⁹

The journal's circulation is hard to ascertain, but references to agencies in villages and towns selling the periodical, numbering over one hundred and fifty, suggest that it was widespread. Indeed, *Land and People* appears to be the most

widely circulated of the journals sampled in this study. In May 1886, in the first year of its production, the journal reported:

Land and People has been received with a warm welcome in all parts of the kingdom. As the list published in our advertising column will show, our readers are widely spread, and the circulation of the paper exceeds the hopes of its promoters' (1, p.12)

This announcement was followed by a statement in which the direct and acknowledged influence of the board of the ASHA on the journal, and the mediating role of the editors, is evident: '*Land and People* has the advantage of much help from influential men, well known authorities on the subjects which they write about, and to all of these the thanks of the Editors and readers are alike warmly due'. Notes of dissent were rarely expressed, and almost all articles and letters supported the particular and specific emphases with which the Association approached the 'land question'. Indeed, *Land and People* developed a particular language to position itself as an interface between those lobbying for land reform and those in need of it. Letters to the editors, Frederick Impey and H.G. Reid, were signed with pseudonyms such as 'Clodhopper', 'Devonian', 'A Plebeian', 'Fair Play' and 'Oxonian'. Many were regular features, raising questions as to their origination. Most purported to be from labourers calling for the need for land or from those commenting on social injustices, such as low wages and denial of access to land. Availability of land was seen as the solution to rural working-class poverty, and unlike the utopian journals, most of *Land and People*'s contributors, apart from the letters pages, took a philanthropic, paternalistic and distanced view of contact with the land.

However, the journal also acted as a forum for the exchange of information about the progress of allotment availability, and it tracked the progress of all the Allotments and Small Holdings Bills before parliament. In 'Notes by the Way' it habitually exposed local authorities and landowners who failed to support the association's cause, and documented evidence of enclosures of commons and waysides. The journal, unlike *Seed-time* and *The New Order*, carried regular articles on cultivation, animal husbandry, cottage garden produce sales and advice on profits per acre, even offering prizes for the most profitable plot. 'Our Village Notes' advertised 'local meetings of interest, and paragraphs upon any circumstances or proceedings likely to interest our readers'. The journal then, was a synthesis of the

familiar and the homely, and within this establishment context, it called for new political legislation and thereby limited the nature of social change. However, despite its highly conventional stance, *Land and People* acted as a genuine pressure group, which offered hope to the impoverished agricultural labourer rather than revolution.

A letter appeared in the June 1889 issue of the journal, entitled 'A Prayer for Landlords'. This called for the reinstatement of the Edward VI Primer's special prayer for landlords not to exploit their tenants. Somewhat abruptly and with no apparent context, the writer went on to say: 'I am glad Mr. Edward Carpenter sees the necessity for Land Nationalisation' (4, p. 44). Incongruous as this is, it suggests that the journal's supporters and readers were possibly more widely informed on the breadth of back-to-the-land issues than most references in the journal would imply. What influence or relationship Morris and Carpenter might have to such a pragmatic, conventional, if altruistic organisation is doubtful. Nevertheless, certain references within the journal can be seen to be part of a wider back-to-the-land vision, and the journal's specific ethos throws more comprehensive land reform issues into sharp relief.

***Land and People* : William Morris and Edward Carpenter**

The aims of the ASHA were clearly stated in *Land and People*, along with their continuous support for allotment and small-holdings legislation before parliament. Their remit was to carry out the provisions of the current Allotments Extension Act and attempt to further the spread of this into areas where the act did not apply. Three other points in their agenda required the Association to 'examine and enquire into the way in which the rights of Labourers under past Enclosure Acts have been observed. To protect the rights of Labourers against encroachments by private enclosures, and to take measures to secure the rights of Labourers in the case of any future enclosures sanctioned by Parliament'. Lastly, the Association stated in its journal that it would 'generally facilitate by all legitimate methods the restoration of the rural population to direct connection with the soil' (1, p. 2).

Although the last aim of the Association was suggestive of Carpenter's ethos advocating physical contact with the earth, any relationship to his ideas was mediated by the ASHA's class specificity, and the economic and legal framework.

which was the context for all its aims. A response from the editors of *Land and People* in April 1887 typified the journal's approach to contact with the land:

Our battle cry has been 'a closer connection between the soil and those who till it' thereby holding the beacon of hope aloft to encourage the more lowly occupants of the rural districts to strive for an amelioration of their position. (2, p. 23)

The language of this quotation reflects the ASHA's often paternalistic but charitable rhetoric. The phrase 'lowly occupants' clearly identifies the recipients of the Society's desired largesse. It also serves to separate editorial authority from the focus of its object.

Regardless of the ASHA's particular and restricted agenda, it would have been difficult for those involved with questions of land reform to have been unaffected by Carpenter's inclusive back-to-the-land writing and lectures of the 1880s and early '90s. His insistence on a physical involvement or union with the earth was central and integral, not only to his attitude to contact with the land, but also to his concept of a regeneration of the human spirit. While this approach was highly influential in the wider Socialist movement, the ASHA's vision of 'connection with the soil' contained little that was either spiritual or liberating in a Carpenterian sense. For the Association, contact with the land meant cultivating food to supplement low wages and alleviate pauperism. It suggested a new Eden only in relation to economic rural poverty, and was liberating only in practical terms. *Land and People* demonstrated the limitations of its campaign in articles such as the 'General Condition of the English Peasantry', in which the editors reported the state of wages and the Poor Law returns across the country.

The journal's criteria for rural poverty were limited to economic factors such as wages, rents and costs. Little importance in the context of reform was put on the value of handwork or agricultural skill or a sense of community. Letters to the journal also reflected the land hunger evident in many villages where landowners were not prepared to make land available to the labouring poor. In one village alone, seventy labourers were applying for land. Unlike their utopian counterparts, it was with this kind of factual information, rather than expressions of ideology, that *Land and People* collected ammunition to fight for land reform. Although Carpenter clearly sympathised with and condemned rural poverty, like Morris, he saw that any

hope of its solution must be rooted in a renaissance of attitudes to nature, to manual work and the need for class struggle.

For both writers, the ASHA's vision was divisive and restrictive; Morris's stated views on Collings' plans for allotment legislation quoted above confirm this. And Carpenter's calls for an overthrow of convention and class barriers, embracing the spirit of nature within a return to the land, were diametrically opposed to the Association's typical attitudes. Despite this, Carpenter's agricultural experience was not merely theoretical or ideological, and his practical experiment at Millthorpe led him to support the idea of individual as well as collective smallholdings. In 1907, Carpenter upheld the Small Holdings and Allotment Act when it was attacked by sections of the Independent Labour Party. Speaking against the call for municipal and state farms, Carpenter wrote of smallholdings that

We want good human crops, as well as good crops of produce ... And some of the best sort of men are grown on small holdings -- handy capable men able to turn their hands to all sorts of work, and enjoying freedom of invention and initiative such as they would not have on larger and public undertakings. I find some of the best all round men in the parish belong to this class³⁰

Regardless of Carpenter's metaphysical and holistic approach to land in works such as *Towards Democracy*, his recollections of rural conditions in *My Days and Dreams* reflected his belief that smallholdings were a foundation in the process of liberating the rural worker from centuries of class domination and the uniformity of agricultural life:

A supply of Small Holdings (holdings say up to thirty acres in size) on a really secure basis would do an immense work in liberating the social life of the rural workers. For the first time in his history one of the most important types of man in the country would be able to hold up his head, face his 'superiors', and give some kind of utterance and expression to his own ideals. (p. 288)

In this instance, Carpenter was referring to the early twentieth century, by which time he had become disillusioned with political Socialism and the ASHA had collapsed. His comments do not refer to an allotment system to alleviate pauperism, but to the creation of self-sufficient small farms. In support of this, Carpenter pointed out that 'the Small Holdings Act of 1907 defines anything up to fifty acres as a small holding'.³¹

Unlike Morris and Carpenter, the ASHA implicitly upheld the existing class structure and rights to private property. However, like both writers, the Association recognised not only the injustice but also the reality of rural poverty and slum conditions in the countryside. Ironically, although both Morris and Carpenter fought for a comprehensive attitude to the land, it was the ASHA's approach to the Land Question which undoubtedly presented the most widespread view of rural poverty and characterised back-to-the-land in the public perception. The journal also demonstrated the rich diversity of back-to-the-land thinking irrespective of Morris and Carpenter.

Perhaps more than any other factor, the advertisements in *Land and People* point out the differences in expectation and ideology between the readers of this journal and its utopian counterparts. As we have seen, *Seed-time* and *The New Order* featured regular advertisements for whole foods, rational dress and progressive literature. All these represented, in terms of Bourdieu's thinking, the cultural capital that surrounded the ideas of writers such as Morris and Carpenter whose writing directly challenged the social order, and promoted the relationship between social justice and the concept of the simple life. *Land and People*, on the other hand ran advertisements that reflected establishment values and supported a capitalist and entrepreneurial system. Shopping catalogues and fancy knitting wools appeared in place of *The New Order's* hand-dyed yarns and sandals, and French coffee in the place of Nucoline (vegetable butter). Where the utopian journals contained information about a variety of idealistic and radical literature, and *Land and Labor* advertised other periodicals concerned with land issues, *Land and People* carried no announcements of an ideological nature. Instead, it contained numerous advertisements for practical farming, including fencing, pig and horse powders, seeds and disinfectants.

Interestingly the journal carried an advertisement for an 'economic cottage for allotments' titled "'Three Acres,' a cottage, 'And a Cow'". This consisted of an illustration and description of a sectioned house, prefabricated, timber framed, and erected in a few days. It demonstrated a very different attitude to settling the land and self-sufficiency than that evident in the colonies at Purleigh and Whiteway. In the reports of these in *The New Order*, it was clear that colonists prided themselves on constructing their own dwellings from local materials, however arduous and impractical. But perhaps most indicative of all were *Land and People's*

advertisements for banks and loans. These included The Discount Bank Ltd. based in Birmingham and London, and The Mercantile Accident and Guarantee Insurance Company Ltd. who had offices in Glasgow, London and Birmingham.³² Although these companies stated that they were particularly interested in meeting the requirements of those without the security to interest an ordinary bank, presumably those seeking smallholdings or large allotments, they point to the prevailing support for the commercial ethos among the readers of *Land and People*. By comparison, most of the utopian schemes were financed by individual middle-class contributions of available cash. In Carpenter's case, he was able to purchase Millthorpe and start his simple-life and back-to-the-land experiment through a legacy from his mother. In extreme examples of collective communities, such as Whiteway, colonists stressed their idealism and their opposition to private property by burning the deeds to the property. This was not only a refusal to accept property law or participate in a commercial system, it also represented a public gesture of non-conformity and defiance.

The fundamental differences evident between *Land and People* and the other journals in this study reflect the absence of any direct ideological influence related to wider Socialism or Morris and Carpenter. *Land and People* expressed little concern for ecological issues or environmental aesthetics. Despite this, there are instances in which the journal expressed ideas which are indirectly connected to Morris's and Carpenter's views about access to land. In this context then, *Land and People* supported limited rights of entry to land and opposed private enclosures. Articles appeared condemning commons enclosure, describing them as 'injustice and robbery of the community'. The Association's concern for these matters extended to roadside enclosures and public rights of way. To this end, they defended the Commons and Footpaths Protection Societies and they urged that every county and town should inaugurate a branch.³³

The only suggestion, apart from the odd letter, that the editors and readers of *Land and People* were receptive to different views were the reports of, and articles by, the Reverend Tuckwell, a committed Christian Socialist. The editors of the journal appear to have approved of Tuckwell's philosophy and his writing on co-operation. Tuckwell took a more radical and inclusive view of land reform and, unusually for *Land and People*, stressed the exploitation of the rich as the reason for both urban and rural poverty. The journal usually limited itself to descriptions of

poverty needing to be addressed, suggesting allotments and smallholdings as the solution, and making little attempt to apportion responsibility or blame. However, in April 1887, Tuckwell took a more direct approach, and under the title 'Twas But A Dream', discussed land reform and the distribution of wealth:

Ten per cent are rich beyond all precedent and all reason: twenty per cent prosperous and privileged: sixty per cent whose toil supports all the rest - earning average weekly wages five shillings a week below the minimum of decency and comfort. (2, p. 38)

This reflected both Morrisian and Carpenterian, and more generally Socialist, sentiments about the inequality of wealth. Both writers, as we have seen, notably expressed their views on this subject in their lectures, exemplified by 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil' and 'England's Ideal'. But central to their argument was the concept that inequality and exploitation of the poor were directly related not only to money and greed, but also to the idleness of the rich and their lack of physical engagement or productiveness. This was epitomized by Carpenter's invective in *England's Ideal*:

If for every man who consumes more than he creates there must of necessity be another man who has to consume less than he creates, what must be the state of affairs in that nation where a vast class - and ever vaster becoming - is living in the height of unproductive wastefulness? Obviously another vast class - and ever vaster becoming - must be sinking down into the abyss of toil, penury, and degradation. (p. 8)

As we have already seen, this emphasis was readily taken up in *Seed-time* and *The New Order*, and provided the justification and the catalyst for many simple-life experiments. To some extent, this concept was also reflected in *Land and Labor*, but with the exception of Tuckwell's writing, it was not part of the ASHA's or *Land and People's* ethos.

As well as articles, letters and editorials, *Land and People* featured village notes, with reports on allotments and advice on cultivation. Among these, as in the rest of the journal, there was little if any sense of the utopian vision that provided the impetus for back-to-the-land experiments, such as Starnthwaite, Norton or Whiteway. In contrast, the practical agricultural information, the potential availability of funding and the sense of crusade for land meant that *Land and People* provided for many in the labouring classes an accessible and realistic version of

back-to-the-land. Not surprisingly, then, where Morris and Carpenter effectively advocated a return to the land (however impracticably) as part of personal and political revolution, the ASHA, although genuinely motivated, remained conservative, deeply conventional and committed to maintaining social stability.

Land and People closed in July of 1894, after the Parish Councils Act of March had given local authorities the powers to compulsorily purchase land, without giving additional compensation to the landowner. An apparent victory, the Act fell far below the expectations of the Association. Jesse Collings however continued to fight for another forty years for smallholdings to be made available to rural labourers. Despite a series of acts passed to allow the creation of allotments (1887) and smallholdings (1892, 1907, 1908) under the patronage of local authorities, the numbers of labourers who were able to take advantage of them were relatively small. The efforts of land reformers such as the LNS and the ASHA resulted only in a limited legislative programme, and ultimately they failed to change the balance of land ownership, which remained in the hands of a minority of landowners. Donald Read points to the *Law Quarterly Review* for 1905 to demonstrate this, when it stated in an article on 'The Paradox of the Land Law' that, 'though democracy now prevailed in political life, English land law remained appropriate to an aristocratic state'.³⁴

Despite the imbalance between enfranchisement and land reform legislation, the biggest re-distribution in land ownership, triggered by economic and social changes, came after the First World War when landowners sold their land en masse to their tenant farmers. England had begun the nineteenth century as a predominantly rural country, and despite the calls by all sections of the back-to-the-land movement for some kind of return to the land, the century closed with a majority of the population for the first time living in towns. Regardless of this fact, ruralism had become a part of the national consciousness and a pervasive element in notions of Englishness. Alun Howkins identified this perception as a part of early-twentieth-century Socialism, attributing much of its 'inspiration and theory to William Morris and Edward Carpenter'³⁵. Ironically, the effects of the Great War served to reinforce the rural as central to this view of Englishness, and in a wider context establish it as a site of recreation, recuperation and leisure.

Conclusion

This section of the thesis has considered the philosophies and agendas of four organisations and journals with highly specific, but different approaches to a return to the land. We have seen that much of the utopian back-to-the-land and simple-life idealism evident in *Seed-time*'s output was directly influenced by Morris's and Carpenter's contemporaneous writing and example. Particularly the Fellowship was patently closely in tune with Carpenter's unaligned Socialism, and celebrated his expressions of spirituality as a fundamental aspect of regeneration. And despite the differences in opinion over atheism and asceticism between Morris and the Fellowship, *Seed-time*'s pages demonstrate the significant extent of his influence, particularly in terms of his writing about meaningful work and art. However, although *Seed-time* acknowledged Morris's Socialism as a central influence in the Fellowship's development, it is clear that Carpenter's emphasis on the simple-life, manual work, and above all, personal, spiritual regeneration as the path to collective salvation, was central to their utopian aspirations.

The Croydon Brotherhood Church and *The New Order* provided a later example of Morris's and Carpenter's influence. Undoubtedly, the editorial authority displayed in the journal was primarily Tolstoyan in inspiration. But it also became clear that both Morris and Carpenter were important influences among the members of the Church, affecting their back-to-the-land idealism, and contributing to the ethos and development of the land colonies described regularly in the journal. While no direct mention was made of Carpenter in relation to the Church's simple-life initiatives, they bear a remarkably close resemblance to his example, and the connections with his writing in this area are unmistakable. Perhaps most surprising was Kenworthy's attitude to Morris; despite his appropriation and repositioning of Morris's ideas, this reflected a much broader paradigm than is usually ascribed to the Church or the journal. Within this context, and despite other important influences, Morris's and Carpenter's utopianism formed a significant part of the radical cultural background to alternative return to the land idealism in the late 1890s.

Lastly, it is clear that although Morris and Carpenter were not direct influences on *Land and Labor*'s Liberal-aligned ideology, its call for public ownership of land reflected both writers' approach to rights of access to land and their concerns about pollution. It is also evident that despite its class bias, and the absence of a declared 'love of nature', *Land and Labor*'s call to restore the land to

the people located the journal within the orbit of progressive but not radical back-to-the-land thinking. Most indicative were the LNS's initiatives for self-supporting communities, some of which were visibly suggestive of Morris and Carpenter's utopian ideals. *Land and People*, although most associated in the public mind with back-to-the-land, offered a contrast to the alternative values and utopianism of wider Socialist ideals. It also confirmed the regressive, paternalistic and socially divisive nature of the ASHA's concern with land issues. *Land and People* was primarily engaged in back-to-the-land as a holding scheme to maintain economic, political and cultural stability; Morris's response, then, to Collings, Chamberlain and the Allotment and Small Holdings Association was not surprising. Yet the journal also concerned itself with widespread rural poverty, and its articles, advertisements and letters discussing practical land schemes directly helped to alleviate the conditions of the poor through the availability of land. Paradoxically, the philosophy displayed in *Land and People*, although purporting to support the working class, reflected many of the attitudes underlying the Socialist imperative for class struggle Morris battled so passionately for, and the rigidity of class conventions Carpenter sought to overthrow.

The next part of the thesis explores two very different examples of ventures which attempted to put many of Morris's and Carpenter's precepts into practice and physically create a utopian return to the land.

¹ This was the motto of The Land Nationalisation Society and appeared under the title header of every issue of *Land and Labor* (London: The Land Nationalisation Society, 1893-1915).

² In a letter to his daughter Jenny, dated November 13th 1882, Morris expressed some guarded respect for Wallace's book on land nationalisation stating, 'It is not nearly such a good book as George's but there are some things to remember in it'. *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, II, p. 135. In 1897, Carpenter edited a book of Socialist essays entitled *Forecasts of the Coming Century* (1897), among the contributors were A. R. Wallace, Tom Mann, and William Morris.

³ In the early years of Morris's Socialism, he seemed generally to approve of Henry George, and was congratulatory about the influence he had on English middle-classes sensibilities to land issues. In a contribution to *Justice* on April 5th 1884, Morris attributed the high profile of the land question to George's lecture tour of England and his books, *Progress and Poverty* (1880) and *Social Problems* (1883); see *Political Writings: Contributions to Justice and Commonwealth 1883-1890*, pp. 21-23.

⁴ Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (London: Dent, 1976, originally published New York: Appleton 1880), p. 305.

⁵ Gould, p. 61. It is also interesting to note that Morris's interrelated landscape in *News* contained similar elements to George's vision of the rural revived by the energy of the urban. For example, see *The Collected Works of William Morris*, XVI, p. 72.

⁶ Gould, p. 188.

⁷ *Justice* was one of the foremost Socialist journals of the 1880s; its beginning can be traced back to the formation of the Democratic Federation in 1881. The journal was launched in the winter of 1883-4, the project being made possible by a donation of £300 from Edward Carpenter. Hyndman gained the editorship of the weekly journal, but his political ambitions caused Morris and other members of the Executive to leave the Federation and found the Socialist League in December 1884. Morris wrote regularly for the journal until 1885. Carpenter sent more money to *Justice* when he heard it was in difficulties after the split; he also contributed an article 'The Causes of Poverty' in 1885.

⁸ For a more detailed account of the relationship between Chamberlain and land reform, see Peter Fraser, *Joseph Chamberlain: Radicalism and Empire, 1868-1914* (London: Cassell, 1966), pp. 44-49.

⁹ See *The Labour Annual*, 1896, p. 203. The biography section also featured Michael Flürscheim, a vice-president of the LNS. Flürscheim was a reforming entrepreneur who believed in Land Nationalisation, but not in the Single Tax, which he considered confiscation. He supported private competition in production but state monopolisation of commerce and land distribution. This situation, he believed, would lead to an end of the interest system, p. 201.

¹⁰ *The Labour Annual*, 1896, p. 203, records that Joseph Hyder was unanimously adopted as LCC Progressive candidate for Clapham in 1895. The Annual also described Hyder as 'an earnest and hard worker, with one chief object in view - the downfall of monopoly'.

¹¹ See *Land and Labor*, 49 (November 1893), p. 1, for a summary of the 4th Van Campaign in which 175 meetings calling for land reform were held in towns and villages in Scotland and the north of England.

¹² This is reflected in the varying amounts individually donated to the campaign and reported in the journal monthly; these ranged from 2d to £5.

¹³ For other articles about rights of access, see *Land and Labor*, 71 (September 1895), pp. 50-51, 56, (May 1894), pp. 34-37, and 50 (December 1893), pp. 1-2.

¹⁴ Carpenter had also written a four-page tract, entitled *Our Parish and our Duke: a Letter to the Parishioners of Holmesfield, in Derbyshire* (1889), in which he had expressed his concern for rights of access to footpaths, and an account of the way in which 'our common lands were eaten by local landlords'. This tract was widely published, appearing in the *London Star* (July 8 1889), and in an enlarged version, as *The Village and the Landlord* (London: Fabian Society, Tract no. 136, 1907).

¹⁵ *The Scout*, 72 (October 1895). Jameson published regularly in *The Scout*, the *Clarion's* journal that dealt with land issues, edited by Montague Blatchford.

¹⁶ For Carpenter's opinion about private ownership of land, see 'Private Property' in *England's Ideal*, pp. 118-122.

¹⁷ Despite their views about private enterprise, the LNS contended that there was 'no antagonism between them and Socialism'. See *Land and Labor*, 67 (May 1895) p. 45 for a fuller explanation.

¹⁸ E. P. Thompson, p. 257.

¹⁹ *Land and Labor*, 50 (1893 December), p. 3.

²⁰ *Land and Labor*, 67 (May 1895) p. 43.

²¹ This was the motto of the Allotments and Small Holding Association and their journal *Land and People* (Birmingham: The Allotments and Small Holdings Association, 1886-1894).

²² Sir Charles Dilke, the Liberal, republican statesman was two years senior to Carpenter at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. In *My Days and Dreams*, Carpenter remembered him as a man of 'chivalry and honour'.

²³ *Land and People*, 3 (October 1888), p. 76.

²⁴ *Land and People* often referred to the labouring classes as 'the peasantry' or 'the peasants of England'; for examples, see 2 (February 1887), p. 16 and (April 1887), p. 32.

²⁵ May Morris, *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1936), vol. 2, pp. 205-6.

²⁶ William Morris, *Commonweal*, 4 (16 June 1888), *Political Writings Contributions to Justice and Commonweal 1883-1890*, p. 364

²⁷ Peter Gould, *Early Green Politics* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1988) p. 104. Also see Gould, pp. 104-123, for a detailed discussion of the 'Three Acres and a Cow' campaign.

²⁸ *Land and People*, 1 (April 1886), p. 2.

²⁹ In 1886, the committee included Lord Carrington, Lord William Compton, Sir Charles Dilke, Joseph Chamberlain, J. T. Brunner M. P. and Richard Tangye J. P.

³⁰ Edward Carpenter, 'The I. L. P. and Small Holdings', *Labour Leader*, 17 July 1908, cited Tsuzuki p. 157.

³¹ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p. 288.

³² For details of The Discount Bank Ltd., see its full page advertisement in *Land and People*, 1 (August 1886), p. 40.

³³ *Land and People*, 1 (May 1886), p. 36.

³⁴ Donald Read citing *Law Quarterly Review* (1905) in *England 1868-1914: The Age of Urban Democracy* (London: Longmans, 1979), p. 239-40.

³⁵ Howkins, *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, p. 68.

Part 3

William Morris and Edward Carpenter,

Utopia Realised

A Preface: Whiteway and Campden

In 1904, C. R. Ashbee visited the Whiteway Colony. He recorded in his journal his impressions and thoughts about the differences between his venture at Campden and the Whiteway experiment. Although aspects of Ashbee's observations are referred to in the next two chapters, it is worth including the whole of the journal entry here as it provides an image of early Whiteway, contextualising its ethos in relation to Chipping Campden. Ashbee's view of himself and his utopian craftsmen as 'aesthetic Socialists' is indicative of the relationship between the aesthetics of ruralist strands of the Arts and Crafts Movement and social reform in terms of a return to the land. This is relevant to the suggestions about Morris's emphasis on the visual discussed in chapter three of the thesis. Ashbee's description of the 'barbarity' and lack of aesthetics at Whiteway suggests a focus for the colony that was based on the importance of being *a community on the land* and having contact with the crops, animals and the elements, a Carpenterian emphasis that was also discussed earlier. Ashbee's conclusion that at Campden they were 'stealing' their food and at Whiteway they were 'stealing' their culture, and that this difference was 'equivalent' in the search for a form of self-sufficiency, is significant. His following statement that 'the important thing is the humanity got from the process of stealing' suggests that despite the enormous differences in the nature and aspirations of these experiments, they both sought to bring about the self-reform and social change called for by Morris and Carpenter alike.

C. R. Ashbee, Journal Entry in the Ashbee Memoirs, Part 2, Campden, 1904.

With Alec Miller and Fred Brown the blacksmith to visit the Whiteway Community - the Communists, or what you will, at Miserden. It was an interesting day...

We found here people who seem to be 'back to the land' in grim earnest. I had long talks with some of them. They hold the other end of the stick we are ourselves shaping at Campden, but their problem, could they work it out is a much more important one than ours. How to live by its produce on a given piece of English land. Treating their agriculture not as exchange but for the purpose of produce only, and paying their rates, for the ninety acres of land they farm, out of a common pasturage and grass crop. They have built little homes, cabins of wood and brick dotted about among their allotment patches. 'Tis all very uncouth and

experimental. In the cabins are pianos, books, machine made chairs and tables and other of the unearned incrementa of civilization, protesting as it were against this half hearted return to barbarism.

I gather the actual feeding of themselves they do accomplish on their respective patches of land and could feed more, that is if you postulate a certain vegetarian diet, but the culture and the extra things of life come by way of gift, and they are to that extent 'dependent' as Edward Carpenter would say upon the Community. Now whether you work for your food and beg or steal the culture as they, or work for the culture and beg or steal your food as we 'aesthetic Socialists' are supposed to be doing, seems to me to matter little provided the values of food and culture are equivalent. The important thing is the humanity got in the process of stealing.

The story of the Whiteway settlement as given us by several of these squatters was romantic enough - the original 'Morrision' foundation in Essex, the Common fund, the Communal system, the attempted phalanstry, the burning of the title deeds, the cast back into limited private property and the methods of the early 'village Community', and above all the fights with the farmers and J. P.'s - it reminded me of E. Roxbury, Massachusettes, only it was much more aggressive and had not so much room to be aggressive in; and if Emerson's 'age of reason' sat once again in its "patty pan" here was a less cultured age in a much tinier pan. Still we wished these good folk success and they deserved it. Their children looked healthy and happy, and the various tongues Austrian, Cockney, Russian, Scotch and Yorkshire were gradually growing tinged with Gloucestershire.

Chapter Eight

C.R. Ashbee and the Chipping Campden Guild and School of Handicraft

To the Guild Idea, as these pages testify, I have given the best of my life.¹

Charles Robert Ashbee: Influences and Connections

Charles Robert Ashbee, the creative spirit and leader of The Guild and School of Handicraft at Chipping Campden, was a hugely energetic and multi-faceted man. One of the major forces in the Arts and Crafts Movement, Ashbee was a designer and architect of some note, and a romantic but committed social reformer. Reflecting this, Ashbee's idealism and the utopianism of his most daring experiment at Campden were coloured as much by his forceful, intelligent and creative personality as they were by visions of social and cultural reform. That Ashbee's reforming zeal was intrinsically related to his personal and artistic growth is evident from his earliest writing, and in this context Morris and Carpenter were two of the most influential personalities in his development. To understand the nature of this influence, we need to consider Ashbee's intellectual and artistic background, and examine how Morris and Carpenter, among other thinkers such as Ruskin, contributed to the particular synthesis of emotive ideas that led to the formation of the Guild of Handicraft and its eventual metamorphosis as a back-to-the-land venture at Chipping Campden.

Born on the outskirts of London in 1863, Ashbee, like Morris and Carpenter, followed a public school education by going to university. Similar to Morris's, Ashbee's intellectual and aesthetic experiences at university were to prove important and enduring influences. And like Carpenter, Ashbee loved the comradeship and intellectual debate of undergraduate life, set among the atmospheric buildings of Cambridge. However, the link between Carpenter's development at Cambridge and Ashbee's was even stronger. For in the same way that discovering the writing of Walt Whitman at Cambridge was a cathartic experience for Carpenter, Ashbee's meeting with Carpenter and his introduction to his work were similarly liberating.

In *C. R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist*, Alan Crawford gives us a detailed exposition of Ashbee's life as an undergraduate, recalling his first intellectual encounters with Emerson, Carlyle, Henry George, Ruskin, and Socialist

ideas, and pointing out much that explains his single-mindedness, but his later diversity of skills.² He identifies what might be seen as one of Ashbee's most crucial intellectual characteristics, which he sums up thus:

Ashbee was no philosopher, and he took away from discussions no great skill in philosophical argument, far less a systematic grasp of the nature of things, but rather an image of the world that was basically dualistic.
(p. 10)

This dualism was reflected in the way Ashbee saw the material and the practical as the counterpart of a deeper spiritual reality and meaning. His future work as designer, architect, Socialist and reformer was inherently bound up with this perception.

Ashbee's interest in art and architecture began at university, and Ruskin's powerful representation of the nature and the role of art appealed intuitively and intellectually to his instinctive romanticism and reforming zeal. Ruskin's basic assumption that the foundation of all art lay in the roots of society also appealed to Ashbee's inherently pedagogic nature, for in this description of art Ashbee saw an opportunity to include the widest possible groups.³ From Ruskin, he also learned the value and dignity of craftsmanship reflected in medieval architecture and described in *The Stones of Venice*. In contrast to Ruskin's vision and identification of art empowering its makers and enriching society, contemporary machine industry and fine art appeared worthless, elitist and exploitative.

It is difficult to overestimate the influence of Ruskin on Ashbee's life-long questioning of society's values and the relationship between the arts and crafts. This was the intellectual and creative standpoint from which he embraced Morris's ideas about the decorative arts. As we have seen, for Morris, like Ruskin, the medieval craftsman was the archetypal artist, reflecting a pre-renaissance unity between the decorative and fine arts. Fine art had become divisive and the machine age had destroyed what was left of the decorative arts. Writing in *Hopes and Fears for Art* (1882), Morris had called for the arts to belong to the people again, and for a revival of the dignity and joy of craftsmanship. The message of this lecture was later reflected in Ashbee's writing, in particular in *An Endeavour Towards The Teaching of John Ruskin and William Morris* (1901), in which Ashbee explained the philosophy of his Guild ideal. Indeed, in terms of Ashbee's utopianism, his mission from the time he left Cambridge was to recover the dignity of the craftsman, restore

his status to artist, and to communicate Morris's fundamental message of joy in work.

This re-positioning of the arts and crafts became the driving force behind many of the later generation of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Like other exponents of the movement, Ashbee generally equated his dislike of undue mechanisation with urban industrialism, and this attitude, coupled with his romantic view of the countryside as the location of a lasting legacy of the past, led him to position himself idealistically, if not in reality, in the rural. Ashbee's identification with the rural and nature was intensified by Morris's advocacy of the aesthetic qualities of the natural world. With Ruskin and Morris as inspiration and example, Ashbee began to evolve part of his concept of the Guild idea.

However, Ashbee's feelings for the rural were not only motivated by his love of England's natural beauty and history alone, but also by what his friend and fellow guildsman, Alec Miller, described as his 'national and imperialistic views'. Interestingly contrasting Ashbee to his immediate Cambridge circle, Miller added this observation to his description of Ashbee as an 'imperialist':

These nationalist and imperialistic views must have differentiated C.R.A. from many of his intimates and friends, for Dickinson, H. Cox, Carpenter and Fry were essentially anti-imperialistic, yet throughout his life he remained unashamedly indeed proudly, an imperialist (though he disliked the word).⁴

Miller's opinions are borne out by Ashbee's support for imperialism in South Africa, his work for the British Government in Palestine, and his ability to move happily and easily among the upper classes, whom he appeared to view as the guardians of a type of 'Englishness' that he obviously valued.⁵

Indeed Morris, as well as his friends, would have found Ashbee's imperialistic views alienating.⁶ And despite the similarities between Morris's and Ashbee's dream of a revival of hand work and its centrality within art and nature, there were marked differences in the emphases of their particular visions both in relation to their views of comradeship and Socialism. For while Ashbee saw a relocating of art into the society that formed and made it as central to his view of Socialism - a gentle spreading of workshop and guild ideals - Morris saw social upheaval and revolution as the only viable route to social change and a genuine revival of the arts. Although a committed social reformer, particularly in relation to

‘aesthetic Socialism’, Ashbee had little of Morris’s intellectual vision or political courage.⁷ The form of his Socialism and the development of his guild ideal owed as much to his meeting with Edward Carpenter as to Morris. And it will be evident that the particularly romantic but practical nature of Ashbee’s Socialism was closely linked to Carpenter’s ideals.

Both Fiona MacCarthy in *The Simple Life* and Alan Crawford in *C.R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* identify Carpenter as well as Morris and Ruskin as central influences in Ashbee’s development. Indeed, in *The Simple Life*, MacCarthy describes Ashbee’s early meetings with Carpenter, and emphasises the fundamental effect Morris’s thinking had on his ideas. MacCarthy also recognises that Ashbee’s attitude differed from Morris’s and his contemporaries who worked essentially as individuals fighting to rediscover and restore the position of the crafts. She puts the concept of the Guild into context, describing how it developed with the second generation of Arts and Crafts practitioners, who were able to position the newly rediscovered crafts and set them within the workshop tradition. MacCarthy concludes that for this second generation, including Ashbee the time had come when ‘craftsmen must now also get involved in life’s “elemental processes”: work on the land, cooking and baking, husbandry and housework’. In relation to this, MacCarthy locates Ashbee as ‘close to those of the Garden City prophets, with their mission of restoring the People to the Land’.⁸ However, although MacCarthy’s description of ‘elemental processes’ and ‘restoring the People to the land’ relating Ashbee to The Garden City Movement is surely right, it necessitates, if it is to be fully understood, a detailed discussion of the centrality of Carpenter’s influence.

Alan Crawford gives us a scholarly account of Ashbee’s life, locating Morris, Ruskin and to some extent Carpenter as germinal influences in his development. Like MacCarthy, he positions Morris’s ideas about the crafts and craftsmanship as fundamental tenets in informing Ashbee’s sense of social reform and his aesthetics. Crawford also deals with Ashbee’s meeting with Carpenter and its importance not only in his recognition of his homosexuality but in his sense of initiation into a brotherhood of men. Importantly, Crawford includes part of a letter from Carpenter to Ashbee marking the end of his time at Cambridge:

Millthorpe 29 July 1886

Dear Charlie

I have got back to my lair - and have a very pleasant recollection of Cambridge. How to reconcile that freedom and culture of life with self supporting labour - that is the question that vexes me. Here in the agricultural parts (and in Sheffield) we have practicality - deadly dull, worn out and grimy - at Cambridge you have lawn tennis and literature - and four men to support each of you.

What is to be done? - it is really horrible to see the despair and gloom in which the mass of the people live. Will the wealthy come and give *everything they have* and live right in the midst of these toiling suffering hordes. ...

And you are depressed. Going to put on the chains so nicely - and do work about which you don't give a damn! Well perhaps you better do it - 3 years is not much - you have plenty of time before you. As Dickinson says, it does not matter much what you do as long as you keep true to the ideal. But I conjure you get to know the people - you will never understand yourself or your work till you do - don't be baffled till you know them thoroughly - that is the only thing that will save you from the deadly torpor of a profession. 'The corn whitens to the harvest and the workers are few'.⁹

As Crawford rightly points out, Ashbee spent the rest of his life in 'a working out of its [the letter's] hints and exhortations' (p. 21). However, although unprinted in Crawford's biography, the letter continues, inviting Ashbee and his friend Lowes Dickinson to stay at Millthorpe: 'There will be plenty to talk about - and Harold Cox has sent a lovely pair of sandals which we can use alternately (with magnetic results!) along the roads. You fellows must help - there is great work to be done and so few to do it.'¹⁰ The great work was not just discussion of and experimentation with the mechanics and ideals of the simple life, or speculation about brotherhood and nature; it was, as Carpenter implied, a matter of teaching and spreading the word. Morris's 'dream', then, and Carpenter's 'great work', became for Ashbee the core of his motivation in relation to his vision for the Guild, and the foundation of his future practical initiatives.

Clearly Crawford and MacCarthy recognise the fundamental influence of Morris on Ashbee's development. They also acknowledge the part Carpenter played in Ashbee's Socialism and the recognition of his homosexuality in relation to brotherhood and back-to-the-land ideas. In *The Simple Life*, MacCarthy also points out that 'Of all the people who influenced his [Ashbee's] way of thinking, Edward Carpenter was by far the most important,' and indeed Ashbee's dependence on Carpenter's theories set him apart from many of William Morris's followers (p. 17). However, I would argue that these influences were not just adjacent or cumulative, but that the specific and particular juxtaposition of the Ruskin/Morris tradition with Edward Carpenter's credo of back to the land and the simple life, embracing homogenic love, resulted in Ashbee's unique vision for his Guild of Handicraft, and its eventual move back to the land at Chipping Campden. The nature and the details of this juxtaposition are the focus of the following section.

Morris and Carpenter and The Guild Idea

Looking back in 1938 to the years 1884-1902, reflecting on his university career, life at the East End settlement, Toynbee Hall, and his philosophical and artistic development, Ashbee pointedly observed: 'Comradeship came with craftsmanship. Doing the thing well meant creating new values'.¹¹ Commenting further on those new values, Ashbee acknowledged the teaching of Edward Carpenter and the writings of Walt Whitman as crucial influences, and as 'a healthy counterblast to the profession, to ecclesiasticism, and above all to the unrealities of Toynbee Hall'.¹² He concluded:

Comradeship, thus interpreted as part of a gospel of work, meant something worthwhile, something real as against the theoretic talk of pubs, and clubs, and political meetings. Unless human intimacies were established all this philanthropising was but a poking and a prying into other people's lives, barren statistics, wasted work.¹³

Comradeship, in this case the interaction and involvement with the working people, physical and emotional as well as intellectual, was an inescapable part of the 'gospel of work', learnt from Carpenter. His example, his writing and his injunction to Ashbee to 'get to know the people' or 'you will never understand yourself and your work' provided Ashbee with the arena for that comradeship. Inextricably bound up in Carpenter's sense of comradeship was an underlying celebration of his own and

others' homosexuality, and through exposure to this Ashbee came to a recognition of his own sexuality. In relation to this, Lionel Lambourne in *Utopian Craftsmen* (1980) makes the interesting point that

for Whitman and Carpenter their homosexual proclivities found expression in a sincere concern for the lot of the working class man which can aptly be described as a more passionate version of William Morris's belief in Fellowship, as expressed in *The Dream of John Ball*: 'Forsooth, brothers, fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell: fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death ...'.¹⁴

How Morris might have reacted to this re-positioning of his vision of brotherhood we can only speculate; his own emphasis was surely passionate in itself, but undoubtedly both Ashbee and Carpenter would have empathised with Lambourne's suggestions.

From the memoirs themselves for the years 1885 and 1886, written while Ashbee was still at Cambridge, it is obvious that the romantic elements of Carpenter's Socialism articulated in *Towards Democracy* impressed Ashbee immediately.¹⁵ Carpenter's particular blend of individual Socialism, combined with a call for a more natural and more primitive life, in which relationships between men and men were as important as those between men and women, appealed directly to Ashbee's homosexual and romantic instincts. But it is also clear that Ashbee felt a kind of hero worship for the man himself. On his first visit to Millthorpe, an entry in his journal reflects this: 'I dwell tonight under the roof of a poet. Edward Carpenter seems to me to come nearer to one's ideal of *The Man* than anyone I have ever met'.¹⁶ During a later stay, he wrote ecstatically: 'the presence of this man here is wonderful - a living influence'.¹⁷

It is not surprising that Ashbee should have venerated Carpenter. Unlike Morris's uncompromising political activism, Carpenter's combined message of social reform and the advocacy of the simple and higher life was a kind of Socialism that Ashbee could identify with.¹⁸ The most powerful element of the Carpenter equation for Ashbee was the sense of initiation he felt into a liberating way of life. Ashbee was influenced as much by Carpenter's writing about homogenic love, explained in works such as *Love's Coming of Age* (1896), as he was by the crusading political lectures such as 'Private Property' and 'Simplification'. Indeed, the sexual and radical quality of *Towards Democracy's* elegiac descriptions of ordinary

working-class men was not lost on Ashbee. And Carpenter's words, 'Lovers of all handicraft and of labor in the open air, confessed passionate lovers of your own sex. Arise!', comprehensively expressed and anticipated the fundamental, but undeclared philosophical standpoint behind the development of Ashbee's guild ideal (p. 33).

For Ashbee, the sense of sexual discovery and comradeship was intensified by reading Carpenter with his greatest friends at King's, Roger Fry and Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, both equally attracted to the idea of homogenic love and social change. All three stayed with Carpenter at Millthorpe at one time or another, and Lowes Dickinson even spent the whole of one summer there unsuccessfully trying to return to the land and engage in the simple life.¹⁹ In April 1886, just before Ashbee left Cambridge, he went to stay with Carpenter and an entry in his journal during the visit demonstrates the strength of his feelings and the sense of spirituality he ascribed to Carpenter's ideas:

This afternoon a long walk over the hills with Edward Carpenter and the black dog Bruno. Rare! He told me a deal about Whitman, and I believe I am beginning to learn more of the workings of his own mind. Democracy, socialism, Christian ethics of the finest type, - all seems to be compact and constructive. And what if a man dreams, - that doesn't matter as long as he has a noble ideal and lives up to it. It matters little what the idea is. Socialism as it is being interpreted by me, by Carpenter is a religion.²⁰

Ashbee's concept of Socialism was essentially idealistic and spiritual, involving the development of the self, and although he became committed to social reform in relation to the Guild of Handicraft, his Socialism always remained a matter of aesthetics and personal belief, rather than political action.

In the same year, while staying at Millthorpe, Ashbee went with Carpenter to visit John Furniss's communist community at Moorhay. Writing in his journal about the members of the commune, Ashbee commented: 'there is a brightness and clearness in the faces of most of them that bespoke "enthusiasm for humanity"'.²¹ The ideal of community life was beginning to take a strong hold on Ashbee's imagination. We know that at this time Carpenter also talked to him about his days as a University Extension Lecturer in Sheffield in the 1870s.²² Discussing his mission to reach and teach the working classes, Carpenter showed Ashbee some of Sheffield's great factories, steel foundries and workshops. His reaction was a mixture of Ruskinian condemnation of the ugliness of industrial conditions and

ecstatic Romanticism reminiscent of Whitman at what seemed to him the heroism and beauty of machinery and workers alike. Shortly after this visit, Ashbee was writing in his journal about art and work:

.....Talents who follow genius, might better devote themselves to domestic and decorative art (instead of painting pictures that nobody wants to buy)..... Would not this be a good basis for art in our Democracy? The young artist becoming the working man - the clever working man an artist - talent the only leveller.²³

By the end of his last year at Cambridge, Ashbee's reading of Morris and Ruskin, and an earlier stay with Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Henrici, the Professor of Architecture at Technische Hochschule in Aachen, convinced him that if he had to follow a profession, he would become an architect.²⁴ Equally, his experience of life at Cambridge, his visits to Millthorpe and his growing need to communicate with the working class, amplified by Carpenter's example, persuaded him that he could not return to his parents' house. Ashbee went to live at Toynbee Hall, the university settlement in the East End, where over the next fifteen years he gained an insight into the realities of poverty and class struggle.

Earlier in the same year, in July of 1886 Ashbee had gone to hear Morris deliver the 'Aims of Art'.²⁵ Much impressed, the entry in his journal recalls that he made notes speculating on the message of the lecture:

There is a general dissatisfaction about Art.

The Art of our day is antiquarian.

The evil is where the man is auxiliary to the machine - the man of the capitalist system is in this category.

Do we admire the Art of the Middle Ages? Of course we do. Should we return to it if we could? No because Art is progressive, and though it was beautiful and leaves behind regret, the Art of the Middle Ages was unfree ... But it had this great quality - it was organic. The Mediaeval craftsman moreover was *free as regards his work*.

From Morris's lecture, Ashbee concluded:

Two views of life and the future are open to us - the optimism of the Socialists, the hope of Revolution; and the pessimism of those who accept the idea of decadence - ending in what? Cataclysm! And a good thing too!²⁶

As we shall see later, Ashbee's vision for the guild ideal embraced the concept of the craftsman '*free as regards his work*', a situation that Ruskin evoked vividly in '*The Nature of Gothic*' and Morris had made the central work ethic in *News from Nowhere*. For all their idealism and rhetoric, Ruskin's paternalism had precluded any real 'freedom' for the participants in the Totley experiments, and Morris never achieved this ideal in relation to his own workforce. It will become clear later in this chapter, that, according to some members of the Guild of Handicraft, neither did Ashbee in London or Chipping Campden.

At Toynbee Hall, despite Ashbee's worries about its philanthropic reputation, he found the 'working man' he was so keen to embrace in comradeship. Following Carpenter's advice to really get to know the working people, he bravely began to give lectures in the East End on Ruskin and Whitman, and to his surprise they received a positive reception.²⁷ Ashbee followed this by initiating The Ruskin Class, a study group for working-class men and boys, which met in Whitechapel. Because of the enthusiasm that Ruskin's writing about the dignity of workmanship engendered, Ashbee and his pupils were inspired to practical experiments, and the reading class developed into a collective endeavour in painting, modelling, gilding and plasterwork. Their first effort, very much in the Pre-Raphaelite spirit of earlier Oxford, was to produce a decorative panel with modelled bosses for the dining room at Toynbee Hall. This was the pragmatic beginning of the guild idea, and the panel produced - a ship in full sail within a circle - became and remained a symbol of the Guild of Handicraft.

Along with his reforming zeal and pedagogic mission, it was Ashbee's homosexuality, like Carpenter's, that led him to seek out male company. However, in the context of the contemporary draconian climate in relation to homosexuality, he was undoubtedly extremely circumspect about this at Toynbee Hall and in the company of The Ruskin Class. From the inception of the practical experiment at Toynbee, Ashbee's ideas about comradeship were presented only within the context of the decorative arts and discussions about the status and nature of craftsmanship. Despite this, comradeship became the dominant theme articulated in Ashbee's writing about his vision for the class and eventually the Guild. An entry in his journal for September 1887, gives us some idea of Ashbee's emotional involvement and sense of ownership in relation to the young men and boys in The Ruskin Class:

Our supper on the opening of the Dining Room, and completion of the class's work. A delightful speech from Kegan Paul. - a good evening. cheered by the love of my men and boys. *The inauguration of an idea.*²⁸

Ashbee's development of '*The inauguration of an idea*' was recorded in his memoirs, and they show that he discussed the idea of an art school or guild with Carpenter and Burne-Jones in the summer of 1887.²⁹ In December, Ashbee elicited the support of Morris as the foremost authority on the decorative arts. Three weeks earlier, Morris had witnessed the brutality of 'Bloody Sunday' and the hospitalisation of two hundred demonstrators.³⁰ He was in no mood to concede that art or guilds could do anything to help the struggle or bring about social change:

William Morris and a great deal of cold water. Spent last evening with him - by appointment a propos of Art Schools.

I could not exchange a single argument with him till I had granted his whole position as a Socialist and then said 'Look, I am going to forge a weapon for you; and thus I work with you in the overthrow of Society'. To which he replied, 'The weapon is too small to be of any value'.³¹

Ashbee was disappointed by Morris's reaction but undeterred. He quite simply believed that from small working groups 'the idea' would spread and that social change would follow. And indeed this was not in opposition to Morris's earlier ideas articulated in 'Hopes and Fears for Art' and those concerning 'due education' and its importance in social change. In 1892, when Ashbee wrote the *Manual of the Guild and School of Handicraft* expanding on his educational values, his summary clearly allied the Guild's views to Morris's ideas about 'due education' and a vision of the 'perfectly educated man' in *News from Nowhere*:

In his picturesque sketch of the New Commonwealth Mr William Morris has sought to give us an idea of the perfectly educated man - perfect in head, in heart, in hand and in body; he creates unconsciously; he learns from all things, but from books least of all; he is an athlete, he is an artificer; and wisdom comes to him from the field, and from handling beautiful things.³²

This passage not only emphasises the importance and the context of educational elements to the Guild Idea, it also anticipates Ashbee's vision for the perfect Guildsman, and explains many of the activities, that as we shall see, characterised guild life in its back-to-the-land guise at Chipping Campden.

When Ashbee wrote *An Endeavour Towards The Teaching of John Ruskin and William Morris* in 1901, a year before the move to Campden, it was beautifully published by the Guild's own Essex House Press. It reflected an established designer with over ten years history of the Guild behind him, and a busy and thriving architectural practice. Nevertheless, as its title presupposes, *Endeavour* is an open acknowledgement that Ashbee continued to locate Ruskin's and Morris's influence at the heart of his guild ideal:

It is fair then, in conclusion, to point again to the sources whence spring whatever the Guild of Handicraft may have achieved of good or lasting. to place the tribute where the tribute is due, - the work and example of the two great Masters who have so recently been taken from us, William Morris and John Ruskin. The practical example of the former in his hand to hand fight with British Commercialism, the prophetic inspiration of the latter in his plea for the relation of Art to life and to Industry. Indeed these two men have marked an epoch, they have pointed out a new objective; for us of the younger generation it remains to give their teaching and example a wider and fuller application.³³

Ashbee's own achievement was to attempt to put these precepts into practice and The Guild and School of Handicraft was the outcome.

Clearly then, elements of Carpenter's and Morris's utopian ideals were fused in the formation of Ashbee's guild ethos. Without the specific combination of Morris's and Carpenter's teachings, the particular educational and supportive comradeship of the Guild would not have developed as it did. Without the influence of Morris's ideas about art and his practical resurrection of the crafts, Ashbee's aesthetic sensibilities and his belief in a new creative ideal for life and art would have been stillborn. Similarly, without Carpenter's notion of homogenic love, his unaligned Socialism and his example of the simple life, Ashbee's ideal of community life would not have been located in a back-to-the-land context. As both Crawford and MacCarthy offer informed and detailed chronological studies of the Guild's time in Chipping Campden, this study will not aim to reiterate their achievement. It will, however, concentrate on the particular synthesis of Morris's and Carpenter's influence on Ashbee's overriding ethos in relation to the Guild and its time in Campden. Therefore, the next part of the thesis will examine this combined influence on the development of the Guild, and look at both the ideology and the reality of its metamorphosis as a back-to-the-land venture.

The Guild and School of Handicraft: East London Utopia

Despite Morris's 'deal of cold water', Ashbee continued to lobby for the idea of a guild and art school, circulating a proposal for the 'Establishment of a Technical and Art School for East London' in the winter of 1887. When he eventually met with success in 1888, it was due in part to his perseverance, and in part to public concern for reform in the East End coupled with growing fashionable interest in the Arts and Crafts Movement. The Guild and School of Handicraft was launched formally at Toynbee Hall on the 23rd of June by Hart Dyke, the Minister of Education. As well as harking back to a mediaeval tradition central to a Morrisian vision of the crafts, the Guild had a contemporary context in the form of the various art guilds established during the 1880s.³⁴

The debate about the position of the decorative arts in relation to fine art and the architectural establishment had been a central theme in Gothic Revival architectural practices, led by such notable architects as J. D. Sedding and Norman Shaw. They had raised the status of the applied arts by commissioning handwork to decorate their prestigious buildings. Simultaneously, they encouraged the Art Workers Guild to exhibit their work, and in 1888, the Guild set up the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society to give their work a public face.³⁵ The rise in the public profile and popularity of Arts and Crafts work engendered by exhibitions was of fundamental importance in the economic success of Ashbee's Guild. It generated a large enough market to absorb increasing amounts of craftwork, even if it was sometimes of debatable quality. Ashbee's early venture in exhibiting the Guild's work is a clear indication that he saw its members as functioning as artist craftsmen and decorators.

Despite his earlier discouragement, Morris came to Whitechapel to lecture to the newly formed guild on 'The Aims of Art'. Perhaps this was auspicious as somewhat surprisingly, the Toynbee Hall Guild flourished, and soon had enough members to move to Essex House in the Mile End Road. At the same time, Ashbee opened a shop in Brook Street in the West End to market the Guild's work. Like Morris, Ashbee recognised the need for handwork to be financially viable. But unlike Morris's attitude to the firm, from the beginning Ashbee perceived the Guild as a co-operative venture in which each guildsman shared equally in the running, the profits and the creativity of the group. Despite this, Ashbee always retained a sense

of ownership over the Guild, directing the work and recreation of his 'men and boys'. By the end of the nineties, the variety of crafts embraced by the Guild expanded and guildsmen were engaged in carpentry, cabinet making, decorative painting, carving and, most successfully, metalwork. Simultaneously during the Essex House years, Ashbee developed the tradition of theatricals and singing, which were to become such an important part of social life in Chipping Campden.

Over the next ten years, the Guild was to achieve some notable results, particularly in jewellery and silver work. Ashbee's knowledge of English plate and his continued experimentation in the workshop, was the main thrust behind the Guild's achievement. The Guild's style was distinctive, using wire threads, enamelling and semi-precious stones, and by the 1890s, their work featured in most of the major Arts and Crafts exhibitions. It was also reviewed regularly in the daily press and journals such as *The Studio* and *The Art Journal*, Ashbee being often invited to contribute articles about various crafts.³⁶

In 1898, the Guild took over the staff and equipment of Morris's Kelmscott Press. It seemed a fitting home and was renamed the Essex House Press, its first publication being appropriately *An Endeavour Towards the Teaching of John Ruskin and William Morris*. During the next decade, it survived the back-to-the-land move to Campden, producing exclusive decorated publications, which although successful in aesthetic terms, were in the main an economic failure. In what Ashbee referred to in his memoirs as 'The Happy Nineties', the guild became an educational, financial and aesthetic success producing some of its finest and most acclaimed work. However, what marked the Guild out as different from other art guilds was its idealistic basis; typical of Ashbee's ethos, his guildsmen in the mediaeval spirit (learnt from Morris) were also to become teachers passing on their knowledge to new members, building the bonds of comradeship. This idealism was recognised in the contemporary press.

In *The Studio*, Aymer Vallance referred to the pedagogic spirit evident in the Guild and the work exhibited from Essex House in the Arts and Crafts exhibition of 1900:

Mr Ashbee has achieved the feat of raising up a living school imbued with the same spirit and principles as himself, men to whom he can confidently look to hand on to posterity the heritage they have learned to value and cherish.³⁷

Vallance went to the nub of the matter, for although Ashbee was by now a significant architect and an influential designer, he never became an accomplished maker. His real ability lay in his power to inspire, communicate ideals and teach others, thus passing on the influence of thinkers such as Morris and Ruskin to the Guildsmen themselves, following Carpenter's injunction to the 'great work' and going some way to fulfil Morris's 'dream'. Alec Miller confirms this in a description of Ashbee's contribution to the Guild:

C.R.A. was never himself a handi-craftsman. His own skill lay in his stimulus and in his power of decorative design. His unique gift lay in his ability to use and expand the artistic powers of others. A very real part of his genius was this gift of discovering and directing craft skill and thus gradually to refine and distinguish the work and the craftsman. (p. 52)

Miller also understood that Ashbee's friends and associates were important influences on the mostly uneducated guildsmen:

Few of the Guildsmen read much and here C.R.A. and his friends became of vital importance - personal contacts with interesting people. (p. 19)

An educational and communal mission was always at the heart of Ashbee's vision for the Guild's evolution. He had visited Concorde in Boston in 1896, and seen there a community that he described as having 'something of the art of life' in it.³⁸ In the late 1880s his outlook was given further impetus by meeting Cecil Reddie on a weekend visit to Millthorpe. As we have seen, Reddie had adopted many of Carpenter's simple-life ideals into his experimental rural school at Abbotsholme, where manual work, physical activity and creativity were given as much importance as academic pursuits. Ashbee was impressed by this balance of 'head, hand and body' in the context of nature, and saw in it an example of how guild life might be lived. By 1898, the Guild had rented Poynett's Farm in Essex to broaden its members' horizons, and to give them weekend tastes of back-to-the-land. From there, Ashbee wrote to Janet Forbes, clearly expressing his rural intentions for the future of the Guild:

The future lies in the hands of Gods! But it's a lovely problem, and in our little microcosm at Essex House we practically have for settlement all the leading problems of modern industry. The agricultural one has yet to be faced, and that we shall do when we plant the Guild out into the

country some day, as I trust, all being well we shall. To train up children or fine craftsmen in London is a cruelty unmentionable.³⁹

Despite Ashbee's dominant ideas, the Guild's early constitution was collectively based. The rules and responsibilities of the Guild were printed clearly in a booklet displayed in the workshops for craftsmen to read. New nominations for guildsmen had to be handed in at the quarterly meeting before an election by all the members. However, Ashbee was renowned for his physical scrutiny of new recruits fixing them with an unwavering gaze, examining their eyes and hands.⁴⁰ It clear from his memoirs that there were craftsmen to whom Ashbee was particularly drawn and that there was an inner circle of guildsmen close to Ashbee. We can only assume that within this group Ashbee was able to develop those intense friendships Carpenter referred to as part of homogenic love. For the rest, the Guild provided an education and an opportunity to earn a living. This division was to become even more noticeable in Campden. Nevertheless, the Guild was exceptionally well run for the benefit of all, and Ashbee, being keen to limit guildsman's financial liability, changed the foundation of the Guild from a private partnership to a limited company in 1898. Whether conscious of the implications of this or not in Ashbee's future plans, this change meant that when the Guild moved back to the land there was less risk to individual craftsmen.

In 1898, when the Guild was well established, Ashbee married Janet Forbes. Why he did so is difficult to understand; he was thirty-five and she was only seventeen. Ashbee had never expressed any sexual interest in women, and over the first years of their marriage, he continued to have homosexual liaisons, which he hinted at to Janet. It was certainly not an ordinary relationship and the marriage was not consummated until some eleven years later, when the strain of her situation caused Janet to break down. However, by marrying, Ashbee was finally able to take charge of his own domestic arrangements, and in fact, Janet fitted into Guild life very well, becoming an honorary comrade and guildsman, and yet another acolyte in Ashbee's circle. However, we have to ask ourselves whether working among the Guild's men and boys, Ashbee needed the camouflage and normality of a conventional relationship. Perhaps to instigate the Guild's move out of the anonymity of London to a return to the land, a suitable partner was an important asset? And perhaps most importantly, Ashbee could keep faith more easily with the

Carpenterian ideal of homogenic love, in the form of guild comradeship, with Janet as a reassuring and acceptable presence.

From the time of their marriage, Janet contributed to the journal along with Ashbee. Her entries show her to be warm, enthusiastic, resourceful and sympathetic to Ashbee's back-to-the-land ideals. Despite her youth, she clearly gave the guildsmen, and particularly their wives and families, faith and support in the utopian scheme ahead. Looking back from 1938, Ashbee described her effect on the Guild thus:

Her coming into this little world of East London life and Labour, the workshops at Essex House, had a profound effect, especially upon the young, it brought music and song, and a new way of looking at life.⁴¹

Ashbee had felt for some time that the ideal context for the Guild was not the East End but a rural setting in which he felt they could flourish as individual craftsmen and as a collective. The fact that the Essex House lease was to expire in September of 1902 focused his mind even more on relocation. The minute book of The Guild for 1900-04 shows that the Board of the Guild spent two years looking both in London and the country for a suitable replacement home. That Carpenter's example and Morris's teaching were still at the forefront of Ashbee's mind is evident in a passage from *Endeavour* written in 1901:

My hope for the future, however, is that we may go right out into the country. All the work we do, can, I am convinced, if the initial differences of transplanting and workshop buildings are overcome, be better done in the country than in a great town. ...

The experience of my friend Edward Carpenter and others who have attacked the problem from a simple, direct and human point of view, has gone to show that this is quite possible, if two things are borne in mind. First, if some other occupation besides agriculture alone be carried on, and second, if the bulk of the produce reared be retained for the consumption of the dwellers on the land themselves.⁴²

This call for a return to the land in conjunction with others forms of meaningful occupation directly reflected the problem Carpenter had expressed in a letter to Ashbee of July 1886: 'How to reconcile that freedom and culture of life with self-supporting labour - that is the question that vexes me'. Carpenter had resolved this dilemma by combining writing with manual labour, self-sufficiency and a

simplification of life. Ashbee visualised that it might be achieved by merging craftsmanship and pleasure in work with some form of agricultural enterprise. Although important in Ashbee's idealism, in fact neither agricultural self-sufficiency nor the simple life played much part in the reality of life at Chipping Campden. There were however other elements of Carpenter's back-to-the-land credo: walking, swimming and communing with nature, which became important features in Campden life.

Ashbee's hopes for the Guild were unmistakeable, but despite his own idealism and his controlling influence, he was aware that when it came to the point he would have to carry the rest of the guildsmen with him. To inspire his 'men and boys' to move from the relative security of London to the unknown equation of the country, Ashbee regularly took the guildsmen, particularly the younger members, on rural expeditions and encouraged sporting activities. The Guild's theatrical endeavours were important elements in re-enforcing the comradeship and the group identity of the craftsmen outside workshop hours. Information concerning the conditions of work in the event of a move and the improvements to life such as sports and allotments and gardens were circulated to all guildsmen. However, despite all the potential advantages, the Guild and its skills were essentially urban; most of its members were in fact Cockneys. Relocation meant moving some forty families, men, women and children, some two hundred people back to the land.⁴³ Ashbee's conviction, in direct contradiction to reality, that the country was the Guild's spiritual home must have been powerfully persuasive.

The City of the Sun - Chipping Campden⁴⁴

In 1901, Rob Martin Holland, who was on the board of the Guild, and whose family lived at Overbury Court on the edge of the Cotswolds, told Ashbee about the potential of the small community of Chipping Campden. Ashbee visited the town on the way back from a summer trip with the guildsmen up the River Wye. The spacious eighteenth-century silk mill, spreading over three storeys in Sheep Street, although long disused, suggested to Ashbee and Janet great possibilities for workshops. The town, with its seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mellow Cotswold houses, seemed to belong to a time before the industrial revolution, and the Ashbees felt immediately that they had found a fitting location for the Guild to return to the land.

As we have seen, Ashbee had been preparing the Guild and the guildsmen for the move in a variety of ways for some time. Now it came to the point where the persuasiveness of his idealism would be put to the test. The Guild Minute Book shows that when the vote was cast in December 1901, twenty-two voted in favour and eleven against: a sizable proportion evidently unhappy about the move. After the vote was declared Janet and Ashbee went away for Christmas. Ashbee's entry in the journal for Christmas Day, although somewhat guarded, has biblical overtones suggesting Ashbee as Moses leading his people home:

The Campden Poll has been declared. I am glad that the men themselves have decided, that on the whole it is better to leave Babylon and go home to the land.⁴⁵

Looking back in 1938, Ashbee recalled the circumstances of the Guild's move to Campden. He recalled a feeling of urgency, and a sense of survival rather than any resolution of an intellectual platform:

"Back to the Land". It had been one of the cries of the "Happy Nineties". For those of us living in East London, it had been neither a political tag, nor an agricultural commonplace; it was a matter of necessity, instinct, life.⁴⁶

Although these sentiments closely reflect the holistic Carpenterian view of a return to the land that so influenced Ashbee in his youth, it is clear that they were not shared by all of the guildsmen and their families, and that they did not reflect the reality of the situation they found in Campden. The move itself changed the make-up of the Guild, several of the older and more established members feeling that they could not leave London. However, their number were soon replaced by new recruits, including the carvers Will Hart and Alec Miller. Both these craftsmen were much admired by Ashbee and were to become central to the creativity and aesthetic character of the Guild's Campden years. Other new members of the Guild were mostly more mature men, already skilled and more independent and more circumspect about Ashbee's utopian arguments.

Sources show that attitudes to life in Campden were coloured by gender, age and whether or not guildsmen belonged to Ashbee's inner circle. Carpenter had always, despite his homosexuality, seen his utopian vision as inclusive of women, and had written extensively on their position and relationship to marriage and domesticity in *Love's Coming of Age* and *Love, Marriage in Free Society* (1894).

Ashbee was probably familiar with these works, but it is clear that he was uninterested in this particular discourse, and notably it was the women who suffered most in the move. Alec Miller's unpublished manuscript, *C. R. Ashbee and The Guild of Handicraft* (1941), *A Child in Arcadia: The Chipping Campden Boyhood of H.T. Osborn 1902-1907* (1986), and Jane Wilgriss's *Alec Miller, Guildsman and Sculptor in Chipping Campden* (1986), all show the different stresses and emphases of Guild life at Campden, and they provide useful sources to illustrate different interpretations of the Guild's ethos and activities.⁴⁷

Ashbee's main interest, given his homosexual inclinations, not surprisingly lay in the younger single guildsmen, and he made every effort to make sure that for them the path to Campden was smooth. An atmosphere of collegiate comradeship awaited them, Ashbee having set up Braithwaite House as a communal home for these young men, even going as far as choreographing their entry into Campden by leading them romantically on bicycles from Moreton-in-the-Marsh station. The constant stream of guests at Braithwaite provided amusement and education for the young Guildsmen who came into contact with interesting and stimulating influences, including John Masefield, William Strang, Walter Crane and Edward Carpenter. Ashbee's famous theatrical productions also involved them in a form of literary education and further cemented a sense of male comradeship.

Ashbee also made sure the older Guild members would be happy in their work by fitting out the old silk mill with generous workshops, providing the resources for a collective and utopian working atmosphere. Plans were even underway to plant up the garden as a restful retreat. Ashbee and Janet moved into the Woolstaplers Hall on the High Street, which they furnished in Arts and Crafts fashion, with William Morris curtains, rush-seated chairs and elaborate hangings and tapestries. The house had a tiny garden and Janet was forced to use the nearby church-yard to read and meet friends out of doors. Despite its drawbacks, the Woolstapler's Hall was welcoming, and it became the focus of Friday night Guild gatherings at which the innercircle of Guildsmen and visitors was entertained.

Conversely, the family accommodation and the living conditions were the real stumbling-block in the practical working of Ashbee's utopian plans. For some of the Guildsmen and their families, he rented a row of six new houses in Sheep Street, and W. J. Osborn the workshop manager and his family moved in. In *A Child in Arcadia*, H. T. Osborn, provides an informative picture, albeit written at a distance

of some seventy years, of his recollections of his childhood, the house in Sheep Street and his mother's and other families' acute disappointment at the move. Far from a slum, the Osbornes had moved from a flat in Bethnal Green situated in a respectable street with indoor plumbing and privacy. In comparison, the delights of a return to the land seem to have been extremely limited. Osborn recalls the imagined rural idyll the family had thought they were going to:⁴⁸

A cosy cottage with a beautiful garden full of flowers and roses growing round the door and we should have a donkey to ride on. In short, we were going to the Elysian Fields. (p. 10)

In contrast to this stereotypical, utopian image of back-to-the-land, Osborn details the realities of the house, and the conditions the family, and particularly his mother, found themselves in:

Whatever Mother had expected, however, was lacking. ...The house was (and still is) No.6 Sheep Street. It is a six door row, just off the High Street. There was no garden, just a narrow strip of land about nine feet wide connecting the backs of the houses with a pump in the middle. At the side of No.6 was a yard bounded by a high stone wall about eight feet high with a door to the street. In one corner of this was an enclosure with a knee high wall. This was the garbage dump. In the centre of the yard was a small building with six doors, one for each house. [This was an outside toilet]

There was provision in the yard for a clothes line, only one. Each house had its own day for using that. Inside, Mother found things no better. She took one look at the apologetic fireplace she was supposed to cook on and sat down and wept. ... They were all guildsmen in these houses in Sheep Street and all felt about the same as we did. Some moved back to London as soon as they could. If this was the Simple Life as Mr Ashbee had planned, something was missing. The Simple Life was what we had left behind in London when you came to look at it besides this. From the housewife's point of view, Mr Ashbee in his role of a latter day Moses had led us into the wilderness instead of the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. (pp. 11-12)

After a year or so, the family moved to a detached house with a large garden, where they were able to cultivate vegetables, keep a pig, chickens and ducks. Perhaps this more closely fitted their perception of a back-to-the-land ideal, but despite this, Mrs. Osborn never liked Campden, rarely went out and hardly made any friends. Ironically, it was Janet, not Ashbee, that Osborne recalls visited the house, giving friendship, offering help and trying to communicate at whatever level she

needed to to promote understanding and stimulate the Guild ideal. Osborne remembers emphatically that Ashbee never visited the house, concluding that 'Apart from his inner circle I don't remember him visiting the homes of any of the men' (p.41).

Despite Osborne's negative remembrances of his and other families' experiences in Ashbee's Campden utopia, his father remained a committed workshop foreman throughout the whole experiment. Others, too, saw the venture in a different light. Walter Edwards was a young craftsman who had suffered the drudgery and repetition of the factory floor, and was, by 1901, thoroughly disillusioned with industrial life. Obviously well-educated and idealistic, Edwards had read Cellini and was inspired by Morris's ideas about the joy of labour. When Ashbee died in 1942, Edwards, who was not one of Ashbee's inner circle, sent a letter of condolence to Janet explaining how the Campden experiment had changed his life:⁴⁹

As a young married man by accident I heard of C.R.Ashbee with his Guild of Art Workers was moving from the East End of London to Chipping Campden, I asked leave to join and from the minute I walked down the beautiful sleepy street of Campden and under the direction of C. R. A. and others who I found (under his direction) were turning out work equal to anything in the middle-ages. Industry meant something different and from that time I have enjoyed every minute of my workday life.⁵⁰

The letter makes no mention of his wife's reaction to Campden, but for Edwards Ashbee had clearly created a situation in which Morris's ideal of meaningful labour was a workable reality. Ashbee's concept of collective and open workshops provided a utopian workspace in a rural context, and here Guildsmen could make a living from handwork and learn about new crafts from other members of the Guild, thus improving both their art and skill. The reality of this state of affairs is reinforced by Alec Miller's description of the workshops in Campden:

These new craft experiences were immensely stimulating and interesting, and the strange thing was that watching these new crafts gave one a deeper insight and interest in one's own craft and made one realise its potentials. In a very real sense all these expectations were educative and this education in other technical processes was such as no other workshop could provide, for no other workshop since the middle ages had such a diversity of craftsmen all working under one roof, and with

ready and open access between shops, and above all, there was a prevailing sense of pride in being a part of a larger movement.⁵¹

Undoubtedly, both Morris and Ruskin would have found much to praise in the aesthetic idealism, fellowship and workmanship of Ashbee's Campden community. These qualities were perhaps the most outstanding achievements of his experiment, and Ashbee believed, and communicated the belief, that 'aesthetic Socialism' could only be achieved through a return to the land. However, despite the success of the Guild in these terms, there is little to suggest, apart from their educational agenda and recreation, that its members had much physical contact with work on the land, or that their rural context radically influenced the imagery or the quality of their crafts. Indeed, the symbols, emblems and iconography of the Guild remained remarkably constant through the London and Campden years.⁵²

For Ashbee personally, his sense of the rightness of Campden had centred on his aesthetic appreciation of its building and its sense of place. There was very little attempt to extend this into self-sufficient cultivation of the land. Like Morris, Ashbee most certainly never used a shovel, and throughout the Campden years, he spent two or three days of every week in London running his architectural practice and trying to find buyers for the Guild's work. Some individual Guildsmen did cultivate gardens, but there is no real evidence that this was widespread or that it involved communal endeavour. Indeed, the Guild's main back-to-the-land activities, reminiscent of Ashbee's visits to Millthorpe, were long collective rambles, discussing, admiring and communing with nature. Janet more often than Ashbee was to be seen leading a group of young Guildsmen on bicycle rides or walks. From the start, Janet was clearly in her element and able to adapt to rural life more easily than Ashbee, mostly wearing a long tunic and sandals, the simplified dress adopted by many Arts and Crafts women. Interestingly, unlike Morris or Carpenter, Ashbee never made any real concession to simple-life dress, preferring instead to retain a bohemian and artistic elegance.

Apart from the ethos and the atmosphere of the workshops, Ashbee's most important practical contributions to the Guild's back-to-the-land experience were the construction of a bathing lake and the Campden School of Handicraft. Both these ventures were not exclusive to the Guild, and the Campden population benefited from both schemes. From the Guild's arrival in Campden, a degree of antagonism and animosity existed between the Cockneys and the town. Ashbee and Janet's

unconventional dress and behaviour did nothing to help the situation, and finding some way to ameliorate the situation became a preoccupation with Ashbee. Both the school and the bathing lake went some way to heal the rift and fulfilled Ashbee's criteria to educate the Guildsmen in 'head, hand and body'. The bathing lake, which was opened in 1903, was intended for mixed bathing, a daring proposal in itself in rural Campden. It reflected a dualism of attitude resonant of Carpenter and Whitman. On the one hand, Ashbee saw the lake as bringing people into the open air and into contact with the natural world, making them physically and morally better. But it was also a venue where Ashbee could openly celebrate the beauty of the human body, particularly the male form. Conceptually, the bathing lake was also closely related to the back-to-nature activities at Abbotsholme School in which both Ashbee and Carpenter were involved.

Ashbee's plans for the Chipping Campden School of Handicraft grew as the economic success of the Guild waned. It also coincided with an urgent local need for some initiative to stem youth unemployment and urban drift in the town. The Guild acquired Elm Tree House, a three-storey building, in the spring of 1904, and with grants from the local board of education, Ashbee set about repairing and converting the building for use as a school. There were to be two libraries, classrooms for cookery, woodwork, metalwork and enamelling. Gardening classes in which the boys were taught to dig, hoe and grow vegetables were held outside along with exercise classes. In 1905, there were twenty-two guildsmen out of three hundred and thirty students, a large proportion coming from the local community. Guest lecturers gave a series of talks, and Ashbee's ability to command influential speakers meant that the country audiences were treated to such luminaries as Walter Crane on 'Design in Relation to the Crafts' and Edward Carpenter 'On Small Holdings and Life on the Land'. Even after the Guild collapsed, the school remained a vibrant and important part of Campden life, and it still exists, teaching a variety of crafts and contemporary subjects such as computer studies. The education mission that Edward Carpenter encouraged Ashbee to fulfil came fully to fruition in the Guild workshops and the Campden School of Handicraft.

The Guild failed economically in 1908, its products challenged by imitations such as Liberties Cymric silver range and a decline in popularity of the Arts and Crafts style. From the start of the experiment, Ashbee knew that it would be difficult to keep the orders coming in, and commissioned excess furniture and metalwork to

keep the Guildsmen busy. It is arguable that the venture was doomed financially from the start. Perhaps it was an impossibility for any workshop on such a large scale to succeed away from a city market. But the financial collapse of the Guild does not detract from its ideological success, as Alec Miller observed:

The history of the Guild must be told as of an experiment, not only in the field of arts and crafts, but as an experiment in living also. The Guild and its founder never confused living with making a living! Perhaps that was its undoing. (p. 11)

Alec Miller represented Ashbee's ideal Guildsman, and he and most of the inner circle were committed to the larger idea behind the Guild, an idea that, as we have seen, closely reflected the juxtaposition of elements of Morris's and Carpenter's back-to-the-land idealism. This commitment to what Ashbee himself described as a form of ruralist aesthetic Socialism was apparent in the Guild's craftsmanship and the various histories they left behind them.⁵³ However, there is evidence that only a minority of the Campden Guildsmen held this view. T. H. Osborne, who deeply admired both Alec Miller and Will Hart, expressed what he claimed reflected a different opinion in *A Child in Arcadia*:

What was the outside view of Mr. Ashbee? It varies with the viewer.

Mr. Ashbee was a genius/ Mr. Ashbee was a bit on the weird side.

Mr. Ashbee had a wide view/ Mr. Ashbee viewed the world through a crack in the fence.

Mr. Ashbee was a prophet/ Mr. Ashbee worshipped false gods. Opinion was divided among the guildsmen with, I always felt, the majority leaning to the second or negative one.

He had his own inner circle, it is true, but they were mere reflections of himself. Everybody of course paid him lip service, but in his absence he was spoken of with an amused smile.

His flock were not all that faithful to him or to his ideas; they were just out to earn a living, whether with handicraft in the country or in town with mass production. When better prospects presented themselves or the future began to look dim, most were ready to take a better job.

This is not an attempt on my part to dim the picture of an admittedly remarkable man, but I put it forward as an absolute truth as the collective picture of him as seen by the workers, the fathers and mothers in his

flock who only wished to live in the twentieth century. not with Mr. Ashbee in the sixteenth century. (p. 37)

Whatever the truth of this statement, it in no way diminishes the aesthetic and social achievement of Ashbee's back-to-the-land experiment. nor does it detract from the vision which he shared with those close to him. The relocation of the Guild was the direct result of Ashbee's synthesis of Morris's convictions about dignity and joy in work within a rural context, and Edward Carpenter's belief in nature, homogenic love and comradeship. Nevertheless, despite this amalgamation of ideas, there was little in the Campden Guild to suggest either Morris's vision of an integrated and socialised landscape, or Carpenter's holistic approach to nature and the elements. The Guild's location at Campden, both demographically and aesthetically, primarily represented a ruralist Arts and Crafts view of a back to the land, focusing on an appropriate context for art and craftsmanship in a society geared to mass production. Despite this emphasis, Ashbee's journal entry printed in the preface to this chapter shows that he was aware of the Guild's relationship to other concepts of a return to the land. One venture Ashbee identified as reflecting this diversity was the reportedly Tolstoyan community, the Whiteway Colony near Stroud. The next and final chapter focuses on this experiment.

¹ Ashbee concluded his memoirs with these words summing up his reflections about the Guild ideal and the Campden experiment; *Ashbee Memoirs*, ed. by C. R. Ashbee, 1938, 7 vols (National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum), unpublished typescript, 7 (1938).

² For a detailed and informative account of Ashbee's early years, see Alan Crawford, *C.R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 8-21.

³ Ashbee's natural inclination towards education and reform was reflected in his decision to become a University Extension lecturer. It was also a central element in the formation and running of the Guild of Handicraft at Toynbee Hall, where Ashbee acted not only as a formal instructor, but also as a mentor and guide. The climax to Ashbee's pedagogic ambitions was the setting up of The Guild and School of Handicraft at Chipping Campden.

⁴ Alec Miller, *C. R. Ashbee and The Guild of Handicraft* (Guild of Handicraft Trust Collection, Chipping Campden, 1941), unpublished typescript, p. 31.

⁵ For an account of Ashbee's imperialism and his time in South Africa, see Crawford pp.117-20. In relation to Ashbee and late-nineteenth-century imperialism, Crawford points out that 'a commitment to social reform at home was often married at the turn of the century, with imperialism in foreign affairs; Joseph Chamberlain the Colonial Secretary, was the classic example'. p. 119.

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- ⁶ Peter Faulkner's lecture, *William Morris and the Idea of England* (1991), discusses Morris's universalism and love of the land, but hatred of nationalism and imperialism. and demonstrates the extent of difference between Morris and Ashbee in this area, pp. 20-22.
- ⁷ Ashbee alluded to himself as an aesthetic Socialist, referring particularly to equality in craftsmanship and work, and reform of conditions for the working class. *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1, 1904.
- ⁸ Fiona MacCarthy, *The Simple Life* (London: Lund Humphries, 1981), p. 91.
- ⁹ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1, 29th July, 1886.
- ¹⁰ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1, 29th July, 1886.
- ¹¹ *Ashbee Memoirs*, Introduction to vol 1, 1938.
- ¹² While Ashbee was training to be an architect, he went to live at Toynbee Hall, the pioneer East London settlement, founded by the Reverend Samuel Barnett in 1875. As well as the group of young graduates working at the settlement anxious to generate social change, the experiment was continually visited by well-intentioned but essentially voyeuristic philanthropists, politicians, artists, academics and middle-class sightseers eager to help in the salvation of the poor. Carpenter's teachings led Ashbee to loath what he called in his memoirs 'The tide of fashionable philanthropy'.
- ¹³ *Ashbee Memoirs*, Introduction to vol 1, 1938.
- ¹⁴ Lionel Lambourn, *Utopian Craftsmen* (London: Astangle Books, 1980), p. 125.
- ¹⁵ The main sources of information for Ashbee, his ideas and his work, are the Ashbee Journals. The complete set (44 volumes) are in King's College Library, Cambridge. In 1938, Ashbee edited and selected entries from the journals and produced the 7 volumes that make up the memoirs. While it is clear that the memoirs present a biased and abridged view of Ashbee's life and work, they also reflect the priorities and slant he perceived as important in retrospect.
- ¹⁶ *Ashbee Journals*, September 1885, quoted in Crawford, p. 16.
- ¹⁷ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1, 2nd April 1886.
- ¹⁸ In his unpublished work, *C. R. Ashbee and The Guild of Handicraft*, Alec Miller confirms that Ashbee never joined any political or Socialist group.
- ¹⁹ Roger Fry's, Lowes Dickinson's and Ashbee's visits to Millthorpe are all described in the *Ashbee Memoirs*, I, December 1885 and April 1886. Lowes Dickinson's unsuccessful back-to-the-land experiment at Craig Farm is recorded in MacCarthy, *The Simple Life*, p. 21.
- ²⁰ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1, 2nd April 1886.
- ²¹ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1, 4th September 1886.
- ²² For a more detailed discussion, see Crawford, pp. 8-21.
- ²³ *Ashbee Journals*, September 1885. Quoted in Crawford, p. 19.
- ²⁴ Ashbee's decision to become an architect was not surprising. The Gothic Revival architects such as Norman Shaw, J.D. Sedding, G. E. Street, James Brooks, and G. F. Bodley, to whom Ashbee was attached, were the nursery of many Arts and Crafts practitioners. From this time, on Ashbee's career as an architect developed in parallel with his vocation as a teacher, craftsman and reformer.

²⁵ Ashbee met Morris in 1886 through an introduction from Carpenter. From the beginning, his relationship with Morris appears to have been characterised by a deep respect on Ashbee's side, and little encouragement or real friendship on Morris's. For examples of Ashbee's perception of this, see *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1, 14th December 1885 and 5th December 1887. In contrast to this, Ashbee considered Carpenter a close friend as well as a mentor and prophet.

²⁶ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1, 3rd July 1886.

²⁷ Ashbee and his friends referred to the working class as the 'British Working Man' abbreviated in his journal as the 'B. W. M'. Ashbee recorded that initially he found the 'B. W. M.' exceptionally alarming.

²⁸ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1, 8th September 1887. The 'idea', of course, became the Guild and School of Handicraft; this is its first mention in Ashbee's Memoirs.

²⁹ For an account of these discussions, see Crawford, p. 28.

³⁰ 'Bloody Sunday' took place on November 13th 1887, when 10,000 unemployed workers, anarchists, radicals and Socialists marched on Trafalgar Square. Before they set off, Morris and Annie Besant addressed the workers. Despite the orderly conduct of the marchers, they were met with indiscriminate brutality by both mounted and foot police, and soldiers. Over 200 marchers were treated in hospital; however, this represented only a small part of those injured. Morris was haunted by the events of the day, which appears later fictionalised as part of the revolutionary struggle in *News from Nowhere*.

³¹ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1, 5th December 1887.

³² C. R. Ashbee, *The Manual of the Guild and School of Handicraft* (London Cassell and Company, 1892), pp. 94-5.

³³ C. R. Ashbee, *An Endeavour Towards The Teaching of John Ruskin and William Morris* (London: Folcroft Library Editions, 1973, originally published 1901), p. 49.

³⁴ Among the most influential of these guilds were Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo's Century Guild (1882), and the Art Workers Guild (1884), whose founder members included Lewis F. Day and Walter Crane.

³⁵ Their first show included work by William de Morgan, Morris and Co., work by the Century Guild and interestingly, Ashbee's Guild and School of Handicraft, not then independent and known as Toynbee Hall School and Guild of Handicraft.

³⁶ See Alec Miller, *C. R. Ashbee and The Guild of Handicraft*, pp. 24-25.

³⁷ Quoted in Alec Miller, *C. R. Ashbee and The Guild of Handicraft*, pp. 76.

³⁸ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1, 1st May 1896.

³⁹ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1, 30th January 1898.

⁴⁰ See Alec Miller's descriptions of Ashbee's scrutiny of new recruits to the Guild, *C. R. Ashbee and The Guild of Handicraft*, p. 5.

⁴¹ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 'Introduction to the Happy Nineties', vol 1, 1938.

⁴² C. R. Ashbee, *An Endeavour Towards The Teaching of John Ruskin and William Morris*, pp. 38-39.

⁴³ This was Ashbee's own estimate, recorded in his journal. *Ashbee Memoirs*, January 1902.

⁴⁴ In 1905, Ashbee published *Echoes from the City of the Sun*. This was a favourite theme of Ashbee's and Edward Carpenter's and was based on Thomas Campanella's *Civitas Solis*, a vision of an ideal society published in 1623.

⁴⁵ *Ashbee Memoirs*, December 1901.

⁴⁶ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 'Epilogue' to vol 1, 1938.

⁴⁷ Jane Wilgress is Alec Miller's daughter and H.T. Osborn was the son of W. J. Osborn, the Guild's workshop manager. He was a child in Campden and went to the Guild of Handicraft's school.

⁴⁸ Osborn's brother Bert had spent some months convalescing in the country and he had painted an enticing picture of the countryside for his mother, who had never been outside London.

⁴⁹ Sources, including Ashbee's memoirs, do not mention Edwards as one of Ashbee's favourites or in his inner circle.

⁵⁰ Quoted by Craig Fees in the footnotes to *A Child in Arcadia*, p. 58.

⁵¹ Alec Miller, *C. R. Ashbee and The Guild of Handicraft*, p. 96.

⁵² For a discussion of Ashbee's attitude to 'Emblems and Symbols', see Crawford, pp. 221-231. For the development of the Guild aesthetics and work practices in Campden, see 'Silver of The Campden Period 1902-1908', Crawford, pp. 338-341. Also for an account of the Guild's work in Campden, see Annette Carruthers, 'The Guild of Handicraft at Chipping Campden' in *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds*, ed. by Mary Greensted (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1993), pp. 44-58.

⁵³ When the Campden venture failed, most of the Guild craftsmen were relocated in other workshops. Although some remained in Campden, the majority returned to urban life; the ruralist imagery and the Arts and Crafts ethos and aesthetics of the Campden experiment became a predominant influence in the development and character of craft workshops during much of the early twentieth century.

Chapter 9

Whiteway : A Colony on the Cotswolds

All things in common¹

Background and Context

In 1898, when the Guild of Handicraft was at its peak in Whitechapel, and Ashbee was seriously considering leading his workpeople in a return to the land, a group of young, educated, middle-class idealists set out to establish a very different back-to-the-land community at Whiteway on the western edge of the Cotswolds. The polarity of these two projects reflected the diversity of back-to-the-land experiments under way at the close of the nineteenth century. It also demonstrated the differing ideological perspectives evident in attitudes to a return to the land. As we have seen, Ashbee acknowledged this difference when he described the Whiteway venture as ‘the other end of the stick we ourselves are shaping at Campden’.²

This chapter considers aspects of the inception and early development of the Whiteway Colony near Stroud, and examines the nature and extent of Morris’s and Carpenter’s influence on it. Bearing in mind the particularity of the Whiteway philosophy, and the background of its pioneers, the nature of influence upon this group was very different to that at Chipping Campden, where back-to-the-land ideas were filtered through Ashbee’s single-minded ethos. At Whiteway, the nature of the commitment to return-to-the-land ideas was a matter of individual inclination and development, resulting in a fluid and often unstable situation. Also, while there is a mass of sources concerned with the short-lived but influential Chipping Campden venture, there is a comparatively small amount of material available relating to the relatively little known land community at Whiteway.

Before we look at Morris’s and Carpenter’s influence on the Colony, we need briefly to examine the background and context of the information that is available about early Whiteway. We also need to remember that the Colony survives today, and although vastly altered, the land is still held collectively and all decisions about it are still made by the Colony Council. This perhaps explains in part the reason why the colonists still feel a strong protective identification with the early settlers and are sensitive to outside opinion. However, to fully understand the context of this, we need to bear in mind how the early Colony was represented. In 1900, *The Labour*

Annual, in its 'Directory of British and American Co-operative Colonies and Communities', described the Whiteway Colony near Stroud as follows:

Whiteways. Commenced October 1898. Number of members has varied from eight men and two women at start, to eighteen men and six women. Occupies forty-one acres, arable and pasture, four of which have been cultivated for garden produce. Does not barter, but gives and takes freely. recognizes no laws or external rules beyond those of the conscience. and has burnt its title deeds, not believing in property holding. Difficulties recently led to the withdrawal of S. V. Bracher (a Gloucester journalist, one of the founders), considerable friction, and loss of means. At present the group have no prospects and desire none. (p. 115)

This description appeared along with comments on five other British experiments. including colonies at Leeds, Blackburn and Leicester. The entry for Whiteway shows that it was far the most ambitious project and the most controversial. Other entries were in the main limited to numbers and details of cultivation and building. From its outset Whiteway's ideological base was inherent in its practical development.

Whiteway's reputation as an anarchist and immoral community, appropriate or not, was established from the start and developed from the community's experimental first year, in which opposing opinion within the Colony about 'free union' relationships led to the break-up of the pioneer group. The Colony's initial phase, in which communal living, experimenting with 'no-money', 'non-resistance,' and what *The New Order* described as 'free love ideas', only lasted for two years, but its aura remained and Whiteway became synonymous with dangerous unconventionality. Although the Colony elicited some local support, its early extreme life-style and nonconformist attitude to sexuality led to sensational reporting in the local press.³

Journalists from farther afield, and the simply curious, began to visit Whiteway, taking away mainly negative and stereotyped reactions. The American Socialist paper, the *Social Democrat*, published in New York, carried an unsympathetic article on the colony in 1901, commenting on the frugal food, 'the question of sex relationships', 'idlers who refused to do any work,' 'a woman colonist who wore bloomers "of the ugliest kind"', and describing the land as arid and the buildings as dilapidated. Despite such unenthusiastic responses, the pioneer colonists were eager to spread the word about the simple life and a return to the land. Consequently, they welcomed all visitors, allowing them to be party to Whiteway's

problems as well as its successes, and hiding none of their unconventional practices, including wearing minimal practical clothing and bathing nude in the lake.⁴

Many visitors to the Colony were deeply impressed and stayed to become members themselves; others were influenced to try other alternative ventures of their own.⁵ However, Whiteway's honesty and openness was generally rewarded with sensational exposure and bad publicity in the press. This reaction and misrepresentation of the Colony continued throughout the twentieth century, fuelled by rumours of foreign spies, provoked by the refugees Whiteway sheltered during both world wars. Radio and television programmes made about Whiteway have merely, in the colony's opinion, repeated earlier generalisations and prejudices. Eventually, the Colony felt forced to adopt a defensive attitude to outsiders wishing to study their life-style and history, and today only Colony members are allowed access to Whiteway's papers and archives.

Consequently, available sources are mainly limited to published material: the Alan Maxfield archive relating the Colony's middle years, 'Notes from the Colony' which as we have seen appeared in *The New Order*, photographs and a variety of newspaper and magazine articles. Despite the lack of primary sources, an illuminating picture of the early colony can be drawn from Nellie Shaw's book *Whiteway: A Colony on the Cotswolds* (as I suggested in the introduction). This is particularly relevant as Nellie Shaw was one of the pioneer settlers at the community, and a former member of the Croydon Brotherhood Church. Joy Thacker's *Whiteway Colony: The Social History of a Tolstoyan Community* draws directly on the Colony's archives, letters and diaries of early colonists, citing useful first-hand descriptions of life at the early community.⁶ Although the Maxfield archive relates mainly to the Colony between 1920 and 1945, I have felt it relevant to refer to it because of the clear ideological continuity evident in Whiteway's development and philosophy.

We have seen that in most of the literature concerned with back-to-the-land the Whiteway Colony is mainly referred to as Tolstoyan in character, and while it is clear that Tolstoy was indeed a formative influence on the Colony's antecedents, the present thesis contends, that like *The New Order*, Whiteway was the result of a multiplicity of influences. These included the writing of Thoreau and Emerson, influential contemporary models such as the Cosme Colony in Paraguay, and more particularly, the work of Morris and Carpenter.⁷ Although Peter Gould, in *Early*

Green Politics, does not expand on this view of Whiteway, he indicates the plurality of the community and suggests that its pioneers sought a break with Tolstoyan orthodoxy (p.53). This is reinforced by H. P. Archer's report in *The New Order* in September 1898 stating that some members of the Purleigh experiment wanted to break away and 'wished to organise themselves on a broader basis'. Indeed, *The New Order* in relation to Whiteway demonstrates clearly this secessionist movement and its heterogeneity of inspiration. It also contains the first printed information about the experiment, taking the form of 'Colony Notes' published in the journal during the first year of the Colony's life.

In this discussion of Whiteway, references and interpretations of Tolstoy's ideas have been taken from first-hand sources in an attempt to understand Tolstoyanism as the early community interpreted it. Consequently, Tolstoy's work, translated and regularly printed in *The New Order*, has provided a relevant selection of his ideas in relation to the development of the colonists' back-to-the-land ideals. Articles by Kenworthy and other members of the Croydon Brotherhood Church also provide an informative and relevant reading of Tolstoy's ideas. As Tolstoy is also discussed as a reformer in other radical literature, such as *The Scout* and *The Labour Annual*, these publications have been used to form an image of English Tolstoyanism as it related generally to back-to-the-land and more particularly, the Whiteway Colony.⁸

The Simple Life

From the 'Colony Notes', letters and articles published in *The New Order*, a picture appears of the motivation and philosophy of the initial colonists in the Whiteway venture. It demonstrates that individualism was a significant dynamic within the group's organisation. The journal shows that among the original colonists were former members of the Croydon Brotherhood Church, some of whom had been active colonists at Purleigh. In the summer of 1898, they set out on bicycles from Croydon to search for land. The initial cohort who bought and settled on the land at Whiteway included Sudbury Protheroe, Jeannie Straughan, William Sinclair, Joseph Burrt, Sam Bracher, Arnold Eiloart, Nellie Shaw, and May and Mac, the only couple in the experiment.⁹ Each of these members had their own specific and sometimes conflicting ideas about a return to the land, but a certain cohesiveness was evident in their reasons for initiating the Colony and their belief in the way it should be run.

Firstly, as we have seen in the chapter on *The New Order*, it is clear that a kind of Tolstoyan orthodoxy in relation to work and sex was required within the original Purleigh Colony, and that this led to contentious decisions about who could and who could not join the group. The search to live the simple life on the land without rigid rules and dogma was the single most important spur to the Whiteway breakaway group. Secondly, it is evident that a desire to live with something like a Morrisian sense of brotherhood, with joy in work and fellowship, was the central foundation for the new land Colony, and an overwhelming consideration for the original pioneers. Nellie Shaw and her partner Lucy Andrew's note in *The New Order* in July 1899, titled 'Goodwill Dressmakers', reflected this. It announced that they were closing their successful rational dress-making business and joining the Whiteway group for these reasons:

We wish to live a simple, useful life, in conformity, as far as possible, with our principles. Goodwill will be the only incentive to action. We are joining a group of people in Gloucestershire where we trust we may be of some use, and where our labours will truly be "labours of love". (18, p. 104)

Others in the original cohort agreed with this simple remit. Arnold Eiloart, a Purleigh veteran, also referred to a collective responsibility in the new experiment when he commented that 'strength and healthcare are not necessary to every individual in a colony based on goodwill'.¹⁰ Clearly, this statement must have been influenced by such Tolstoyan reasoning as a belief in 'the full and practical acceptance of Christ's doctrine of human equality and brotherhood, based upon the acknowledgement and service of a God, a Creator, who is perfect Truth, Wisdom and Love'.¹¹ Nevertheless, the essentially non-religious concept for living at Whiteway, in which life and work was a 'labour of love' and goodwill was given freely, was far more closely related to Morris's lines from *A Dream of John Ball*, 'Fellowship is heaven and lack of fellowship is hell,' than any Tolstoyan rhetoric about Christian love and duty. It is also clear that the desire for a 'better life' in the open air away from cities, which was part of the back-to-the-land impulse discussed in chapter one, played a very important part in many of the early pioneers' motivation. This was, as we have seen, linked to a practical search for social reform, and for freedom from restrictive convention in terms of dress, food and sexuality.

In February 1899, Arnold Eiloart wrote a letter to *The New Order* under the title 'A Colonist's Defence'. Replying to questioning concerning his thinking about back-to-the-land and community ventures, his answer gives an indication of the background and influences that made up his rationale. Eiloart stated that while he had never read Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*, he had, on the other hand read Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, adding that it had not influenced him and he could not conceive of living in 'a colony run on such lines'. He identified Tolstoy's 'What to do' as the starting-point for his present direction. As for his attitude to the economic causes behind the prevailing misery in society, he ascribed it to 'Anatomy of Misery', which was written while Kenworthy still considered himself a Socialist. Finally, he stated 'some inkling of the state of society we look forward to is to be got from William Morris's *News from Nowhere*'. This letter shows the evolution of Eiloart's thinking, and while Kenworthy's early work and Tolstoy were obviously influential in Eiloart's development, it firmly locates Morris's vision as an important influence in his view of building a utopian return-to-the-land society. For just as *News from Nowhere* was a visionary alternative to industrialism and materialism, so Whiteway was an attempt to create physically a utopian version of that alternative. Later in the same letter, Eiloart, like Shaw, referred to the importance of co-operation and goodwill and the relevance of a simplification of life:

Now here is one more way of putting my position. One cannot live alone - must have co-operation; if one digs someone else makes the spade, and etc. etc. Now co-operation can come in two ways, willingly or unwillingly. To rely on the first is to rely on goodwill, charity, love; to rely on the second is to rely on compulsion, on the need of others, on fear. I wish to rely entirely on the first. ...

Well in order to cease forcing people to supply my wants, my idea was to reduce my wants, and supply what remained myself. This could not be done in town. The artificial life breeds artificial wants. It could be done nowhere so well as on a colony. But now my idea has undergone modification. I cannot supply even simple wants without co-operation, and I have no right to force this. So I abstain from force and supply only such wants as the goodwill of others permits. Sometimes this will mean a reduction to Spartan simplicity, sometimes an approach to something like luxury, but always peace. (13, pp.26-27)

Eiloart's writing about simplicity and co-operation and the resulting happiness and peace of mind is reminiscent of Guest's descriptions of the new quality of life in *News from Nowhere*. Journeying up the Thames, he speculated on the changes in the

life of the country and the people who had forsaken monetary values and possessions, and gained brotherhood and communal wealth.¹² Indeed, it was this Morrisian form of 'wealth', and its symbolic and cultural rather than economic capital, that the early settlers at Whiteway were seeking. However, Eiloart's call for simplicity and the resultant equanimity also reflected elements of Carpenter's ethos. He had written in 'Desirable Mansions' in *England's Ideal* concerning the peace of mind and freedom from middle-class ennui to be found through the simplification of needs and wants, and through attempts at self-sufficiency. The Colony's attempt at the simple life and self-sufficiency closely mirrored many aspects of Carpenter's simple-life ideals.

When the first pioneers moved to Whiteway in the summer of 1898, they took on a barren exposed hillside, eight hundred feet above sea level, and a primitive stone shepherd's cottage (soon to become Whiteway House) with a few outbuildings. While they constructed the early housing, some settlers were scattered around in lodgings in the neighbouring villages of Miserden and Sheepscombe. However, the main group attempted to feed the whole community, and from the outset weekly meetings were held to discuss growing food, livestock and more generally how they should live. For the first two years, they attempted to live without money, trying to operate a system of reciprocal goodwill.¹³ The concept of ownership was unacceptable to the group, resulting in them famously burning the deeds to the land. Life at Whiteway was undoubtedly difficult, harsh and often bleak, and it would be hard to find a greater aesthetic contrast than the setting for the Campden experiment. And where Ashbee's Campden venture had fully embraced Morris's emphasis on the importance of meaningful creative work within a natural context, Whiteway represented an attempt to follow Carpenter's holistic call to actual physical contact with the land and the elements, and to engage in self-sufficiency.

It is difficult not to have a picture of overwhelming crudeness in relation to much of the agricultural activity at early Whiteway. But despite the privations of life, the pioneers remained committed not only to physical involvement with the land but also to intellectual and spiritual growth. Shaw confirmed this in her writing, which established that the colonists were familiar with Carpenter's work. She stated that the early settlers were a widely-read, educated group and that on Friday evenings after a week of often backbreaking work on the land, they held readings where works by writers such as 'Shelley, Browning, Shakespeare, Emerson, Carpenter and Ruskin

were the chief favourites' (p. 56). Nevertheless, in practical terms, the aim of the Colony was to be as self-sufficient as possible, and despite their limited agricultural knowledge the colonists intended to achieve this from the start. They also set out to help their neighbours and know 'the pleasure experienced by the giver as well as the receiver' (p. 59). In excerpts from a paper Nellie Shaw recalled delivering to 'a young woman's class at Croydon' in the late summer of 1899, she gave a detailed account of colony life, the colonists' approach to their actions and particularly their attitude to work. Discussing their problems, Shaw was able to speak with certainty about the sense of community in the colony:

The one thing which we really rejoice in and speak of with confidence is the spirit of love which is a living force among us, making the joy or sorrow of one the joy or sorrow of all, binding us together as a large family. There is never any shrinking of one kind of work in preference for another. Where the labour is needed there it is expended. (p. 59)

Like much that Shaw wrote about the Colony's beginnings, the values of the group appear to have much in common with what Morris described in *News* as the 'religion of humanity, when the men and women who make up humanity are free, happy and energetic...' (XVI, p.133). Shaw went on in her paper to justify Whiteway's existence:

But what are we here for? You ask. To live a happy, idyllic life, free from carking care and the responsibility of property? Yes that and something more. We do not set ourselves up as reformers of society, but try to reform ourselves. (p. 59)

Although some of these sentiments are allied to Tolstoy's injunction to set an example through self-sacrifice, the desire to lead a 'happy, idyllic life' appears to be in direct opposition to the Tolstoyan belief in denial and obedience to the word of the Sermon on the Mount.¹⁴ The desire for personal reformation also reflects a concept that was central to Carpenter's ethos, expressed realistically and practically in *England's Ideal* and mystically in *Towards Democracy*. In these texts, as we have seen in previous chapters, he developed the idea that personal responsibility and self-realisation were the only real basis for pleasure, brotherhood or any form of personal or collective endeavour. In an instance of this in *Towards Democracy*, writing of freedom, love and nature, Carpenter revealed self-discovery as the key to equality and joy:

Do you understand? To realise Freedom or Equality (for it comes to the same thing) – for this hitherto, for you, the universe has rolled; for this your life, possibly yet many lives; for this, death. many deaths: for this desires, fears, complications, bewilderments, sufferings, hope, regret---all falling away at last duly before the Soul, before You (O laughter!) arising the full grown lover—possessor of the password. (p.17)

The initial colonists at Whiteway felt that they had indeed discovered the ‘password’. or the key to a better life, through exploring the idea of happiness in self-realisation within the context of a return to the land.

There is a palpable sense in Nellie Shaw’s descriptions of early Whiteway that the colonists did indeed feel that despite the hardships and difficulties of communal life, they would come to some form of self-realisation and thereby self-reform. In this context, she also demonstrated the lack of religious dogma and stressed the importance of individualism within the Colony when she wrote: ‘I want it clearly understood that at no time did we formulate any creed or define our position. No one was asked what his opinions were or required to subscribe to any doctrine’ (p. 60). This closely reflected Carpenter’s emphasis on individual belief and action and his insistence that the motive for his return to the land ‘was in the main a purely personal one’.¹⁵ Individualism at Whiteway, or anarchism, as it was interpreted in many press reports, was also pervaded with a Carpenterian blend of practicality and spirituality in relation to nature and contact with the land. In terms of this theme, looking at Whiteway’s beginnings in retrospect, Shaw identified the qualities in ‘the writings of such men as Thoreau and Edward Carpenter (especially the latter’s book, *Towards Democracy*)’, stating that they ‘gave voice to that feeling and acted as a stimulus to many individuals - including the little group which started our Colony’ (p. 220).

A cynical view of the of the Colony’s first attempts at juxtaposing individualism, simplification and communal life was recorded by the *Social Democrat* in 1901, its journalist describing the community thus:

They had no rules of any kind and everybody did absolutely as he or she chose to do. To become a member of the group no application was needed, all that anyone need to was to take a seat at the common table. All things were held in common and all the money they had was kept in a small open box upon the mantel. My companion confessed, as he guided me over the place, that they were the victims of idlers who refused to do any work.¹⁶

This kind of picture presents a negative vision of an anarchist, communist community and this became Whiteway's hallmark in the public mind. Elements of this representation of Whiteway were probably correct, but overall, its ethos was to find a balance between communal life on the land and individual freedom.

Carpenter's sense of self-determination, rather than direct action, would have made him highly receptive to Whiteway's individualism and lack of any specific political philosophy. Indeed, looking back in *My Days and Dreams*, Carpenter wrote that along with Socialism he had worked for 'the Anarchist ideal consistently' (p. 114). Although attracted to anarchism, for Morris, simplification and communal life were essentially integral elements of Socialist revolution, rather than the means of individual salvation. Like Carpenter's experiment at Millthorpe, Morris would probably have viewed Whiteway as a diversion from the cause of Socialism.

The reality of the situation at Whiteway is difficult to ascertain, and other commentators reported differing interpretations of Colony life. F. R. Henderson, in 'Whiteway Notes' in *The New Order* in June 1899, commented on how 'a recent visitor was astonished that so much had been done to the land', continuing that 'They have opened a quarry, and with the friendly assistance of a stone-dresser, are preparing stone with which to build a dairy' (17, p. 86). And although she acknowledged the presence of those who did not contribute to the Colony, Shaw portrayed an image of Whiteway's collective philosophy that reflected a particularly open, trusting and non-coercive attitude to the participation in work in their attempt at the simple life:

It was believed that all who joined would quite naturally wish to do their share of the necessary work. We had a simple childlike belief in the inherent goodness of human nature, and imagined that, given good conditions, equal and loving treatment, people would respond and give us of their best. (p. 60)

This statement, while it demonstrates an obvious naiveté, also resounds with ideas from Morris's *News* in which, under the new conditions of equality, work has become a pleasure in which everyone participates. Everyone helps joyfully with fieldwork, and as Hammond puts it, 'the fields were everywhere treated as a garden made for the pleasure as well as the livelihood of all' (XVI, p. 191). Sadly, at Whiteway, the colonists' faith in participation in communal work was abused by many outside the original cohort, who, dissatisfied with their jobs or the restrictions

of town life, came down to the colony in the summer months and spent most of their time reading, smoking and lounging around. Eventually, the Colony was forced to assume a more structured and disciplined approach to cultivating the land. But until the situation proved impossible and threatened their existence, no one was turned away. Although this made the burden of feeding the community even greater, it also made the need for the simple life even more pertinent.

We have seen that by the end of the nineteenth century Carpenter was accepted as a guru of the simple life, and his ideas about dress, diet and self-sufficiency had become part of many radical simple-life experiments, including whole food restaurants, ideas about rational dress, and progressive educational ventures. However, in the context of colony life, Carpenter's ideas could be developed to the full. In 'Simplification of Life', Carpenter had written a detailed *raison d'être* for vegetarianism, linking this to ecological concerns and animal welfare. At Whiteway vegetarianism was an economic necessity as well as a matter of principle, and it must be remembered that Tolstoy also advocated vegetarianism and a simplified diet. Despite this, descriptions of Whiteway's early diet bear a close resemblance to Carpenter's suggestions for appropriate simple-life food.

At Whiteway, their daily menu consisted of 'bread and a little butter, porridge and tea or cocoa for breakfast; beans, lentils, some other pulse, cooked with onions and potatoes were the chief dishes at dinner time, varied occasionally with rice, rhubarb, or wholemeal pudding, or bread and cheese'.¹⁷ Carpenter had suggested something very similar, especially as nourishment for hard physical work, writing in 'Simplification of Life' in *England's Ideal*:

On the whole, and for habitual use, I do not know what can be pleasanter or more nourishing than the cereals (rice, wheat, etc.), milk, eggs, cheese, bread, butter, and any fruit or vegetables that come handy; and they seem to me to stand by one for hard work and endurance better than any flesh. Less than a pennyworth of oatmeal will make one person a large dish of porridge, and this with an egg or some cheese and a little fruit, will form a first-class dinner. (p. 84)

Carpenter also discussed the craving for meat and man's relationship to animals, stating that this need for flesh was part of the 'present conditions of civilization' and that this would be remedied by the outdoor life (p. 84). And although in relation to diet, as we have seen, Carpenter had argued that women would always be domestic slaves while society adhered to overcomplicated food, his ideal of emancipation in

the domestic sphere was patently seldom achieved. Even at Whiteway, where meals were mostly eaten out of doors and kept very simple, and despite the theoretical equality of women and their declared preference for field work, cooking was considered 'women's occupation'. Shaw corroborated this when she related that even with a simplified diet, the burden for the women at the Colony of catering for the whole community and the numerous visitors was very heavy.¹⁸

Colonists were also notorious in the locality for their unconventional clothes and appearance, and were particularly recognisable by their sandals or bare feet and minimal clothing. Although this alienated some local people, it had the advantage for the colonists of acting as a badge of belonging, and reinforced the group's collective identity. The colonists' mode of dress appears to have remained consistent for much of the first half of the twentieth century, so that an article published in 1932 gives a similar picture to Ashbee's account of a colonist in 1904 and a very early report in the *Stroud Journal* published in 1899. Ashbee described a colonist as 'tall beautiful, longhaired, ... dressed in something approaching a loin-cloth' and going barefoot.¹⁹ This biblical apparition was repeated in a report called 'In England's Strangest Village' (1932). The reporter arrived at Whiteway dressed for a cold wet day, and encountering a member of the Colony dressed only in shorts and a sleeveless shirt, recounted that

His pale face was adorned by a blonde beard and his bare feet were encased in sandals of the kind that the Jews wore when they went out of Egypt in the days of the Pharaohs.²⁰

The *Stroud Journal* confirms that a form of simple-life 'uniform' was evident from the very start of the Colony:

Gathered in the rick yard were all sorts of conditions of men, from those holding university degrees to able bodied sea men. Women too, were also in evidence and the utter lack of conventionality in the attire of both sexes, gave a most picturesque effect to the whole scene. Bare legs and heads, and feet covered only with sandals of the ancients were prominent; while some of the women were very quaintly dressed.²¹

Although there are certain similarities between the peasant costume and flowing beard assumed by Tolstoy and the 'Colony style', pictures of the Russian reformer show him clothed from top to toe in a simple version of a peasant smock. The loose, minimal dress adopted by the colony and the sense of freedom it imbued.

was far more reminiscent of the functional philosophy of the Rational and Reform dress movements, and the oppositional influence of Morris and Carpenter. Indeed Nellie Shaw and Lucy Andrews had been professional Rational dressmakers before their arrival at Whiteway, but as well as being practical, Colony dress acted as a visible symbol of having broken away from the constraints of convention and the restrictions of middle-class morality. Carpenter was renowned for his views in this area, and importantly he had located simplified dress as part of the solution to the position of women in the domestic arena. Nellie Shaw confirmed that for women at Whiteway, this was an important consideration. Describing their clothing in relation to this, she wrote:

No hats, but sun bonnets and short frocks are the order of the day for the women, and many of the men work bareheaded, barelegged and often barefooted. The women much appreciate this state of things, as it means less work for them to do.²²

Early photographs of Eiloart, Nellie Shaw and other pioneer colonists show a collective emphasis on simplified and unconventional dress promoting freedom of movement and comfort. It is easy to underestimate the impact of the appearance of Colony members at a time when it was considered unthinkable for middle-class men and women not to wear hats out of doors, and stays were an essential item of women's attire. Photographs show that contemporary written reports commenting on the 'scandalous' nature of the colonists' appearance were not exaggerated.²³

Despite Carpenter's withdrawal into private life at the turn of the twentieth century, he was by this time an icon of nonconformity. We have seen in earlier chapters that he had advocated the efficacy of simplified clothing, calling for uncomplicated woollen, preferably hand-spun and hand-woven clothes, at most a shirt, pants and coat and no more than three layers (he calculated that the average middle-class person wore eleven layers for warmth). Stressing the comfort, warmth and health-giving properties of minimal dress, Carpenter had written in *England's Ideal* of the effect on the body of the constraints of conventional clothing:

And certainly, nowadays, many folk visibly *are* in their coffins. Only the head and hands out, all the rest of the body clearly sickly through want of light, air, atrophied, stiff in the joints, strait-waistcoated, and partially mummied. Sometimes it seems to me that is the reason why in our modern times the curious intellect is so abnormally developed, the brain and the tongue waggle so, and the fingers are so nervous and

meddlesome, because these organs alone have a chance. the rest are shut out from God's light and air: the poor human heart grown feeble and weary in its isolation and imprisonment, the sexual parts degenerated and ashamed of themselves, the liver diseased, and the lungs straightened down to mere sighs and conventional disconsolate sounds beneath their cerements. (p. 93)

In this passage, Carpenter equated the heavy, formal, complicated garments of conventional society with contemporary feeling of unease and ill health. He also recalled in *My Days and Dreams* that when he began his return to the land at Millthorpe, as he put it, 'I was plunged in the very heart of Nature ... I gave my dress clothes away'. He went on to say: 'I did so without any misgiving and without any fear that I should need them again' (pp.48-49). At Whiteway, the colonists' adoption of simple-life dress was a visible symbol to the rest of society that they, like Carpenter, had turned their backs on a conformist *urban* existence, and embraced a physical, elemental and non-competitive life on the *land*. It was within this context that the sandal became emblematic of non-conventional lifestyle.

Carpenter had extolled the virtue of sandals in 'Simplification of Life', after first experiencing them in India and later learning to make them at Millthorpe, having acquired the pattern from his friend, Harold Cox.²⁴ Convinced of their practicality as well as their health-giving properties he wrote:

There seems to be no reason except mere habit why, for a large part of the year at least, we should not go barefoot, as the Irish do, or at least with sandals. [Democracy which redeems the lowest and most despised of people, must redeem also the most menial and despised members and organs of the body]. Even now, effeminated as our feet are, it takes but little practice to accustom them to country roads; ... and who does not know the pleasure of grasping the ground - the bare earth - with his bare feet? (p. 94)

Carpenter's sandals were advertised in *Seed-time* in 1892, claiming that 'they are pleasant to wear and elegant in appearance, and by restoring freedom and circulation to the foot, render it in a short time as healthy and vital as the hand'. Although Whiteway and other alternative ventures adopted the sandal or bare feet as a symbol of cultural difference, early photographs show that they were worn at Whiteway for hard manual work, digging, using a pickaxe and path-laying.²⁵ Among observers of the 'New Life', sandals became an object of ridicule and derision, famously lampooned in a cartoon called 'Letchworth's Reputation' depicted by Louis Weirter for *The Citizen* in 1909. However, with the craze for hiking in the inter-war years

sandals became popular and were viewed as healthy in more conventional circles. Despite this, throughout the twentieth century, sandals continued to be connected with cranks, back-to-nature enthusiasts, vegetarians and alternative dress. In the nineteen-thirties, Stanley Randolph still made sandals at Whiteway; he had learnt his craft directly from Edward Carpenter. *The News Chronicle* for March 14th 1934 quoted Randolph as saying: ‘once people have worn them they never go back to shoes again. You need enthusiasm at first to get over possible shyness. They fit in with the open-air life’.²⁶

As well as the obvious connections between Carpenter and Colony dress, there are also aspects of Morris’s unconventional and informal appearance that were influential on the group’s alternative forms of dress. Carpenter, for all his adoption of unconventional clothing and sandals, remained a dapper figure, hatted and sporting a neatly trimmed beard. In contrast, Morris’s adoption of the simple working suit, irrepressible hair and beard became not only the uniform of social protest in the Arts and Crafts workshops of the simple life, but filtered through to the simple-life and back-to-the-land movement in general.²⁷ Although this informality of appearance was evident at Whiteway, there was little reminiscent of Morris’s utopian clothing in *News from Nowhere* in which he portrayed decorative, colourful garments and romantic, medieval-looking figures. Despite this, if we accept that clothes can act as a reflection of a group identity and social change, there was much to suggest the empowered society of *Nowhere*, which was described in *The New Order* by Kenworthy as containing ‘neither rich nor poor, strong nor oppressed but only free folk, each following his or her bent in work and manner of life’ (10, p. 108).

Both Morris and Carpenter wrote concerning simplicity of ornament and its impact on the environment. As we have seen in previous chapters, Morris emphasised that gimcrack goods and elaborate interiors supported the capitalist economy, and robbed the worker of dignity and pleasure in work, turning him into a factory slave. He also wrote, in ‘Some Hints on Pattern-Designing’ (1881), of the paucity of design that did not consider nature, or that deprived the maker of the ‘delight in skill [that] lies at the root of all art’ (XXII, p. 181). Contrary to Ashbee’s report of the Colony in 1904, describing it as totally lacking in cultural activity, one of the first building jobs the pioneers undertook was to convert part of an out-building into a room for a weaving loom. We know little about what was

made on it, but crafts were continually practised at Whiteway from its earliest years.²⁸

Morris's teachings about creativity and the crafts were later taken up at the colony in a more organised way, when the Cotswold Handicrafts Guild was initiated. This was a co-operative of crafts-people living and working at Whiteway that flourished during the 1920s. The guild practised a variety of crafts including woodworking, bookbinding, weaving, sandal-making, rush-seating and raffia work. All the craftspeople contributed to and were supported by a common fund, and sold their artefacts collectively. Fred Foster, a wood-worker and a member of the guild who had worked with Sidney Barnsley at Sapperton (about five miles from Whiteway), was described by Shaw in 1935 as 'a true successor to the school of William Morris'. Describing Foster's life and work at the colony, she wrote that 'he desires, as do some others, to be able to continue living here, cultivating a little land and at the same time making a living by his craft'.²⁹ A combination of culture and cultivation was equally evident in Carpenter's life at Millthorpe, where he practised and advocated manual work and writing.

Carpenter had pointed out that simple uncluttered interiors promoted health and well-being, and encouraged the possibility of ending domestic servitude. He had also expounded the need for simplicity in living that promoted inclusiveness, pointing out in *My Days and Dreams* that

plainness again is necessary from foundation considerations of humanity and democracy. To live in opulent and luxurious surroundings is to erect a fence between yourself and the mass world which no self-respecting manual worker will pass. It is consequently to stultify yourself and to lose some of the best the world can give. (p. 166)

There was little in the physicality of Whiteway that acted in this exclusive way, and its surroundings, coupled with the colonists' open attitude, were an invitation to all-comers. However, in 'Simplification of Life', Carpenter had also described the simplicity and beauty of his vision of the ideal country cottage, advocating colour-washes for the walls and a function for every object. This suggestion for a simplified building and interior had little in common with descriptions of early Whiteway. Ashbee on his visit in 1904 referred scathingly to Whiteway's wooden cabins built by the colonists, stating that:

'Tis all very uncouth and experimental. In the cabins are pianos, books, machine-made chairs and tables and other of the unearned incrementa of civilization, protesting as it were against this half-hearted return to barbarism.³⁰

Indeed, Campden, with its self-conscious and well-tended simplicity, appeared in direct opposition to the chaotic and accidental environment at Whiteway. And unlike the Campden experiment, interiors and ornament at early Whiteway appear to have been a matter of expediency, with minimal consideration of aesthetics.

If the colonists had little time for consideration of aesthetics in relation to their interior environment, they engaged with the land and tilled the earth in a way quite outside the Campden experience of back-to-the-land. Their manual work and appreciation of the natural world reflected truly Carpenterian sentiments. Shaw not only portrayed the backbreaking work on the land, ploughing and sowing; she also celebrated 'the walks home in the evening to our various little cottages and the lovely morning walk through the wood and over the field to our work'. Carpenter had written of the importance and delight in contact with and appreciation of nature in *Towards Democracy*, indicating these experiences as fundamental to all self-realisation and collective aims. Shaw also described the joys of haymaking at Whiteway and the colonists' attitudes to this relationship with nature and the land:

Now we were all really tasting country life, for we all men and maids, made the hay, as it was an ideal summer, it was quickly done. Yes, that truly was a summer idyll. Perfect weather, agreeable companionship, raking, turning the sweet smelling hay, then piling it up in heaps, taking our refreshment and rest in the shade of the haystacks, working on even until the moon rose in the sky, going home at night tired and happy feeling that at last we had done some 'real work'. (p. 52)

The connection between Shaw's ecstatic reaction to haymaking and Morris's description of the haymakers' appreciation of nature and joy in their work in *News from Nowhere* is inescapable. The collective tilling of the land at Whiteway was not only a necessity; it was also a reflection of the colonists' endeavour towards a communal display of the concept of a practical return to the land. Free unions and relationships at the colony were similarly a reflection of inclusiveness, and an extension of many of the pioneers' back-to-the-land ethos.

Free Unions: Relationships and Education

As we have seen earlier, Nellie Shaw referred to arguments about sexuality and relationships in relation to the split at Purleigh, and the resulting decision to establish an alternative colony. Shaw confirmed that in the new group ‘all should be welcome and none excluded for their views on sex matters or the output of their work’ (p. 38). Later letters published in *The New Order* show that she was also right to point out that differences in attitudes to sex and marriage were contentious issues for others in the original colony. Carpenter had offered physical contact with nature and simple self-sufficiency as an alternative to rigid convention and meaningless relationships. At Whiteway, these ideas resonated in the way the Colony developed.

In an earlier chapter, we saw that Carpenter’s ideas on gender and sexuality, clearly stated in *Sex-Love* and *Woman and Marriage in Free Society*, were highly influential in informing radical opinion on matters of sexuality in the 1890s. Carpenter’s *Love’s Coming-of-Age*, first published in 1896, provided a model for some of the relationships that developed at Whiteway, which were reported in *The New Order*. In September 1899, F. R. Henderson the editor wrote on ‘Affairs at Whiteway’, discussing what he described as the ‘free love’ ideas held by some of the settlers. Henderson was unhappy with what he viewed as the colonists’ ‘easy attitude to adultery’, because the actions of a few had brought condemnation upon the whole community. On the subject of ‘Marriage: A Forecast’, in *Love’s Coming-of-Age*, Carpenter discussed the pressure of public opinion on relationships:

It is obvious that external opinion and pressure are looked upon as having an educational value; and the question arises whether there is beneath this any reality of marriage which will ultimately emerge and make itself felt enabling men and women to order their relations to each other, and to walk freely, unhampered by props or pressures from without. (p. 93)

Emulating Carpenter’s views, the community experimented with free relationships, known at Whiteway as ‘free unions’; these were quite free of external pressures until salaciously reported in the local press. *The New Order* reported Whitway’s free unions, describing them thus:

A man and woman enter the marriage state without legal bond, and after three years find that they cannot live together, and separation takes place. Another man becomes the woman’s husband, also without legal bond. Neither the woman nor the second husband regard their union as other than permanent, or as other than a righteous act. (20, p.130)

This state of affairs, anathema to Tolstoyan Christian sentiment, directly reflected words from Carpenter's *Love's Coming-of-Age*: 'The subjection of sex-relations to legal conventions is an intolerable bondage' (p.148). Like Carpenter, the Whiteway settlers did not advocate a promiscuous society, but one in which relationships were unfettered by convention or hidebound by law, a situation such as Carpenter expressed in his conclusion to 'The Free Society':

Surely it is not too much to suppose that a reasonable society will be capable of seeing these and other things; that it will neither on the one hand submit to a cast-iron system depriving it of all grace and freedom of movement, nor on the other hand be in danger of falling into swamps of promiscuity; but that it will have the sense to recognize and establish the innumerable and delicate distinctions of relation which build up the fabric of a complex social organism.³¹

We know from Nellie Shaw, contemporary press reports, and Joy Thacker's book *Whiteway Colony: The Social History of a Tolstoyan Community*, that such an approach as Carpenter postulated was part of the Whiteway ethos, and that free union couples were numerous. Despite this, there was no obligation to unconventional relationships, and there were married and single colonists and all manner of different groupings at the Colony. What mattered at Whiteway was the quality of a particular relationship, individual preferences and a sense of acceptance by the community. This in many ways reflected Carpenter's vision for a more developed society:

Perhaps it will only be for a society more fully grown than ours to understand the wealth and variety of affectional possibilities which it has within itself....³²

There is no information available to ascertain whether Carpenter's ideas about homosexual relationships met with sympathy or experiment at Whiteway. Nevertheless, it is fair to suggest that, given the Colony's propensity to tolerance, it is quite likely that these ideas would have received a favourable hearing.

Free unions continued at the Colony long after the original collective foundation collapsed. They represented a freedom in relationships that encapsulated Whiteway's belief in individuality. However when the early colonists came to the decision that it was not tenable to cultivate the land collectively, it was partly due to the difficulties of communal work and partly reflected a need for individual living spaces. Those who had formed free unions, married couples and single people all began to erect wooden dwellings and cultivate the land around them. In this way.

Whiteway was divided up while the land remained collectively owned. Whiteway House, which was the centre of all the Colony's communal activity during the first two years, now became housing for those who applied to join the group.

From 1906 on, the policy of allowing all-comers to join the Colony changed, and applications from newcomers had to be received in writing, colonists deciding who had greatest need and who might fit in. This fundamentally changed the original remit of the community, but despite this, much of its radical, individualist spirit remained. Throughout the First World War, many colonists adhered to the Tolstoyan concept of 'no force' and were accused of pacifism, and during both World Wars, the Colony was suspected of sheltering foreign spies by the authorities. Whiteway continued to be seen as a threat to the establishment, and in 1925, the Home Office paid a couple to infiltrate the Colony in an attempt to close it down. They described it as 'a plague spot on morality where free love, vegetarianism and pacifism were rife': however, they found no reason to close the Colony down.³³ In reality, throughout its history, Whiteway has always welcomed refugees and those in need of help, and supported them out of its communal funds.

In the 1920s, the Colony initiated its own school, called The Whiteway Modern School. It was open to non-colony children and it was designed to offer a progressive education. Its prospectus described what it called the 'Human Surroundings' of the school as

People who, in an attempt to get away from the unhealthy influences of modern commercialism, have gone back to the land and thus escaped many of the stifling conventions which hinder the development of personality. These people hold their land on the principle of possession use only, and though living in separate bungalows, meet often for lectures, study, music and enjoyment of social life generally.³⁴

Apart from traditional subjects, Whiteway School offered a large range of activities including, handicrafts, carpentry, gardening, art, music and cosmology. Joy Thacker described the school's aims as 'designed to encourage initiative and natural abilities through daily living and co-operation with one another. This was combined with the pupil's own researches obtained through books and nature'. Thacker went on to say that 'there was no dogmatic teaching regarding religious or political issues, and no punishments or rewards. All students would be judged separately according to their progress, and that this would be enhanced by visits to factories, places of interest and

through games' (p. 87). Whiteway School's emphasis on creativity, community and nature was remarkably reminiscent of the experiments in education of the 1890s, such as Abbotsholme, where the curriculum designed by Cecil Reddie with Carpenter's help included a mixture of crafts and manual work. Whiteway's emphasis on personal development and education to fit the individual also displayed values in common with Morris's concept of 'due education', expounded in 'Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil'. Despite these obvious Morrisian and Carpenterian traits, it needs to be remembered that Whiteway must have been influenced by other schools, some of which developed a similar alternative pedagogic agenda during the first thirty years of the twentieth century.³⁵

Even in the light of the progressive educational climate of the 1920s, the Whiteway School still significantly reflected the philosophical influences that formed the community's values. Specifically, it was indicative of the non-authoritarian, non-doctrinal and collective atmosphere that Nellie Shaw identified as intrinsic to the belief and organization of the early community. And as we have seen, the intellectual, emotional and spiritual foundation of the initial Whiteway settlers was broader and less dogmatic than is often implied. Tolstoy was undoubtedly a vital influence on the development of the pioneer colonists, but to describe the Colony as Tolstoyan is to misunderstand its inherent sense of individuality, freedom and equality. Rather it was, as it hoped to be, 'organised on a broader basis', some of which was influenced by Morris vision of a socialised landscape, but more particularly by Carpenter's ideas about social change, education and a return to the land.

¹ This is how Nellie Shaw described the way the initial settlers at the Whiteway Colony lived, *Whiteway*, p. 48.

² *Ashbee Memoirs*, 2, 1904.

³ During the early years of the Whiteway Colony 'Jottings by Jonathan' in the *Stroud Journal* carried sensational reporting of events at the community. However, a letter of support in relation to the colony also appeared in the paper from a Dr Henry Hardy on September 1st 1899.

⁴ Reports of minimal dressing appeared in *The Social Democrat*, in an article entitled 'My Visit to The "Tolstoyan Colony"' (1901). Nude bathing was still being reported in 1932 in the *Express and Star* in a piece called 'In England's Strangest Village', Alan Maxfield Papers, Gloucestershire Record Office.

⁵ Nellie Shaw recalled the string of visitors who came to visit the early colony, so many in fact that the numbers swelled to thirty or forty during the summer months. Many did a little back-to-the-land work, but the daily cooking and washing was done by Colony members; usually the women, p. 61. Whiteway was also the home to refugees, pacifists and conscientious objectors from all over Europe. Joy Thacker gives examples of their stories, particularly of Carmen Maurice, pp. 21-28.

⁶ Joy Thacker is a current member of Whiteway and therefore has access to the colony's archives and records.

⁷ J. Spargo, writing in the *Social Democrat* in 1901, claims that a lecture by an agent of the Cosme Colony in Parguay, brought into the district by a local branch of the I. L. P., was influential in informing early colonist opinion.

⁸ For other sources of information about Tolstoy see footnote 14 in chapter 6.

⁹ **Sudbury Protheroe** came from a middle-class family and was the junior partner in the family auctioneering business. At twenty-four, he threw it all up to join the Purleigh land experiment. One of the original Whiteway settlers, he lived at the colony till he was sixty, when he moved to Salisbury and started a vegetarian food shop.

Jeannie Straughan was a member of the Croydon Brotherhood Church and the Purleigh Colony. At Purleigh, she met Sudbury Protheroe; on settling at Whiteway, they entered into a free union relationship. Jeannie died at Whiteway aged eighty-one.

William Sinclair abandoned the security of his job as a bank clerk and had tried to live an alternative life on the land. A former Purleigh member he was part of the group that formed the initial settlement at Whiteway. A conscientious worker, his previous experience of land settlements meant his was an invaluable asset to the community. He died at Whiteway aged sixty from a fall.

Joseph Burt had previously been a bank manager in Cheltenham. His views on capitalism were radically altered by his involvement with The West of England Land Society and The Gloucester Society of Friends. After a brief involvement with Purleigh, he took part in the finding and procuring of the ground for the Whiteway scheme.

Arnold Eiloart only lived at Whiteway for the first nine months of the colony's life, although he was involved with the community for seven years. He had been a Purleigh member after leaving Denmark as a conscientious objector. A Doctor of Philosophy, he was the most committed of all the settlers to Tolstoy's principles.

Sam Bracher came from a respectable middle-class background; he had served his apprenticeship in journalism with John Bellows and he had joined the Society of Friends. When Whiteway was set up, Bracher stayed in Sheepscombe with his girlfriend, Lottie Dunn, keeping a large part of the capital he had promised the project. He was also at the centre of a much publicised argument over free unions.

Nellie Shaw was a member of the Croydon Brotherhood Church. Involvement with her Rational Dress-making business meant she was unable to join the Purleigh group; however, she was a frequent visitor. She lived at Whiteway in a free-union relationship with Francis Sedlak until his death. She remained at Whiteway until she too died in 1946, aged eighty-two. She was buried next to Francis in the Whiteway Corner (unconsecrated ground) of Miserden Church.

May and Mac were the only settlers to arrive as a 'couple'. They had been associated with the Croydon Brotherhood Church and had a small daughter, a son being born shortly after their arrival at Whiteway. Information quoted in W. G. H. Armytage, *Heavens Below*, Joy Thacker, *Whiteway: The Social History of a Tolstoyan Community* and Nellie Shaw, *Whiteway: Colony on the Cotswolds*.

¹⁰ *The New Order*, 13, February 1899, p.1.

¹¹ 'Some Interesting Biographies', *The Labour Annual*, 1896, p.239.

¹² See *Collected Works of William Morris*, XVI, p.200.

¹³ Despite living with 'no money', the settlers did have some resources to buffer them from the initial problems and to see them through to the first harvest. Sam Bracher was the main provider of funds, and when he split from the core group over differences of opinion about 'free unions', the colony was left with less resources than they had anticipated. For an account of the problems the colony faced because of this situation, see Joy Thacker, pp. 9-14.

¹⁴ For a view of Tolstoy's attitudes towards self-reform and human happiness, see 'Some Interesting Biographies', *The Labour Annual* 1896.

¹⁵ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p. 110.

¹⁶ 'My Visit to The "Tolstoyan Colony"', *Social Democrat* (1901).

¹⁷ Shaw, p. 58.

¹⁸ See Shaw, pp. 62-63. Although cooking and domestic chores do appear to have mainly been 'women's work', Sudbury Protheroe, one of the original settlers, started a colony bakery, in which he made wholemeal loaves from local flour fired in a brick oven with sticks gathered from the local woods. As well as supplying the colony, his bread was in great demand and eventually sold to private customers and whole-food shops in the locality. The enterprise lasted eighty-five years.

¹⁹ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 2, 1904.

²⁰ W. Byford-Jones, 'In England's Strangest Village', *Express and Star*, 1932, Maxfield Papers.

²¹ *Stroud Journal*, September 1st 1899.

²² Shaw, p. 57. Shaw also confirmed that most of the women preferred to be outside doing fieldwork rather than domestic chores.

²³ For examples, see photographs in Thacker, p.10, Jeannie Straughan with loose hair, no hat and short frock without sleeves or belt, and p. 12, Arnold Eiloart in shorts, loose shirt, sandals and no hat.

²⁴ Having tried an ill-fated back-to-the-land venture at Craig Farm, Harold Cox went in search of 'enlightenment' in India. He sent Carpenter the pattern for the famous sandals from Cashmere.

²⁵ See the front cover of Joy Thacker's *Whiteway* which shows colonists working on Dry Ground Road at Whiteway in 1924. All the adults are wearing sandals despite using a variety of sharp implements such as pickaxes and spades, and working with heavy stone. In contrast, the two workmen helping them wore shirts, trousers, waistcoats, boots and hats.

²⁶ Quoted in Shaw, p. 156.

²⁷ MacCarthy makes the point that the Morrisian working smock, utilitarian suit and flowing beard became a uniform of social protest in the Arts and Crafts workshops. See illustration 45. *William Morris: a Life for Our Time*. Early photographs of Whiteway in Thacker and the Maxfield Papers also show the adoption of a comparable dress code. Return-to-the-land hippies of the late 1960s and early '70s wore long hair, beards, smocks and flowing garments, using dress as symbol of rebellion, anti-urbanism and anti-materialism.

²⁸ See Thacker, pp. 95-110, for an account of crafts at early Whiteway and The Cotswold Co-operative Handicrafts.

²⁹ Shaw, p. 158.

³⁰ *Ashbee Memoirs*, 1904.

³¹ Carpenter, *Love's Coming-of-Age*, pp. 148-149.

³² Carpenter, *Love's Coming-of-Age* p. 148.

³³ Richard Ford, 'Officials spied on "beastly hippies"', *The Times*, 3 March 2000, p. 3.

³⁴ Quoted in Thacker, p. 87.

³⁵ By 1910, Letchworth Garden City had founded its own alternative school St. Christopher, and a centre for education, 'The Cloisters', for those who wished 'to live a fresh air life'. In 1911, Edmond Holmes published the influential *What Might Be*; part two began with a chapter called 'A School in Utopia'. Its contents did much to establish 'progressive education' as a trend over the following decades. The 1920s saw the development of A. S. Neil's progressive free school at Summerhill, the Rudolph Steiner schools, Dartington, and Marion Richardson's pioneer work in art education.

Conclusion

During the years 1880-1895, we have seen that radical notions of back-to-the-land and the simple life united with wider Socialist aspirations in a utopian challenge to industrial urbanism and the rigid conventions of late-nineteenth-century society. Pressure groups such as the Land Nationalisation Society and the Allotment and Smallholdings Association, while operating within the existing social order brought back-to-the-land schemes, in the guise of a solution to working-class poverty, to the forefront of public consciousness. For a while, it seemed that back-to-the-land was to play a significant role in the development of the coming century. However, back-to-the-land's radicalism was short-lived, and by the end of the 1890s, Socialism became uneasy with its ideals, the legislative concerns and the parliamentary activity of the Labour Party causing a narrowing of the movement's vision.

Further slowing-down in back-to-the-land's momentum came from improvements in urban conditions; higher building standards; new open spaces and parks provided an aesthetic and physical replacement for the rural, and deflated the image of the city as a locus of evil. The passing of the Allotments and Smallholding Act in 1907 provided some land for the labouring poor, mainly in the cities, and defused the urgency of calls for land reform among Liberal politicians and the Land Nationalisation Society. Developments in transport allowed the working masses access to the country and the seaside, reconciling urban tensions and stimulating a more positive attitude to learning how to live in the city. The proliferation of the bicycle facilitated a freedom unknown before, the popularity of the Clarion Cyclists Club being witness to a proletarian claim on the countryside.¹

The growth of the railway network also allowed working people the freedom to live away from the city, the expansion of the suburbs, symbolically and physically, blurring the edges between the rural and the urban. Suburban life was seen as the way forward; Masterman, writing in 1909, described it as the 'healthiest and most hopeful promise for the future of modern England'.² By 1905, the regenerative elements of back-to-the-land had dwindled to minority groups, focused in artistic and literary activities and educational ventures. The radical and libertarian centre of the simple life and back-to-the-land was diminished, replaced by a developing environmental movement and a strengthened and idealised ruralism in English culture residing safely within the established social order.³ This sense of a

pastoral Englishness was notably at the heart of the Georgian poetry of 1910-30, and pervasive in the Arts and Crafts legacy influencing twentieth-century craft, design and suburban building. Despite our multi-cultural, predominantly urban society, an enduring ruralism is still evident today, demonstrated in the continued assertion that the country is better place to live than the city, and the related popularity of 'cottage styles' in contemporary architecture and gardening. The persistence of this ruralist trope is also evident in advertisements trading on the transferable values of the rural, through lauding 'country goodness' and 'wholesome naturalness'.

However, if the utopian and egalitarian return to land that Morris and Carpenter had called for was subsumed in wider issues, it was not dead. Rather, aspects of their vision were famously metamorphosed in the concept and ethos of the Garden City Movement. Indeed, as Jan Marsh has accurately pointed out, 'The Garden City was the culmination of the back-to-the-land movement, the vindication of its ideas and aspirations'.⁴ And like both Morris and Carpenter, the garden city was neither regressive nor nostalgic. As Morris's vision of an interrelated and socialised landscape had suggested a revolutionised life, so the garden city looked forward and aimed to build a new and better society. Carpenter's dream of the simple life, in touch with the land and the open air, would be encompassed within its design, evident in its approach to diet and dress reform, and spread throughout its educational agenda.⁵

The first garden city inaugurated by The Garden City Association in 1903 at Letchworth in Hertfordshire proved popular with social and land reformers, as well as utopian Socialists and ruralists who saw it as a chance to realize their back-to-the-land dreams of co-operative and ethical living. Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker were appropriately chosen as the consultant architects, and together with Ebenezer Howard, were among the first to build houses at Letchworth.⁶ These were constructed in the Arts and Crafts style, with dormer windows, cat-slide roofs, roughcast walls, tall chimneys and surrounded by a large garden. Indeed, every house in Letchworth had a garden, and there were allotments and smallholdings for those who wished to be self-sufficient, as well as craft workshops, light industrial areas, factories set amid landscaped grounds.⁷ Not surprisingly, Nicholas Pevsner recalled that two inspirational photographs hung over Unwin's desk; one was 'William Morris and the other was Edward Carpenter'.⁸

Predictably, Letchworth attracted advocates of the 'New Life' dedicated to vegetarianism, alternative dress and the ubiquitous Carpenter sandal. Armytage recorded a famous caricature, 'From a Letchworth Diary', describing the "typical Garden citizen", clad in knickerbockers and, of course sandals, a vegetarian and a member of the Theosophical Society ... Over his mantelpiece was a large photo of Madame Blavatsky and on his library shelves were *Isis Unveiled* and the works of William Morris, H. G. Wells and Tolstoy'.⁹ Craftwork was naturally widespread, and bookbinding and fine printing were practised in the Ashbee and Morris tradition. And although Letchworth also recruited artisans, attracted by the chance to combine work in the model factories with cultivation of a smallholding, it was primarily a middle-class community.

The concept of the garden city and its offshoot in the form of the garden suburb flourished in the years before the 1914-1918 war. However, the cataclysmic upheaval of the conflict marked a point of transition in which concepts such as a back-to-the-land and the simple life along with most cultural certainties were irrevocably changed. In particular, in the years immediately after the Great War, the largest ever transfer of land ownership took place, resulting in the end of a rural hierarchy that had predominated during the nineteenth century. Despite the ensuing loss of confidence in the certainties of the previous century, Morris's and Carpenter's utopian inheritance is still clearly visible in the development of twentieth-century expressions of back-to-the-land and related issues.

While Morris's legacy to twentieth-century environmentalism, alternative technology, art and craft education, modernist design and the preservation of ancient buildings is justly acclaimed and documented, Carpenter's influence on the post-First World War years is almost entirely limited to his writing about sexuality, re-discovered and re-published by the Gay Men's Press.¹⁰ Yet many of Carpenter's simple-life and return-to-nature ideals have, if unrecognised, continued to affect outdoor activities and alternative and anti-establishment thinking. The cycling craze of the interwar years was a direct descendant of the Clarion Field Clubs of the late 1890s, instigated by Robert Blatchford, and inspired by Carpenter's writing on the benefits of fresh air, exercise and communing with nature. The emphasis on vegetarianism and healthy food, which has escalated over the last forty years, owes much to Carpenter's ethos; indeed, the menus of the now defunct Cranks restaurants could, like *The New Order's* communal shop, have taken their stock-list straight

from 'Simplification of Life'. Carpenter's emphasis on an ethical approach to animal welfare and a holistic approach to health are yet other areas where his thinking appears as significant as ever. The current campaign for rights of access to private land still echoes the sentiments Carpenter expressed in 'Private Property' in *England's Ideal and Our Parish and Our Duke, a letter to the Parishioners of Holmesfield* (1889). The counter-culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s reflected many of the concerns of the anti-urbanism of the late nineteenth century, and in similar vein, its advocates returned to the land, grew their own food, engaged in a simplified self-sufficiency and adopted long hair, beards, loose simple flowing clothing and sandals as symbols of anti-establishment values. This image has become stereotypical of the average rural hippie commune, but in reality, part of this exodus from the towns and cities represented a synthesis of Morris's and Carpenter's idealism, the re-location of craftspeople in the country. A version of this union was exemplified by the North Wales Potters who went back to the land; occupying dilapidated cottages and farmhouses, they aimed to practise their craft, 'grow their own food', and 'live simply' in a 'good working environment away from the hustle and bustle'.¹¹

One more area in which both Morris's and Carpenter's utopianism found expression in the twentieth century is worth mentioning - the marriage of Modernist Socialist architecture and social reform, first seen in the concept of Finsbury Health Centre. Built in 1935-38 by the Russian émigré Berthold Lubetkin, the centre was designed to encourage the smog-bound slum-dwellers of Finsbury to lead healthier, happier lives, by promoting fresh air and sunlight in a light and airy environment, Lubetkin commenting that 'nothing is too good for ordinary people'.¹² Kensal House, designed in 1937 by Maxwell Fry, also demonstrated what Socialist Modernist architecture could do for the working classes. Conceived like Finsbury as a utopian alternative to slum conditions, it contained spacious living accommodation, supported by communal facilities including craftwork classes and a gardening club. The Alton Estates at Roehampton on the edge of London, built in 1958-59 in the aesthetic tradition of Le Corbusier, were set amid the greenery, mature trees and hilly landscape of Richmond Park in a conscious attempt to integrate the rural and the urban as an ideal environment to re-house the working classes from the East End slums.

Today, the rural has become an inverse image of Morris's integrated, socialised and organic landscape in *News from Nowhere*. Despite valiant efforts by campaigners for rights of access to land and environmentalists, the majority of our countryside is exclusive, de-populated, and mechanised. Our fields lie wasted by set-aside and acres of oil-seed rape, and our landscape is denuded by destruction of the wetlands, trees and hedges. Agro-business and industrial farming have destroyed the livelihood of the small farmer, caused deep insecurity about the safety of food, and created an empty landscape, devoid of agricultural worker or craftsmen. Planning authorities allow expensive urban architecture in rural space, yet lack of public transport, rented or affordable housing has driven the young, the old and the poor from the land. In the main, what remains is an enclave of middle-class vested interest, the retired, or those who live in the country but work in the towns and cities whose problems they have moved to the country to escape. Far from calling for others to join them, they propound an image of rural England and Englishness that precludes change. Rural politics of the future face significant questions about inclusivity, access, work, farming practices and conservation. However, whether we live in the city or the country, our lives are increasingly dominated by complex technology and virtual space, both impersonal and dehumanised. Carpenter's call to the simple life, lived in equality, out of doors in the open air, seems to be as relevant today as it was at the end of the nineteenth century.

At the end of the 'Epilogue' to *Against the Age* (1980), Peter Faulkner described the core of Morris's profound creativity as his conviction that 'man is most completely human when he is able to see himself in the perspective of the natural universe'.¹³ To humanise and democratise the landscape was among Nowhere's great imaginative achievements. Tsuzuki concluded his study of Carpenter by quoting from a review of *Chants of Labour* (1888) which summed up Carpenter's utopian Socialism: 'to make Socialists is nothing, but to make Socialism human is a great thing'.¹⁴ As the urban/ rural debate progresses into the twenty-first century, we would do well to remember the humanity that lay at the heart of both Morris's and Carpenter's vision of a return to the land.

¹ See Harvey Taylor, 'The Outdoor Movement on Wheels' in *A Claim on the Countryside*, for an interesting history of cycling clubs and the Clarion Field Clubs, especially pp 154-170.

² C. F. G. Masterman, *The Condition of England* (1909), quoted in Gould, p. 145.

³ In 'The Discovery of Rural England' in *Englishness: Politics and Culture*, pp. 63-75. Howkins demonstrates that ruralism in English culture was not a new trope in 1900. However, he also accounts for the construction of an idealised rural England, based on the cultivated landscape of the South Country, an image that was later reflected in suburban aspirations towards the rural.

⁴ Marsh, *Back to the Land*, p. 220.

⁵ Letchworth's progressive school St. Christopher's was co-educational, craft-based and run without examinations or prizes. The school developed from the Letchworth School started by J. H. N. Stephenson in 1905; its prospectus stated that it catered for vegetarians and that 'no two lessons follow one another without a short interval in the open air, ... Further, in order to give maximum time in the fresh air, both lessons and meals are taken whenever possible out of doors'. Quoted in Marsh, *Back to the Land*, pp. 242-243.

⁶ The Garden City Company had socially aware and idealistic employers among its major shareholders, including George Cadbury and W. H. Lever. Cadbury famously built the model village at Bournville in Birmingham for his workforce, where every house had a spacious garden, and cultivation of the soil was considered an antidote to the sedentary occupations of the town. W. H. Lever constructed a model community for his workers at Port Sunlight near Birkenhead. It was built on the lines of a self-conscious village, with green open spaces, half-timbered library and an Arts and Crafts school.

⁷ For an interesting account of the relationship between the utopianism of the Garden City movement and the development of the suburbs from the 1920s to 1940s, see Simon Dentith, 'From William Morris to the Morris Minor: an Alternative Suburban History', in *Expanding Suburbia: Reviewing Suburban Narratives*, ed. by Roger Webster (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000), pp. 15-30.

⁸ Nicholas Pevsner, Foreword to *Hampstead Garden Suburb: The Care and Appreciation of its Architectural Heritage*, compiled by Alfred W. Lester (London: Hampstead Garden Suburb Design Study Group, 1977), p. 4.

⁹ Armytage, *Heavens Below*, p. 374.

¹⁰ For an interesting series of essays on Morris's legacy, see Jennifer Harris and Tanya Harrod, *William Morris Revisited: Questioning the Legacy*. Also for Morris's relationship to the ecological movement, see Florence S. Boos, 'An Aesthetic Ecocommunist: Morris the Red and Morris the Green', in *William Morris Centenary Essays*, pp. 21-46. As well as being published by the Gay Men's Press, Carpenter's work has been influential in gay culture, particularly with reference to developing a sense of community. The Edward Carpenter Community is a group of gay men committed to 'caring, trusting, personal growth, sharing, creativity and other principles and intentions aimed at nurturing "community"'; their remit is published in a web site

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/frank.sierowski/ecc/home.htm>.

¹¹ Fiona Inglis and Yvonne Thomas, *Potters of North Wales* (Holywell: Peart Print, 1973), pp. 30-36

¹² Open University website. *From here to Modernity*, <http://www.open2.net/modernity/> 2001.

¹³ Peter Faulkner, *Against the Age: An Introduction to William Morris* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980), p. 181.

¹⁴ Tsuzuki, p. 199.

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