

***A Socialist Christian Utopia: “Balmanno;
The City of Our Quest and Its Social Problems” (1906)***

***Socjalistyczna, chrześcijańska utopia: „Balmanno;
The City of Our Quest and Its Social Problems” (1906)***

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Abstract

The article analyses the obscure anonymous work *Balmanno; The City of Our Quest and Its Social Problems* (1906). It explores the text's indebtedness to the classical literary utopia, namely by focusing on the depiction of the ideal city, and to the late nineteenth-century transformations of the genre, detectable in the social programme of the city of Balmanno aimed at the betterment of the human condition and the creation of industrious, healthy and moral citizens. Furthermore, the article discusses *Balmanno's* criticism of contemporaneous social and economic relations in the context of Anglo-American socialism, and, more specifically, the cooperative propositions of Robert Owen and the models of socialist societies presented in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and William Morris's *News from Nowhere*.

Abstrakt

Artykuł zawiera analizę mało znanego anonimowego utworu *Balmanno; The City of Our Quest and Its Social Problems* (1906). Autorka bada związek między analizowanym tekstem i gatunkiem klasycznej utopii literackiej, skupiając się

na obrazie idealnego miasta. Śledzi także wpływy utopii końca XIX w., widoczne w programie społecznym miasta Balmanno, mającym na celu polepszenie życia ogółu i stworzenie pracowitych, zdrowych i prawych obywateli. Ponadto, artykuł omawia obecną w Balmanno krytykę współczesnych relacji społeczno-ekonomicznych w kontekście tradycji angloamerykańskiego socjalizmu, a konkretnie w odniesieniu do poglądów Roberta Owena oraz modeli społeczeństwa socjalistycznego przedstawionych w *Looking Backward* Edwarda Bellamy oraz *News from Nowhere* Williama Morrisa.

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The city as an embodiment of moral and political values features prominently in the history of the utopian genre. As famously stated by Northrop Frye, “[t]he utopia is primarily a vision of the orderly city and of a city-dominated society”¹. In classical utopias, e.g. Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), Tommaso Campanella’s *Civitas Solis* (1602), Johann Valentin Andreae’s *Christianopolis* (1619), or Samuel Gott’s *Nova Solyma* (1648), the city gives space to an ideal of social life. It bespeaks the values of communality and collectivity, its utopian character manifesting itself in the concept of harmony realised on all levels of the city’s organisation, from its size and architecture to the various aspects of existence of the city-dwellers, such as labour, leisure, education, religion and morals. Although utopian cities in literature are imaginative constructs, they respond to the problems of the author’s day, offering solutions to the imperfections and abuses of the society in which they were produced.

Balmanno; The City of Our Quest and Its Social Problems (1906), an anonymous work sometimes attributed to J. Paton² and hitherto neglected by scholars, continues the aforementioned tradition. Set somewhere in Scotland, the book reiterates the well-known formal paradigm of early utopias. Within the narrative frame of the novel of manners, it contains a static picture of an ideal community whose successive layers are disclosed by a number of local guides to two outsiders, Arthur Clements, a young social reformer, and Lady Elizabeth Mayflower, a niece of Balmanno’s founder, the Master of Tinlie. However, Balmanno can also be considered a turn-of-the-century materialisation of a socialist, welfare state with precepts pertaining to the equality of chances, fair distribution of wealth and the society’s responsibility for those of its members who are unable to fend for themselves. All the above are in turn predicated on the Christian ethical beacons of charity and brotherly love.

¹ N. Frye, *The Stubborn Structure: Essays on Criticism and Society*, New York, 2011, p. 111.

² This information is given by L. T. Sargent, *Utopian Literature in English: An Annotated Bibliography from 1516 to the Present*, [in:] <https://openpublishing.psu.edu/utopia/content/balmanno-city-our-quest-and-its-social-problems> (access 30 VI 2020). The likely author is James Paton (1843–1921), on whom see M. O’Neil, P. Seaman and D. Duncan, *Thinking through health and museums in Glasgow*, [in:] *Connecting Museums*, ed. M. O’Neill and G. Hooper, London and New York 2019, pp. 96–97.

This article, accordingly, examines the work's indebtedness to the formal features and the communitarian ethos of early-modern utopian writing, while simultaneously tracing *Balmanno's* preoccupation with the contemporary context, namely the economic and health problems affecting British society in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. This latter task will naturally involve relating *Balmanno's* ideological programme to the traditions of socialism, which Krishan Kumar considers "the nineteenth-century utopia, the truly modern utopia, *par excellence*", and the most obvious continuation of "the utopian tradition of More, Campanella and Bacon"³. The focus here will be on the Anglo-American strand of socialism, namely its early nineteenth-century manifestation in the work and philosophy of Robert Owen, as well as its later developments as epitomised in the socialist literary utopias of the *fin de siècle*, two major referents being Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and William Morris's *News from Nowhere*.

Balmanno begins in the library of Tinlie Hall, with a conversation among a small circle of the socially privileged and/or educated. The conversation is sparked by the "novel with a purpose" read by Lady Mayflower, which she criticises for its focus on the characters' sexual lives and for its cynicism about religion and love. Clements suggests they should rather go and visit "a City with a purpose" (15), a realised utopian project led by the Master of Tinlie. This narrative frame, which contains elements of the novel of manners, is therefore the point of departure for a visit to Balmanno, which in the text is posited to be as real and close at hand as the conversation in the library itself.

According to Krishan Kumar, the transformation of utopia in the nineteenth century was dependent on "the new sense of time and history". Its dynamisation was a result of the penetration of European thought by the concepts of "change, evolution and progress" brought about by discoveries in natural sciences such as geology and biology.⁴ *Eutopia* (the good place) turned into *euchronia* (the good time), as this new sense of the historical process "made it increasingly old-fashioned to think of utopia as belonging anywhere but in mankind's future". "Utopia was not the deliberate conscious construct of a wise monarch or legislator, a King Utopus or King Solamona," argues Kumar. "It was the product of the impersonal working out of dynamic historical forces, which was guiding humanity to the realization of its full potential in the modern socialist or scientific utopia", and its scope was "world-wide"⁵.

³ K. Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*, Oxford 1991, p. 49.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 42.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 45.

In the light of the above, *Balmanno*, published in 1906 but addressing Britain's social and economic problems which had their roots in the ruthless capitalism and liberalism of the preceding century, clearly harks back to the classical model of utopia. The city of Balmanno came into being by the fiat of a benevolent and wealthy person, "coined out of [his] brain, and being reared by hundreds and thousands of fellow-helpers" (15). However, it is neither removed in space nor in time. It is here (somewhere in Scotland) and now – the book, as the Prefatory Note states, follows thirty years of the author's social work and planning. *Balmanno* offers a project of a utopian city which has successfully remedied the economic and social inequalities as well as environmental degradation caused by technology and progress. It is a nationalist utopia, to be replicated, as the author hopes, on a national scale, becoming a synecdoche for the British Empire in the foreseeable future (6).

In early modern utopias, the main city of the utopian land (its capital) not only takes a central position (in the heart of the country) but also embodies the symbolic design of ideal cities, which is replicated by other towns and cities of the land. The shape of the utopian city is based on geometrical figures, which happens, for instance, in Campanella's *Civitas Solis* (circle), Andrea's *Christianopolis* (square), Simon Berrington's *The Memoirs of Signor Gaudenzio di Lucca* of 1732 (circle), or the anonymous *Voyage to the World in the Centre of the Earth* of 1755 (octagon). The central position of the capital in relation to the country is mirrored by the central position of the city's main building, which represents the principles espoused by the state⁶. In many utopian texts of the era, this position is occupied by a cathedral or a temple towering over the rest of the architecture, which foregrounds the principal role of religion (not necessarily of Christian provenance) in the life of the utopian society⁷.

Balmanno, by the same token, is built on a circular plan, resembling a wheel whose axle is the City Square with its public life and whose circumference is formed by the Boundary Drive, a wide avenue separating the city from the open fields beyond. The centre of the square and thus the centre of the city is occupied by a white marble pillar with a cross on top. Around the pillar there are letters forming the inscription "Balmanno City. Built for the welfare of men, to the Glory of God, and ruled by the spirit of the Cross" (34). This communicates the objective of the city's founders as well as the values endorsed by the citizens – those of Christian agape ("lovingkindness"), piety

⁶ A. Blaim, *Gazing in Useless Wonder: English Utopian Fictions, 1516–1800*, Oxford 2013, pp. 157–168. On utopian town planning see also J. C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing 1516–1700*, Cambridge 1983, pp. 52–53, 68–69, and 76–77.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 164.

and the betterment of the human condition. At the four corners of the City Square there are public buildings which represent all areas of social life. The North East corner is occupied by the City Church and the City College, thus uniting religious and educational institutions. In the North West corner there are the City Chambers with the Courts of Justice and the City Hall, bringing together the legislative, judicial and executive branches of Balmanno's government. The buildings in the South East corner house the City Library and the City Museum with the adjacent sports and entertainment facilities. This part, therefore, stands for culture and recreation promoted in the city as part of the citizens' development. The South West corner is home to the Great City Market and Exchange, which represents trade and commerce and connects Balmanno with the greater world (36-40).

One of the key assumptions behind Balmanno as an ideal city is the control of its population, which must not exceed one hundred thousand people; otherwise, the place will turn into a hotbed of "monstrosity and crime" (84). This postulate echoes demographic policies in early-modern works like More's *Utopia*, whose cities and communities are established according to their manageability⁸. It is also reminiscent of the ideas of Robert Owen, a utopian socialist and reformer working in Scotland in the first decades of the nineteenth century, who wanted his cooperative villages to house no more than two thousand inhabitants each⁹, and to be built on the plan of a large square or parallelogram. The outer sides of the settlement would be used for private apartments and sleeping quarters, warehouses, storerooms, an inn and a guest house, while the centre would be occupied by places of worship, schools, kitchens and eating rooms, leaving enough space for air, light and communication. Such a plan, in Owen's view, "combine[d] the greatest advantages in its form for the domestic arrangements of the association"¹⁰.

Balmanno's circular plan spatializes the values of equality and communality. The spokes of the wheel are formed by four great avenues which converge at the centre. They are exactly of the same length and width, with the same traffic and pedestrian conveniences; therefore, none of them is given priority and no city part adjacent to a particular avenue is privileged or treated as superior or inferior to the others. Between the avenues, there are housing estates intersected by terraces and streets, while the heart of each of the four districts between the avenues is occupied by a district church, which emphasises the fundamental role of religion in leading a good life. Public worship reflects the core value of Balmanno, that of social justice, as

⁸ T. More, *Utopia*, Cambridge 2003, pp. 54-55.

⁹ R. Owen, *A New View of Society*, London 1991, p. 272.

¹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 274-275.

“all ranks and classes [mingle] together [...] as a Community of Christians” (44). Christianity preached in Balmanno is not sectarian but “Catholic”, “Apostolic”, “New Testament” and “Universal”. As prophesied by the Master of Tinlie, it will “heal all the Nations of all their ills”, as it preaches the value of lovingkindness and makes the people do “all the good in their power to their fellow-creatures” (54). The universal Christianity of Balmanno inevitably brings to mind Owen’s even more radical idea of “the New Religion”, i.e. “the Religion of Charity, unconnected with Faith”, which lies at the core of his vision of a new moral world and which is bound to result in “[p]eace on earth and goodwill towards men”¹¹.

Balmanno was evidently conceived as an answer to the housing problem and the plight of the poor in British cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For the Master of Tinlie, the modern city is a new Babel, “a wilderness of stone and lime – spread far and wide in miles and miles of hideous Streets and dreary Lanes”. It alienates humanity from the natural world, a world which not only fosters man’s connection with God and His creation, including one’s fellow-men, and thus inspires the feelings of empathy and brotherhood (84-85), but also, on a more practical level, ensures a healthier, purer kind of existence. In contrast to the modern Babel, Balmanno is perfectly adapted to human life and needs, obliterating – in the vein of many early modern utopias – a major cultural opposition between nature and civilisation¹². It is a city of gardens, open fields and avenues shaded by trees. As the characters note, it is a true *Rus in Urbe* (21) – the model of the city as it should be, where “City life and Country life are blent as much as may be together and where City health and Country health are one and the same thing” (22)¹³.

Last but not least, Balmanno is presented as a model of sustainability and environmental awareness. The ecological and hygienic precept of Balmanno’s founders according to which the life and well-being of “God’s Human Family” depends on three elements – air, water and land (121) – is followed not only by individuals but also by companies. The smoke from factories, which are situated away from the residential quarters, is consumed, not emitted. The same rule applies to domestic smoke: all reckless emission is penalized, whereas all innovative methods and appliances for reducing domestic pollution are rewarded. Industrial waste is not released into the water and Bal-

¹¹ Ibidem, pp. 221-222.

¹² A. Blaim, op. cit., p. 146.

¹³ This aspect of Balmanno brings to mind Owen’s cooperative villages, which strike a balance between urban and rural life as a prerequisite for social regeneration (see e.g. R. Owen, op. cit., 41 and 58).

manno pays the costs of drainage for small villages and towns in the upper reaches of the river (124-7).

The blending of city life and country life in *Balmanno* clearly echoes William Morris's pastoral utopianism as expounded in *News from Nowhere*. In the socialist future, Britain is divided into small units of organisation, like parishes, with big cities being replaced by urban villages. London is a city of gardens, orchards, woodlands, fields and meadows, and there is little difference between town and country¹⁴. Moreover, although the author of *Balmanno* is less critical of large-scale technologies than Morris, he seems to reveal a similar ecological consciousness. Balmanno has apparently achieved a sustainability which Morris longs for in his "The Lesser Arts" (1878), namely using science not only to increase profit but also to remedy the environmental effects of industrialisation: "teaching Manchester how to consume its own smoke, or Leeds how to get rid of its superfluous black dye without turning it into the river"¹⁵. Accordingly, in *News from Nowhere* the Thames is clean, and as a result of the transformations in industry and labour, there is no waste and no pollution. Additionally, Balmanno's awareness of the ecosystem supporting all life, including human, and thus the need of its due handling and protection, reminds us of Morris's "apprehension of systemic interconnectedness", i.e. "how a large-scale social and ecological system is constituted by the manifold practices that occur in local and specific situations"¹⁶. In the light of the above considerations, *Balmanno* shows closer affinities with Morris's "back-to-nature" socialism than with the mechanized and explicitly urban socialism represented in another important utopia of the age, namely Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, in which Morris saw "no true community, no art, no nature, no sense of the past, nothing to hope for but freedom from work"¹⁷. Last but not least, one can detect in *Balmanno* something of Morris's "conception of the life lived according to the means and modes of beauty"¹⁸, pertaining not only to the purity of the countryside but also to utopian architecture. In the city of Balmanno, the houses cannot be more than two storeys high and they are all surrounded by private gardens, allowing the inhabitants to grow their own fruit and vegetables. They also show designer

¹⁴ W. Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, London, 1998, 104.

¹⁵ Quoted in C. Wilmer, *Introduction*, [in:] *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, by William Morris, London, 1998, p. xl.

¹⁶ See B. Morgan, *How We Might Live: Utopian Ecology in William Morris and Samuel Butler*, [in:] *Ecological Form: System and Aesthetics in the Age of Empire*, ed. N. K. Hensley and P. Steer, New York, 2019, p. 145.

¹⁷ C. Wilmer, op. cit., p. xxxiv.

¹⁸ See K. Kumar, *News from Nowhere: The Renewal of Utopia*, "History of Political Thought" 1993, vol. 14, no 1, p. 141.

variety, revealing their owners' "originality, independence, or taste", as opposed to the "hideous, two-penny-pie monotonous cottages, villas, terraces" built elsewhere by speculative jerry-builders (25).

Looking at the project of social (and urban) regeneration devised and put into practice by her uncle, Lady Mayflower pictures its dreary antithesis, the slum hell of East London, where people herd together in cramped rooms of inner-city tenement houses away from the healthy aspects of country life, their health being ruined by the lack of clean air, water and even light. It is also there that "innocent children and weary mothers wither and rot and die" (29) in abject poverty, killed by diseases and lack of proper nourishment. In Balmanno, by contrast, "children are nourished and cared for, as the first asset of the Nation's Wealth. If taken away, it is by the hand of God, and for some loving purpose, not by brutal and murderous neglect or abuse" (163).

In the view of the Master of Tinlie, proper housing is not only conducive to the welfare of the nation but also to Britain's progress as a superpower. As one "cannot breed an Imperial Race in Slums" (23), the Master intends to "give every decent, sober, self-respecting family a chance to live in a house worthy to be called a home" (29). Everyone becomes the owner of the house in which they live (as opposed to the workers in other cities, who pay extortionate rents to greedy landlords and developers) once they have paid their dues to the Corporation of Balmanno City, which represents the entire community, and to which "ultimately all the property absolutely belongs" (27). This scheme again shows a striking similarity to Owen's proposition of the retirement-cum-mortgage system, to which every worker contributes a certain amount of money for a given number of years, thereby becoming the owner of a house near the village and receiving something akin to a pension in his/her old age¹⁹. However, it is also an echo of the earlier communitarian tradition of More and his followers, who advocated collective property distributable among the citizens according to their needs, an idea which was contemplated by Owen as a basis for his character-formation programme²⁰, and which found its natural home in the philosophy of Communism.

As opposed to modern cities, where the life of the poor revolves around the problems of labour or lack thereof, in Balmanno the citizens' recreation and physical well-being have become an overriding aim. Medical clinics are assigned to all district churches, staffed with pastors, doctors and nurses (49), which helps the authorities monitor the health of the population, both spiritual and physical. Moreover, owing to the vast lands donated by the Mas-

¹⁹ Owen, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

²⁰ See Gregory Claeys, *A Tale of Two Cities: Robert Owen and the Search for Utopia, 1815-17*, [in:] *Utopian Moments: Reading Utopian Texts*, ed. M. A. Ramiro Avilés and J. C. Davis, London, 2012, p.101.

ter of Tinlie to the Balmanno community, in a truly utilitarian manner “for the greater permanent good to the greatest number of people” (36)²¹, the city-dwellers can engage in field sports and games, enjoy country walks, as well as take part in recreation festivals organised periodically by the Recreation Board (see 66–70; 76–82), all of these attractions being financed entirely by the public Exchequer with the revenue from the progressive income tax. High culture flourishes in Balmanno, its most important element, apart from concerts and lectures, being the theatre. The latter is treated “as the handmaid of Religion and of Education” (95–96), as it instils desirable values into the young and promotes “the happiness and welfare of Balmanno” (100–101)²². Last but not least, comprehensive recreation, which makes the body strong and stimulates intellectual capabilities, is also a method of eradicating social vice, e.g. drunkenness, as well as fostering propriety in language and behaviour (79–81). Most of all, however, recreation is a way of bringing together all citizens, irrespective of their status and profession, which underscores the values of equality and fraternity lying at Balmanno’s foundations.

If Balmanno takes after Morris’s *News from Nowhere* in its insistence on small urban-village communities and its back-to-nature ecological lifestyle, it also retains some of his postulate of work as a source of pleasure, which adds purpose and meaning to human life in a post-Christian world²³. Arthur is impressed at the happiness of the workers; he cannot help but marvel at “the human soul working out its own salvation, with both hands, busy, with a cheerful outlook, with a loyal purpose, with a neighbouring good-will, with self-respect” (123). In a different perspective, even though the working class shown in *Balmanno* is a far cry from Bellamy’s “industrial army”, organised on “the principle of universal military service”²⁴, the novel’s overall presentation of the mechanism of an ideal social organisation owes more to the utopian strand represented by *Looking Backward* than to *News from Nowhere*, staving off rather than promoting class-struggle and a proletarian revolution.

The aforementioned economic measures adopted in Balmanno bring to mind the precepts of reformist socialism, which Matthew Beaumont consid-

²¹ The Master’s understanding of social and economic arrangements is in tune with Robert Owen’s, as shown above. Although Owen could adopt a phrasing that resonated with Benthamite arguments (see R. Owen, *ibid.*, p. 62), he was fundamentally at odds with the liberal, individualistic ethos of utilitarianism (*ibid.*, p. 377, note 5).

²² Here *Balmanno* again echoes Owen, this time his belief in the influence of the environment on the formation of character and in the importance of childhood education (see Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1998, 680).

²³ Wilmer, *op. cit.*, p. xxxv.

²⁴ E. Bellamy, *Looking Backward 2000–1887*, Oxford, 2007, p. 36.

ers “a radical form of philanthropy” and which advocated the possibility of a “systematic transformation [...] within the framework of the existing social order”²⁵, as opposed to the change of social and economic relations by way of a revolution effected by the working classes. Utopian reformism, manifested in the majority of late nineteenth-century utopias, “tried to decipher traces of the occult future secreted in the social and cultural conditions of the present” on the one hand, and “sought to conjure away the spectre of communism that threatened to destroy the prospect of peaceful evolution to the coming social order” on the other²⁶. Therefore in *Looking Backward* and other texts of the same nature, utopianism is interlaced with evolutionism, offering visions of a better future for the children of the workers, but not for the workers themselves²⁷. Moreover, as Beaumont further argues, for all its socialist pretensions, Bellamy’s utopia of the future deals in the main solutions employed by capitalists in order to combat the Great Depression of 1873–1896, i.e. protectionism, Taylorism and monopolies, thus presenting “a redemptive version of the capitalist reformation of the economic sphere at the *fin de siècle*”²⁸.

In contrast to *Looking Backward*, *Balmanno* does not show a deferral of the utopia to some unforeseeable future: the heavenly city as a paradigm has already come into being, it only awaits the dissemination of its model throughout the empire. However, like Bellamy’s utopia, it is not about disposing of the capitalist system and effecting a complete break with the capitalist past in lifestyle and sentiments, whose outcome would be a classless society (as in Morris’s *News from Nowhere*). It is about giving the workers, the poor and the excluded opportunities and protection within the capitalist market and a class society, resorting to devices deceptively similar to those postulated by the New Liberalism at the turn of the twentieth century, which developed over the decades into the precepts of the post-WW2 welfare state.

The foundation of *Balmanno* is also telling in this context. Conceived in a local manor house by a philanthropic aristocrat, with the help of the petty bourgeoisie/intelligentsia (clergymen, medical doctors and nurses, teachers, bailiffs, etc.) and in collaboration with big merchants, developers and producers, it shows a utopia designed for the working classes without their actual participation, let alone any class struggle. As such, it is a model to be accepted and adjusted to; those who do not acquiesce return to a life of penury and slumdom. By no means is *Balmanno* a classless society, as Marxists

²⁵ M. Beaumont, *Utopia Ltd.: Ideologies of Social Dreaming in England 1870–1900*, Leiden and Boston, 2005, p. 14.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 62.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 77.

and Morris would like it. It offers a palliative measure in the form of false social ascent, bringing the working classes closer to the middle classes (lower and upper) through common worship, feasts and recreations. However, the divide remains, visible if only in their intended homes and their location: cottages for simple workers along the city streets, and country villas and mansions for merchants, town councillors, professors, and the like (27-29).

Echoes of Owen in *Balmanno* are also not surprising, given the fact that socialist reformism, as Beaumont notes, “inherited the contradictions of an earlier utopian socialism”, Owenite schemes being predicated on “a dialectic of ‘reformist premises and utopian aspirations’”²⁹. Moreover, just like reformist socialists, their predecessors Owen and Fourier “hoped to see their new forms of organization grow within the body of the old system”, being committed to “peace, gradualism, and nonrevolution”³⁰. No wonder, Arthur Clements, “Student, Social Reformer, and reputed Revolutionary” (196), eventually applauds Balmanno on the grounds of its reformist status-quo, accepting the possibility of a bloodless Revolution – “for it is seen to be practicable” – in place of hanging all the rich who prey on the common man (86).

In line with the logic of the aforementioned utopian-reformist tradition, the workers in Balmanno share in the profits of the businessmen and manufacturers, as every employer who grants his employees some percentage on the profits of his own stipulation is offered favourable terms by the City Corporation (88), the guardian of justice and order. This solution appears to have nullified old class animosities: there are no strikes and lockouts in Balmanno, because the masters and workers have realised that they have common interests (89). This arrangement seems to have also resolved, at least partly, the perennial problem of the workers’ alienation under the capitalist system of production lamented by Marxists³¹; “Life is thereby transfigured! Work is transfigured! The men themselves are transfigured!” (118).

Interestingly, in the opinion of one of Balmanno’s founders, those who refuse to be reformed into honest and working citizens should be coerced into it by the legal authority of their respective communities³². The issue of unemployment, poverty and beggarmdom discussed in Balmanno gives rise to a criticism of the British belief in “the liberty of the Subject” as misguided and injurious to society as a whole. Suggesting some coercive measures

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 67.

³⁰ F. E. Manuel and F. P. Manuel, op. cit., p. 587.

³¹ See G. Claeys, *Marx and Marxism*, London 2018, pp. 86-87, 171-176.

³² The founders of Balmanno, just as Owen (cf. 1991: 69), criticise outdoor charity and yet both parties advertise kindness and charity as instrumental to social regeneration.

by which to deal with “*a rebellious element* – vicious, violent, refusing to work, and trading on Society”, Dr. Jardine voices this criticism in the following way: “We shall have to win our Countrymen to the conviction that no Subject ought to have any liberty to make himself a pest to Society, or a burden upon others; any more than that a man should be at liberty to spread infectious disease, or to destroy the health of others by his filth” (221–222).

Despite such extreme opinions being prevalent among its founders, Balmanno is a benevolent and merciful community to those who cannot support themselves economically without the community’s help, i.e. poor old people and orphans. In Balmanno, the poor are helped without the poorhouse and orphans without the orphanage, the organisation of public help relying on the system of Homes. The poor who are unable to work for a living are placed in “a decent, though ever so humble, Home, with some one *in loco parentis*; for are they not Children again, dependent and destitute?” (170). Similarly, Balmanno have no institutionalised orphanages, which Lady Mayflower compares to barracks. Instead, the orphans are placed in a family environment, in the care of foster parents, who raise children from different families as if they were brothers and sisters. This system, according to the Master of Tinlie, reflects “God’s plan of rearing children in a family” (184). As opposed to other cities and even various churches, Balmanno does not leave its poor and orphans to philanthropists or alms-givers, but seeks systemic solutions to provide for them and improve their lives (186). Only an organised community, as the Master of Tinlie argues, by which he means “the Christian city” and “the Christian state”, is able to meet this challenge (190).

In conclusion, while following the traditional narrative pattern and organisational design of classical utopias, the city of Balmanno also seems to draw its inspiration from the social, moral and economic propositions made over the century preceding its publication with a view to ameliorating both individual and communal existence. Balmanno, brought to life by a socially privileged and enlightened person out of a sense of righteousness and charity, owes much to Owen’s utopian socialism, which aimed to advance the vision of communality and social justice by paternalistic means of social engineering, good example and philanthropy rather than by class struggle and revolution, as Marx would have it. Like Owen, the utopianist of *Balmanno* is intent on raising a society that is moral, clean and healthy no less than industrious. However, *Balmanno* is also an heir to late nineteenth-century literary utopias, owing much to the pastoralism and ecological consciousness of William Morris’s *News from Nowhere* and to the idea of a peaceful transformation of social and economic relationships as presented in Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* and other reformist utopias of the age. Other authors in the field as

well as other domains of social and political philosophy may have influenced this model of an ideal city³³. However, this analysis reveals that the philosophy of socialism, present in the writings and works of Robert Owen, as well as underpinning the models of ideal societies in *fin-de-siècle* utopias written on both sides of the Atlantic, additionally anchored in Christian charity, remains a definite component of the “new world for brain and heart” (58) envisioned in the city of Balmanno.

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³³ For example, it is worth investigating *Balmanno*'s indebtedness to Christian socialism, the doctrine of national efficiency and the critique of liberalism in Britain in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

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