

DYSTOPIAN VIOLENCE:
WILLIAM MORRIS
AND THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY PEACE MOVEMENT

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In this essay I will argue that William Morris's critiques of capitalism flowed from a prior rejection of its imperialist wars; that his analyses of social and economic causes of armed conflicts drew strength from a broad tradition of nineteenth-century peace movements; and finally, that his views converged toward pacifism as he gained in wariness and political sophistication.

Near-War in the Balkans and "The Eastern Question"

The "Eastern Question" dealt with areas in the Ottoman empire which now form parts of Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Moldova, Macedonia, and Greece.¹ Rebellions against Turkish rule in Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria in 1875 and 1876 aroused dissident British sympathies with European liberation movements which echoed Byron's fatal engagement in the Greek war of independence (1821-1830), and British Christians also had their own reasons for solidarity with orthodox brethren denied the practice of their religion under the Turks.² During the Bulgarian revolt of 1876, Turkish troops called Bashi-Bazouks raped and kidnapped several hundred women and massacred thousands of Bulgarian Christians, and extensive newspaper-coverage of these atrocities aroused what A.J.P. Taylor later called "the greatest storm over foreign policy in [British] history" (Duggan 133; Stojanovic 55-56).

Two books on the subject quickly appeared: J.A. MacGahan's impassioned eyewitness account of *The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria* (1876), reprinted from his dispatches to the London *Daily News*;³ and W.E. Gladstone's *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (1876), in which Gladstone denounced British "moral complicity with the basest and blackest outrages upon record within the present century, if not within the memory of man" (61-62).