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## RETIREMENT IN UTOPIA: WILLIAM MORRIS'S SENESCENT SOCIALISM

BY JACOB JEWUSIAK

In his obituary for William Morris in *The Athenaeum*, Theodore Watts-Dunton stresses the preternatural youthfulness of the deceased: “The man must, indeed, be specially beloved by the gods who in his sixty-third year dies young. Old age Morris could not have borne with patience.”<sup>1</sup> He continues, remembering Morris as “the radiant boy of genius that he remained till the years had silvered his hair and carved wrinkles on his brow, but left his blue-grey eyes as bright as when they first opened on the world.”<sup>2</sup> Finding it easier to accept Morris’s death than imagine the man as old, Watts-Dunton exemplifies an ageist tendency to eulogize the dead by distancing them from the negative traits associated with senescence, such as decline and enervation. Morris’s biographers often follow suit, describing the man as constantly at work and filled with exuberant youthfulness: E. P. Thompson writes, for example, that Morris “was in his fiftieth year, but he looked to the future with the excitement of youth.”<sup>3</sup> However, the mythology of Morris’s perennial youth distracts from the role that senescence plays in the author’s political and fictional works. When asked by Watts-Dunton how he negotiated the “peril of such a life of tension as his,” Morris replied: “Look at Gladstone . . . look to those wise owls your chancellors and your judges. Don’t they live all the longer for work? It is rust that kills men, not work.”<sup>4</sup> Old age serves as the test case for Morris’s belief in the positive effects of useful work, acting as a cipher for the way social conditions write themselves onto the body of the individual.

Morris’s interest in old age reflects the importance of retirement for socialism in the late nineteenth century. The work of Charles Booth in the 1890s laid the groundwork for the eventual passage of the Old Age Pensions Act in 1908, a landmark piece of socialist legislation that provided five shillings a week for British subjects seventy and over, with a yearly income of less than 32 pounds.<sup>5</sup> Through a statistical analysis that drilled down to the very streets and houses of London, Booth’s 1892 study revealed that poverty increased exponentially as one aged.<sup>6</sup> As political debates about retirement took center stage at the

turn of the century, they served as a powerful catalyst for the utopian imagination of Morris's *News from Nowhere*. For Morris, retirement did not serve as the *telos* of life—a well-deserved rest—but as a means of shifting the value of labor away from brazen mass production to the more reflective rhythms of amateurism and craft. This shift occurs, in part, through a reconceptualization of the relation between age and society. Lionel Trilling argues that life in *Nowhere*, “without urgency and without anxiety,” “is the regaining of childhood . . . and the epoch of man's rest.”<sup>7</sup> Yet Trilling grapples with the ambivalence of reverting to this earlier—happier, unmindful—stage of life that rejects the Western narrative of “superlative effort” and preeminent genius.<sup>8</sup> If Trilling arrives at an impasse regarding the value of youth, Karen Chase explores the opposite pole: the “prominence of aging characters within the utopic life of *Nowhere*.”<sup>9</sup> For Chase, the long memory and historical perspective of the elderly play a mediating role between “decrepit, degraded Victorian values” and a utopia that sacrifices “creative vitality.”<sup>10</sup> The analysis of youth and old age results in the same conclusion relating to a well-known utopian dilemma: the difficulty of balancing competition, creativity, and genius on the one hand, and peace, pleasure, and equality on the other. This essay argues that *News from Nowhere* reveals the false dichotomy of capitalist vitality and utopian stasis by abolishing the economic and biological necessity that marks out the stages of capitalist age ideology—such as adolescence, adulthood, and old age. As the older citizens of *Nowhere* engage in meaningful work, they imbue labor with the elective quality of a pleasurable retirement.<sup>11</sup>

I define the term retirement capaciously to refer to the life of a worker after he or she, voluntarily or involuntarily, ceases to work. The conditions of retirement—whether supported through the state, charitable institutions, private funds, or kinship networks—have changed greatly over time. Pat Thane asserts that the first modern retirement system for the middle class began in the eighteenth-century civil service as a way of addressing the need of employees who were disabled by age.<sup>12</sup> There was no fixed retirement age, and the dispersal of funds depended on the employer's evaluation of the employee's need and merit. A portion of the salary for junior employees went toward the maintenance of these superannuated workers. In the early nineteenth century, pensions remained non-contributory and were tied to “age, length, and quality of service,” but they were no longer subject to an employee's privation, and “by 1828 the pension had in effect become a right at age 60.”<sup>13</sup> As the example set by the civil service spread to

other institutions in the private and public sector (often in mitigated form), a larger reconceptualization of retirement took place away from the eighteenth-century idea of a stopgap for those unable to work and toward the modern idea of a well-deserved reward for service. For Morris, these benefits for the retired middle-class were deeply problematic. First, he looked upon welfare of this sort as makeshift socialism—a concession by the masters, designed to lessen revolutionary urgency. Second, the idea of retirement as reward coded work as something from which to escape, alienating the individual from the majority of his or her lifespan. Old age emerged as the only stage of life when the worker freely pursued his or her own desire.

The privileges of middle-class retirement did not carry over to the working class.<sup>14</sup> For this group, retirement often entailed obsolescence and dependence, either on one's family or the state. Because of the inability to save for retirement—and perhaps a gamble that one might not live long enough anyway—old age was a no-man's land of the worker's life, often subject to humiliation and want. Leslie Hannah notes that “the majority of adults at this time could not expect to live to [the pensionable age of] seventy” and “only about one in four of those who joined pension schemes at age twenty typically remained at the pension age to draw a pension.”<sup>15</sup> John Macnicol writes that most working people would toil until no longer physically capable, accepting lower levels of pay as their capacity decreased.<sup>16</sup> For those unable to work in old age, “the final years of life were likely to be a precarious existence: every effort would be made to eke out a meagre living—by obtaining outdoor relief, by appealing to charities, by selling furniture and personal effects, by begging, by moving in with relatives—until all resources were exhausted. The last resort would be the Poor Law workhouse.”<sup>17</sup> The uncertain fate for older workers motivated the push toward universal pensions in the first decade of the twentieth century, in part due to “a widely expressed revulsion that old people should be forced to such straits in an increasingly prosperous society.”<sup>18</sup> Yet even the Old Age Pensions Act contained an implicitly conservative thrust, freeing up the workforce for younger employees and tightening restrictions on Poor Law relief.<sup>19</sup>

For both the middle and working class, retirement takes on meaning by its separation from earlier life stages—either as an increase in leisure or privation. For Morris, however, the disciplinization of the lifespan into zones of productivity constituted one of capitalism's most egregious excesses. In his essays Morris laments the waste produced by a capitalist society that expends labor on consumer goods that no one

wants or needs. The paradigm of utilitarian efficiency, he argues, only helps the current regime produce more wasteful luxuries: as Thompson writes, the “‘utilitarian’ he saw, in capitalist society, as always the ally of ‘makeshift’—the production of shoddy, substitute, ersatz; and also of the useless and debased ‘luxury’ articles.”<sup>20</sup> Enabled by turning wasteful toil into productive labor, Morris’s utopia frees the time for its citizens to use the aesthetic faculty that capitalism smothered. Instead of producing the greatest number of goods to achieve the greatest profit, the people of Nowhere ornament buildings with stone carvings and tapestries. Even a tobacco pipe comes delicately whittled and inlaid with gold and jewels. The relation between art, labor, and pleasure forms a central concern in Morris scholarship, which attends to the way socialist abundance requires vast transformations at every level of production. Work on this topic includes Bradley Macdonald’s study on the link between Morris’s aesthetics and politics; Florence Boos’s argument that art blurs the boundary between the exceptional and the everyday; and work by Ruth Kinna and William Casement, who argue separately that work for its own sake expands the creative possibilities for art.<sup>21</sup> While these scholars reference the worker’s acute economic and aesthetic deprivation as inspiring Morris’s vision of a socialist future, my essay contends that the figure of senescence played a major role as an affective stimulus toward revolution. As public attention was increasingly drawn to the victimization of the aged poor near the end of the century, they served as a powerful symbol for capitalist exploitation and a provocation for social and cultural upheaval. Imagining a society without a class hierarchy begins with demystifying the way capitalist ideology stratifies the development of the human body into stages of more or less utility.

Many socialists, ranging from Fabians to anarchists, connected utopian futurity to the figure of youth. In his book on state socialism, *New Worlds for Old*, H. G. Wells imagines a “new society full of life, full of youth, full of the spirit of creation.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the anarchist Peter Kropotkin locates the potential for revolutionary change with youth: “It is to the young that I wish to address myself today. Let the old . . . lay the pamphlet down therefore without tiring their eyes in reading what will tell them nothing.”<sup>23</sup> Among the most prominent theorists of utopia, Ernst Bloch defines the principle of hope as inherently youthful: “All fresh strength necessarily contains this New, and moves towards it. Its best places are: youth, times which are on the point of changing, creative expression.”<sup>24</sup> More recent accounts of utopia—from Fredric Jameson’s articulation of the utopian “impulse”

to Ruth Levitas's and Bill Ashcroft's focus of utopian "desire"—draw on an implicitly youthful lexicon to describe the essence of utopia.<sup>25</sup> In contrast to this critical tradition, *News from Nowhere* provides a sustained critique of the desire for a utopian futurity freighted with an overwhelmingly youthful urgency—restlessness, dissatisfaction, endless desire—and thus still afflicted by the rapacious drives inherent to capitalism. Instead, by annexing senescence from the realm of excess and non-productivity, Morris expands the horizon of revolutionary possibility beyond that of youth and theorizes utopia around networks of dependence and generational reciprocity.

#### I. THE AGE OF UTOPIA

For some socialists, age served as an alternative to the class system. In *The Book of the New Moral World*, Robert Owen claimed that the "distinctions of class and station are artificial, and have been conceived and adopted by men, while they were ignorant, inexperienced, and irrational."<sup>26</sup> Instead of class, he argues, society must turn to a "natural" means of classification, which he identifies as age: "The natural and rational classification of the human race, is the classification of age—each division of age having the occupations to perform, for which each age is best adapted by nature."<sup>27</sup> Owen divides the lifespan into eight classes with distinct functions and durations. The first class, which covers birth to the fifth year, focuses on socializing children and instilling confidence. Classes two through six, in units of five years each, guide the individual through various levels of production, from manual labor to managing and distribution. The seventh class covers a decade—from one's thirties to forties—and marks a turn toward the management of the home. The final, longest class—from one's forties to sixties—sets the individual free to travel and disseminate knowledge, providing paternalistic oversight of the infrastructure of his or her home country. "By this classification," he writes, "the causes of the evils with which the human race is now afflicted, will be permanently removed: and whatever is to be done will be effected in a superior manner, willingly, cheerfully, and with high gratification."<sup>28</sup> Age serves as the structuring principle that enables utopia.

While not as strictly regimented as Owen's taxonomy, the utopia of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* makes age an important facet of its thriving society. Contrasting Boston of the year 2000 to that of 1887, Dr. Leete explains that "Your workshops were filled with children and old men, but we hold the period of youth sacred to education, and

the period of maturity, when the physical forces begin to flag, equally sacred to ease and agreeable relaxation. The period of industrial service is twenty-four years, beginning at the close of the course of education at twenty-one and terminating at forty-five."<sup>29</sup> This short interval of work perplexes the narrator, who claims that to "be superannuated at that age [45] and laid on the shelf must be regarded rather as a hardship than a favor by men of energetic dispositions."<sup>30</sup> Yet in Bellamy's vision of utopia as a nationalized business run by an industrial army, one's life truly begins after finishing the mandatory interval of work: "We look upon [labor] as a necessary duty to be discharged before we can fully devote ourselves to the higher exercise of our faculties, the intellectual and spiritual enjoyments and pursuits which alone mean life."<sup>31</sup> The alienation of labor persists in Bellamy's utopia, at least during the 24 years that one is a member of the workforce. Work remains something to endure before one truly lives. Dr. Leete claims that "at forty-five we renew youth," and that "we all agree in looking forward to the date of our discharge as the time when we shall first enter upon the full enjoyment of our birth-right."<sup>32</sup>

It is well known that Morris wrote *News from Nowhere* as a corrective to Bellamy's immensely popular *Looking Backward*. Though he called *Looking Backward* "deadly dull," Morris acknowledged its importance in marking the lamentable shift to Fabian socialism.<sup>33</sup> In *Commonweal*, Morris critiqued what he saw as Bellamy's unrealistic attitude toward work and age:

As an illustration it may be mentioned that everybody is to begin the serious work of production at the age of twenty-one, work three years as a labourer, and then choose his skilled occupation and work till he is forty-five, when he is to knock off his work and amuse himself (improve his mind, if he has one left him). Heavens! think of a man of forty-five changing all his habits suddenly and by compulsion! It is a small matter after this that the said persons past work should form a kind of aristocracy (how curiously old ideas cling) for the performance of certain judicial and political functions.<sup>34</sup>

For Owen and Bellamy, socialist efficiency enabled a much shorter interval of work, freeing middle and old age for individuals to pursue activities that truly interested them. Morris found socialist schemes of this sort demoralizing because they reproduced capitalism's hierarchizing system in a different form. Bellamy's model accelerates the timeline for middle-class retirement already in place, merely shortening the duration of capitalism's alienation of labor. To toil for 40 years or

24 makes little difference to Morris, who believed that hateful work left its stamp deeply engrained in the laboring subject. Owen's and Bellamy's systems derive too much from the classificatory systems of capitalism, because an early retirement means little to the worker whose creativity has been atrophied by rote tasks.

In Morris's *Nowhere*, however, retirement loses meaning as an escape from the drudgery of work. In this alternative economy of aging, the individual's desire coincides with socially beneficial labor over the worker's lifespan. This is apparent in the way Dick welcomes every opportunity for pulling the oars of the ferry or mowing hay at the harvest festival, or in Philippa's delight chiseling flowers to ornament an old nineteenth-century structure. Because the citizens of *Nowhere* actively seek out work for its own sake, the concept of retirement loses its meaning as either an escape or as privation. In fact, the older characters do not retire from work so much as sink into it: as Dick describes his kinsman Hammond, at 105 he is "too old to do much work in the Museum, where he was a custodian of the books for many years; but he still lives here a good deal; indeed I think . . . that he looks upon himself as a part of the books, or the books a part of him, I don't know which."<sup>35</sup> Old Hammond serves as both historian and relic, existentially entangled with the work that he has performed over a lifetime.<sup>36</sup> In contrast to the state of retirement under capitalism, where the elderly worker is set apart to open the market to younger employees, Old Hammond ages into his work.<sup>37</sup> Growing older involves a process of calcification that slowly fuses the worker to his labor. This does not entail senile stultification, but an increase in the overall productivity of society by valuing, rather than excluding, the work of the old.

After meeting with Old Hammond, the narrator travels up the river with his guides Dick and Clara, encountering Ellen and her grandfather—known as the "Old Grumbler"—along the way. In contrast to Hammond's contentment, the Grumbler serves as a figure of critical distance from utopia—one who points out, as Thompson claims, the "lack of eager intellectual life . . . in 'Nowhere.'"<sup>38</sup> Having read novels from the nineteenth century such as Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847–48), the Grumbler laments the lack of competition in *Nowhere*, recalling "the spirit of adventure" and the capacity to "extract good out of evil" exemplified by so many novels of the Victorian era (174). Here, Morris revises a common stereotype—the old man nostalgically pining for the good old days of his youth—with an old man who craves a return to the golden age of industrial modernity. As with all nostalgia, the past



he desires never existed. Ellen conjures a counterfactual scenario of what their life could have been like in the nineteenth century: “But in those past days you, grandfather, would have had to work hard after you were old; and would have been always afraid of having to be shut up in a kind of prison along with other old men, half-starved and without amusement” (182). In a capitalist marketplace that puts a premium on competition, old men like the Grumbler were swept away in favor of younger, cheaper employees.<sup>39</sup> Ellen’s reference to the workhouse underlines how the nineteenth-century Poor Laws sequestered the aged poor away from the general populace, a shockingly material emblem of the larger cultural marginalization of older people.

*News from Nowhere* concludes with the disappearance of utopia and the return of the nineteenth century, which takes the form of yet another old man: “I came upon a figure strongly contrasting with the joyous, beautiful people I had left behind in the church. It was a man who looked old, but whom I knew from habit, now half-forgotten, was really not much more than fifty. His face was rugged, and grimed rather than dirty; his eyes dull and bleared; his body bent, his calves thin and spindly” (227). The worn body of the fifty-year-old man registers the passage of industrial rather than utopian time. He appears much older than his chronological age, as his bodily ailments signify the effects of poverty and poor working conditions. “Inexpressibly shocked” by this old man, the narrator also observes “a black cloud rolling along to meet me, like a nightmare of my childish days; and for a while I was conscious of nothing else than being in the dark” (228). Recalling John Ruskin’s “Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century,” the black cloud that blots out Nowhere reflects the “moral gloom” of late nineteenth-century modernity, an impoverishment that Ruskin links to the iniquity of colonial capitalism: “That the Empire of England, on which formerly the sun never set, has become one on which he never rises.”<sup>40</sup> Unlike Old Hammond and the Old Grumbler, the decrepit man at the end of *News from Nowhere* does not verbalize his story; rather, his prematurely aged body provides silent testimony of capitalist exploitation.

In addition to Old Hammond, the Grumbler, and the prematurely aged worker, the narrator identifies himself as “hard on fifty-six”—not elderly by Victorian standards, but surprising to the inhabitants of Nowhere, who bluntly state that “you look rather old for your age” (56). The number of old men who occupy positions of central importance in *News from Nowhere*—from the protagonist to his primary interlocutor—goes against the grain of Victorian narratives that privilege youth, such as the bildungsroman and the marriage plot.

Just what does the proliferation of elderly men signify in this novel? According to Jameson, older people serve as a condition of utopia's narrative possibility: in "the moment of revolutionary transition" "[a]ll of diachronic time is compressed in this single apocalyptic instance, which the narrative relates as the memory of old people."<sup>41</sup> The aged men of Nowhere do not serve as a figure for utopian stasis, but as the instrument of temporal unwinding from the revolutionary moment. The worn out, prematurely aged bodies of the nineteenth century make legible the oppressive conditions of labor that youth would conceal. The years of toil written into the body provide stark proof of the violence of capital. In contrast, Nowhere inverts aging's value: the ninety-year-old who Guest and Dick encounter early in their travels "was old, and yet he looked dry and sturdy like a piece of old oak; a type of old man I was not used to seeing" (84). Old age does not result in decline but in continued thriving. The revolution pivots on the elderly, who do not act as a conservative force weighing down zealous, youthful insurgents. Rather, the aged emerge as the engine for revolution's affective and epistemological modes. They attest to the injustice that necessitates revolution and disseminate the knowledge to achieve it.

## II. LONGEVITY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

By serving an affective and epistemological function in bringing about the revolution, older people play an important (and yet overlooked) role in what Miguel Abensour calls Morris's education of desire: "The point is not for utopia . . . to assign 'true' or 'just' goals to desire but rather to educate desire, to stimulate it, to awaken it—not to assign it a goal but to open a path for it."<sup>42</sup> This influential account of *News from Nowhere* relies upon conventions related to youthful desire as proliferating, omnidirectional, and vital. In her survey of adolescence from the eighteenth century to the twentieth, Patricia Meyer Spacks writes that youth makes for compelling narrative because the young are thought to "exist always . . . in a condition of desire. They want intensely: want love, excitement, gain, supremacy, challenge—whatever."<sup>43</sup> Yet the same quality that makes youth so interesting for fiction also aligns it with the endless desire of consumer capitalism.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, Morris frames utopian desire through older characters, channeling affect into socially productive forms. Far from weakening desire, old age enables a series of erotic possibilities: the narrator longs for a beautiful woman who holds his horse, and expresses disappointment when an elderly

man takes over her job; he receives a thrill of pleasure from Annie, but laments that she probably has a “lover of her own age”; though the beautiful Ellen reciprocates his affection, the return of the nineteenth century blots her out (168). These rhythms of stimulation and disappointment provide a counterpoint to the youthful urgency that precipitates crises of desire.

The crises of capitalism form predictable turning points in Giovanni Arrighi’s cyclic model of the world economy since the fourteenth century. For Arrighi, the transition of capital from “trade and production to financial intermediation and speculation” marks a “*signal crisis*” that results in the end of one dominant regime of accumulation and the beginning of another.<sup>45</sup> The years from 1870 to 1930 marked the signal crisis of British hegemony, an era whose “newly found prosperity rested on a shift of the crisis from one set of relations to another set of relations. It was only a question of time before the crisis would re-emerge in more troublesome forms.”<sup>46</sup> Critics like Lauren Berlant and Joshua Clover echo Arrighi, suggesting that crisis is not something that *happens to* finance capitalism, but forms its ontology.<sup>47</sup> While the socialist society of *News from Nowhere* makes capitalism’s cyclic crises a structural impossibility, the brevity of Guest’s visit does not allow the reader to witness the stability of the new milieu. Instead, Morris uses the longevity of his characters to symbolically register continuity and duration over crisis and rupture. This biological aesthetic attunes the whole human lifespan to the heartbeat that organizes social life: decoupling life stages from climacterics such as puberty and menopause, the bodies of Nowhere attest to an existence inoculated against periodic crisis.

Consider the role of education in Morris’s utopia. While the narrator marvels at the happy lifestyle of the inhabitants of Nowhere, he nevertheless expresses alarm when he learns that this society lacks a system of formal education. In fact, the term “education” has fallen out of use altogether. The narrator must define the term to Dick, explaining that “education means a system of teaching young people” (66). But his interlocutor replies, with “a twinkle in his eye,” “Why not old people also?” (66). Nowhere’s extended timeline for education does more than liberate children from the grind of formal studies. It produces a model of the lifespan that resists the compartmentalization of capitalist age ideology, where youth serves as a period of training, adulthood of productive labor, and old age of retirement. Morris, along with his coauthor E. Belfort Bax, make this point about education a cornerstone of *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*:

As regards Education, it should be borne in mind that it must of necessity cease to be a preparation for a life of commercial success on the one hand, or of irresponsible labour on the other; and therefore in either case a short and perfunctory exercise with a definite object, more or less sordid in view. It will become rather a habit of making the best of the individual's powers in all directions to which he is led by his innate disposition; so that no man will ever "finish" his education while he is alive[.]<sup>48</sup>

Providing an alternative to capitalism means reconfiguring the relationship between educational institutions and the periodization of the human lifespan. When education occurs only during youth, it serves merely as a means of producing useful workers. When it occurs over the lifespan, however, education tunes to the desire of the individual—not as an instrument for the reproduction of capitalism, but as the agent for the realization of social welfare.

Extending education beyond youth wastes less time; as Morris and Bax write, the cramming of an individual's "early training . . . lie[s] behind him a piece of mere waste."<sup>49</sup> When education occurs across the lifespan, the curiosity of the individual enables the acquisition and retention of truly useful knowledge. In this way, education exemplifies Morris's efficient socialist society. As Old Hammond claims, "we have now found out what we want, so we make no more than we want; and as we are not driven to make a vast quantity of useless things, we have time and resources enough to consider our pleasure in making them" (127).<sup>50</sup> In a capitalist society, however, "the whole method of distribution . . . is full of waste; for it employs whole armies of clerks, travellers, shopmen, advertisers, and what not, merely for the sake of shifting money from one person's pocket to another's; and this waste in production and waste in distribution, added to the maintenance of the useless lives of the possessing and non-producing class, must all be paid for out of the products of the workers."<sup>51</sup> In addition to this inefficient system, the conflict between the upper and lower classes produces superfluity: "The result of this [class] war," Morris writes, "is necessarily waste."<sup>52</sup> As Morris's model of education demonstrates, some of the greatest excesses of capitalist society arise from assigning a predetermined set of expectations upon the individual based upon how many years he or she has lived.

The wastefulness of capitalism maps onto the lifespan itself, represented by the discrepancy in longevity between the inhabitants of the nineteenth century and those of Nowhere. In Nowhere, the narrator encounters healthy men at the ages of 90 and 105, prompting Dick

to reflect that “we have beaten the threescore-and-ten of the old Jewish proverb-book. But then you see that was written of Syria, a hot dry country, where people live faster than in our temperate climate. However, I don’t think it matters much, so long as a man is healthy and happy while he is alive” (84). The reorganization of society around socialist principles result in much longer lives than were possible under the capitalist regime: as a character remarks early in the novel, “one ages very quickly if one lives amongst unhappy people” (57). While Morris’s preternaturally aged and healthy citizens strain biological credulity, they exemplify what Simone de Beauvoir viewed as a very real connection between social conditions and life expectancy: it “is the fault of society that the decline of old age begins too early, that it is rapid, physically painful and, because they enter in upon it with empty hands, morally atrocious.”<sup>53</sup> Enmeshed in the healthy rhythms of *Nowhere*, the human body actualizes the biological potential that capitalist exploitation cuts short. The happy and healthy elders of *Nowhere* demonstrate the wastefulness of excluding old age from the normative, productive span of a human’s life through retirement. Folding retirement back into adulthood—or eliminating such distinctions altogether—provides a powerful figure for the excessive way that capitalism superannuates whole portions of human life.

As a common trope in utopian literature, longevity raises questions about the kind of society that nurtures healthy, long life. However, according to Jameson, “the longevity plot is always a figure and a disguise for that rather different one which is historical change, for radical mutations in society and collective life itself.”<sup>54</sup> For Jameson, the coexistence of “long-living characters with the older, shorter-lived kind . . . becomes a story that can only be identified as that of class struggle.”<sup>55</sup> The coexistence of different generations confirms the similarly arbitrary inequities of social class. Andrea Charise provides a different reading in “The Tyranny of Age,” where she coins the term “longevity narrative” to identify a pattern in texts that represent old age as “a state into which one may enter, languish, exist, or reverse regardless of chronological age.”<sup>56</sup> By doing so, “nineteenth-century representations of senescence were more likely than their predecessors to regard old age as a comparably open and even nomadic condition of being, one more susceptible to the influence of medicine, philosophy, and economics.”<sup>57</sup> Charise’s account of the mutability of old age provides a way of revising Jameson’s claim about longevity and the class struggle: for if living longer entails an opening rather than closing of possibility, longevity also provides a powerful symbol

for the reorganization of naturalized social hierarchies. Longevity, in other words, does not function to extend the status quo—to merely live longer than normal—but to fundamentally disrupt capitalism’s narrative of accumulation and exploitation over the lifespan.

The trope of longevity appears often in Morris’s fantasies, where it takes the form of eternal youth and immortality. Though long ignored, Morris’s late romances have recently received attention from critics as manifesting collectivity in surprising ways.<sup>58</sup> John Plotz argues, for example, that the romances eschew interiority in favor of an aesthetics of the surface that manifests an undifferentiated “dream of mutuality.”<sup>59</sup> In their commitment to exteriority and the beauty of surfaces, Morris’s late romances emphasize the surface of the body and its transformation through aging. In *The Story of the Glittering Plain* (1890) the protagonist encounters a series of old men who quest for the Acre of the Undying—a place where youth will be restored forever. Though these men doggedly pursue their goal, it comes with significant drawbacks—a forgetfulness of the past and confinement to the enchanted location. The youthful hedonism that dominates the Acre of the Undying results in a withdrawal from the world and a callow concern for only the present moment and place. The titular well in *The Well at the World’s End* does not grant eternal life, but a draught from it makes “life blossom in the old, and uphold life in the young.”<sup>60</sup> As the Elder describes it: “True it is that the water of that Well shall cause a man to thrive in all ways, and to live through many generations of men, maybe, in honour and good-liking; but it may not keep any man alive for ever; for so have the Gods given us the gift of death lest we weary of life.”<sup>61</sup> The well grants youth and charisma until one’s death, enabling the protagonist to conquer the foes that threatened his homeland. Though these two works of fantasy value longevity and youthfulness differently, they both emphasize the limited number of individuals who achieve it and the great sacrifices that many endure for the privilege.

In contrast, Nowhere’s socialist society demonstrates that longevity is not a privilege only for the heroic, but a right that extends to all its inhabitants. According to Chris Ferns, longevity signals a problematic suspension of the aging process that reflects an underlying utopian stasis: “Age, rather than signalling the passage of time, often suggests that its normal operations have been suspended.”<sup>62</sup> Yet I would argue just the opposite. Longevity does not imply the suspension of time, but rather its elongation and enrichment—an enhanced capacity to enjoy life. The older bodies of *News from Nowhere* do not register

the fear of decline but the assurance of a long, healthy life, fundamentally changing the relationship between aging and time: “We are no longer hurried . . . we can afford to give ourselves time to grow” (98). While debunking capitalist age ideology allows the elderly to retain a meaningful place in society, it opens new roles for children as well. After Guest encounters a girl and boy acting as clerk, Dick observes that the “children like to amuse themselves” with waiting “on people in the markets” (75). Labor extends both forward and backward from maturity, as the entirety of life is shot through with useful work. Karl Mannheim challenges the charge of stasis by asking the reader to imagine a world without the utopian imagination, a task that removes the very provocation to change that underwrites subjectivity itself: “The disappearance of utopia brings about a static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing.”<sup>63</sup> Nowhere attains its vibrant utopian equilibrium through the steady hum of work from the beginning to the end of life. Extending the years of work results in extending the lifespan: as Old Hammond says, “The reward of labour is *life*. Is that not enough?” (122).

The equation of work and life requires distinguishing between the kind of work performed in the nineteenth century and in Nowhere. Morris refers to the work of industrial modernity as “Useless Toil”: “Some labour . . . is so far from being a blessing that it is a curse.”<sup>64</sup> Useless toil results in the production of wasteful luxuries that ensure the necessity of a capitalist underclass. Morris continues, writing that “under conditions where all produced and no work was wasted, not only would every one work with the certain hope of gaining a due share of wealth by his work, but also he could not miss his due share of rest.”<sup>65</sup> Written five years after “Useful Work,” *News from Nowhere* further blurs the boundary between work and rest. The two states constantly intermingle, as the inhabitants of this utopia seek out opportunities for flexing their muscles behind the oars of a ferry, mowing hay, or chiseling stone. This work results in the same pleasure that defines the leisurely activities of the festival and boating. As Ellen observes to the bewildered narrator, “I can see that you are not yet used to our life of repose amidst of energy; of work which is pleasure and pleasure which is work” (222). The subtitle of Morris’s novel—*An Epoch of Rest*—does not come freighted with irony but forms a sincere claim about the interchangeability of work and rest.

Eliminating waste makes this pleasurable work possible, an efficiency that is both enabled and emblemized by recovering old age from the realm of excess. As such, the state of retirement falls out of

Morris's utopia since the distinction between work and rest no longer exists. Instead, the labor of everyday life—from childhood to old age—acquires the characteristics of an active retirement: the time to interact with significant others, careful management of the self, and the development of meaningful social roles.<sup>66</sup> This accords with the way Hammond celebrates the “second childhood” of the Nowhere: “For my part,” he claims, “I hope it may last long; and that the world's next period of wise and unhappy manhood, if that should happen, will speedily lead us to a third childhood: if indeed this age be not our third. Meantime, my friend, you must know that we are too happy, both individually and collectively, to trouble ourselves about what is to come hereafter” (132). Utopia means “living in the second childhood of the world,” a figure of senility that has lost its negative connotation of decline and crisis in favor of an unalienated appreciation of the present moment (161).

### III. YET SOMETHING I HOPE TO SEE

As he aged, Morris confronted the likelihood that he would not behold the revolution within his own lifetime. In “Makeshift” he wrote, “I am now growing an old man, and it is little likely that I shall see the coming about of the great change from privilege and competition to equality and mutual help.”<sup>67</sup> In a letter to the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, he anticipated the growth of a new popular art “founded on the general well-being of the people”; however, he acknowledged that “the blossom of it I shall not see. . . . Yet if we shall not (those of us who are as old as I am) see the New Art . . . we are even now seeing the seed of it beginning to germinate.”<sup>68</sup> As almost any great craftsman, Morris felt a profound desire to witness the finished product of his labor. He confronted the diminishing possibility of its realization with hesitation, unwilling to completely forgo the pleasures of the conclusion: “Of course I don't mean to say that I necessarily expect to see much of it before I die, and yet something I hope to see.”<sup>69</sup> Confident in the revolution to come and yet filled with the desire to witness it, Morris resigned himself to experiencing just a part of what he viewed as the inevitable transformation of society.

Morris's reflection on the incompleteness of the socialist project and the limits of his lifespan arise from his so-called late style, exemplified by the works created late in his career. For Theodor Adorno, late style emphasizes the “sudden discontinuities” that demonstrate an inability or unwillingness to bring the subjective and objective aspects



of art into a “harmonious synthesis.”<sup>70</sup> Late style’s “impulse toward the beyond,” as Helen Small puts it, registers Morris’s ambivalence toward completing his life’s work: the keen desire that pushes toward conclusion and the reflective pull that opens the space for its fulfillment.<sup>71</sup> Expanding upon Adorno’s argument, Edward Said argues that the temporal indeterminateness of late style results in a complex relation to the present: “Lateness is being at the end . . . and also very (even preternaturally) aware of the present.”<sup>72</sup> And yet, “Late style is *in*, but oddly *apart* from the present[.]”<sup>73</sup> Written at the age of 56, only six years before Morris’s death, *News from Nowhere* captures the play of contradictory forces that both Adorno and Said associate with late style. The narrator—William Guest, a surrogate for the author himself—embodies this exilic space between subjectivity and objectivity, present and future, that challenge the deep attachments between the author and his contemporary milieu. Projecting himself into the future, Morris imagines utopia while simultaneously reaffirming the necessity of its incompleteness in the present. Paradoxically, Morris’s sense of lateness manifests as being premature, “too early” to realize the utopia that exists beyond the limits of his experience.

A recent volume of essays by Gordon McMullan and Sam Smiles argues against the critical impulse to turn late style into a transcendental category. In their chapter “Historicizing Late Style,” Linda and Michael Hutcheon write that this impulse tends toward two essentializing modes: either the critic privileges “wholeness, coherence, synthesis,” or, in the tradition of Adorno and Said that I quote above, “fragmentation, dissonance, lack . . . of reconciliation.”<sup>74</sup> The form of Morris’s *News from Nowhere*, with its representation of a harmonious society framed by the discordance of nineteenth-century industrial modernity, brings together these two conventional discourses about late style. Such doubling formed the basis of Morris’s reflection on lateness as serenity and tension, as he impatiently waited for a future world that was both certain and out of reach. This logic of lateness informed the politics of Morris’s utopia. Arising from his reflections on the temporality of socialist futurity and the limits of the human lifespan, Morris rejected a society that marginalized the elderly through institutions such as retirement. To be late, under capitalism, was to be excluded from the normatively productive society; but for Morris, lateness was a necessary condition for stimulating the utopian imagination in a fallen world.

For theorists like Bloch, the utopian imagination is driven by hope—the drive toward futurity, the conquest of the New over the

old. He develops terms such as the Front and the Novum to describe thought that congeals a not-yet-realized future, “where worldly wisdom becomes young and original again.”<sup>75</sup> Youth pervades Bloch’s magnum opus, *The Principle of Hope*. The opening sections outline a series of essentialized life stages ranging from childhood to old age, illustrating the constriction of hope as bourgeois culture slowly corrupts the youthful imagination. In contrast to maturity or old age, youth remains sensitive to what Bloch calls the Not-Yet-Conscious, or “the preconscious of what is to come, the psychological birthplace of the New,” because “youth and movement forwards are synonymous.”<sup>76</sup> For Bloch, growing older entails an expanding past and a diminishing future: the eyes of the aged are directed backward rather than forward to hopeful possibilities. He maps this assumption about age onto the way ideology slowly ossifies the imagination of the individual, resulting in a paralyzed acceptance of the status quo.

Bloch fails to address modalities of hope beyond that of youthful striving. Does nearness to the end of life necessarily entail a lack of hope or a weakened utopian impulse? While Bloch’s reliance on stereotypical assumptions about youth and old age would suggest so, Morris’s late style reveals a more nuanced account of the relation between age and utopia. Becoming older does not weaken Morris’s vision of utopia, but tempers his hope of a better future into an article of faith, the historical materialist’s belief of the inevitable revolution: as Gabriel Marcel writes in *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, “hope is only possible on the level of the *us* . . . and that it does not exist on the level of the solitary ego, self-hypnotized and concentrating exclusively on individual aims.”<sup>77</sup> Positing utopia beyond the limits of the lifespan, Morris outlines a senescent socialism defined less by the urgency of bold youths and revolutionary heroes than the simple acknowledgment that social transformation depends upon networks of dependence. Privileging youth’s symbolic significance diminishes the prosaic reality of cooperation that supports the work of socialism. When Patrick Brantlinger describes Nowhere—“in growing up into utopia, mankind has also grown up—or regressed—into a second childhood, in the sense that all of the innocence, the pleasures, and the wonders of childhood are restored to it”—he categorizes the characters according to the age ideology of capitalist modernity, importing a classificatory system that no longer signifies amongst the inhabitants of Morris’s utopia.<sup>78</sup> In Morris’s imagination, progress toward a classless society must also eliminate the distinctions that assign economic value based solely on one’s chronological age.

The emergence of utopia requires reimagining the relationship between the human lifespan and labor. The state of retirement serves as the most powerful figure for Morris's vision, in which an ethos of amateurism and curiosity overrides that of specialization and coercion. Far from confining old age to a separate sphere, Morris blurs the distinction between retirement and productive work, thereby critiquing capitalism's wasteful parceling of the human lifespan into zones of youthfulness and old age, of usefulness and excess. By doing so, his work attests to the role of senescence in revitalizing the motivations of labor, expanding the institution of education, and defying the biological limits of longevity. The shape of Morris's utopia cannot be conceived without accounting for the way he embeds a politics of age into the deepest fibers of Nowhere's social fabric. And the possibility of utopia, its inevitability and its lateness, becomes meaningful in relation to the aging individual who looks forward to the diminishing future with an anguished hope.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Theodor Watts-Dunton, "William Morris," *The Athenaeum* 488.3598 (1896): 487.

<sup>2</sup>Watts-Dunton, 487.

<sup>3</sup>E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (Pontypool: Spectre, 2011), 274. In his early biography of William Morris, Bruce Glasier writes that "He was then fifty-one years of age, and just beginning to look elderly. His splendid crest of dark curly hair and his finely textured beard were brindling into grey. His head was lion-like, not only because of his shaggy mane, but because of the impress of strength of his whole front. . . . I noted, also . . . the constant restlessness of his hands, and indeed of his whole body, as if overcharged with energy" (*William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement* [London: Longmans, 1921], 23). J. W. Mackail reports in his biography that a doctor identified the cause of Morris's death as "simply being William Morris, and having done more work than most ten men" (*The Life of William Morris* [London: Longmans, 1899], 336).

<sup>4</sup>Watts-Dunton, 487.

<sup>5</sup>Charles Booth writes that "Old age fares hardly in our times. Life runs more intensely than it did, and the old tend to be thrown out. Not only does work on the whole go faster and require more perfect nerve, but it changes its character more frequently, and new men—young men—are needed to take hold of the new machines or new methods employed. The community gains by this, but the old suffer" (*Pauperism and the Endowment of Old Age* [London: Macmillan, 1892], 167). In *The Aged Poor in England and Wales*, Booth criticizes the unequal distribution of relief from one parish to another, "for those who are not able-bodied, and these include almost all the old, each Board of Guardians is at liberty to adopt its own rules and to change them at will, or to act without any rules at all" (London: Macmillan, 1894, v).

<sup>6</sup>The “ratio of paupers to population . . . will be for those from 16 to 60 (the naturally self supporting years of life) less than 4 per cent, but that for those between 60 and 65 the rate will rise to about 8 per cent, while for those over 65 it is probably more than 25 per cent” (Booth, *Pauperism*, 164).

<sup>7</sup>Lionel Trilling, “Aggression and Utopia: A Note on William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*,” *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 42.2 (1973): 218, 223.

<sup>8</sup>Trilling, 216.

<sup>9</sup>Karen Chase, *The Victorians and Old Age* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 233.

<sup>10</sup>Chase, 234.

<sup>11</sup>As Morris writes in a letter to James Leatham, “No man ever does good work unless he likes it: evasion is all you can get out of him by compulsion” (21 April 1893, in *The Collected Letters of William Morris, Volume IV: 1893–1896*, ed. Norman Kelvin [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1996], 35).

<sup>12</sup>Pat Thane, *Old Age in English History* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 236–37.

<sup>13</sup>Thane, 239.

<sup>14</sup>Susannah Ottaway’s study of the eighteenth century remains applicable throughout the nineteenth: “‘Retirement,’ when it came, was either a function of earlier savings and personal choice (among the better off) or a result of complete decrepitude (among the laboring classes)” (*The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004], 9).

<sup>15</sup>Leslie Hannah, *Inventing Retirement: The Development of Occupational Pensions in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), 16, 23–24.

<sup>16</sup>See John Macnicol, *The Politics of Retirement in Britain, 1878–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 21.

<sup>17</sup>Macnicol, 21.

<sup>18</sup>Thane, 279.

<sup>19</sup>See Macnicol, 59.

<sup>20</sup>Thompson, 646.

<sup>21</sup>Bradley MacDonald writes that “art, irrespective of the ideological context of its production, is an important way of gaining political knowledge and/or engaging in political action” (*William Morris and the Aesthetic Constitution of Politics* [Lanham: Lexington Books, 1999], xvi). Florence Boos claims that the inhabitants of Nowhere “cherish and respect . . . useful and pleasurable work, harmony with nature, and kinship with one’s fellows and the past as marks and rewards of a fulfilled everyday life” (“The Ideal of Everyday Life in William Morris’ *News from Nowhere*,” in *The Literary Utopias of Cultural Communities, 1790–1910*, ed. Marguérite Corporaal and Evert Jan van Leeuwen [Leiden: Rodopi, 2010], 160). Ruth Kinna suggests that Morris “identified work with leisure and defined attractive labor as the exercise and expression of human creativity” (“William Morris: Art, Work, and Leisure,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61.3 [2000]: 494); William Casement avers: “Labor [is] approached as creative activity, and that this may render it pleasurable” (“Morris on Labour and Pleasure,” *Social Theory and Practice* 12.3 [1986]: 356).

<sup>22</sup>H. G. Wells, *New Worlds for Old: A Plain Account of Modern Socialism* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908), 21.

<sup>23</sup>Peter Kropotkin, “An Appeal to the Young,” *Marxists Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/literature/children/ref/excerpt/krop.html>.

<sup>24</sup>Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 3 vol. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 1:117.

<sup>25</sup>Frederic Jameson sets out to theorize “an obscure yet omnipresent Utopian impulse” that is “primary and not to be reduced” (*Archaeologies of the Future* [London: Verso,

2007], 3, 201); in the subtitle of his book, Jameson refers to the “Desire Called Utopia,” echoing the language of Ruth Levitas, who writes that the essence of utopia lies in “the desire for a different, better way of being” (*The Concept of Utopia* [Bern: Peter Lang, 2010], 209). Bill Ashcroft agrees, writing that “Desire is an essential driving force for the imagination of a different world, and hence of the transformation of the present” (“Critical Utopias,” *Textual Practice* 21.3 [2007]: 412). He goes on to problematize this definition, marking the way utopian desire remains structurally similar to the capitalist desire it was intended to displace: “Desires are not benign, and capitalism itself, the system that most utopias are now designed to contest, is generated by desire as needs expand to fulfill the requirements of growth” (Ashcroft, 412).

<sup>26</sup> Robert Owen, “The Book of the New Moral World,” in *The Utopia Reader*, ed. Gregory Claeys and Lymen Sargent (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1999), 208.

<sup>27</sup> Owen, 208.

<sup>28</sup> Owen, 208.

<sup>29</sup> Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2000–1887* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 37.

<sup>30</sup> Bellamy, 114.

<sup>31</sup> Bellamy, 114.

<sup>32</sup> Bellamy, 116.

<sup>33</sup> Morris, “Where Are We Now?,” *Marxists Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1890/where.htm>.

<sup>34</sup> Morris, “‘Looking Backward’: A Review of *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy,” in *News from Nowhere and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 356.

<sup>35</sup> Morris, “News from Nowhere, or An Epoch of Rest,” in *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, 86. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>36</sup> According to James Buzard, Old Hammond transforms “the metonymic relationship of a man living amidst books into the synecdochic one of a man who ‘is’ in some sense a vital member of the library’s collection” (“Ethnography as Interruption: *News from Nowhere*, Narrative, and the Modern Romance of Authority,” *Victorian Studies* 40.3 [1997]: 457).

<sup>37</sup> Macnicol writes that despite the high costs of pensions, the retirement of older employees gives bargaining power to the younger generation: “By removing older workers, the labour market would also be ‘tightened up’ and the bargaining power of younger workers enhanced, thus boosting the power of trade unions. Old age pensions thus quickly became the centrepiece of a rapaciously redistributive socialism that had to be resisted by the state at all costs” (6).

<sup>38</sup> Thompson, 696.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Jill Quadagno, who claims that “generally, the work of the aged was marginal and sporadic” and “the labor market in general was more rigid for older people” (*Aging in Early Industrial Society* [New York: Academic, 1982], 21, 63). See also my analysis of the elderly man in Victorian culture and the novel (“No Plots for Old Men,” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 46.2 [2013]: 193–213).

<sup>40</sup> John Ruskin, *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (London: George Allen, 1884), 62.

<sup>41</sup> Jameson, 187.

<sup>42</sup> Miguel Abensour, “William Morris: The Politics of Romance,” in *Revolutionary Romanticism*, ed. Max Blechman (New York: City Lights, 1999), 145. Abensour continues: “Desire must be taught to desire, to desire better, to desire more, and above all to desire otherwise; it must learn to shatter the dead weight, to alleviate

the weakness of appetite, to liberate the firebirds of desire, to give free rein to the impulse of adventure” (145–46).

<sup>43</sup> Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea* (New York: Basic, 1981), 293.

<sup>44</sup> Spacks writes about “the extreme competitiveness of adolescent boys and the establishment in school of hierarchies of strength, patterns of dominance and submission” (199). See also Carolyn Oulton, who observes that “writers on the subject [of youthful friendship] return again and again to the passionate impulsiveness of youth and the dangers inherent in such undirected passion” (*Romantic Friendship in Victorian Literature* [London: Routledge, 2007], 1).

<sup>45</sup> Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of our Times* (London: Verso, 2010), 220, emphasis original.

<sup>46</sup> Arrighi, 335.

<sup>47</sup> Lauren Berlant writes that “Crisis is not exceptional to history or consciousness but a process embedded in the ordinary that unfolds in stories about navigating what’s overwhelming” (*Cruel Optimism* [Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2011], 10). Joshua Clover avers that “crisis is inevitable; bubbles beget bubbles. . . . Thus it makes sense to say that finance is crisis: crisis as regime, crisis as mode of capital” (“*Retcon Value and Temporality in Poetics*,” *Representations* 126.1 [2014]: 26).

<sup>48</sup> Morris and Ernest Belfort Bax, *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1893), 317.

<sup>49</sup> Morris and Bax, *Socialism*, 317.

<sup>50</sup> Hammond critiques the wastefulness of the nineteenth century elsewhere in *News from Nowhere*: “Go and have a look at the sheep-walks high up the slopes between Ingleborough and Pen-y-gwent, and tell me if you think we waste the land there by not covering it with factories for making things nobody wants, which was the chief business of the nineteenth century” (107).

<sup>51</sup> Morris and Bax, “Manifesto of the Socialist League,” in *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, ed. Thompson (Pontypool: Specter, 2011), 734.

<sup>52</sup> Morris, “Makeshift,” *Marxists Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1894/make.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Coming of Age*, trans. Patrick O’Brian (New York: Norton, 1996), 542.

<sup>54</sup> Jameson, 335.

<sup>55</sup> Jameson, 338.

<sup>56</sup> Andrea Charise, “‘The Tyranny of Age’: Godwin’s *St. Leon* and the Nineteenth-Century Longevity Narrative,” *ELH* 79.4 (2012): 927.

<sup>57</sup> Charise, 928.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, the work of Carole Silver, who claims that the “last six prose fictions demonstrate socialism internalized” (“Socialism Internalized: The Last Romances of William Morris,” in *Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris*, ed. Boos and Silver [Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1990], 118); or the work of Anna Vaninskaya, who demonstrates the way Morris’s tales presented “the kind of communal organisation Morris perceived in the literature and society of the past, and hoped to see in the future” (*William Morris and the Idea of Community: Romance, History, and Propaganda, 1880–1914* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2010], 63).

<sup>59</sup> John Plotz, “Nowhere and Everywhere: Portability in William Morris’s Romances,” *ELH* 74.4 (2007): 935.

<sup>60</sup> Morris, *The Well at the World’s End*, 2 vol. (London: Longmans, 1910), 1:212.

<sup>61</sup> Morris, *The Well at the World’s End*, 2 vol. (London: Longmans, 1896), 2:75.

<sup>62</sup> Chris Ferns, *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool Univ. Press, 1999), 151.

<sup>63</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (San Diego: Harcourt, 1966), 236.

<sup>64</sup> Morris, "Useful Work v. Useless Toil," in *Useful Work v. Useless Toil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 2.

<sup>65</sup> Morris, "Useful Work," 12.

<sup>66</sup> For more about care for the self and interaction with family in retirement, see Jennifer Gray and Harvey Sterns, "Work, Leisure, and Retirement," in *Gerontology: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, ed. John C. Cavanaugh and Susan Krauss Whitbourne (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), 370, 383. For more about the development of social roles, see Laura Brown and others, "Supporting Well-Being in Retirement through Meaningful Social Roles: Systematic Review of Intervention Studies," *The Milbank Quarterly* 91.2 (2013): 224.

<sup>67</sup> Morris, "Makeshift."

<sup>68</sup> Morris to the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, 9 November 1893, in *The Collected Letters of William Morris, Volume IV*, 104.

<sup>69</sup> Morris to Georgiana Burne-Jones, 1 June 1884, in *The Collected Letters of William Morris, Volume II, Part A: 1881–1884*, ed. Kelvin (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1987), 286. Morris wrote this letter early enough in his life to problematize the ascription of the term late style. I would argue, however, that the sentiment expressed—of belatedness, of untimeliness—aligns with the most important characteristics of late style that I outline below. Moreover, Gordon McMullan and Sam Smiles, critiquing the equation of "late style" with "old-age style," write that "not every elderly practitioner can be presumed to have achieved an old-age style merely from the fact of being old" ("Introduction: Late Style and its Discontents," in *Late Style and Its Discontents: Essays in Art, Literature, and Music*, ed. McMullan and Smiles [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2016], 3).

<sup>70</sup> Theodor Adorno, "Late Style in Beethoven," in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2002), 567.

<sup>71</sup> Helen Small, *The Long Life* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), 185.

<sup>72</sup> Edward Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 14.

<sup>73</sup> Said, 24, emphasis original.

<sup>74</sup> Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, "Historicizing Late Style as a Discourse of Reception," in *Late Style and Its Discontents*, 58.

<sup>75</sup> Bloch, 18.

<sup>76</sup> Bloch, 116, 118.

<sup>77</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 10, emphasis original.

<sup>78</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, "'News from Nowhere': Morris's Socialist Anti-Novel," *Victorian Studies* 19.1 (1975): 45.