

Bodily Beauty, Socialist Evolution, and William Morris's News from Nowhere

Jessica Kuskey

Introduction

One of the most perplexing features of the communist utopian future that William Morris imagines in his novel *News from Nowhere* is the seductive physical beauty of Nowhere's entire population. The novel's narrator, William Guest, falls asleep in Morris's contemporary London and wakes up over a century later to a Hammersmith that is completely different. The first citizen of Nowhere that Guest meets is "a handsome young fellow, with a peculiarly pleasant and friendly look about his eyes ... dark-haired and berry-brown of skin, well-knit and strong, and obviously used to exercising his muscles, but with nothing rough or coarse about him, and clean as might be" (7). Guest figures this man must be upper class, playing at being boatman for fun. The first women he encounters are also "so kind and happy-looking in expression of face, so shapely and well-knit of body, and thoroughly healthy-looking and strong. All were at least comely, and one of them very handsome and regular of feature" (12-13). Another beautiful man holds Guest's attention when he sees "a splendid figure slowly sauntering over the pavement The man himself was tall, dark-haired, and exceedingly handsome, and though his face was no less kindly in expression than that of the others, he moved with that somewhat haughty mien which great beauty is apt to give both men and women" (18). On the one hand, the beauty of these faces and bodies is to be expected from Morris: he is as well known today for his writing on art and aesthetics as he is for his socialism, and the two threads of his philosophy actually overlap and support each other. How-

ever, this pervasive physical beauty immediately raises several potentially troubling questions about Morris's novel and his socialist agenda, most obviously, How did people become so beautiful?

An early chapter of the novel seems to offer biological evolution as a simple answer to that question. By 1890, when *News* first appeared in serial form in the *Commonweal*, Darwin's theory was quite familiar to Morris's readers, and it seems to be exactly what Guest's guide means to refer to when he takes pride in his people's beauty:

"...I will point out to you a token of all the benefits which we have gained by our freedom. What did you think of the looks of the people whom you have come across to-day?"

Said I: "I could hardly have believed that there could be so many good-looking people in any civilised country."

... "Well, as to our looks, the English and Jutish blood, which on the whole is predominant here, used not to produce much beauty. But I think we have improved it. I know a man who has a large collection of portraits printed from photographs of the nineteenth century, and going over those and comparing them with the everyday faces in these times, puts the improvement in our good looks beyond a doubt. Now, there are some people who think it not too fantastic to connect this increase of beauty directly with our freedom and good sense in the matters we have been speaking of: they believe that a child born from the natural and healthy love between a man and a woman, even if that be transient, is likely to turn out better in all ways, and especially in bodily beauty, than the birth of the respectable commercial marriage bed, or of the dull despair of the drudge of that system. They say, Pleasure begets pleasure."

(53-54)

It is important to note here the inextricability of biological evolution and socio-economic revolution. Physical beauty is a "token" of the numerous benefits resulting from capitalism's collapse, implying the end to the physi-

cal degradation and deformity suffered during the coerced industrial labor of Morris's Victorian England. This implies also that in addition to the social, attitudinal, and emotional changes communism brought about, Morris's utopists also enjoy physical changes resulting directly from that revolution because their socio-economic change bears directly on biological human evolution. Careful examination affirms that this is not, as it may at first appear, a Lamarckian view. It is not simply that a life of industrial labor caused physical degradation in parents, which according to Lamarck's theory became an acquired characteristic that was passed on to children. If this were the case, then one would have to wonder what environmental stimuli would make beauty an advantageous trait to be passed on through natural selection. The reasoning Morris's novel proposes is not, however, that when ugly laborers stop laboring they revert to a former beautiful condition. Rather, ugliness has been eradicated and the species dramatically improved upon: for Morris, biological evolution is a direct benefit of revolution.

Morris's discussions of heredity and evolution are more than just an attempt to extend his aesthetic ideals to his socialist doctrines. *News from Nowhere* was first published serially in Morris's *Commonweal*, the "Official Journal of the Socialist League," and in this original context these references point to a larger socialist project of articulating a socialist evolutionary theory. This theory was developed and asserted as a correction to capitalist Darwinism and as a retort to critics who dismissed socialism on the grounds that it was in direct contradiction to Darwinian evolution and therefore a ludicrous impossibility, flying in the face of hard scientific evidence. Socialists argued for a reinterpretation of Darwin's findings and proposed a new theory of evolution that cohered with socialist political doctrine.¹ Like many other socialist writers in Morris's circles, his views on evolution seek to denaturalize capitalist competition and class struggle and replace these with socialist cooperation as the next natural stage of human evolution. While evolution is perhaps a minor aspect of Morris's novel, examination of socialist evolutionary science offers key insight to an understanding of late-nineteenth-century British socialism. The project of socialist evolution in fact contains the fundamental contradiction in their overall socialist project:

a Victorian idealism lurking behind their self-proclaimed materialist historicizing of human biological and social evolution. In short, examination of the socialist evolutionary theory developed by writers in Morris's circle reveals their evolutionary – not *revolutionary* – socialism.

Reading Late-Victorian Evolutionary Science

One of the barriers preventing scholars from identifying socialist evolution as productive of a scientific theory of evolution is the fact that during this period politicized discussions of scientific theories generally had multiple and overlapping rhetorical functions. It has been easy, therefore, for readers to dismiss all socialist discussion of evolution as, for example, merely failed attempts to claim legitimacy or prestige for their political agendas by invoking Darwin's name. Many political and social theorists indeed hoped that the shine of evolution would rub off on their ideas by association, but one must separate this from the many other functions served by socialist discussion of science and evolution in order to recognize a more complex discursive project.

Grasping at pretensions aside, it was quite common for branches of Victorian science to reach for connections to other branches, even if those connections were only linguistic. The dominant view was that each branch of scientific knowledge fit in to a larger grand theory that unified the sciences and coordinated their discoveries. Historically, this view has roots in the widespread influence of August Comte's positivist theories (first translated into English by Harriet Martineau in 1848) and shortly thereafter Herbert Spencer's organic theory and assertion of the primacy of sociology in a pyramid of scientific disciplines, each connected to and supporting the others. For writers of science, the appeal of empiricism made this theory of connectivity especially attractive. Linking one's ideas to the natural sciences offered empirical proof for theoretical concepts in fields like ethics and social theory. It is also easy to see the ideological appeal of this way of thinking as it gave a quasi-religious structure to scientific knowledge and inquiry. Discoveries in geology had cast doubt upon biblical authority, and by replicating the providential and authoritative omniscience of religion, science

filled in this cultural gap.² Socialists who called their thought "scientific" or who framed socialism as a "religion" were therefore, to some extent, participating in a widespread discursive trend in the nineteenth century of proving their argument's scientific validity by demonstrating its synthesis with other scientific fields. On a more general level, this overall drive to forge links between scientific fields led to the quite common practice for Victorian writers in the social sciences to employ biological metaphors. Socialist discussions of evolutionary science are therefore often dismissed as the mere borrowing of metaphor, or the discrediting of a competing ideology on a merely linguistic level, rather than scientific knowledge production in its own right.³

By identifying socialist evolutionary theory as a scientific project distinct from the rhetorical objectives just mentioned, my approach differs significantly from others who have examined this topic.⁴ Unlike other critics, I do not aim to identify where these writers "got it right" by adhering to a pure Darwinism or, on the other hand, to write off their departures from "true" Darwinian science as propagandistic distortions. David Stack argues that "Darwinism was appealed to [by socialists] as a tactic; there was never any true integration. The term 'Darwinian' was sought as an honorific title, nothing more" ("First" 684). Stack's thorough assemblage of Darwinian influence in socialist and radical British thought in the period from 1859-1914 is limited because he fails to acknowledge the possibility of an alternative science, while viewing Huxley's liberal evolutionary theory as the pure theory with which socialists were unable to synthesize their ideas. This leads him to conclude that there was a "consistent failure of radicals and socialists to reconcile their politics with Darwinian science.... Quite simply, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was an irreconcilable tension between Darwinian science and radical or socialist politics" (709). This approach directs readers away from examining evolutionary science as a legitimate and deliberate component of late-Victorian socialist thought.

I also do not attempt to identify the specific origins or strands of influence shaping socialist discussions of science in the 1880s and 1890s. Piers J. Hale, for example, rightly identifies socialists' objection to the "emphasis that Thomas Huxley and Spencer placed upon the Malthusian,

competitive and individualistic elements of Darwin's theory," but then argues from this one fact that all radicals – including William Morris in *News from Nowhere* – must necessarily have been Lamarckians in order to avoid the undesirable capitalist Malthusian aspects of evolutionary theory (Hale 18). I find the intellectual history approach restrictive because it leaves intact historically reified divisions and hierarchies within the sciences, especially the Victorian view of the natural sciences as empirical truth unthreatened by ideological distortion. In fact, many of the writers under examination here often argued against this very mistake. They claimed that Darwin's discoveries had been misused to develop distorted evolutionary theories that were formed by capitalist ideology and readily available to support capitalist social theory. Socialists viewed these theories as ideological interpretations and refused to accept theorizations of evolutionary findings that naturalized capitalist society and supported the dominant ideology. Socialist evolution makes this ideological struggle clear as it sought to discredit dominant scientific theories, and I thus argue that socialist evolution was one of many ways that socialism as an alternative ideology critiqued dominant ideological positions.⁵

Socialism: Utopian and Scientific

I begin my examination of science in late-Victorian socialist thought with Friedrich Engels's "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" (1880) because this text laid the theoretical groundwork that enabled socialist evolution to develop as an historical materialist theory and as a critique of current scientific thought.⁶ The significant contributions of this text include Engels's call for socialists to reinterpret the knowledge produced in the natural sciences along historical materialist lines and to likewise historicize man's place in nature. The Darwinian scientist and self-proclaimed socialist Edward B. Aveling will serve in this section as a foil for Engels, as close analysis reveals Aveling to fall into the exact ideological and scientific traps that Engels warned his socialist followers to correct in their reinterpretations of Victorian science.

Engels begins "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" by distinguishing current socialist thought from the utopianism of the early nineteenth century. The utopians believed socialism was the ultimate goal and sought to make specific economic and social changes in order to construct a socialist utopia. For Engels, like Marx, a utopian vision of society is a fantastical and pointless impossibility because it cannot be constructed from within capitalism, and will remain unknowable until after the revolution. Rather than modifying capitalism from within, he explains, his contemporaries now see that a wholesale revolution is necessary for capitalism to be overcome and abandoned entirely.⁷ Engels explains that the flaw in the utopian approach is its ahistorical view of socialism as an absolute principle, which he distinguishes from Marxist materialist historicism that enables his contemporaries to recognize capitalism as a social phenomenon that has developed over the course of human history. From a dialectical point of view, Engels explains, "the history of mankind no longer appeared as a wild whirl of senseless deeds of violence ... but as the process of evolution of man himself" (697). Furthermore, historical materialism replaces the idealism of Hegel's dialectics: "Old materialism looked upon all previous history as a crude heap of irrationality and violence; modern materialism sees in it the process of evolution of humanity, and aims at discovering the laws thereof" (698). Materialism is thus the primary lesson Engels offers to replace utopianism: "To make a science of socialism, it had first to be placed upon a real basis" (694). Engels's argument offered socialists of the 1880s a scientific socialism – which drew upon natural science and evolutionary theory specifically – as a methodological alternative to utopianism and as an argumentative response to accusations of utopian dreaming.

More specifically, by directly linking Darwinian evolution to Hegelian dialectics, Engels lays the theoretical groundwork for socialist evolution as an historical materialist argument and as a critique of current scientific thought. He explains that, because natural scientists fail to think historically, their analyses of nature are transhistorical and therefore fundamentally flawed: "Modern materialism embraces the more recent discoveries of natural science, according to which *Nature also has its history in time*" (698 ital-

ics added). Because they fail to think dialectically, they inevitably misinterpret Darwin's findings:

Nature is the proof of dialectics, and it must be said for modern science that it has furnished this proof with very rich materials increasing daily. ... In this connection Darwin must be named before all others. ... But the naturalists who have learned to think dialectically are few and far between, and this conflict of the results of discovery with the preconceived modes of thinking explains the endless confusion now reigning in theoretical natural science, the despair of teachers as well as learners, of authors and readers alike. (697)

Because these natural scientists are idealists and accept the world as developing from entirely *natural* processes, they are unable to see capitalism as an historical development, nor to see it as anything but a natural phenomenon. In other words, they see human social existence as emerging from nature, rather than seeing all of human experience as developing from material, historical phenomenon.

At this point Engels anticipates the main problem that socialists following him would run into when they sought to apply the theory of evolution to society: if the Darwinian struggle for existence drives natural selection and biological evolution, then this struggle in human society is also natural, inevitable, and eternal. This is, of course, the Social Darwinist argument. Many writers who insisted that Darwin's was the "pure" and "true" evolutionary theory were unable to get around this problem, and in turn naturalized the (capitalist) struggle for existence in Darwin's name. A prime example is Edward B. Aveling, husband of Eleanor Marx and close friend of the Morris family. Aveling was a vocal and highly visible member of the Socialist League and no doubt clearly understood its Marxist position, yet because of his extensive scientific training and complete indoctrination in Victorian scientific principles he remained unable to stray from the dominant interpretation of Darwin. For Aveling, as for most other Victorians, Herbert Spencer's doctrine of "the survival of the fittest" and T.H. Huxley's laissez-faire liberalism dominated the meaning of biological evolution. As a

result, in all of his many books and articles that aim to make Darwin available to a popular audience, Aveling's explanations of natural selection consistently naturalize capitalism and class struggle.⁸ In a remarkable passage in *The Student's Darwin* (1881), Aveling writes,

The struggle for life. The world is one great battlefield. Over all its surface, within the depths of its waters, in the very air that belts it round is eternal strife. All living beings, from loftiest to lowest, are fighting unceasingly. The life of our huge cities, with its struggle of class against class, and of individual against individual, with, on the part of him that would triumph, an unremitting toil and an intense devotion to himself and his that are needful as they are awful in their desperation, with its doing unto death of the many that is the inevitable accompaniment of the success of the one – that life, I say, that is so full of the terrible that the very stars shiver as they look down upon it and hear the sound of the city's inarticulate moaning pass by them into the infinite, like a wandering ghost – that life is the type of all life. In the darkness of the soil of the earth the roots of the plants are struggling with each other for food. In the microscopic drop of water the Infusoria sweep sufficient for them all. Never ending contest. Interminable strife. Every living being is an Ishmael. Its hand is against all others. The hands of all others are against it. And as among men, so also among the more lowly organized creatures, the bitterest struggle is ever between those who are akin to one to another. Wherefore is the contest? For wealth or glory, or a lasting name? Nay, for bare life. The struggle everlasting is for the very means of existence. It is as the struggle of a famine-stricken multitude for the bread that is not sufficient for their wants. ... Who, then, are to be the survivors in this battle? Who are doomed to be numbered among the slain? Those best fitted for the struggle will sur-

vive. Those least adapted to the circumstances of the unending fight are doomed. (244-45)⁹

In his application of natural selection to human society, Aveling accepts evolution and natural selection as timeless, universal, and absolute and likewise naturalizes and universalizes the suffering and class struggle which Marxists would insist are not at all natural but in fact the social conditions of capitalism. Aveling's conclusions are startlingly ahistorical as he assumes that life under capitalism – characterized by incessant class struggle, selfishness, “unremitting toil,” and “awful ... desperation” – is “the type of all life,” a truth visible throughout nature and in all species “from loftiest to lowest,” a universal experience for all creatures for all time (244). Aveling's naturalization of capitalist experience makes abundantly clear the degree to which capitalist ideology shaped his scientific training. For example, the fact that roots in the ground have limited amount of space within which to grow or that cells are full of “Infusoria” may be empirical truths, but Aveling's choice to view these as scenes of ruthless competition and struggle is an interpretation that projects capitalist class struggle onto nature. Aveling's training as a bourgeois scientist leads him to see capitalist experiences in every level of nature and to universalize them as the results of inevitable natural forces. This blatantly ideological interpretation is of course in stark opposition to what Aveling must have known from his Marxist training: these experiences are the product of capitalism, a specific historical moment.

In order to discredit conclusions like Aveling's, late-Victorian socialists had to insist that the truths of evolution did not also prove that the struggle for existence was a universal and natural phenomenon, or at least not for humans. They were careful to show that this struggle had not always existed in its present form throughout human history, and they were confident that a socialist revolution would end it completely. The writers I will discuss below accomplished this either by historicizing nature and arguing that the theory of evolution did not necessitate a universal struggle for all time; or by dichotomizing humans from animals and asserting that human intelligence could permit them to end the struggle and take control over nature.¹⁰ In “So-

cialism: Utopian and Scientific" Engels takes the latter approach and asserts that technically – if perhaps not realistically – humans are capable of taking control of their situation and can exit the survival of the fittest. After explaining society's historical evolution into modern capitalism, Engels writes that

Finally, modern industry and the opening of the world market made the struggle universal, and at the same time gave it an unheard-of virulence. Advantages in natural or artificial conditions of production now decide the existence or non-existence of individual capitalists, as well as of whole industries and countries. He that falls is remorselessly cast aside. It is the Darwinian struggle of the individual for existence transferred from nature to society with intense violence. The conditions of existence natural to the animal appear as the final term of human development. The contradiction between socialised production and capitalistic appropriation now presents itself as *an antagonism between the organisation of production in the individual workshop and the anarchy of production in society generally*. (706-7, Engels' italics)

"Advantages" and "existence," specific Darwinian terms, emphasize Engels' point that the emergence of "the Darwinian struggle of the individual for existence" is an historical development, not a natural constant. Because struggle is visible in the human and animal worlds alike, the conditions and quality of animal existence now *appear* true for human social existence as well. Moreover, this misleading correlation makes socialized economics *appear* impossible because it requires the cooperation that the natural sciences have made *appear* impossible as it directly contradicts man's "natural" state of antagonistic competition.

Because the struggle for existence is an historical and not a natural phenomenon, Engels argues, humans are capable of recognizing that they might separate themselves from nature and endeavor to take control of their conditions. De-naturalizing capitalism makes "nature" a force to actually be reckoned with. Rather than an inevitable natural fact, capitalist existence

therefore becomes a type of choice because, Engels explains, “Active social forces work exactly like natural forces: blindly, forcibly, destructively, so long as we do not understand, and reckon with, them. But when once we do understand them, when once we grasp their action, their direction, their effects, it depends only upon ourselves to subject them more and more to our own will, and by means of them to reach our own ends” (712). While no doubt a simplification of the revolutionary project, Engels’s statement sharply demonstrates his scientific point that the forces and conditions that humans are subject to are only inescapable and “natural” as long as they fail to take control over them. Socialist revolution is both the goal and also the means by which human society may truly separate themselves from animals by taking control over their conditions. Engels continues:

With the seizing of the means of production by society ... The struggle for existence disappears. Then for the first time man, in a certain sense, is finally marked off from the rest of the animal kingdom, and emerges from mere animal conditions of existence into really human ones. The whole sphere of the conditions of life which environ man, and which have hitherto ruled man, now comes under the dominion and control of man, who for the first time becomes the real, conscious lord of Nature, because he has now become master of his whole social organisation. The laws of his own social action, hitherto standing face to face with man as laws of Nature foreign to, and dominating him, will then be used with full understanding, and so mastered by him. Man’s own social organisation, hitherto confronting him as a necessity imposed by Nature and history, now becomes the result of his own free action. (715)

Engels’s argument foreshadows and likely influenced the socialist evolution advanced in the pages of *Justice* and the *Commonweal*. Primarily, he clarifies the science of the socialist project: it must be an historical materialist science (to avoid the utopianism of the early nineteenth century), and it must reinterpret the knowledge produced in the natural sciences along historical

materialist lines. These are among the specific rhetorical and theoretical endeavors of the socialist evolutionists I turn to next.

Socialist Evolution in *Justice* and *Commonweal*

In 1883 William Morris joined H.M. Hyndman's Democratic Federation (begun in 1881) and read Karl Marx's *Capital* (in French). The next year the group changed its name to the Social Democratic Federation to emphasize its increasing socialist and Marxist position, and under this new name launched *Justice*, the "Organ of the Social Democracy." Morris was especially active in financing, publishing, and writing for the paper until clashing personalities coupled with Hyndman's increasing nationalism caused Morris and a group of others to secede and form the Socialist League under Morris's reluctant leadership.¹¹ In 1885 the group launched the *Commonweal* under Morris's direction, which featured his writing weekly, including *News from Nowhere* which appeared serially in 1890.¹² Within the pages of *Justice* and the *Commonweal*, many writers participated in reconstructing science primarily by reinterpreting Darwin's evolutionary findings and arguing for a socialist scientific theory. The two periodicals took care throughout their pages to create a scientific public face for socialism by advertizing scientific texts and lectures and by demonstrating their leading figures' scientific knowledge and active participation in public scientific debates and forums.

Peter Kropotkin's career as a radical anarchist revolutionary is complex and spanned Europe, but during his time in England beginning in 1886 he became friends with William Morris and others active in socialist circles. Yet even before their acquaintance, Kropotkin was well-known and regarded by the group, most likely because he was a Russian Prince whose string of arrests and imprisonments made him a kind of celebrity. His activities were regularly reported in *Justice* and the *Commonweal*, and his scientific background gave him the authority of a professional. His long essay, "An Appeal to the Young," which first appeared in French in *Le Révolté* in 1880, was translated into English and excerpted in *Justice* over the course of 1884, appearing again in the socialist periodical *To-day* in July 1885.¹³ The

editor's choice to start *Justice*'s serialization of the "Appeal" with an excerpt focusing on science reflects the fact that Kropotkin's scientific knowledge lent authority to his socialism. He addresses those who ask,

"What shall we do?" When there is everything to be done!
[...]

What shall we do? Listen.

You lovers of pure science if you are imbued with the principles of Socialism, if you have understood the real meaning of the revolution which is even now knocking at the door, don't you see that all science has to be recast in order to place it in harmony with the new principles; that it is your business to accomplish in this field a revolution far greater than that which was accomplished in every branch of science during the eighteenth century? Don't you understand that history – which to-day is an old wife's tale about great kings, great statesmen and great parliaments – that history itself has to be rewritten from the point of view of the people from the point of view of work done by the masses in the long evolutions of mankind? That social economy – which to-day is merely the sanctification of capitalist robbery – has to be worked out afresh as well in its fundamental principles as in its innumerable applications? That anthropology, sociology, ethics must be completely recast and that the very natural sciences themselves, regarded from another point of view, must undergo a profound modification alike in regard to the conceptions of natural phenomena and with respect to the method of exposition.

Very well, then. Set to work! Place your abilities at the command of the good cause. (2)

Kropotkin charges all his readers, not just professional scientists, with the task of rewriting and reinterpreting the entire stock of current knowledge.¹⁴ The disciplines themselves that organize and legitimize knowledge must be "recast in order to place it in harmony with the new principles" – socialism.

Kropotkin was not arguing for mere propagandistic revisionism, however. The next stage in "the long evolutions of mankind" is inevitably socialist, and this will bring with it a new materialist, historicist perspective from which to understand the world. Kropotkin's appeal would no doubt have been taken seriously within Morris's socialist circle and by the readers of *Justice*. Whether or not their seeking to reinterpret science from the materialist socialist point of view was directly due to Kropotkin's instructions is of course unknowable. It is certainly clear, however, that writers like Kropotkin and Engels demonstrated to their readers that a socialist agenda did not simply mean inhabiting a personal desire to revolt, but that it meant adopting a wholesale ideological shift and a materialist analytic. Readers could see from their examples that the knowledge handed down by self-declared authorities did not necessitate unquestioned acceptance, but that all received knowledge, even "history itself," could and must be "rewritten from the point of view of the people."¹⁵ For Victorians, these instructions meant rejection of the two leading authorities in the natural sciences, Herbert Spencer and T.H. Huxley.

Editors and writers were careful to demonstrate that they kept abreast of the publications put forth by Huxley and Spencer, who in their own public performances sought to legitimize the dominant interpretation of evolution. In 1884 one writer in *Justice* remarked that "In spite of his late violent attacks on Socialism, Mr. H. Spencer concludes his attack on Positivism in the *Nineteenth Century* thus, 'modifications of human nature past and future I ascribe in the main to the continuous operation of surrounding social conditions and entailed habits of life' a very excellent definition of the Socialist's creed. Does Mr. Spencer know what he means?" ("Tell-Tale" 5). A few months later a writer quipped, "In Six Days the Lord made the Earth, and on the Seventh HERBERT SPENCER Wrote it Down" (5). Writers mocked the pompous authority with which Spencer and Huxley addressed their popular audience and also took care to demonstrate their own scientific skill: not only were they able to read and comprehend scientific texts, but they could point out the contradictions in their opponents' thinking and ably take them to task for their flawed scientific analysis.

The writers of *Justice* and the *Commonweal* were also keen to point out how errors in Huxley's and Spencer's conclusions revealed the ideological limitations of their methodology. In 1888 a *Justice* cover story's title proclaimed "Huxley as a Bourgeois Scientist":

Professor Huxley, when applied to some years ago to sign the memorial in favour of reasonable treatment for Kropotkin, at that time imprisoned in France – a memorial signed by several men of science quite as eminent as himself – refused his name. He added ... that he would keep such persons as Kropotkin permanently in gaol. No doubt he would. The scientific pluralist is as intolerant and as money-grubbing as the ecclesiastic. In the current number of the 'Nineteenth Century' Professor Huxley again parades his ignorance and prejudices in an article on the 'Struggle for Existence.' He makes out that the national struggle is inevitable, that over-population is a great difficulty ... Over-population – can you help laughing, friends, at this blundering scientist, when over-wealth is the difficulty? (1)

Beyond simply mocking public figures for their readers' entertainment, these articles ridiculed Huxley and Spencer for failing to understand scientific theories that the paper had taught its own readers. For example, this writer does not have to explain his assertions about over-population and over-wealth because it would be quite clear to any reader of *Justice* that he referred to Malthus's population theory. Readers would be quite familiar with the paper's repeated lessons that Malthus's ideas were mistaken, misused, or misunderstood, and Huxley's error would be apparent. Their specific critiques, therefore, were made in an effort to expose mainstream science as bourgeois ideology. Socialist critics discredited authorities' claims by demonstrating that their methodology and hegemonic position were bound up together: Huxley and Spencer were "authorities" because they assert and rationalized bourgeois ideology, and they were methodologically limited by their need to assert the hegemony of their scientific positions and their individual authority.

The ideological allegiances of dominant interpretations of Darwinian evolution are specifically critiqued and debunked in three apparently unrelated articles in *Justice*, all titled "The Survival of the Fittest": by H.M. Hyndman in 1885, John Fielding in 1887, and H. Willis-Harris in 1888. Willis-Harris begins by making a familiar point that dominant scientific theories are suspicious because they are not disinterested, and their selective attention and deliberate misuse of Darwin's discoveries renders their theories illegitimate: "Every discovery of science, every invention of mankind, has been seized by the bourgeois to delude and exploit the proletariat. ...the bourgeois accept the teachings of Malthus and pervert those of Darwin to bolster up the tottering fabric of society to-day, and they steal from the armoury of the evolutionist weapons which they will use in their own defense" (2). Taking a similar line, Hyndman's article considers whether the phrase "survival of the fittest" makes sense if one considers what kind of people actually succeed in modern capitalist society: "animate money-bags" such as "a Grosvenor, a Ward, a Rothschild or a Vanderbilt" (2). He declares that these are clearly not the "best" human specimens in any moral or biological sense, but rather the conditions of their birth – not evolutionary adaptation – have made them "fittest" to survive. He continues: "Under capitalism, competition, and the degrading domination of purely pecuniary interests those survive and do well who are specially cunning, astute, miserly, and dexterous, or who have inherited the means of purchasing the services of men who possess these qualities. Are these, therefore, the 'fittest' in any high sense? Assuredly not" (2). He points out an artificial historical condition – capitalism – has made these qualities most advantageous, not nature: "Change, then, the surroundings and do not thus deliberately foster conditions which favor the survival of the unfittest for social happiness. Yes, that is what modern society tends to – the survival of the unfittest" (2).

Fielding makes a similar point in his "Survival of the Fittest" but takes the argument a step further. Like Hyndman and Willis-Harris, Fielding criticizes those who "coolly assume[] that the word 'fittest' necessarily means the best, and that to put an end to the hellish warfare, euphemistically termed competition, would stop progress and lead to a deterioration of the human

race by allowing the unfit to survive and propagate their kind" (2). But the conclusion Fielding draws from this belies his materialist analysis and reveals the idealist assumptions that form the core contradiction in late-Victorian socialist thought. He continues, "We Social Democrats maintain that in the incessant strife of modern commerce the higher and nobler instincts of humanity instead of being strengthened and developed are weakened and crushed out. ...The greediest, the most brutal, and the most unscrupulous are thus the fittest for the conditions as they now exist" (2). The "higher and nobler instincts of humanity" that Fielding insists on is a Victorian moral ideal, and this assumption marks the limit to which he is capable of extending his materialist analysis and ideology critique. The socialist evolution developed in *Justice* and the *Commonweal* by Fielding and others was the product of and an argument for their historical materialist critique, yet the idealist strain underlying their conclusions exposes the extent to which the ideology of Victorian morality limits their analysis.

Examination of socialist evolution therefore exposes the contradiction their idealism creates at the center of their scientific theory and socialist position. This underlying idealism also led these writers to extend their theory of evolution in the same utopian direction that Engels critiqued and warned against. These writers rightly critiqued the ideological interpretations of evolutionary theory and argued that the end of capitalism would bring about the end to struggle and competition, and proposed that after the revolution a new evolutionary trajectory could unfold independent of capitalist influence. Post-capitalist evolution is unknowable, and imagining it is as unprofitable as utopian dreaming. When these writers critiqued the dominant interpretations of evolution, however, they often could not resist, and began imagining a utopian evolution, arguing specifically that once capitalist forces ceased, humans would evolve toward greater cooperation and through natural selection develop traits making them increasingly "fit" for a cooperative society.

The idea that cooperation is the next stage in human evolution was a common conclusion for socialists. In his "Survival of the Fittest" article, Hyndman argues that people have the ability and the responsibility to

change the capitalist conditions that artificially produce struggle within the species, a change that requires and is also supported by a new science:

But the truths of scientific socialism, the doctrines of the development of economical forces and the social state dependent thereon, are spreading rapidly among the mass of the people. They are attaching a new meaning to scientific phrases and are determining that they will use science to change conditions so that the best and not the worst – in the sense of moral and physical development – shall alone survive: and for man at least the struggle for existence shall be changed into the co-operation for existence. (2)

Willis-Harris also concludes that "in place of the struggle for existence between individuals, society that has grown out of barbarism should strive for the co-operation for the existence of society as society. The struggle for existence being replaced by the struggle of the whole to bring about a better system, where the interest of the one shall be the interest of all" (2). These writers imagine a utopian future that sets humanity on a utopian evolutionary track, and their visions of a cooperative society producing superior "moral and physical development" are direct products of their society's dominant moral ideals. The idealism of socialist evolution therefore makes clear the hegemony of the Victorian moral system: the bourgeois, liberal program wherein the sole purpose of every individual's life is to work hard and achieve his/her proper relation to the community.

William Morris's Evolutionary Socialism

This critique of the evolutionary theory developed by these late-Victorian socialists extends to William Morris's use of science as well. The numerous evocations and analyses of science in his socialist and aesthetic writings have gone largely unnoticed by Morris's readers, yet examination of this frequent theme reveals the extent to which his writing was in conversation with the above-mentioned writers. Specifically, his criticisms of late-Victorian scientific thought – including socialist scientific thought – demonstrate that Morris was convinced that a society of idealized cooperation

would follow the revolution, and therefore reveal the idealist, utopian undercurrents in his socialism, which Morris recognized and proclaimed “practical socialism.”

Morris began actively contributing to critiques of mainstream science as early as 1877 in “The Lesser Arts.” In the essay he criticizes a personified “Science” for failing to address social ills because “she” is manipulated by capitalist interests: “And Science – we have loved her well, and followed her diligently, what will she do? I fear she is so much in the pay of the counting-house, the counting-house and the drill-sergeant, that she is too busy, and will for the present do nothing” (24-25). He continues this line of thought in “The Aims of Art” (1886): “Science will grow more and more one-sided, more incomplete, more wordy and useless, till at last she will pile herself up into such a mass of superstition, that beside it the theologies of old time will seem mere reason and enlightenment” (95). Morris also follows the common socialist argument described above by dichotomizing humans from nature. He wholeheartedly endorsed the theory that a socialist revolution would spur a corresponding revolution in humankind’s control over natural forces, and that both phenomena would bring humanity toward increasing states of co-operation. In the “Summary of the Principles of Socialism, Written for the Democratic Federation,” co-written with Hyndman and appearing in *Justice* in 1884, they argue that human control over nature will be the cause and benefit of “the Revolution” and that “The increased power of man over nature is gained by co-operation, by social machinery, by associated labour, by skillfully concerted work” (61). This clear correspondence between material conditions and humanity’s experience of “natural” forces underwrites the direct line of influence between economic revolution and biological evolution that Morris presupposes in *News from Nowhere*.

While the socialists discussed above actively sought to avoid the utopianism and moral idealism which my analysis has uncovered, Morris proudly displayed these features on the surface of his scientific socialism as the crucial difference between it and the socialist intentions of his contemporaries. In his 1887 essay “The Society of the Future,” Morris describes the difference as between socialists like those whom he calls “constructive,”

"the visionaries or *practical people*," and those whom he calls "analytical" (174-75). He explains that "practical" socialists "are concerned to mak[e] our claims for the changes in Society which we believe would set labour free and thus bring about a new Society" (174). Morris's "practical" socialists were therefore not *revolutionary*, but *evolutionary* socialists: they believed in instituting piecemeal reforms in order to gradually bring society toward a desired ideal. In addition to developing and endorsing the socialist scientific theory of evolution, this group applied the theory of evolution to human history and viewed social change as proceeding on an evolutionary – not revolutionary – trajectory.¹⁶ This view is evident in their frequent discussions of "historical evolution" which trace the historical processes that have led up to the current stage of capitalism and conclude that socialism is inevitably the next stage in human social and economic development.¹⁷ This view of historical evolution supported a "practical" socialism like Morris's that demanded the institution of individual reforms in order to begin building today the socialist society that was already inevitably developing.

In "The Society of the Future" Morris anticipates accusations of utopian dreaming, which he claims he would never participate in, but in the end he concedes,

Nevertheless, we do partly know the direction which the development of the world will take in the immediate future; the evolution of past history teaches us that. We know the world cannot go back on its footsteps, and that men will develop swiftly both bodily and mentally in the new Society; we know that men in general will feel the obligations of Society much more than the latter generations have done; that the necessity for co-operation in production and life in general will be more consciously felt than it has been; that the comparative ease of life which the freeing of labour will bring about will be rarer because there will not be the same temptation to it; that increased ease of life and education combined will tend to free us from disease of body and mind. (174-75)

Morris can claim that his predictions about feeling “the obligations of Society” and “the necessity for co-operation” are separate from utopian dreaming because he assumes these are among the absolute features of human progress. The perfection toward which he sees humankind progressing is defined by Victorian bourgeois ideals of ethics, morality, and nostalgia for an ideal communal past. As examination of *News from Nowhere* will confirm, the coincidence he posits between an inevitably more cooperative society and the resulting improvements in body and mind rests on the logic of a specifically Victorian moral system.

Like many of his socialist contemporaries, Morris was anxious that revolution would destroy society’s core morals and values. A revolution would lead participants to abandon moral principles during the inevitable clash of violence and turmoil that would follow, and the new society formed after the revolution would therefore be unlikely to morally recover and reinstate the values Victorians saw as the ideal foundation of social stability and cohesion. This concern arose at least in part in reaction to the current environment of strikes, protests, and revolutionary fervor arising in the streets and in the pages of *Justice* and the *Commonweal*, and the anticipation of the revolution many socialists believed was so close at hand. Fear for the loss of society’s values convinced those like Morris’s “practical socialists” that the greatest need was not for preparation for revolution, but for social reforms that would hasten the inevitable evolution of human society toward a state of Victorian perfection.

Morris designs his utopia Nowhere as a society perfected through the complete development of Victorian moral ideals, which are retained and achieved entirely through the violent and wholesale revolution that would make it a logical impossibility. This is, of course, the fundamental contradiction within Morris’s novel. The bodily beauty his utopians enjoy is possible precisely because socialist evolutionary theory insisted that humanity could take charge of its relation to nature by redirecting the principles of natural selection: economic revolution is the necessary condition for and result of the mental, moral, and physical progress of humanity that would “develop swiftly both bodily and mentally in the new Society” (174). Yet the bodily

and mental developments his utopists exhibit are not features of a entirely new society, but are in fact the perfection of specifically Victorian aesthetic and moral bourgeois ideals. In other words, while Morris's characters attribute their utopia to the revolution they describe in detail, the characters' actual features are the logical conclusions of an evolutionary socialism directed by a specifically Victorian ideological program, thus giving the lie to the novel's claims to a pure revolutionary socialist politics.

Socialist Evolution in *News from Nowhere*

The preceding discussion has gone a long way to contextualize Morris's utopian novel *News from Nowhere*. I mean to suggest that a full understanding of the conversations about science and evolution occurring within socialist circles shaped Morris's ideas about evolution, and that without doubt he was participating in those conversations through his remarks on science and evolution in his novel. I do not mean to propose that it is in fact a coded declaration of socialist evolutionary theory,¹⁸ but merely to clarify our understanding of the import of Morris's remarks on science, heredity, and his utopists' physical beauty. Moreover, these features of the novel have gone mostly unnoticed by scholars, and those few critics who do tackle these questions hastily conclude that Morris's beautiful citizens are the result of a forced positive eugenics, a position which I will argue against.

Morris's novel ran serially in *Commonweal* beginning in January 1890. He was inspired to write primarily by the appearance the year before of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, which Morris reviewed unfavorably in the *Commonweal*.¹⁸ The bulk of *News* is devoted to describing the future society through conversation between the time-traveling Victorian William Guest (a version of Morris himself) and his guide Hammond (who we learn is Guest's centenarian grandson). Through their discussions, both characters serve to deliver many of Morris's critiques of nineteenth-century society. His assault on science from "The Hopes of Civilization," for example, is recapitulated exactly:

the so-called science of the nineteenth century, which, as you must know, was in the main an appendage to the

commercial system; nay, not seldom an appendage to the police of that system. In spite of appearances, it was limited and cowardly, because it did not really believe in itself. It was the outcome, as it was the sole relief, of the unhappiness of the period which made life so bitter even to the rich, and which, as you may see with your bodily eyes, the great change has swept away. (113)

The accusation that science “did not really believe in itself” recalls Engels’ accusation that natural scientists were not materialists: even though their discoveries were fueled by nineteenth-century obsessions with empirical evidence, they produced ideological, not materialist, interpretations of that evidence. Their science therefore concluded that “the unhappiness of the period” was natural, inevitable, and unending.

In addition to critiquing mainstream Victorian science, Morris’s utopia understands human biological evolution according to the exact socialist scientific theory outlined above. In the novel, economic revolution has had direct impact on human biological evolution, and it has allowed humanity to separate itself from “natural” forces and to exit the “survival of the fittest.” An important example is found in a passage that readers of Morris’s novel have found baffling. In response to Guest’s questioning, Hammond describes his society’s views on motherhood:

A mother has no longer any mere sordid anxieties for the future of her children... [as] she knows that they will live and act according to the measure of their own faculties. In times past, it is clear that the ‘Society’ of the day helped its Judaic god, and the ‘Man of Science’ of the time, in visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children. How to reverse this process, how to take the sting out of heredity, has for long been one of the most constant cares of the thoughtful men amongst us. (53)

That children are free to “live and act according to the measure of their own faculties” recalls the arguments made in *Justice* that capitalism produced “survival of the *unfittest*” and therefore retarded improvement of the human

species by discouraging an actually *natural* selection. Whereas science, specifically Social Darwinism, used to legitimize the vicious cycle of "visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children" by declaring poverty a natural phenomenon resulting from the struggle for existence, Morris's utopists have succeeded in "tak[ing] the sting out of heredity" by eradicating private property, exploitative labor, and class struggle. It is interesting to note that this argument is recapitulated by an article in the *Commonweal* that appeared the week after the issue containing this installment of Morris's novel. In "Prof. Huxley and His Natural Rights," Andreas Scheu declares confidently that

On the whole, I cannot see why Socialists should be indignant at the Professor's contentions ... there is nothing in his mixture of truths and fallacies which could injure Socialism, and much that will be found to support it. ... We modern Socialists ... say nothing of *natural* rights, because we know that society is not in a natural state, and that in consequence of the unequal distribution of wealth and public power the rights of the favoured classes are anything but natural. We know, further, without the aid of any professor (thanks all the same!) that at present no two newborn babies are 'equal.' On the contrary, and just because we know they are *unequal*, not only as to their inherited physical and mental endowments, but also as to their surroundings and facilities of existence in a society in which all are at war with each other; ... it is because we are aware of all this, that we demand the abolition of all such rights and privileges. (84)

News from Nowhere takes the exact same position on "nature" a few chapters later when Guest says, "'I have been told that political strife was a necessary result of human nature.' 'Human nature!' cried the old boy [Hammond], impetuously; 'what human nature? The human nature of paupers, of slaves, of slave-holders, or the human nature of wealthy freeman? Which? Come, tell me that!' 'Well,' said I, 'I suppose there would be a difference according to circumstances'" (75).

The most fascinating example of Morris's position on socialist evolution occurs when Hammond describes how ugly nineteenth-century bodies appear from his society's perspective:

It is said that in the early days of our epoch there were a good many people who were hereditarily afflicted with a disease called Idleness, because they were the direct descendants of those who in the bad times used to force other people to work for them – the people, you know, who are called slave-holders or employers of labour in the history books. Well, these Idleness-stricken people ... especially the women, got so ugly and produced such ugly children if their disease was not treated sharply, that the neighbors couldn't stand it. ... I have seen some of those poor women grown old. But my father used to know some of them when they were young; and he said that they were as little like young women as might be: they had hands like bunches of skewers, and wretched little arms like sticks; and waists like hour-glasses, and thin lips and peaked noses and pale cheeks; and they were always pretending to be offended at anything you said or did to them. No wonder they bore such ugly children, for no one except men like them could be in love with them – poor things! (34)

In what must have been a shocking reversal for Morris's original readers, the ugliest Victorian bodies belong to the upper classes. It is the rich who, through "the survival of the *unfittest*," caused humankind to evolve uglier and uglier bodies. Their disease of "Idleness" is hereditarily passed down from generation to generation, perverting Morris's famous principle: that work and the creation of beauty should be the pleasure of all human lives. In this instance we see that the course of biological evolution has been shaped not by nature, but first by the historical and artificial capitalist conditions, and later by human choices to overturn this system. What appeared to be beautiful and desirable under capitalism – young women with "hands like bunches of skewers, and wretched little arms like sticks; and waists like

hour-glasses, and thin lips and peaked noses and pale cheeks" – looks hideous and diseased to Morris's utopists when compared with the healthy glow of exercise that Nowhere's young women display.

In the passage with which I began this essay, Hammond remarks that this pervasive beauty occurs because they have so "improved" the "English blood" (54). The action and intent this language implies has been read by some as a direct reference to eugenics as the real explanation for Nowhere's beautiful bodies. Peter Morton asserts that "State-manipulated breeding and child-rearing is one of the major recurring themes of the Utopian fiction written between 1870 and 1900" (96), and that "Eugenics was indeed a component in most of the utopian writing after 1870" (129). Following his lead, Patrick Parrinder remarks that "Any utopia from before the age of plastic surgery which emphasizes the physical beauty of its inhabitants is likely to be referring to the effects of a deliberate or inadvertent eugenic policy. *News from Nowhere* is one such utopia" (np). He references Morris's statement that the utopists have learned "how to take the sting out of heredity," and concludes, "Had Morris deliberately intended to show Hammond as a champion of libertarian eugenics, he could hardly have been more explicit. ... This passage is so cautious and vague that it would be mistaken to hang too much upon it; but a utopia where the sting has been taken out of heredity must be a utopia at least mildly eugenic." Piers J. Hale joins this group when he misreads Morris's remarks about "making socialists" through education as pertaining to eugenics (19).¹⁹

I have found nothing in the socialist writings from the 1880s to support these assertions. Though eugenics was certainly an established concept by 1890, it is debatable how much it had penetrated popular discourse, and there is no evidence of its appeal registered in the pages of *Justice* or the *Commonweal* between 1884 and 1890. Moreover, Morris himself, speaking through his character Hammond, emphatically rejects one possible form of this practice:

The only alternatives to our method that I can conceive of are these. First that we should choose out, or breed, a class of superior persons capable of judging on all matters with-

out consulting the neighbors; that, in short, we should get for ourselves what used to be called an aristocracy of intellect; or, secondly, that for the purpose of safe-guarding the freedom of the individual will, we should revert to a system of private property again, and have slaves and slave-holders once more. (77)

Selective breeding of an intellectual élite is presented by Morris as detestable an alternative as a return to capitalist slavery. Moreover, since *Nowhere* has done away with private property, husbands and wives no longer own each other and are no longer bound in an exploitative material relationship, resulting in the novel's often-noted atmosphere of "free love." A program of forced eugenicist breeding would be completely contradictory to Morris's utopian vision of a society where – to return again to the quotation with which I began this essay – "the natural and healthy love between a man and a woman, even if that be transient, is likely to turn out better in all ways, and especially in bodily beauty, than the birth of the respectable commercial marriage bed, or of the dull despair of the drudge of that system. They say, Pleasure begets pleasure" (54). The eugenics that readers have accused Morris of implies a planned, self-conscious program enforced from without, whereas this description of pleasure in *Nowhere* shows that "bodily beauty" is the intrinsic product of individual desire alone. After the revolution, the family is no longer an economic system or mode of production supporting capitalism, and the production of children no longer supports that system. "Pleasure begets pleasure" because individual desire directs sexual partnering and reproduction and results in the production of healthier children, and the fact that desire and pleasure is the sole force directing reproduction in *Nowhere* is finally what renders any program of eugenics impossible.

Far from being the result of any eugenicist program, the bodily beauty Morris's utopists enjoy is presented in *News from Nowhere* as evidence of the course human biological evolution would take after economic revolution freed humanity from the physical deterioration suffered from industrial labor. Once liberated from the artificial conditions of capitalist competition, human society could exit the survival of the fittest and evolve toward a state

of ever-increasing cooperation, and as a result humans would biologically evolve through the emergence of traits most advantageous under this new economic system. While strict socialism insists that the form society will take after economic revolution is entirely unknowable, Morris's immersion in two contradictory socialist philosophies – his evolutionary or "practical" socialism coupled with his knowledge of socialist evolutionary science – allowed him to imagine a utopian world where humans evolve according to a "survival of the fittest" where "fitness" is measured according to Morris's aesthetic and Victorian moral ideals.

Syracuse University

Notes

¹ The two important studies on the relevance of biology and evolutionary theory to nineteenth-century British radical politics are Greta Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought: The Interaction between Biological and Social Theory* (The Harvester Press, 1980), and Adrian Desmond, *The Politics of Evolution: Morphology, Medicine, and Reform in Radical London* (U of Chicago P, 1989).

² On the impact of Comte's theories, see T.R. Wright, *The Religion of Humanity: The Impact of Comtean Positivism on Victorian Britain* (Cambridge UP, 1986). On the impact on discoveries in the natural sciences, see *1859: Entering an Age of Crisis*, ed. Philip Appleman *et al.* (Indiana UP, 1959).

³ See, for example, Geoffrey M. Hodgson, "Decomposition and Growth: Biological Metaphors in Economics from the 1880s to the 1980s," in *The Evolutionary Foundations of Economics*, ed. Kurt Dopfer (Cambridge UP, 2005), 105-48.

⁴ Studies that I have found useful though limited in their approach include Piers J. Hale, "Of Mice and Men: Evolution and the Socialist Utopia: William Morris, H.G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw"; Erin McLaughlin-Jenkins, "Common Knowledge: Science and the Late Victorian Working-Class Press"; Peter Morton, *The Vital Science: Biology and the Literary Imagination, 1860-1900*, especially chapters 4 and 5; Gerald Runkle, "Marx-

ism and Charles Darwin”; and David Stack, “The First Darwinian Left: Radical and Socialist Responses to Darwin, 1859-1914,” and *The First Darwinian Left: Socialism and Darwinism, 1859-1914*.

⁵ Immanuel Wallerstein argues that socialist, liberal, and conservative are the three nineteenth-century ideologies that in turn shaped the developing fields of social science. See *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms* (1991), especially Ch. 1, and “Should We Unthink the Nineteenth Century?” in *Rethinking the Nineteenth Century: Contradictions and Movements*, ed. Franco O. Ramirez (1988).

⁶ Though “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific” was not translated into English until 1892, it is clear that this text was readily available in the original French and widely within Victorian socialist circles by the mid-1880s. I make this claim based on the recapitulations of Engels’ discussion of the early utopians – Robert Owen, Saint-Simon, and Fourier – in articles in *Justice* and in Morris’s “Hopes and Fears for Art” (1885).

⁷ Morris’s departure from the SDF appears to have been amicable, and it did not entail a complete split from Hyndman or *Justice*, which routinely advertised and favorably reviewed Morris’s publications and public lectures.

⁸ The best account of Morris’s development as a socialist remains E.P. Thompson’s *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. For accounts treating Morris’s place in the history of early British socialism, see James W. Hulse, *Revolutionists in London: A Study of Five Unorthodox Socialists*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970; Stanley Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism: The Struggle for a New Consciousness* (Cornell UP, 1973); and Chris Waters, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture, 1884-1914* (Stanford UP, 1990).

⁹ Engels’ point of course applies to Morris’s *News from Nowhere*, though space does not permit me to fully develop a critique of utopianism here. The novel is properly socialist in that it is Morris’s primary intention to depict utopia in order to stir discontent and raise awareness among a working-class readership, thus preparing conditions for revolution. The first page of the novel gives the exact reason why William Guest dreams of a utopian future: he is ready to be converted to a socialist politics, if only ““I could but

see a day of it,' he said to himself; 'if I could but see it!'" (3). As a utopian novel, however, it is a categorically flawed Marxist project because, as for Marx and Engels, the question of utopia distracts from the project at hand: "But if the designing of the future and the proclamation of ready-made solutions for all time is not our affair, then we realize all the more clearly what we have to accomplish in the present – I am speaking of a *ruthless criticism of everything existing*, ruthless in two senses: The criticism must not be afraid of its own conclusions, nor of conflict with the powers that be" (letter to Arnold Ruge, September 1843; 13).

¹⁰ Edward B. Aveling's scientific publications include: *The Student's Darwin* (1881); *Biological Discoveries and Problems* (1881); "Darwinism and Small Families" (1882); *General Biology, Theoretical and Practical* (1882); *The Religious Views of Charles Darwin* (1883); "The Gospel of Evolution" (in Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant's *The Atheistic Platform*, 1884); and "The Darwinian Theory" (1884), "The Origin of Man" (1884), and "Monkeys, Apes and Men" (1885), all three collected and published as *The People's Darwin; or, Darwin Made Easy* (1885). In 1887 Aveling translated the third German edition of *Capital* into English along with Samuel More and under Engels' editorship. In 1892 he translated Engels' "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," again authorized by Engels. In 1892 he published *The Students' Marx: An Introduction to the Study of Karl Marx's Capital*, and in 1897 he published in the *New Century Review*, "Charles Darwin and Karl Marx: A Comparison," which was subsequently translated and printed as a pamphlet all over Europe.

¹¹ Aveling revised this passage three years later for "The Darwinian Theory" (1884): "The struggle for life. The world is one great battlefield. Beneath its surface, within the depths of its waters, in the very air is eternal strife. All living beings are ceaselessly fighting. The life of our great cities, with its contest of class with class, of individual with individual, is the type of all life. In the darkness of the soil of the earth the roots of the plants are struggling with each other for food. In the microscopic drop of water the Infusoria sweep ceaselessly round and round, searching for the food that is not sufficient for them all. Every living thing is an Ishmael. Its hand is

against all others. The hands of all others are against it. And as among men, so also among the more lowly organised creatures, the bitterest struggle is ever between those who are akin one to another. *Væ victis*, woe to the conquered, is the cry of the world. If plant or animal does not succeed, it perishes. How does nature, in her silent, imperturbable fashion, take advantage of these eternal variations in the flowers and in the animals? By Natural Selection, or the survival of the fittest. Who are to be the survivors in this battle? Who are doomed to be numbered among the slain? Those best fitted for the struggle will survive. Those not adapted to the circumstances of the unending fight are doomed. The fittest will hold out the longest. That which possesses in strength of in any other way an advantage over its fellows will conquer them in the struggle for existence" (8-9).

¹² An important figure in the development of these ideas, which space does not permit me to discuss at length, is Alfred Russel Wallace, co-discoverer of evolution and, in the second half of his life an active participant in socialist and radical platforms. For more on Wallace's socialism and his theory of evolution, see especially Richard Clements, *Alfred Russel Wallace: Biologist and Social Reformer* (Hutchinson, 1983) and Martin Fichman, *An Elusive Victorian: The Evolution of Alfred Russel Wallace* (U of Chicago P, 2004).

¹³ Space does not permit me to discuss *To-day*, another widely read periodical that was enthusiastically promoted in the pages of *Justice*. See especially, William Boulting, "Misapplied Darwinism" (1.2 [February 1884]: 91-97); E. Belfort Bax, "Unscientific Socialism" (1.3 [March 1884]: 192-204); and Paul Lafarge, "A Few Words with Mr. Herbert Spencer" (1.6 [June 1884]: 416-27).

¹⁴ See also Erin McLaughlin-Jenkins' discussion of this passage (457).

¹⁵ Kropotkin developed his ideas about evolution much further in *Mutual Aid*, appearing as a series of articles published in the *Nineteenth Century* from 1890-96 and then in book form in 1902. Kropotkin was prompted to write in response to Huxley's "The Struggle for Existence in Human Society," which appeared in 1888, also in *Nineteenth Century*. On *Mutual Aid*, see David Stack ("First" 698) and Piers J. Hale (22). For a useful reading of

Huxley's essay, see Michael S. Helfand's "T.H. Huxley's 'Evolution and Ethics': The Politics of Evolution and the Evolution of Politics," *Victorian Studies* 20.2 (Winter 1977): 159-77.

¹⁶ Thomas Bolas explicitly links "practical" and evolutionary socialism in the subtitle of his journal *The Practical Socialist*: "A Monthly Review of Evolutionary, or Non-Revolutionary Socialism" (March 1887, 2.15).

¹⁷ A key example is Morris's "Socialism from the Root Up," co-written with E. Belfort Bax and appearing serially in the *Commonweal* between 1886 and 1888. Their long and ambitious text details this historical evolution, describing the evolution of human society and anticipating its next socialist stage. From the final chapter: "We may be asked, since we have been putting forward the doctrine of evolution throughout these chapters, what Socialism in its turn will evolve. We can only answer that Socialism denies the finality of human progress and that any system of which we can now conceive of as Socialism must necessarily give way to a new development of society. But that development is necessarily hidden from us by the unfinished struggle in which we live..." (621-22). Morris discusses "historical evolution" (319) again in his essay "The Revival of Architecture": "History taught us the evolution of architecture, it is now teaching us the evolution of society; and it is clear to us, and even to many who refuse to acknowledge it, that the society which is developing out of ours will not need or endure mechanical drudgery as the lot of the general population; that the new society will not be hag-ridden as we are by the necessity for producing ever more and more market-wares for a profit, whether any one needs them or not; that it will produce to live, and not live to produce, as we do" (330).

¹⁸ Compelling recent arguments about Morris's novel include Matthew Beaumont's "*News from Nowhere* and the Here and Now: Reification and the Representation of the Present in Utopian Fiction" and Michael Holzman's "Anarchism and Utopia: William Morris's *News from Nowhere*." See also Ruth Kinna's "William Morris: Art, Work, and Leisure" for a thorough discussion of Morris's Marxism and resulting conception of a socialist future.

¹⁹ For discussion of Bellamy's influence on *News from Nowhere*, see Stephen Coleman, "The Economics of Utopia: Morris and Bellamy Contrasted," *Journal of the William Morris Society* 8.2 (1989): 2-6.; and Alexander MacDonald, "Bellamy, Morris, and the Great Victorian Debate," *Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris*, ed. Florence S. Boos and Carole G. Silver (U of Missouri P, 1990), 74-87. For a discussion of evolution in Bellamy's novel, see Matthew Hartman, "Utopian Evolution: The Sentimental Critique of Social Darwinism in Bellamy and Peirce," *Utopian Studies* 10.1 (1999): 26-41.

²⁰ See Stephen Coleman for a clarification of Morris's injunction to "make socialists" through education. "'Therefore, I say, make Socialists,' wrote Morris in 1890. 'We Socialists can do nothing else that is useful, and preaching and teaching is not out of date for that purpose; but rather for those who, like myself, do not believe in State Socialism, it is the only rational means of attaining to the New Order of Things.' This was the same policy as that stated at the outset of the Socialist League in 1885: 'The work that lies before us at present is to *make Socialists*, to cover the country with a network of associations composed of men who feel their antagonism to the dominant classes, and have no temptation to waste their time in the thousand lollies of party politics'" (50).

Works Cited

- Aveling, Edward B. "The Darwinian Theory." 1884. *The People's Darwin, or, Darwin Made Easy*. London: R. Forder, 1885. 1-48.
- . *The Student's Darwin*. London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1881. Facsimile reprint edition, Kessinger Publishing, 2006.
- Coleman, Stephen. "William Morris and 'Education Towards Revolution': 'Making Socialists' versus 'Putting Them in Their Place.'" *Journal of the William Morris Society* 11.1 (August 1994): 49-58.
- Engels, Friedrich. "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific." *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 2nd ed. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978. 683-717.
- Fielding, John. "The Survival of the Fittest." *Justice* 4.165 (12 March

1887): 2-3.

Hale, Piers J. "Of Mice and Men: Evolution and the Socialist Utopia: William Morris, H.G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw." *Journal of the History of Biology* 43.1 (February 2010): 17-66.

Holzman, Michael. "Anarchism and Utopia: William Morris's *News from Nowhere*." *ELH* 51.9 (Fall 1984): 589-603.

"Huxley as a Bourgeois Scientist." *Justice* 5.215 (25 February 1888): 1.

Hyndman, H.M. "Survival of the Fittest." *Justice* 2.101 (19 December 1885): 2.

Hyndman, H.M., and William Morris. *Summary of the Principles of Socialism Written for the Democratic Federation*. London: The Modern Press, 1884.

"In Six Days..." *Justice* 20 September 1884: 5.

Kropotkin, Peter. "An Appeal to the Young." *Justice* 1.3 (2 February 1884): 2.

McLaughlin-Jenkins, Erin. "Common Knowledge: Science and the Late Victorian Working-Class Press." *History of Science* 39 (2001): 445-65.

Morris, William. "The Aims of Art." 1886. *The Collected Works of William Morris*. Vol. 23. 1895. Facsimile reprint edition, Elibrion Classics, 2006. 81-97.

———. "The Hopes of Civilization." 1885. *The Collected Works of William Morris*. Vol. 23 (1895). Facsimile reprint edition, Elibrion Classics, 2006. 59-80.

———. "The Lesser Arts." 1877. *The Collected Works of William Morris*. Vol. 22 (1895). Facsimile reprint edition, Elibrion Classics, 2006. 3-27.

———. *News from Nowhere*. 1890. Ed. David Leopold. Oxford UP, 2003.

———. "The Revival of Architecture." 1888. *The Collected Works of William Morris*. Vol. 22 (1895). Facsimile reprint edition. Elibrion Classics, 2006. 318-30.

———. "The Society of the Future." 1887. *William Morris on Art and Socialism*. Ed. Norman Kelvin. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999. 174-84.

Morris, William, and E. Belfort Bax. *Socialism from the Root Up*. 1886-88. *Political Writings: Contributions to Justice and Commonweal, 1883-*

1890. Ed. Nicholas Salmon. Bristol, Thoemmes Press, 1994. 495-622.
- Morton, Peter. *The Vital Science: Biology and the Literary Imagination, 1860-1900*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984.
- Parrinder, Patrick. "Eugenics and Utopia: Sexual Selection from Galton to Morris." *Utopian Studies* 8.2 (1997): 1-12.
- Runkle, Gerald. "Marxism and Charles Darwin." *The Journal of Politics* 23.1 (1961): 108-26.
- Scheu, Andreas. "Prof. Huxley and His Natural Rights." *Commonweal* 6.218 (15 March 1890): 84-85.
- Stack, David. "The First Darwinian Left: Radical and Socialist Responses to Darwin, 1859-1914." *History of Political Thought* 21.4 (2000): 682-710.
- . *The First Darwinian Left: Socialism and Darwinism, 1859-1914*. Cheltenham, New Clarion Press, 2003.
- "Tell-Tale Straws." *Justice* (19 July 1884), 5.
- Thompson, E.P. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. 1955. Reissue. Stanford UP, 1988.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. "Should We Unthink the Nineteenth Century?" *Rethinking the Nineteenth Century: Contradictions and Movements*. Ed. Franco O. Ramirez. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988. 185-92.
- . *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1991.
- Willis-Harris, H. "The Survival of the Fittest." *Justice* 5.222 (28 April 1888), 2.

