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Victorian Literature and Culture (2016), **44**, 887–906.
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doi:10.1017/S1060150316000267

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S EVOLUTIONARY WORDSWORTH

By Trenton B. Olsen

I. Introduction

WHILE CREDITING WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S tutelage in his 1887 essay "Books Which Have Influenced Me," Robert Louis Stevenson indicates that the poet's contribution to his writing is difficult to pin down: "Wordsworth should perhaps come next. Every one has been influenced by Wordsworth and it is hard to tell precisely how" (164). Seeking to understand this relationship, I examined Stevenson's copy of Wordsworth's *The Poetical Works* (1858) at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. Stevenson's penciled markings, cross-references, and annotations fill the six-volume set, indicating careful and repeated reading over many years.[1] Stevenson purchased the edition as he was entering adulthood in Edinburgh, and kept it with him until the end of his life in Samoa. While Stevenson's marginalia cannot be precisely dated, the handwriting alongside Wordsworth's poetry ranges from the large sloped script of his early years (1870–1874) to the smaller, more rounded and upright letters he used in the final period of his life (1890–1894).[2] Given this record and the frequency and depth of Stevenson's allusions to Wordsworth in his fiction, essays, and letters, it is surprising that no study of the relationship has been undertaken. In recent book-length studies of Romantic influences on Victorian writing, Stevenson is rarely mentioned, and never in connection with Wordsworth.[3] Even Stephen Gill's encyclopedic *Wordsworth and the Victorians* makes no reference to Stevenson.

In Stevenson's marginalia to Wordsworth, praise and criticism often intermingle, reflecting his deeply ambivalent response to the poet. Stevenson's inscription in the first volume's inside cover evinces this tension: "Wordsworth has written much that life is too short for us to read – much also that life is too bare of enjoyment for us voluntarily to miss." Next to "Strange fits of passion," Stevenson penned the backhanded compliment, "How perfect . . . the first verse only is feeble," and followed his complaint about "Scorn not the sonnet" with sincere admiration: "Just as this string of conceits begins to weary, come these three inevitable concluding lines" (MS I.215, II.278). In these two-sided assessments Stevenson both rejected and applauded Wordsworth's poetry. Ventriloquizing his fictional friend, Mr. Pegfurth Bannatyne, Stevenson called Wordsworth "a milk-blooded, blue-spectacled bitch," but acknowledged "his po'mes are grand – there's no denying that" (*Letters* 3: 339). Stevenson corrected Wordsworth's grammar and wrote the ironic exclamation "verse!" next

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to a particularly prosaic phrase in *The Prelude*, but alongside this disparagement we find not only respect, but profound veneration for the poet (MS V.306).[4] Next to "Proud were ye, Mountains" he wrote: "I don't believe there is a finer sonnet in the world. It is one gorgeous, equable crescendo." He also noted "a splendid sonnet" in the margin of "It is not to be thought of that the Flood" (MS II.320, III.61).

While these annotations mainly address Wordsworth's style, Stevenson's ambivalent engagement with the poet reaches far beneath the surface. In the only published description of Stevenson's annotated edition, George S. Hellman writes that Stevenson is "led by" Wordsworth in its pages, "always in marked sympathy with the elder in the love of nature, in the attitude towards human obligations, [and] in sentimental reactions" (2). As this essay will demonstrate, it was Wordsworth's sentiments on nature and its moral implications which Stevenson found most difficult to accept. Victorian evolutionary theory had opened a wide chasm separating Stevenson from his predecessor on precisely these issues. Though Stevenson's conflicted Romantic inheritance has been overlooked, his response to Victorian science has been less neglected in recent years. Julia Reid's *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* explores Stevenson's engagement with evolutionary thought, arguing that his interest in the primitive spanned his writing career.[5]

Stevenson's divided response to Wordsworth, I will argue, was largely due to his preoccupation with evolutionary theory, as these cultural forces intertwine in his work. Stevenson grappled with Wordsworth's and Darwin's conflicting influences, and his writing bears signs of the struggle. While Darwinism shaped Stevenson's reception of Wordsworth, prompting him to reject some of the poet's ideas and to retain others, Wordsworth's poetry informed his response to evolutionary theory. In tracing this simultaneous engagement, I have relied primarily on Stevenson's direct quotations of and identifiable allusions to Wordsworth, and limited my study to poems which Stevenson specifically marked in his edition. After exploring the intersection of these influences, I will discuss Stevenson's Darwinian revision of Wordsworth and his enlistment of the poet against what he considered evolution's painful elements. Stevenson's Darwinian view of his literary relationship with the poet emerges from this analysis.

While my focus is Stevenson's engagement with Wordsworth and evolution, Darwinian developments in the study of literary influence call for more general commentary. What follows is a close examination of evolutionary theory's influence on a complex literary relationship, emphasizing the writers' subjectivities and idiosyncratic language. I distinguish this approach from objectivist accounts of Darwinian cultural transmission, namely those of Richard Dawkins and Joseph Carroll. Dawkins's "meme" theory holds that cultural transmission is analogous to genetic transmission. Carroll attempts to explain literature broadly as a naturally selected biological advantage. Both scholars minimize the significance of the writer's subjectivity. For Dawkins, "memes propagate themselves by leaping from brain to brain" – minds which are passive receptacles and straightforward transmitters of information (192). Carroll argues that Darwinian "human nature" is both the source and the content of literature (203). This approach, by Carroll's own admission, is reductive, limiting the resulting analysis (*Reading Human Nature* 29). While Dawkins indicates that new memes originate from mistakes in the copying process, I agree with Harold Bloom's argument that these supposed mistakes (or misreadings) are writers' intentional creative acts meant "to clear imaginative space for themselves" (5). I seek to guard against the reductiveness that obscures this creativity in other Darwinian influence studies.[6]

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Some sociobiological scholars of influence have aspired to develop a unifying and all-encompassing theory of culture analogous to Darwin's theory of evolution – an objective which has forced generalized analysis of complex and heterogeneous texts.[7] Unlike objectivist studies of cultural transmission, evolution shapes this essay as an *idea* being transmitted rather than a mere spreading mechanism. It does not matter to Dawkins or Carroll whether the writers in question are conscious of an evolutionary process or not. Carroll performs Darwinian readings of ancient texts because the biological realities, if not the theories, were available to their authors. They are not concerned with evolutionary theory as part of an intellectual climate but as an explanation of how cultural production works. Stevenson was very much aware of natural selection, which provided both content and conceptual framework for his engagement with Wordsworth. Darwinism complicated, rather than simplified, Stevenson's view of literary relationship. He did not merely accept and apply evolutionary theory, but modified it to suit his own creative purposes, just as he revised the poet's work. In this way, Stevenson avoided some of the shortcomings that have hampered modern Darwinian literary scholars.

II. The Intersection of Wordsworth and Darwinism in Stevenson's Work

THE INTERRELATED INFLUENCES OF Wordsworth and evolutionary theory preoccupied Stevenson from the beginning of his career, originating in an early meditation on memory in 1871. In "Cockermouth and Keswick," the twenty-one-year-old Stevenson combines a retrospective account of his Lake District travels with a reflection on memory and place. As Stevenson wanders onto Wordsworth's turf both literally and metaphorically, his path takes a Darwinian turn. He explains that he deliberately delays recording his experience to "allow my memory to choose out what is truly memorable by a process of natural selection; and I piously believe that in this way I ensure the Survival of the Fittest" (*The Works* 101–02). Beneath this witticism lies the beginning of a serious line of inquiry which he would pursue for the rest of his career. The Wordsworthian pattern of experiencing nature, reflecting on the memory, and then writing about it backfires on Stevenson, as he confesses he has forgotten most of the trip. Stevenson describes meeting a hatmaker named Smethurst who typifies Wordsworth's celebration of rural people's ordinary speech, as his words "were so simple and unaffected that they put all the best writing and speaking to the blush" (107). Smethurst proposes a thoroughly Wordsworthian excursion. Because "he had little things in his past life that . . . gave him special pleasure to recall," he would lend Stevenson his raft for a trip down the river so that he could look back "in after years . . . and get great pleasure from the recollection" (107-08). This offer recalls Wordsworth, in "Tintern Abbey," directing Dorothy's experience to help her form beneficial future memories and the poet's own remembered boat excursions in *The Prelude* – all of which are marked in Stevenson's edition. Again, however, the Wordsworthian formula does not quite work, as Stevenson's obligation to enjoy and remember "turned the whole thing from a pleasure into a duty" of which he "soon wearied" (108). While Wordsworth believes that the "memory be[comes] as a dwelling place" and the "mind . . . a mansion for all lovely forms," Stevenson emphasizes that some of these memories fail to achieve "survival of the fittest" (66, 140–42). These disappointments suggest that Wordsworth's poetry would need to interact and compete with evolutionary ideas in Stevenson's writing, and that not all of the poet's material would survive the selection process.

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While Stevenson would later explore the tensions between evolution and Wordsworth's philosophy, this early essay also suggests that Darwinism would make him cling to certain elements of Wordsworth all the more tightly. Stevenson is touched that Smethurst would unselfishly take the trouble to make a memory for him, reflecting "that it gives [him] more pleasure to recall the man himself and his simple, happy conversation" than to remember his boat ride (109). While Smethurst's ideas may not be entirely sound, the benevolent sentiment behind them has a refreshing and redemptive quality that Stevenson values in a Darwinian world: "I find myself facing as stoutly as I can a hard, combative existence, full of doubt, difficulties, ... and dangers ... so that what I want is a happy-minded Smethurst placed here and there at the ugly corners of my life's wayside, preaching his gospel of quiet and contentment" (109). Stevenson is perhaps thinking of Smethurst when he muses in his next essay that "a man who carries a pleasant face about to his friends and neighbors" does more good than someone like Darwin ("On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places" 148). "Cockermouth and Keswick" introduces a pattern that would span Stevenson's career of engaging Wordsworth and evolutionary thought simultaneously, demonstrating Wordsworth's shortcomings against this backdrop, and then using his work as a corrective against evolution's dark side.

Leslie Stephen's 1876 essay "Wordsworth's Ethics," published in his *Cornhill Magazine* the same year Stevenson began writing for it, further solidified Stevenson's perception of the link between Wordsworth's poetry and evolutionary theory. Stephen considers the "real connection" which exists between "the evolutionist" and Wordsworth, "though in one sense they are almost antithetical" (142). Stephen anticipates links that Stevenson would continue to explore: the analogy between Wordsworth's notion of heavenly preexistence and primitive instinct, the poet's supposed neglect of nature's violence, and the power of the mind to recognize harmony beneath nature's chaos.[8] Stephen's essay would have further stimulated his thinking and encouraged him to continue reading Wordsworth through a Darwinian lens.

Stevenson's use of the "Intimations Ode," his most frequently cited Wordsworth text, sheds light on his evolutionary interpretation of the poet's work. Stevenson repeatedly evokes Wordsworth's well-known phrase "trailing clouds of glory," but always in a profoundly different sense from its original reference to a preexistent state with God (64). In his essay "Aes Triplex," with a fitting foreshadowing of his own end, he praises those who "make one brave push" in their work before death: "In the hot-fit of life, a tip-toe on the highest point of being, he passes at a bound on to the other side ... trailing with him clouds of glory, this happy-starred, full-blooded spirit shoots into the spiritual land" (53-54).[9] Here deeds in life, not otherworldly origins, glorify one's passing. The struggle for survival lends its luster to those "full-blooded" individuals vigorously striving in the "hot-fit." For Stevenson, life can thus lend us grandeur, whereas for Wordsworth, our worldly dwelling lessens it as the earth strives "to make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man, / Forget the glories he has known" (82-83). Stevenson, then, renders Wordsworth's spiritual visions temporal, elevating deeds in the earthly struggle – "the highest point of being" – above heavenly origins or destinations.

While Wordsworth celebrates divine purpose and origins, his words aptly describe Stevenson's view of instinctual inheritance. In Stevenson's evolutionary reading of the "Intimations Ode," Wordsworth's "song of thanks and praise" is raised not to our spiritual capacity for transcendence, but to biologically inherited "high instincts" of prehistoric origins, the "first affections," and "shadowy recollections" "of a Creature," which "are yet a master light of all our seeing" and behavior (143–55). Whereas, for Wordsworth,

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these "impulses of deeper birth" (a phrase Stevenson marked in "A Poet's Epitaph") signal spiritual origins, Stevenson views them as instincts inherited from a primitive evolutionary past (MS IV.192.47). In his essay "The Character of Dogs," Stevenson mischievously borrows Wordsworth's elevated language to describe animal instincts and suggest their shared ancestry with humans: "Instinct . . . [the dog] certainly possesses . . . as though he came 'trailing clouds of glory.' But with him, as with man, the field of instinct is limited" (126). In his essay "On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places," Stevenson describes visiting an ancient castle once defended by "old fighting men of the Norse breed" (10). He enters to "escape" from the wind "as from an enemy," quoting Wordsworth's phrase from *The Prelude*, and "had the memory at heart of the insane strife of the pigmies' who had built them" (11; Wordsworth VII.185). Stevenson's suggestion of inherited ancestral recollection draws on Samuel Butler's evolutionary theory of unconscious memory. Stevenson wrote in his essay "The Manse" that his ancestors' experiences were "in his blood . . . in the very knot and center of [his] being" (107). In the face of this age-old ancestral memory of tribal violence at the ancient site, he quotes the "Intimations Ode," writing that "our noisy years did indeed seem moments / In the being of the eternal silence," as his life suddenly seems momentary when juxtaposed with millions of years of geological and biological transformation (11; Wordsworth 157–58).

III. Stevenson's Evolutionary Revision of Wordsworth

As Wordsworth's and Darwinism's influences intertwine, they also come into conflict. In addition to reading Wordsworth through an evolutionary lens, Stevenson criticizes and revises his poetry, emphasizing in his fiction that much of what is benign in Wordsworth's writing becomes problematic or sinister in Darwin's wake. Describing Wordsworth's influence, the first quality that Stevenson attributes to the poet's work is "a certain *innocence*" which clings to it ("Books" 164, my emphasis). When examined in Stevenson's writing, Wordsworth's beliefs about nature (that it exists to inspire us, serves as a moral anchor, and promotes sympathy) appear innocent, even naive in a Darwinian world of uncertainty and violence. This contrasting view of nature leads Stevenson to depart from Wordsworth's views on human relationships and poetry. Examining Wordsworth's tenets on these subjects through a Darwinian lens in his fiction, Stevenson emphasizes that his poetry has taken on radically different meaning, and seeks to debunk his philosophy.

A scene from Stevenson's final unfinished novel, *The Weir of Hermiston*, illustrates this revision. Stevenson evokes Wordsworth's poem "Stepping Westward" to describe the protagonist's meeting with his lover, but reframes it in evolutionary terms. As Archie approaches, Kirstie calls out to him with an echo of the titular question posed to Wordsworth by two women during his walking tour through Scotland: "Are you stepping west, Hermiston?" (107; ch. 6). For Wordsworth, this prospect represents access to the eternal ("and stepping westward seemed to be / A kind of *heavenly* destiny"), but enticing as the fantasy may be, he acknowledges that he has a more practical plan than following the sun: "'Twould be a wildish destiny, / If we . . . were in this place the guests of Chance" (11–12, 2–5). Whereas Wordsworth ultimately rejects the blind following of fortune, the course of Stevenson's young lovers is determined by chance as much as choice. Kirstie "never admitted to herself that she had come . . . to look for Archie. And perhaps after all she did not know, perhaps came as a stone falls. For the steps of love in the young . . . are instinctive and

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unconscious," and Archie finds her only on an "off chance" (106; ch. 6). Leaving the lovers at the mercy of chance places them firmly on Darwinian soil. *On the Origin of Species* emphasizes that "natural selection can do nothing until favourable variations chance to occur;" thus random variation partially determines evolution's winners and losers (563; ch. 6).[10] Kirstie engages in a self-display of beauty and vitality similar to what Darwin describes in sexual selection: "By an afterthought that was a stroke of art," she "framed [her face] becomingly" with her kerchief and "leaned on her bare arm, which showed out strong and round . . . in the fading light" (107; ch. 6).

While Kirstie encourages Archie's approach, Stevenson's portrayal of the scene's Darwinian implications is decidedly ominous. Whereas Wordsworth imagines stepping westward toward the divine, Archie walks toward destruction. Approaching Kirstie,

> Young Hermiston was struck with a certain chill. He was reminded that he now dealt in serious matters of life and death. This was a grown woman he was approaching, endowed with her mysterious potencies and attractions, the treasury of her continued race, and he was neither better nor worse than the average of his sex and age. (107; ch. 6)

Seemingly innocent flirtations with a local girl can be fatal in a Darwinian world, in which life and the powers which create it are inextricably entangled with death. For Darwin, all the lovers' games of chase and display and the entire process of sexual selection ultimately result in extinction as species evolve, with some members thriving at the expense of others. Archie does step toward death, as the affair will result in his murdering his romantic rival, Frank, and being sentenced to die. Being merely average, Archie is subject to deadly sexual competition. The lovers meet in spring as "the moss [begins] to renew itself in jewels of green," but these signs of new life are haunted by the "unchanging face of the deathstone" nearby (107; ch. 6). Here death is the one constant in an ever-changing world. Stevenson's Darwinian portrayal of romantic love differs markedly from Wordsworth's. The Solitary in *The Excursion* finds "a blooming lady – a conspicuous flower . . . whom he had sensibility to love / Ambition to attempt, and skill to win" (II.187–90). Whereas Wordsworth celebrates this process as a high point in the Solitary's sad history, Stevenson cannot gloss over sexual selection's inherent violence and disappointment.

Stevenson's Darwinian view of instinctual drives makes him deeply mistrustful of another "innocent" Wordsworthian concept: that poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling" (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* 327). Stevenson departed from contemporary anthropological understandings of primitive instincts by representing "survivals" or returns to these impulses as common rather than exceptional – a "stubbornly persistent force of savagery" constantly threatening to burst through the veneer of civilization (Reid 123–24). For Stevenson these instincts are never far away – an assumption that sheds light on his abiding evolutionary interest in Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode": "our souls have sight of that immortal sea / Which brought us hither, / Can in a moment travel thither" (166–68). Stevenson's work suggests that we did not leave our primitive instincts in the ocean, but that "the primal sympathy / Which having been must ever be" (184–85). Stevenson both borrows and recasts Wordsworth's framework. When powerful feelings come to the surface in his fiction, they are almost always primitive and usually overflow in destructive ways.

In *The Wrecker*, Bellairs demonstrates how dangerous Wordsworth's poetic philosophy has become after Darwin. The conniving attorney is relentless in his attempt to blackmail

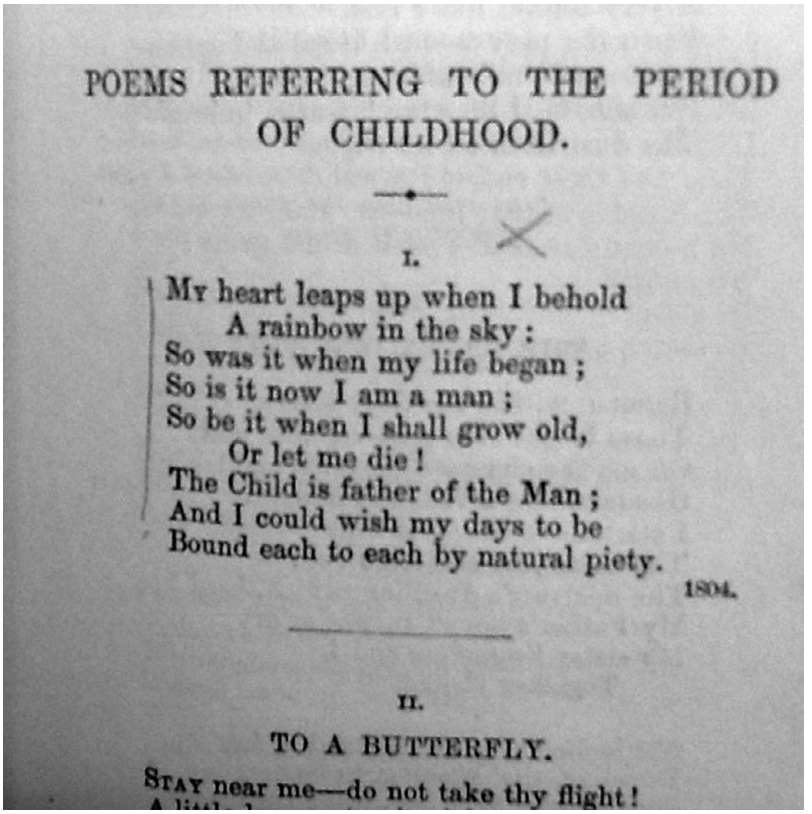
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Carthew, but also faithfully supports an unfaithful wife. He wins the sympathy of the protagonist, Loudon Dodd, in part because of his love for Romantic poetry. On their voyage to England, Bellairs tells Dodd of his "passion" for the sea, misquoting "Tintern Abbey" as he says, "And the tall cataract haunted me like a passion" (346; ch. 19). Of Bellairs, Dodd relates that "his taste for literature was naïve and unaffected; his sentimentality, although extreme and a thought ridiculous, was plainly genuine" (347; ch. 19). Notwithstanding his faults, Bellairs, like Wordsworth, exhibits "a certain innocence," and his "essential passions of the heart" – sincerely held powerful feelings – recommend him to Dodd (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* 597). But Bellairs's love of nature and Wordsworth's poetry give him no moral stability or refuge from his "latent and essential madness" (362; ch. 19). When Dodd tries to prevent Bellairs's efforts to blackmail Carthew, the Wordsworth-quoting attorney goes on a crazed, violent rant, screaming, "I'll hunt you down, hunt you, hunt you down! If I were strong, I'd tear your vitals out, here in this room – tear them out – I'd tear them out! Damn, damn, damn! You think me weak? I can bite, bite to the blood, bite you, hurt you, disgrace you . . . " (361–362; ch. 19). These animalistic threats show the sinister aspect of the "[exquisite] wild[ness]" Wordsworth prizes and the nature of the "haunting passions" and powerful feelings likely to spontaneously overflow in the Darwinian struggle ("To H. C. Six Years Old" 12). Far from the poet's vision in his Preface, this outburst leaves no room for tranquil recollection and seeks to give pain rather than pleasure.

If spontaneous overflows often backfire in Stevenson's fiction, tranquil recollection also fails.[11] In *The Weir of Hermiston*, Archie's unplanned, emotional denunciation of the death penalty his father decrees sparks conflict and ultimately leads toward a deadly outburst, subjecting Archie to the same potential sentencing. In true Wordsworthian fashion, Archie seeks to follow the explosion at the hanging with "recollect[ion] in tranquility" as he "walk[s] in the country and admire[s] the beauties of nature" (32; ch. 3). Stevenson gently mocks these Wordsworthian wanderings, suggesting that they no longer work poetically any more than morally. Archie walks through the countryside on a warm spring day, "wonder[s] at [the] beauty" of the scene, and then "surprise[s] himself with a sudden impulse to write poetry" (86; ch. 6). This appears to be the perfect beginning for a Wordsworthian pedestrian composition. After Archie is comfortably settled on a boulder near some picturesque falls, however, the inspiration does not come, and "it still more surprise[s] him that he should find nothing to write" (86; ch. 6). This would-be Wordsworthian poet's innocent effort to connect to a benevolent nature is ultimately misguided and unfruitful.

Stevenson also takes issue with Wordsworth's portrayal of a benevolent natural world. He frequently quotes the final lines of "My Heart Leaps Up": "And I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each by natural piety" (8–9). Wordsworth's speaker states that his heart will still leap up at the sight of a rainbow in old age as it did in childhood, declaring "or let me die!" (6). A Darwinian natural world, however, will let him die regardless of his emotional response to rainbows. Stevenson's quotation of this poem in a letter on aging emphasizes this helplessness in the face of nature's inevitable course: "And I could wish my days to be bound each to each . . . they *are* anyway, and whether I wish it or not" (8: 361). Stevenson's most telling adaptation of Wordsworth's phrase reverses it completely. In an 1884 letter to Bob and Louisa Stevenson, he reflects: "I am myself no more. Of that lean, feverish, voluble, whiskeyfied young Scot . . . there now remains no quality but the strong language. That, at least, I shall take gravewards: my last word, it's like, will be an execration . . . . My days shall thus be bound each to each in natural impietee" (4: 259–60).

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POEMS REFERRING TO THE PERIOD OF CHILDHOOD.

I.

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

1804.

II.

TO A BUTTERFLY.

Stay near me—do not take thy flight!

Figure 6. Robert Louis Stevenson's Marking of Wordsworth's "My Heart Leaps Up," Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (MS I.147).

In this one quality, he muses, the child would be father of the man. This "natural impietee" functions on at least two levels. Personally, Stevenson considers himself impious by nature; thus his retention of profane language throughout his life would be only natural. Referring to vice as natural emphasizes an oppositional relationship between human instincts and religious morality. The second meaning of this revision is that nature itself, understood with significantly different associations after Darwin, is inherently impious. Stevenson lost his Christian faith by a "very hard" reading of Herbert Spencer's writing on natural science (*Letters* 1: 249). He approaches Wordsworth's phrase "natural piety" with some baggage. His copy of Wordsworth reflects this ambivalence; the entire poem is marked except this line, which bears only a faint, indecisive pencil dash, indicating a reluctance to fully endorse the concept of "natural piety" (Figure 6; MS I.147).

For Stevenson, as for many Victorians, nature had become a place of doubt rather than of faith. In a letter from his sickbed, Stevenson quoted the lines from Wordsworth's "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle," describing Lord Clifford, who "moved to and fro, for his delight. / He knew the rocks which Angels haunt / Upon the mountains visitant" (3: 203; Wordsworth 127–29). Stevenson noted his last two years of inactivity due to ill health, relating his doctor's

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orders that he spend another winter at Davos: "[I] must soon be back again to that unkindly haunt 'upon the mountains visitant' – there goes no angel there but the angel of death" (3: 203). Unlike Wordsworth's Clifford, then, Stevenson's mountain scene is one of suffering, not delight, giving place not to religious belief, but to death. Wordsworth emphasizes that because of Clifford's time spent in nature, "in him the savage virtue of the Race, / Revenge, and all ferocious thoughts were dead" (165–66). For Stevenson, nature is the source, rather than the antithesis, of these "savage" and "ferocious" instincts which never die.

Stevenson subjects not only Wordsworth's conception of the natural world but also nature's effects on individuals to a Darwinian revision. The natural world is not a sufficient moral anchor for Stevenson's characters, who invalidate Wordsworth's claim that "love of nature lead[s] to love of mankind" (Book VIII *The Prelude*). In *The Ebb-Tide*, the character closest to nature, Attwater, enjoys a Wordsworthian solitude on his remote island, but his destructive instincts are unrestrained as he exploits and even kills natives to maintain dominance. In "The Beach of Falesá," Case is most nearly aligned with the natural world, and, like Attwater, he is violent and oppressive. When Wiltshire sets out alone to find Case's lair in the forest, he is frightened by the "sound of singing in the wind" (77; ch. 4). Notwithstanding his scorn for "native talk," he believes that he is hearing an *aitu*, or evil spirit, and determines to pursue it (77; ch. 4). Discovering that the sound comes from a box with banjo strings attached to vibrate in the wind, he says, "I believe they call the thing a Tyrolean harp, whatever that may mean" (79; ch. 4). Though Wiltshire may not be thinking of Romantic poetry, Stevenson clearly is. The aeolian harp was an eighteenth-century emblem of the responsive poetic mind, frequently evoked by Wordsworth and his collaborator, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Though usually representing the poet in reflective harmony with nature, here the aeolian harp inspires fear until it is exposed as a cheap trick – an illusion planted by Case to exploit the indigenous people's beliefs for his own gain. This "innocent" Wordsworthian metaphor becomes a weapon in the Darwinian competition for resources and survival.

No discussion of primitive nature's dark side in Stevenson's work would be complete without *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and we find Wordsworth's poetry stirred into the doctor's transforming potion. Jekyll describes the intoxicating liberty of rejecting moral inhibition, echoing the "Intimations Ode." For Wordsworth, though "the shades of the prison-house begin to close / Upon the growing boy," "our souls have sight of that immortal sea / Which brought us hither, / Can in a moment travel thither" (67–68, 166–68). Similarly, Jekyll "could plod the public eye with a load of genial respectability, and *in a moment*, like a *schoolboy*, strip off these lendings and spring headlong into a *sea* of liberty" with a drug which "shook the *prisonhouse* of [his] disposition" (86, 84; ch. 10; my emphases). Wordsworth's intimations are ennobling and joyful, but Jekyll's plunge into the primitive brings devastating effects. Hyde's most vicious crime occurs against a Wordsworthian backdrop. Before witnessing the incident, a "romantically given" London maid takes in a picturesque scene from her window: a "cloudless" night "brilliantly lit by the full moon"; "never had she felt more at peace with all men or thought more kindly of the world" (26; ch. 4). Her emotional association of the state of her environment with humanity is based on the quintessentially Wordsworthian tenet, often cited by Victorian critics, of "reciprocity" between people and the natural world, in which nature's mood "awakens a kindred or correspondent state of feeling in us."[12] The maid then sees Mr. Hyde approach an older man who emanates "an innocent and old-world kindness" (26; ch. 4). Given the scene's introduction, we might think of the apparently similar roadway

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encounters that occur in Wordsworth's poetry with leech gatherers, discharged soldiers, peddlers, and other passersby. Typically these meetings result in shared sympathy or lessons learned, after which the Wordsworthian impulse is to "let him pass, a blessing on his head!" ("The Old Cumberland Beggar" 162). Hyde's brutal primitive instincts, however, are quite different: "All of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger" (26; ch. 4). In a savage spontaneous overflow, the "troglodytic" Hyde beats the older man to (and for some time after) death with "ape-like fury" (18, 27; ch. 2, 3). Wordsworth's "innocent and old-world" notions about nature, human interaction, and poetry appear similarly beaten down with a Darwinian stick in Stevenson's work.[13]

Whereas Stevenson corrects Wordsworth's view of a benevolent natural world in his writing, his marginalia highlight the poet's acknowledgement of nature's violence – a disconnect that illustrates the theory of Bloom's influential study: *The Anxiety of Influence*. While Stevenson's markings repeatedly emphasize Wordsworthian nature's tranquil benevolence, he also notes its precariousness in the phrase "calm is all nature as a resting wheel" ("Written in very early Youth" MS I.2.1).[14] Stevenson takes note "of doubt, and something dark, / Of the old Sea some reverential fear" that creeps into the poet's natural vision – an anxiety that evolution had linked more clearly to the sea and further darkened for the novelist ("Where lies the Land" MS II.275.12-13). Stevenson's markings also emphasize that identifying with nature too closely brings death. In "To H.C.," Hartley's "exquisitely wild" instincts make him fragile as "a dew drop" and destine him to a premature demise (MS I.171.12, 27). Also marked is "Three years she grew," in which nature's sinister "law and impulse" ultimately lead to Lucy's death (MS II.102.8). By recognizing Wordsworth's depiction of nature's destructiveness as a reader, but deliberately ignoring it as a writer, Stevenson commits what Bloom terms a misreading – "an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation" (30). Stevenson's evolutionary revisions of Wordsworth amplify and extend latent elements of his precursor's work, which Bloom calls *Apophrades*, or the return of the dead, paradoxically making these passages feel more Stevensonian than Wordsworthian. As Bloom explains, "the uncanny effect . . . makes it seem to us . . . as though the later poet himself had written the precursor's characteristic work" (16).

Bloom's theory, however, can only take us so far as Stevenson's explanation of nature's indifference departs from his predecessor's. Stevenson marks phrases in Wordsworth's poetry which emphasize that chance natural occurrence and destruction in "life's uneasy game" are still divinely managed – a doctrine which Stevenson's study of evolution made difficult to accept ("The Pass of Kirkstone" MS II.168.30).[15] Wordsworth's declaration in "Imagination" that "the God of peace and love . . . guides the Pestilence . . . drought . . . [and] earthquake" caught Stevenson's attention ("Imagination – ne'er before content" MS III.116.1-12). While occasionally acknowledging nature's violence, Wordsworth maintained his teleological faith rooted in "hill and vale" that "Whate'er the weak may dread, the wicked dare, / Thy lot, O man, is good, thy portion fair!" – a belief which Stevenson marked but could not hold ("The Pass of Kirkstone" MS II.170.83-86). While highlighting Wordsworth's phrase that "to every natural form . . . I gave a moral life," Stevenson had accepted the Darwinian view that nature was amoral and that the world had no divine order (*The Prelude* III, MS V.155.127-29). Thus his evolutionary revision of Wordsworth was more than competitive self-positioning, but grew out of fundamental philosophical disagreement.

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IV. Wordsworth's Enduring Value for Stevenson

IF WORDSWORTH'S WRITING was no longer adequate for Stevenson, we must ask why it appears in his fiction at all. A study of Stevenson's essays makes clear that while he revised those elements of Wordsworth he considered invalidated by evolutionary theory, he also clung to "a certain innocence" in his work to counter Darwinism's troubling implications. Stevenson's essay "On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places" states that we can "perfect ourselves in the art of seeing nature more favorably" by training our sensibilities (3). In seeking to cultivate this Wordsworthian power, Stevenson recognizes nature's brutality, but chooses to focus on its beauties – "We learn to live with her [nature], as people learn to live with fretful or violent spouses: to dwell lovingly on what is good, and shut our eyes against all that is bleak or inharmonious" (3). This process takes time, but "things looked at patiently from one side to another," he writes, "generally end by showing us a side that is beautiful" (3). Stevenson's Darwinian perspective prevents him from fully adopting Wordsworth's "cheerful faith, that all which we behold / Is full of blessings" (a phrase Stevenson's marking pencil does not quite reach in "Tintern Abbey") (MS II.154.133-34). Still, Stevenson keeps at the task of discovering beauty in nature's "unpleasant places," which he illustrates by quoting *The Prelude*. If nature's hostile "roar continues" and "winds blow loud," it also offers nurturing protection: "sequestered nook[s]" and "shelter'd place[s]" to which we can "escape as from an enemy" (Stevenson 10; VII.168-71). Wordsworth's presence in the essay is also marked by Stevenson's statement that when we cannot sympathize with a panoramic landscape, "we begin to peep and botanise, we take an interest in birds and insects, we find many things beautiful in miniature," quoting "A Poet's Epitaph" (5; 19). Wordsworth helps Stevenson hold on to nature's softer side.

Wordsworth's poetry could address Stevenson's concerns about evolutionary theory, tempering its harshness, without demanding he subscribe to beliefs that he could no longer hold. He writes of the poet in "Books,"

> a certain innocence, a rugged austerity of joy, a sight of the stars "the silence that is in the lonely hills," something of the cold thrill of dawn, cling to his work and give it a particular address to what is best in us. I do not know that you learn a lesson; you need not – Mill did not agree with any one of his beliefs; and yet the spell is cast. Such are the best teachers; a dogma learned is only a new error – the old one was perhaps as good; but a spirit communicated is a perpetual possession. These best teachers climb beyond teaching to the plane of art; it is themselves, and what is best in themselves that they communicate. (164)

The paradoxical phrase "austerity of joy" reflects Stevenson's Wordsworthian effort to celebrate the beauties of a violent natural world. Stevenson quotes ambiguous imagery from "Brougham Castle," which permits both bleak and benevolent readings of nature. More than the attributes of nature itself, however, the quotation emphasizes the perception (sight, sound, and thrill) of it. It is not Wordsworth's *ideas* about nature that Stevenson values – he does not accept his "dogma" and "beliefs," but he celebrates the poet's "spirit" and artistic vision. The "innocence" of Wordsworth's faith in nature, if not the belief itself, is, for Stevenson, "what is best in [him]." Wordsworth, then, functions somewhat like Smethurst in "Cockermouth and Keswick": not all of his ideas hold up, but Stevenson is better and happier for the encounter. Writing to a friend about Samoa, Stevenson reflects: "On the frontier,"

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where "you may take in what books you will . . . men and women grow up, like trees in a still well-walled garden 'at their own sweet will,'" quoting Wordsworth's "Westminster Bridge" (8: 415). Stevenson's observation also draws on T. H. Huxley's metaphor for civilization: "a small patch of the soil . . . cut off from the rest by a *wall* . . . [and] made into a *garden*," in which the Darwinian "state of nature . . . was brought to an end . . . by the intervention of man" (9, my emphasis). Huxley suggests that ethics are based on "the elimination of [the] struggle" for survival, and "[suppress] the qualities best fitted for success in that struggle" (13, 31). Stevenson "take[s] in" Wordsworth, whose poetry limits and softens the violent chaos of nature with the ethical sympathy Huxley describes: "trees in a still well-walled garden." For Stevenson, Wordsworth helps keep the will "sweet" rather than selfish and destructive. His quotation also introduces an element of personal agency into biological growth, imposing the significance of individual choice on evolutionary narrative. Most important, Wordsworth speaks "to what is best in us," which helps Stevenson address what he sees as moral problems with evolution.

Wordsworth's "address to what is best in us" also relates to Stevenson's view of himself. Another reason Stevenson retains Wordsworth's influence in spite of challenges posed to it by evolution is that his life could be counted a success according to Wordsworth, but a failure by Darwinian standards. In a revealing letter to Bob Stevenson, the novelist confesses,

> As I go on in life, day by day, I become more of a bewildered child: I cannot get used to this world, to procreation, to heredity . . . . The sight of Belle and her twelve-year-old-boy, already taller than herself, is enough to turn my hair grey; as for Fanny and her brood, it is insane to think of. The prim obliterated face of life, and the broad, bawdy, and orgiastic – or maenadic – foundations, form a spectacle to which no habit reconciles me; and "I could wish my days to be bound each to each" by the same open-mouthed wonder. They are anyway, and whether I wish it or not. (8: 362)

In his final letter to Edmund Gosse (perhaps the last letter he ever wrote), Stevenson describes himself, in contrast to Gosse the family man, as "a childless, rather bitter, very clear-eyed blighted youth" (8.399). "Blighted," with its associations of diseased and stunted organisms, evokes the late-Victorian discourse of degeneration – the evolutionary inverse of progress. A childless invalid, Stevenson fell far short of the evolutionary ideal of the "fittest." Being an only child, he felt that he had failed in his family's struggle for survival. His self-descriptions of "clear-eyed" and "rather bitter" make clear that he understood the evolutionary significance of his childlessness all too well. This bitterness shows through in the touch of irony behind Stevenson's wish that his days be "bound each to each" by his amazement at an intergenerational life cycle in which he cannot participate. Stevenson also regretted that he had not fulfilled his inheritance in the family business of lighthouse engineering, lamenting, "I ought to have been able to build lighthouses and write *David Balfour* too" (*Letters* 8: 235). For many of Stevenson's contemporaries, becoming "more of a bewildered child" with age would signal degeneration, a harmful step backwards towards primitivism. While failing according to evolutionary biology, however, Stevenson finds Wordsworthian success as his "days are bound each to each" by his wonder at the world as "the child is father of the man" in his life.

Even when ostensibly departing from Wordsworth's notion that "the child is father of the man," Stevenson enlists the poet in resisting some of evolutionary theory's troubling implications. He reflects in his "Memoir of Himself," "I hope and I do believe I am a better man than I was a child. With my respects to Wordsworth . . . the sight of deformed persons

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and above all hideous old women moved in me a sort of panic horror" (157-58). Stevenson's childhood aversion to the deformed and elderly is an inherited trait that, while beneficial in natural selection, he finds morally objectionable. He has progressed beyond this primitive instinct, but the ethical growth that removes the man from the child paradoxically brings Stevenson closer to Wordsworth, as he internalizes the tenet of "The Old Cumberland Beggar" that "we have all of us one human heart" (146). This Wordsworthian brand of sympathy runs counter to the Social Darwinism of Stevenson's time. Wordsworth's character is an example of one of the "old" and "deformed" persons who would have frightened Stevenson as a child and serves no useful evolutionary purpose, but of whom Wordsworth warns, "deem not this man useless" (67).[16] Though Wordsworth and Herbert Spencer were both critical of the Poor Laws, that the beggar's class "will probably soon be extinct" represents crisis for the poet, whereas, for Spencer, allowing this natural process to run its course without artificial intervention is to "sacrifice the small immediate gratification for a future great one" ("A Description"; Spencer 363). Wordsworth's poetry, then, softened evolution for Stevenson, and provided a gentler perspective from which to approach nature, view society, and assess his own life.

V. A Darwinian Literary Relationship

THE INTERSECTION OF WORDSWORTH'S INFLUENCE and evolution provided Stevenson a lens through which to assess his career as well as his life. He saw his engagement with Wordsworth and literary influence more broadly in Darwinian terms. Stevenson's ambivalent response to Wordsworth's poetry is central to his view of their relationship, as reflected in his essay "Talk and Talkers." He writes, "Literature in many of its branches is no other than the shadow of good talk; but the imitation falls far short of the original in life, freedom, and effect," echoing the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, which states that the poet only produces "*shadows*" of what is "uttered by men in real life" (61; Wordsworth 335). While the poet "describes and *imitates* passions, his situation is altogether slavish and mechanical, compared with the *freedom* and power of real and substantial" feelings and experience (335, my emphases). For Stevenson, good talk "should keep close along the lines of humanity, near the bosoms and business of men," just as Wordsworth sought to "keep [his] reader in the company of flesh and blood" and "adopt the very language of men" (65; 330).

Notwithstanding the essay's debt to Wordsworth, it is highly critical of him, specifically revising his poem "Personal Talk." While Wordsworth does not "much or oft delight / To season [his] fireside with personal talk" because it limits the imagination, Stevenson declares that "there can be no fairer ambition than to excel in good talk . . . the first duty of man" (1-2; Stevenson 55–56).[17] Disregarding Wordsworth's aversion to fireside chats, Stevenson pulls up a chair, taking the adversarial position of the poet's ironically planted interlocutor who insists that "fits of sprightly malice do but bribe / The languid mind into activity" and that "love itself, and mirth and glee / Are fostered by the comment and the gibe" (17–20). Stevenson writes, "The spice of life is battle; the friendliest relations are still a kind of contest . . . every durable bond between human beings is founded in or heightened by some element of competition" (62). For him, debate is a beneficial outlet for our primitive instincts for war, which are denied at our developmental detriment. While Wordsworth enjoys "smooth discourse" "remote / From evil-speaking [and] rancour," Stevenson condemns "urbane and smiling coteries [which] indulge a man's vanities in silence . . . encourage him to be an ass,

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and . . . radically more contemptible" (44–48; 69).[18] Adding insult to injury, he commandeers Wordsworth's famous phrase to attack his position, writing that when such combative "talk is over, each goes his own way, still flushed with vanity and admiration, still trailing clouds of glory . . . the excitement of a good talk [still] . . . in the blood, the heart still hot within you" (64–65).[19] The thrill of competitive literary dialogue, not transcendent connection with nature, is, for Stevenson, "felt in the blood, and felt along the heart" ("Tintern Abbey" 29). His connection with Wordsworth is a "durable bond," at once "the friendliest relation" and "still a kind of contest."

Stevenson's two-sided approach, to some extent, is inherent in literary influence generally, but it also relates to Darwinism itself. Creative writers compete not just for the present prizes of readership and prestige, but for the future of literary history, just as biological species battle not only for current position, but ultimately for the success of their offspring. We can recognize the struggle for survival in Bloom's description of "strong poets . . . with the persistence to wrestle with their strong precursors, even to the death" (5). Stevenson's competitive instinct is certainly evident in his annotations. Next to "The Solitary Reaper," Stevenson inscribes the earlier, slightly different version of a line and writes "old reading (and better)" (MS III.17).[20] Aside from revealing his perceptiveness, Stevenson's criticism packs an evolutionary punch, suggesting that Wordsworth was regressing rather than advancing. Indeed, Stevenson's annotated edition is a record of one author's Darwinian engagement with another. Its pages give us an image of Stevenson, pencil in hand, physically – even violently – grappling with Wordsworth as he annotated and defaced, edited and altered the poet's text. His critical and mocking annotations might lead us to recall Hyde "annotat[ing]" Jekyll's esteemed pious book "with startling blasphemies," an editorial attack Jekyll calls a primitive "ape-like trick" in Hyde's struggle for survival (64, 101; ch. 8, 10). Robin G. Schulze has developed a Darwinian theory of "authorial selection," in which authors determine the "fitness" of competing versions of texts in revision ("Textual Darwinism" 299). A Darwinian theory of editorial criticism should also take stock of the more directly competitive struggle which occurs when one author revises another's text. The margins become a battleground for exploiting perceived weakness and asserting superiority. Of course, when Stevenson combats Wordsworth in his marginalia the poet is already dead, and Stevenson's annotations do not directly impact his literary afterlife, but they do allow him to prepare for the more direct and influential engagement of published writing.

Yet cooperation, as well as competition, characterizes influence and evolution. If Darwin's "entangled bank" is a natural battleground, it is also a site of network and interconnection (*Origin of Species* 413; ch. 14). While writers compete with their predecessors, they also pay them homage, recognizing their dependence on worthy rivals who merit response. Donna Haraway examines the attraction and interdependence of companion species, and the evolutionary significance of their benign interactions. Even in the most competitive of intertextual revisions are the fundamental elements of "respect and response" that are so critical in inter-species meetings (26).

Just as Jekyll's transformation into Hyde depends on the "thorough and primitive duality of man," Stevenson's ambivalent engagement with Wordsworth is due to the two-sided nature of influence (79; ch. 10). As a reader of Wordsworth, Stevenson shows both Jekyll's reverent admiration and Hyde's mocking malice. As Darwinian evolution is both competitive and cooperative, the two opposing responses each plays a significant role in the literary relationship. This two-sided engagement can help reconcile longstanding division

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in influence theory, as it encompasses both Bloom's account of fiercely competitive self-assertion with T. S. Eliot's view of influence as a "continual surrender" and "self-sacrifice" of the artist (7). This tension is still evident in influence studies today, as seen in the combative struggle of Joseph Fruscione's "literary rivalry" and the benevolent collaboration of Schulze's "web of friendship."

VI. A Conclusion

EVOLUTIONARY THEORY INFORMS STEVENSON'S conflicted relationship with Wordsworth at every point. Stevenson names Wordsworth as one of the authors to whom he "played the sedulous ape" as an aspiring young writer ("Books" 144). To be sure, the metaphor is self-deprecating, as it suggests lower life forms servilely imitating more advanced beings. Yet the Darwinian implication of the phrase recalls Hyde's "ape-like" violence, and places Stevenson in a competitive struggle for survival with his predecessors. His imitation becomes what Longinus describes as emulation, revealing an ambition to surpass his models. In a letter to Edmund Gosse, Stevenson addresses Wordsworth from his own later historical moment: "Ah Wordsworth, you would change your note if you were alive today!" (5: 84–85).[21] Stevenson's message implies an evolutionary boast: that he has adapted to the later historical moment, and will thus survive his predecessor – potentially in literature as well as in life. Stevenson was born in 1850, the year Wordsworth died – a coincidence which intensifies their literary struggle for survival. The pairing of Stevenson's life with Wordsworth's death suggests that one depends on the other in a zero-sum literary fight to the death. Stevenson's attitude towards Wordsworth is, in some ways, analogous to Keats's view of Milton: "life to him would be death to me" (Keats *314*). Stevenson's emphasis of Wordsworth's death coincides with his criticism of much of the inherited literary tradition, which Stevenson described as "an art that is like mahogany and horsehair furniture, solid, true, serious and dead as Caesar" (*Letters* 4.276).

On the one hand, Stevenson's elevation of himself above Wordsworth in the struggle of literary selection is partly ironic, as he was self-consciously a childless invalid, and Wordsworth was famously healthy and quintessentially patriarchal, surrounded by his offspring, in retirement at Rydal Mount. Furthermore, Stevenson, like Darwin, was uncertain about the evolutionary narrative of progress, so it is not surprising that he would undercut it.[22] On the other hand, his competitive struggle with the fatherly Wordsworth and his emphasis on the poet's literary fertility relate to Stevenson's deep-seated resistance to paternal authority in literature and life. Bloom frames literary influences as a "battle between ... father and son as mighty opposites" in which the poet seeks to usurp his father and become his own maker, drawing on a centuries-old filial model of influence (11). Alan Sandison argues that Stevenson's literary resistance to paternal authority distinguishes him as a proto-Modernist (15). Sandison notes that Stevenson's hostility against paternal authority was of a "mixed sort" that "occasionally ... contend[ed] with a more accommodating instinct," which kept him from fully separating from his father, whom he loved, despite significant tension (14–15, 37–39). The same can be said of his relationship with Wordsworth. Stevenson's conflicted engagement with Wordsworth's influence, laden with Darwinian undertones, related to his larger struggle against the fathers.

Representing literary production in terms of fertility evokes natural selection, as Stevenson imagines a link between his lack of posterity and unfinished literary work. In

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a letter to Henry James in which Stevenson paraphrases Darwin to state that no one can write without a theory, he discusses the promise of Rudyard Kipling: "If I had this man's fertility and courage, it seems to me I could leave a pyramid" (7: 66).While writing about Kipling, he was likely also thinking of Wordsworth, as he marked the poet's stated aim to leave "a lasting monument of words" and his reflection on death and literary afterlife: "We Men . . . must vanish; be it so! / Enough, if something from our hands have power / To live, and act, and serve the future hour" ("Fidelity" MS IV.207.52; "Valedictory Sonnet to The River Duddon" MS III.217.9-11). While representing the literary contest in Darwinian terms, he simultaneously questions it and appears to withdraw. Commenting in a letter about his decision to give up writing poetry, he reflects, "I have done so many things, and cultivated so many fields in literature, that I think I shall let the 'scanty plot' lie fallow" (5: 200–01), alluding to Wordsworth's "sonnet's scanty ground" ("Nuns Fret Not" 11). The need to give a reminder of his accomplishments signals a competitive insecurity as he steers clear of the poet's literary territory. In leaving the poetic ground uncultivated, the novelist fails to plant his authorial seeds, furthering the implications of biological and literary infertility as compared to Wordsworth.

Stevenson was a self-described "hardened Wordsworthian" (*Letters* 5: 91–92). While "Wordsworthian" generally referred to the most zealous enthusiasts, the qualifying "hardened" suggests a more skeptical, less innocent, albeit durable appreciation for the poet due to Stevenson's "very hard" study of Darwinism (*Letters* 1: 249). This relationship is also evident in the opening inscription of Stevenson's edition. The first clause of the annotation (that life is too short to read much of Wordsworth) has a Darwinian resonance with its competitive jab at the poet based on a view of life constantly threatened with death.[23] The second clause (that life is too bare of enjoyment for us to voluntarily miss much of his work) recognizes and resists the implications of Darwinism, seeking instead what is beautiful and uplifting in Wordsworth's writing to counter the natural world's harsh realities – conditions which only render the poetry more valuable (MS I). Equally significant is the later reflection below this inscription, written some twenty years later: "Sententious gentleman!" showing that while Stevenson revised Wordsworth, he also found it worthwhile to return to him again and again (Figure 7). The later comment slightly tempers the critique with self-mockery. The older Stevenson seems as much attuned to his own flaws as to those of the poet, suggesting that his engagement with Wordsworth and evolutionary theory was partially an internal struggle with himself – a conflict between the optimist and pessimist, the follower and rival – just as Jekyll / Hyde's "two natures . . . contended in the field of his consciousness" (79-80; ch. 10). Stevenson also departs from Wordsworth in the comment itself, which shows that the child is not father of the man, but that he is constantly changing and developing. He makes no Wordsworthian effort here to bind his days "each to each," but rather evolves away from his earlier self.

Stevenson's relationship with Wordsworth, which was inseparably linked with evolutionary theory, was conflicted from the beginning of his career to the end. He simultaneously attacked the poet's philosophy as invalidated by evolutionary theory and enlisted Wordsworth's assistance in tempering the brutality of Darwinism. Stevenson viewed this ambivalent engagement with his predecessor in Darwinian terms: an interaction at once competitive and collaborative which would determine literary survival. Stevenson's evolutionary model of literary influence, unlike recent sociobiological studies of cultural transmission, allowed for the nuanced complexity and profound ambivalence of his

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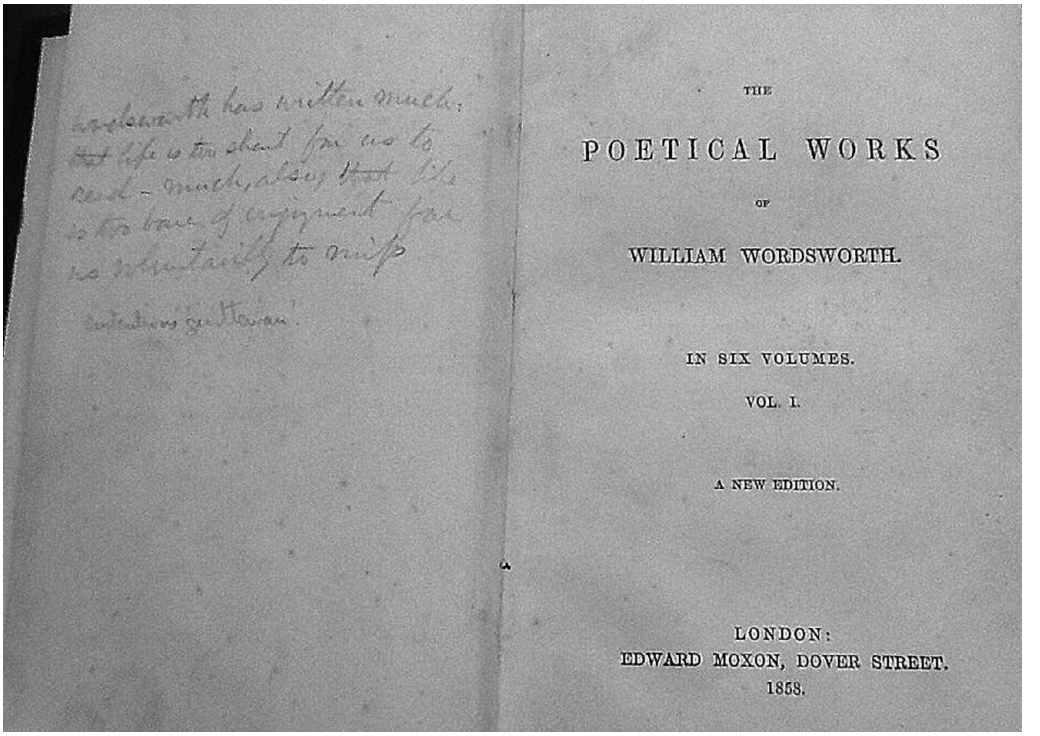


Figure 7. Opening Inscription in Robert Louis Stevenson's Annotated Edition of Wordsworth: "Wordsworth has written much that life is too short for us to read — much, also, that life is too bare of enjoyment for us voluntarily to miss." Stevenson's later note on this reflection: "Sententious gentleman!" Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

engagement with his predecessor, enriching rather than reducing his lasting and formative relationship with Wordsworth.

Brigham Young University – Idaho

NOTES

1. For a limited discussion of this revealing source see Hellman, who acknowledges that his eight-page description is "hardly more than an intimation" of the source (8). While highlighting some significant annotations, Hellman's commentary is mostly biographical speculation such as guesses as to which of his lovers Stevenson had in mind while marking "Haughty Geraldine" and the Lucy poems.
2. See Hellman 2 and Gertrude Hills's *Robert Louis Stevenson's Handwriting* 34–43.
3. See Beer, Hancock, and Stone.
4. For more on Stevenson's criticism of Wordsworth's prosaic verse, see his letter to P. G. Hamerton (5: 91–92).
5. Since the publication of Reid's work, other scholars of literature and science have reexamined Stevenson's writing. See, for instance, MacDuffie, Stiles, Arata, and Turnbull.

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6. Drout has sought to correct the minimization of the author's subjectivity in the sociobiological study of influence, seeking to "recover the individual" and remind scholars that the transmission, retransmission, and modification of meme-plexes involve individual minds (182). While he theoretically makes room for subjectivity, his insistence that "because both literary traditions and biological lineages work in analogous ways, tools developed for understanding one can be adapted to explain the other" prevents nuanced analysis of individual authors' relationships. While his "lexomic" computational and statistical approach to literature may be useful in linguistic studies, source hunting, and a "distant reading" view of the evolution of genre over time, it can never provide an in-depth analysis of complex literary interactions. Such methods may helpfully direct scholars of influence to relevant sources, but are insufficient as influence studies in themselves.
7. See Drout 215, and Carroll's *Reading Human Nature* 271–77.
8. This essay's influence on Stevenson is especially evident in his use of Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode" as discussed in this essay, but Stevenson also likely influenced the critic, as his "On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places," published two years earlier, comes to a similar conclusion on cultivating and training our perception of nature.
9. Stevenson worked furiously on his unfinished final novel *The Weir of Hermiston* until the final hours of his life.
10. Stevenson favored Darwin's view of evolution, which emphasizes chance, uncertainty, and extinction over Spencer's more progressive, teleological narrative (Reid 109, Darwin 506–07).
11. In *The Master of Ballantrae*, Henry alarms his lawyer as "in the midst of the most regular and wise behavior, his animosity spurted out," suddenly screaming of his brother, "I wish he was in hell!" (184; ch. 6). Other spontaneous overflows of this hatred result in Henry's attempts to send him there. In *The Weir of Hermiston*, Archie's "stoical" father, Adam, has "moments when he overflow[s]" with anger in "appalling explosion" (5; ch. 1). Hermiston's aging and unmarried servant is consumed with a passion for the young Archie. Envious of Archie's romantic visits to her niece Kirstie, "the effervescency of her passionate and irritable nature rose within her at times to bursting point" (135; ch. 11). Stevenson's commentary on "the price paid by age for unseasonable ardours of feeling" suggests that such outbursts are unbecoming of a later age, much as Wordsworthian overflows will no longer work in the present epoch (135; ch. 11).
12. See Knight's "Wordsworth" 309.
13. Stevenson's manuscript draft of the novel suggests an even more direct connection between Hyde's victim (originally a Mr. Lemsome, rather than Sir Danvers) and Wordsworth, as both Lemsome and the poet "[shield] a pair of suffering eyes under blue spectacles" (Veeder and Hirsch 8). Stevenson calls attention to Wordsworth's eyewear several times in his writing (*The Wrecker* 347, ch. 19; *Letters* 3: 339).
14. Stevenson marked "Ode Composed on May Morning," in which Wordsworth proclaims to nature, "Man changes, but not Thou!" (24). Late Victorian readers would view both nature and humans as constantly changing and evolving. Stevenson marked the following descriptions of nature's calmness: "How calm! How still!" in "Remembrance of Collins" (21), "the sun is rising calm and bright" in "Resolution and Independence" (3), "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free (1), "calm as the universe" in "Flowers on the Top of the Pillars" (9), "calm as a frozen lake" in *The Excursion* (III.650), "the calm / And dead still water lay upon my mind," and "old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir / Which animates this day their calm abode" in *The Prelude* (II.170-71, VIII.68-69).
15. Stevenson marked several passages on chance, including "the earth / And common face of Nature spake to me . . . by chance collisions and quaint accidents" (*The Prelude* I.586-88). In "Ode to Duty," he marked "I feel the weight of chance-desires" (38).
16. For a discussion of deformity and degeneration theory in Stevenson's work, see Arata 234–37.
17. Stevenson's identification of the conversation Wordsworth avoids as "the first duty of man" intensifies his criticism of the poet of "Ode to Duty," who was widely viewed as an authority on moral responsibility.

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18. Stevenson echoes Shakespeare's clown Feste in *Twelfth Night*, who reasons that he is "the better for [his] foes and the worse for [his] friends," saying, "[my friends] praise me, and make an ass of me. Now my foes tell me plainly I am an ass, so that . . . I profit in the knowledge of myself, and by my friends I am abused" (5.1.10-18).
19. Stevenson notes in his essay "On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature" that "good writer[s and] . . . brilliant conversationalist[s] . . . restore to [words] their primal energy" (94).
20. Stevenson marks with an asterisk the line reading, "More welcome notes to weary bands," and writes "'More sweetly to reposing bands' old reading and better" (MS III.17.10).
21. While the address in the letter regards changes in the political landscape since Wordsworth's time, Stevenson would certainly apply it to the period's scientific discourse.
22. For a discussion of Stevenson's engagement with degeneration theory, see Arata 33–53.
23. Stevenson apparently meant this criticism seriously. The final markings in his Wordsworth edition are roughly halfway through *The Excursion* (V.369-85), suggesting that somewhere in the remaining four and a half books, he decided that "life [was] too short . . . to read" the rest of the long theological poem, notwithstanding its central position in Wordsworth's canon at the time. Having given up belief in the afterlife as a result of his study of evolutionary theory, Stevenson concluded that time on earth was too precious to devote to a poem whose "best hope" was "in heaven" (Book I, 574).

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150316000267 Published online by Cambridge University Press

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