

Entangled Influence: Wordsworth and Darwinism in the Late Victorian Period

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Dedication

For Mandy

Abstract

This dissertation examines the intersection of William Wordsworth's influence and evolutionary theory---the nineteenth century's two defining representations of nature---in late Victorian literature and society. Victorian writers were sensitive to the compatibilities and conflicts between these philosophies, and Wordsworth's poetry was enlisted in arguments both for and against evolution. Creative writers and critics alike turned to the poet as an alternative or antidote to evolution, criticized and revised his poetry in response to this discourse, and synthesized elements of each to propose their own modified theories. In engaging with Wordsworth's influence in this way, these writers began to see literary influence and history in Darwinian terms. They viewed their engagement with Wordsworth and Darwin, which was both competitive and collaborative, as a struggle for literary survival and offspring as well as transformative encounters in their development. This model of "literary selection" synthesizes opposing influence theories, and differs from objectivist accounts of Darwinian cultural transmission through its emphasis on writers' subjectivities, idiosyncratic language, and conscious adoption and modification of evolutionary ideas in their literary relationships. The opening chapter surveys a broad range of critical and creative writing to demonstrate the prevalence of Wordsworth's and Darwin's intertwining influences in the period, and outlines the various ideological positions late Victorian writers occupied toward these entangled philosophies. The chapter explores these simultaneous influences in the work of Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Charles Kingsley, and Emily Pfeiffer along with a host of Victorian critics. The three central chapters provide in-depth demonstrations of this argument in the work of Matthew Arnold, George Eliot, and Robert Louis Stevenson, respectively. The final chapter moves beyond literature to read the late nineteenth-century conservation movement, in which The Wordsworth Society helped establish the National Trust to preserve the Lake District's landscape, as a conflict between Wordsworthian and Darwinian ideas.

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Introduction

If William Wordsworth's representation of nature became the established cultural standard of the first half of the nineteenth century in Great Britain, evolutionary theorists defined the natural world for its second half. In many ways, the two philosophies couldn't appear more different: Wordsworth represents a benevolent natural world that inspires, serves as a moral guide, and reminds us of our divine origins and potential, whereas Darwin reveals an indifferent, violent nature that points to an evolutionary past, and demands participation in the brutal contest of survival of the fittest. Recent efforts to reveal the unlikely pairing of the poet and naturalist include George Levine's claim that a Wordsworthian spirit "remains alive and well in the very texture of Darwin's gradualist materialism" and David Amigoni's more direct assertion that Wordsworth's poems helped shape both Darwin's theories and his conception of the scientific enterprise (155). While these readers bring needed attention to commonly overlooked aspects of Darwinism, they are not the first to sense a connection between Wordsworth and evolution. Rather than focusing on how Wordsworth may have contributed to Darwin's work, this dissertation will track and analyze the interaction and conflict between their ideas in the work of creative writers, critics, and the broader culture. While these intersecting influences have not been explored in modern criticism, readers in the late nineteenth century were very much aware of and interested in their relationship.

Late Victorians recognized a dialogue between Wordsworth and Darwinian evolution.¹ Both gave revolutionary and culturally dominant accounts of nature and our place in it. Some commentators saw an analogy between their scientific and poetic approaches to the natural world. Naturalist and essayist John Burroughs uses Wordsworth and Charles Darwin as representative of the poet and the naturalist, noting "both half create the world they describe," explaining that while one used the poetic imagination and the other the scientific understanding, each created something from their observations of nature (36). Whereas Darwin found in nature the origins of life, Wordsworth turned to the natural world to find the origin of language, literature, and spirituality. Evolutionary theory prompted many Victorians to reconsider fundamental beliefs about nature and its relation to humankind, human origins, and moral responsibility. Wordsworth was inextricably associated with these issues, and consequently became part of this cultural reassessment of ideas. In many late Victorian texts, when Wordsworth comes up, Darwinism isn't far off, and vice-versa. These two views of nature were so pervasive, and the points of analogy and incongruity between them were so profound, that many Victorians found that responding to evolution required retracing Wordsworth's steps.

In exploring the intersection of these influences, let me emphasize that this dissertation does not seek to define what Wordsworth's poetry or Darwinian evolution *are*, but instead analyzes what their relationship meant to Victorians. As Stephen Gill has demonstrated, the Victorian "Wordsworth" differed significantly from our idea of the poet today (2-3). *The Excursion*, rather than *The Prelude*, was considered the poet's great

¹ For the purposes of this study, I define the late Victorian period as 1859-1900. My discussion of Matthew Arnold, however, begins with Wordsworth's death in 1850 (37-44).

work. *Home at Grasmere*, now a central part of the Wordsworth canon, was largely unknown. Wordsworth the conservative Anglican was more familiar than Wordsworth the radical. Late Victorians considered the relationship between Wordsworth and Darwinism without the benefit on twentieth-century scholarship on these subjects, and in probing what these combined influences meant to them, much of the analysis in this study will do the same. As Wordsworth and Darwin intersected, the salient elements of their representations of nature dominated cultural perceptions of them and reinforced their contrast. While this was a complex entanglement, Wordsworth's writing and evolutionary ideas were sometimes simplified in the process. Twenty-first century readers may find that Wordsworth's nature is more benign and Darwin's more bleak in late Victorians' engagement with this dialogue than we may consider them in actuality to be.

As evolutionary theory advanced in the late Victorian period (1859-1900) Wordsworth's poetry took on new associations. His unifying declaration in *The Prelude* (1850) that "in all things / I saw one life" could be aptly applied to Darwin's theory that all life on earth descended from a common ancestor. *The Excursion* was widely viewed as the poet's greatest work, and would have spoken directly to Victorians seeking to come to terms with evolutionary theory. Wordsworth's access to Erasmus Darwin's writings enabled him to celebrate in the poem's preface "how exquisitely . . . the progressive powers . . . of the whole species to the external Worlds / [are] fitted" (63-66).² After hearing an account of a great knight in Queen Elizabeth's time who built a large mansion

² See Duncan Wu's *Wordsworth's Reading* (I.44-45, 183, II.70).

among the villagers' small cottages, and seeing the last remaining stone of its ruins, the

Wanderer gives this evolutionary reflection:

The vast Frame
Of social nature changes evermore
Her organs and her members, with decay
Restless, and restless generation, powers
And functions dying and produced at need,---
And by this law the mighty Whole subsists:
With an ascent and progress in the main. (VII.1021-1027)

While nature's law promises progress for the species, Wordsworth acknowledges "how disproportioned to the hopes / And expectations of self-flattering minds" its workings are.

Those who sought moral direction in Darwin's wake or shared the Solitary's despairing question---"our origin, what matters it?"---could turn to Wordsworth's text for

consolation, finding assurance in his song

Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope.
And melancholy fear subdued by faith,
Of blessed consolations in distress,
Of moral strength and intellectual power,
Of joy in widest commonalty spread. (III.243, Preface 10)

Such passages gave late Victorians the sense that Wordsworth spoke directly to their time as both poet and prophet. He claimed as much for himself, writing that he must not only "prophesy to his generation," but also "teach the present age by counseling with the future; he must plead for posterity" (*Memoirs* 7).

The plight of Wordsworth's pathetic characters would have grown more poignant for readers who understood their failure in a Darwinian sense, and sought to temper the harsh struggle for survival with compassion. In "Resolution and Independence," Wordsworth describes the "extreme[ly] old" leech gatherer, who "like a sea beast crawled

forth" from his work in the water (65, 62). "Not all alive nor dead," he moves towards extinction much like the leeches he collects, which "have dwindled long by slow decay" (71, 132). "Simon Lee" tells the story of an old huntsman, once tall, powerful, and vigorous, now small, weak, and sick, feebly clinging to his final months of life as the sole survivor of a bygone era. He "has no child," and his struggle for existence will end as completely and fruitlessly as the stump he isn't strong enough to unearth (37). This loser in the battle of natural selection draws out our sympathy, as does "The Old Cumberland Beggar," who "will probably soon be extinct" ("A Description"). Though "nature's law" dictates that his "blood [will] / Struggle with frosty air and winter snows" and ultimately die, it also states that "even the lowest should not exist divorced from good" (73-78, 166-167). By continuing to receive his neighbors' charity, he teaches sympathy and reminds them that "we have all of us one human heart" (145). Part of Wordsworth's appeal in Darwin's time was that elements of his work emphasized the need for sympathy in the face of evolution's bleak reality.

Imposing Wordsworthian sympathy on Darwinism was only one of several different stances Victorian writers took in engaging with these simultaneous influences. The following chapters will show that critics and creative writers, including Matthew Arnold, George Eliot, and Robert Louis Stevenson, turned to Wordsworth as an alternative or antidote to evolution, criticized and revised his poetry in response to this discourse, and synthesized elements of each to propose their own modified theories. In engaging with Wordsworth in this way, I argue, these writers began to see literary influence and history in Darwinian terms. We can recognize the struggle for survival in

the inherent competition of literary relationships. Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* defines creative writers in competitive terms. The poet has "more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul than are supposed to be common among mankind" (603). Set apart by superiority not "in kind," but "in degree" to others, the poet must always battle for preeminence (607). Matthew Arnold's essay "Wordsworth" suggests that, in a very real way, the legacy of Romantic literature was a struggle for survival, as "the death of Byron . . . seemed to make an opening for Wordsworth" (1). If Wordsworth benefited from the deaths of his rivals, his literary fortunes declined with his own. As Arnold writes, "Since his death, in obedience to that law which gives living poets a stronger hold on the minds of their own generation than any poet, even the greatest, of a past age, Wordsworth may seem to have receded somewhat in the world's estimate" (6). Arnold highlights the direct, interpersonal competition between authors, noting that "Tennyson drew [readers] to himself, and away from Wordsworth" (2). In engaging with their predecessors, creative writers compete not just for present success in terms of readership and prestige, but for the judgment of posterity and the future of literary history, just as biological species battle not only for current position, but for their future offspring to thrive.

While evolution and literary influence are inherently competitive, they are also characterized by cooperation and interdependence. In *The Principles of Biology* (1864), Herbert Spencer emphasizes that our traditional understanding of autonomous selfhood makes no evolutionary sense, but that, biologically speaking, people are actually

societies---associations of partly independent organisms. If Darwin's metaphor of the "entangled bank" represents a battleground for "the war of nature," it is also a site of network as its various life forms are "dependent on each other in so complex a manner" (413). Similarly, if writers engage with their predecessors with "an ambition to excel" them, they also come paying tribute, recognizing that their writing depends on the work of others (Longinus 53). Donna Haraway explores the "mutually transforming mergers" that occur *When Species Meet*, tracing the attraction and interdependence of companion species (32). Even in the most competitive of intertextual revisions are the fundamental elements of "respect and response" between authors, which, Haraway argues, are central in inter-species meetings (26). The "mutually transforming merger" is a useful metaphor for literary influence. When Victorian writers pick up Wordsworth's poetry, not only do they change as a result of the encounter, but so does Wordsworth, as we see different versions of the poet in the work of his respective followers. As T.S. Eliot put it, "the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past" (6).

The writers I examine in this study understood the dual nature of influence---both competition and collaboration---as consistent with evolutionary theory, which is based both on interdependence and conflict. Using natural selection as a conceptual framework can help us reconcile opposing views of literary influence in recent studies, as "literary selection" encompasses both Joseph Fruscione's "literary rivalry" and Robin G. Schulze's "web of friendship."³ The phrase "entangled influence" in my title refers to Darwin's entangled bank. The influences of Wordsworth and Darwin were entangled in Victorian

³ See Joseph Fruscione's *Faulkner and Hemingway: Biography of a Literary Rivalry* and Robin G. Schulze's *The Web of Friendship: Marianne Moore and Wallace Stevens*.

literature and culture, repeatedly bumping against each other and intertwining. Like organisms inhabiting the entangled bank, these philosophies conflicted, as their intersections were often mutually disruptive, yet were also interdependent, as each helped define and even strengthen the other through their struggle.

I distinguish this model of influence from objectivist accounts of Darwinian cultural transmission, namely those of Richard Dawkins and Joseph Carroll. Richard Dawkins's "meme" theory holds that cultural transmission is analogous to genetic transmission. Joseph Carroll attempts to explain literature broadly as itself a naturally selected biological advantage. My study counters these explanations in two ways. Both Carroll and Dawkins minimize the significance of the writer's subjectivity. For Dawkins, "memes propagate themselves by leaping from brain to brain" (192). The minds involved in this process are passive receptacles and straight-forward transmitters of information. Carroll's analysis suggests that all authors are driven by the same biological concerns, and that both the source and the content of literature is a Darwinian "human nature" (203). This method is, by Carroll's own admission, reductive, which limits the resulting analysis. While Dawkins indicates that new memes originate from mistakes in the copying process, I agree with Harold Bloom's argument that these mistakes (or misreadings) are intentional creative acts meant "to clear imaginative space for themselves" (5). My emphasis on writers' subjectivities and idiosyncratic language guards against the reductiveness that tends to obscure this creativity in Dawkins's and Carroll's work.

Unlike in sociobiological studies of literary and cultural transmission, that evolutionary theory is among the ideas being transmitted by the writers examined here

has a significant impact on this study. It does not matter to Dawkins or Carroll whether the thinkers 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. Their arguments have nothing to do with the intellectual climate that evolutionary theorists created. For them, evolution simply explains how literary and cultural production works. I'm interested in the authors studied here partially because they were very much aware of natural selection and considered it a conceptual framework for literary influence and history generally, and specifically for their engagement with Wordsworth. These writers, however, didn't merely accept Darwin's terms and apply them cleanly to their literary relationships. Instead they modified evolutionary theory, changing it to suit their own individual, creatively determined ends, just as they revised Wordsworth. In this way, the Victorians avoided some of the shortcomings of Darwinian literary and cultural studies that have hampered modern critics. The following chapters will seek to explain "Literary Selection" through the lens of Wordsworth's and Darwinism's combined influence in late Victorian literature and culture while similarly avoiding this pitfall.

The opening chapter, "Wordsworth in the Age of Evolution," surveys Wordsworth's and Darwinism's intersecting influences in the work of a broad range of critical and creative writers in order to demonstrate the complexity and pervasiveness of this dialogue and outline the background against which Arnold, Eliot, and Stevenson wrote. Victorian commentators took a number of different stances towards the intersection of Wordsworth and evolution. These positions ranged from using

Wordsworth to argue for or against evolution to enlisting Darwinism to criticize or praise Wordsworth's writing. These simultaneous influences occupied a widely diverse group of writers from clergymen such as Gerard Manley Hopkins, Charles Kingsley, and Stopford Brooke to secular thinkers like Walter Pater and George Meredith. In defining their own positions towards the entanglement of Wordsworthian and Darwinian thought, these writers shaped the intellectual and spiritual climate of the period.

Chapter Two, "Creative and Critical Interventions: Wordsworth and Culture in the Work of Matthew Arnold," explores the meeting of Wordsworth and evolution in Arnold's writing. For Arnold, Wordsworth's poetry provides the meaning and guidance necessary to deal with Victorian science, answering fundamental questions which Darwin doesn't address. On the one hand, Arnold includes Wordsworth's poetry in his all-important "Culture," which serves as a check against the brutality of evolutionary theory. This emphasis is a revision of the poet on the other hand, as Arnoldian "Culture" replaces Wordsworthian "Nature." Darwinian nature, Arnold suggests, no longer supports Wordsworthian philosophy, and Wordsworth's formulas which rely on this outdated view of the natural world are undercut and cruelly reversed in Arnold's poetry. While Arnold revises Wordsworth, he also goes to great lengths to strengthen the poet's legacy, which he considers critical for the evolution and descent of English literature. He suggests that current and future writers need strong literary ancestors in order to progress. To descend from the wrong poetic stock is to risk regression and fail to leave a progressing literary offspring. Thus while Arnold elevates Wordsworth over science, he also uses evolutionary arguments in making the case for the poet's importance. Arnold's critical

efforts to edit and promote Wordsworth can be seen as a sort of pruning or breeding technique: removing the undesirable and facilitating the development of the best traits. His approach resembles the artificial selection techniques of the gardeners and animal breeders Darwin describes, as Arnold seeks to determine the outcome of literary contests by manipulating natural processes, privileging culture over nature.

The third chapter is "Evolving from Wordsworth and Darwin in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*." As Wordsworth's influence became less noticeable, Darwin's became more central over the course of Eliot's career. This chapter departs from the critical consensus in arguing that far from abandoning Wordsworth, Eliot's final novel represents her most confident engagement with his poetry, particularly *The Prelude* and "Tintern Abbey," in a literary dialogue best understood in relation to Darwinism. Eliot critiques and revises both Wordsworth's and Darwin's writing in similar ways in the novel; namely, she deliberately evokes them only to reverse what she considers the selfishness and sexism inherent in their work. She also uses these combined influences to work through problems with the concept of sympathy. Wordsworth reshapes Eliot's acceptance of Darwinism and in turn Darwin affects her relationship with Wordsworth. Eliot's novel uses Wordsworth's proposition in Book XIII of *The Prelude* that "Love of Nature Lead[s] to Love of Mankind" to counter the Darwinian link between an amoral natural world and self-interest. Evolutionary theory enables Eliot to imagine a progression away from Wordsworth and Darwin---a transformation of their flaws as reflected in her fiction. Even as Eliot draws on evolution, however, she also modifies it, rendering it an active, conscious choice rather than an inevitable phenomenon. Her insistence on the importance

of the will in literary evolution enables her to maintain her intellectual independence and artistic authority and reinforces her revisions as ethical choices.

My fourth chapter, "Trailing Clouds of . . . Primal Sympathy: Robert Louis Stevenson's Evolutionary Wordsworth," is the first study of Wordsworth's influence on Stevenson. Stevenson's engagement with evolutionary theory, on the other hand, has been less neglected by critics. This chapter argues that Darwinism shaped Stevenson's reading of Wordsworth, leading him to both revise and reaffirm his poetry. I explore these interacting influences through an analysis of Stevenson's fiction, essays, letters, and annotated copy of Wordsworth's *The Poetical Works* (1858). As the two strains intertwine, they come into conflict. Stevenson criticizes and revises Wordsworth's poetry, emphasizing that much of what is benign in the poet's work becomes problematic or sinister in a Darwinian world. While Stevenson revises those elements of Wordsworth he considers invalidated by evolution, he also clings to Wordsworth's poetry in an effort to counter Darwinism's dark side. Stevenson engages with Wordsworth as a critic, a rival, and an enthusiastic admirer. At every point, from Stevenson's recasting of literary competition as natural selection to his emphasis on his evolving response to Wordsworth, the relationship is informed by evolutionary theory.

The fifth and final chapter, "Entangled Arguments: Wordsworth, Evolution, and the Preservation Movement," demonstrates that the relationship between Wordsworth and evolutionary theory extended beyond literature and informed the period's conservation debates. The Wordsworth Society was at the forefront of the late nineteenth-century conservation movement, which led to the establishment of the British National Trust to

preserve the Lake District's landscape. I analyze a wide range of newspapers, periodicals, parliamentary records, and pamphlets to argue that this debate rested on a conflict between Wordsworthian and Darwinian ideas. Wordsworthian preservationists implicitly framed their arguments against railways and water works in the Lake District as an opposition to evolutionary theory. Whereas nature is always changing in natural selection, these conservationists sought to stop "development" and "progress," retaining a link not only to Wordsworth, but to the primitive past through the unaltered landscape. They characterized their industrial opponents as animalistic and predatory, and stressed that the Lake District provided a refuge from the selfish, competitive struggle of modern society. Advocates of each side also drew on the ideology of their opponents when it suited their purposes. Some proponents of the Thirlmere Water Scheme, for instance, attacked the preservationists in Wordsworthian terms, suggesting that their lack of imagination, deficient sense of beauty, and misunderstanding of the link between people and nature kept them from recognizing the superior value of the water scheme, and led to their misanthropic opposition. The conservationists, on the other hand, drew on evolutionary ideas, emphasizing that changing the Lake District environment would weaken or destroy the native peasantry (a valuable but endangered species), deprive future generations of their ancestral inheritance, and stunt the development of artists, who needed the natural environment to thrive. My hope is that this study will give us a better understanding of the important though overlooked links between two dominant and very different views of nature in late Victorian literature and culture.

1

Wordsworth in the Age of Evolution

Many Victorian writers sought to explore the complex interaction and profound tension between Wordsworth's influence and evolution in their critical and creative work. Efforts to define this relationship were both frequent and widespread. The writers engaged in this struggle occupied a wide variety of ideological and rhetorical stances. These positions included using Wordsworth to counter, modify, or resist Darwinism, enlisting evolution to criticize or invalidate Wordsworth, turning to the poet to find comfort and meaning in an evolutionary world, drawing on one philosophy or the other from both sides of the conflict between science and faith, synthesizing both to reconcile that conflict, and praising or criticizing Wordsworth himself in Darwinian terms. Victorian critics such as Stopford Brooke, Arthur Clough, Aubrey de Vere, Richard Holt Hutton, William Knight, Walter Pater, John Campbell Shairp, and Leslie Stephen sought to come to terms with these intersecting influences along these various lines. A wide range of creative writers, including Thomas Hardy, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Emily Pfeiffer, Charles Kingsley, and George Meredith also grappled with this entanglement in different genres and from various standpoints. In doing so, they strengthened the cultural presence of Wordsworth's and evolution's simultaneous and conflicting influences which

would shape not only the work of Arnold, Eliot, and Stevenson, but also political and social discourse in the environmental debates.

Victorian Criticism

In his 1876 essay "Wordsworth's Ethics," Leslie Stephen pauses in his argument on the soundness of Wordsworth's philosophy to point out the confluence of his poetry and the discoveries of Victorian science. He uses the "Intimations Ode" as an example, in which "high instincts" and "shadowy recollections" from a spiritual preexistence are "yet a master-light of all our seeing" (151-157). Devoting two paragraphs to the connections between Wordsworth's verse and evolutionary theory, he muses:

Some modern reasoners would explain its significance by reference to a very different kind of pre-existence. The instincts, they would say, are valuable, because they register the accumulated and inherited experience of past generations. Wordsworth's delight in wild scenery is regarded by them as due to the "combination of states that were organised in the race during barbarous times, when its pleasurable activities were amongst the mountains, woods, and waters."⁴ . . . Wordsworth would have repudiated the doctrine with disgust. . . . Yet there is much in common between him and the[se] men of science. . . . The fact of the value of these primitive instincts is admitted, and admitted for the same purpose. Man, it is agreed, is furnished with sentiments which cannot be explained as the result of his individual experience. They may be intelligible, according to the evolutionist, when regarded as embodying the past experience of the race; or, according to Wordsworth, as implying a certain mysterious faculty imprinted on the soul. (140-142)

Concluding that there is "a real connection between the two doctrines, though in one sense they are almost antithetical," Stephen makes clear that the significance of this link

⁴ Stephen's quotation is from Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Psychology*. In the quoted passage, Spencer describes how our response to external stimuli reveals an instinctual inheritance from evolutionary forebears. The smell of meat, for instance, "will make nascent those numerous and varied states of consciousness that accompany the running down, catching, killing, and eating of prey: the sensations . . . accompanying these actions . . . will all be partially aroused at the same time" (598). Spencer goes on to explain that "the like explanation applies to the emotions that leave the subject of them comparatively passive: as, for instance, the emotion produced by beautiful scenery" (599). This passive response to the natural world is analogous with Wordsworth's state of "wise passiveness" in nature ("Expostulation and Reply" 24).

is far more important than mere scholarly speculation. "The scientific doctrine," he explains, "whether sound or not, has modified the whole mode of approaching ethical problems; and Wordsworth . . . gives a new emphasis to the facts" (142).

While Stephen's reflection is the most explicit and sustained discussion of the link between Wordsworth and evolution, the connection was "far more deeply interfused" in Victorian literature and culture than he indicates ("Tintern Abbey" 97). One reviewer in *The Spectator* commented, "It is certainly remarkable that the main ideas of Wordsworth are becoming slowly but surely the watchwords of science. . . . Wordsworth saw the unity of the world, the oneness of man with Nature, now the corner-stone of science" ("England's Debt to Wordsworth" 182). More than simply reflecting evolutionary ideas, however, Wordsworth's poetry had relevance on both sides of the evolution debate. Stopford Brooke, an anti-evolution Anglican minister, described "the theological idea which is the basis of Wordsworth's representation of nature" in a sermon, while the agnostic T.H. Huxley used his words as an epigram in each issue of his journal of evolutionary biology *Nature* (79).⁵ Wordsworth's late Victorian readers described him as both for and against evolution. Elizabeth Wordsworth links her great uncle's poetic celebration of industrial technology in *The Excursion* and "Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways" with evolution, writing that "railways *are* the offspring of Nature. Given the human brain, water, coals, and iron, they were bound to come in time; they are part of evolution though the word had hardly come into fashion in his days" (114). Her narrative places Wordsworth firmly within the popular Victorian teleological view of evolution: "it

⁵ Huxley opened each issue with the following quotation from "A Volant Tribe of Bards on Earth are Found": "To the solid ground of / Nature trusts the Mind which builds for aye."

was his credo that man's race advances 'with an ascent and progress in the main'" (234).

H.D. Traill, on the other hand, read the assumption in Wordsworth's poetry "that poetic inspiration proceeds from a higher source than experience . . . [as] a protest against belief in evolution from beneath" (531).

Questions of belief and its absence characterize a significant portion of the Victorian Wordsworth criticism informed by evolutionary ideas. Stopford Brooke seeks to bring Wordsworth's pantheistic representation of nature in line with orthodox Anglicanism: "[It] is a poetic impersonation of the Spirit of God in the outer world. This is God, living, moving, and rejoicing in all his works" (96). Aubrey de Vere analyzes the "Intimations Ode," but carefully disassociates it from evolution to emphasize its Christianity. While Stephen's reading links the "high instinct" and triumphant climax of the poem with biologically inherited traits through evolutionary processes, de Vere is careful to describe not the spiritually elevated, but the lower, despondent state as "half-animal," omitting the phrases "high instinct" and "like a creature" from his quotation of Wordsworth's description of the transcendent experience. He supports Wordsworth's account of preexistence with theological citations, and explicitly positions it against evolution, writing that "we bring our sense of beauty, truth, the infinite, and holiness into the world---spiritual senses which contradistinguish man from the brutes" (259). While not changing Wordsworth's emphasis that our connection with nature reminds us of our elevated origins, he does add a disclaimer to ensure that our "fellowship" with nature is not read in any evolutionary sense:

I need hardly guard myself against mistake by adding that it is easy to carry this notion of kindred too far, and thus to degrade it altogether. If we do not recognize

the transcendent unlikeness of nature to man, along with the likeness which exists, the latter idea is more than vulgarized. It becomes distorted and untrue. Only through the recognition of the former does the latter gain in reality and grandeur. We do not need, however, to be reminded of the difference so much as the resemblance. (313)

Too close a kinship between humanity and nature would imply, as the Darwinists argue, that man is an animal.⁶

While some critics seek to bolster Wordsworth's theological credentials against Darwinism, others find in his work an unorthodox link between humanity and nature that is more consistent with evolution than Christianity, and allows secular thinkers to enlist the poet on their side. Walter Pater reads an evolutionary return to a primitive pantheism rather than Christian doctrine in Wordsworth's spiritualized vision of nature. "It was like a 'survival'" (a resurfacing of instinctual behavior from the evolutionary past), he wrote, "in the peculiar intellectual temperament of a man of letters at the end of the 18th century, of that primitive condition, which some philosophers have traced in the general history of human culture, wherein all outward objects . . . were believed to be endowed with animation, and the world was 'full of souls'" (47-48). Pater's reading of Wordsworth emphasizes that in his poetry humans are part of nature, as "the leech gatherer on the moor, the woman stepping westward, are for him natural objects almost in the same sense as the aged thorn, or the lichened rock on the heath. The very religion of these people of the dales appeared but as another link between them and the earth." Pater places Wordsworth's characters in a Darwinian natural world, where "their poor pathetic

⁶ While this idea, which Jonathan Swift emphasizes in Book IV of *Gulliver's Travels*, predates evolutionary theory, it took on unmistakably Darwinian associations for the Victorians.

pleasures [are] . . . won so hardly in the struggle for bare existence" (53). Far from the tame orthodoxy of some of his fellow critics, Pater writes that

Wordsworth seems at times to have passed the borders of a world of strange speculations, inconsistent enough, had he cared to note such inconsistencies, with those traditional beliefs, which were otherwise the object of his devout acceptance. He passes into thoughts which have visited far more venturesome, perhaps errant spirits. He pondered deeply on those strange reminiscences and forebodings, which seem to make our lives stretch before and behind us, beyond where we can see or touch anything, or trace the lines of connection, following the soul backwards and forwards (future and past life) that old heresy. . . . And so he has something, also, for those who feel the fascination of bold speculative ideas. . . . This speculative boldness constitutes for some minds the secret attraction of much of his best poetry. (55)

As Wordsworth "passed the borders" of his Christian faith in the evolutionary elements of his writing, secular thinkers were eager to point out where he crossed the line. If Wordsworth's representation of preexistence was an "old heresy," it had contemporary applications following Darwinian theory. That Wordsworth was commonly viewed as quintessentially Anglican made these elements of doubt and speculation a "secret attraction" of his work. It was this speculative element of Wordsworth's poetry which allowed agnostics and freethinkers to claim Wordsworth as one of their own during the debates surrounding evolution.

Christian evolutionists countered this speculative interpretation with a much different reading, often turning to Wordsworth to help reconcile the apparent ideological conflicts between faith and science. Henry Ward Beecher describes Wordsworth's revolutionary elevation of the poor in his writing as part of a broader evolution of society towards Christian love (208). Rev. John W. Chadwick uses Wordsworth's lines in "Ode to Duty"---"Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong / And the most ancient heavens

through thee are fresh and strong"---to demonstrate that the same evolutionary force by which the stars developed also spawned human morality. The long evolution of moral standards, he reasons, signals their importance and suggests that only the immortality of the soul would justify this natural process. He writes that Wordsworth "is not more poetical than scientific" in these lines (337). John Campbell Shairp, who complains that "there was call for a fuller acknowledgement of Christian verities" in Wordsworth's work, emphasizes that no other poet better restores "the primeval intuitions of a something Divine in nature, traces of which lie far down in the lowest layers of the world's early religions, . . . yielding glimpses into that morning feeling for Nature which seems to have vanished with the world's childhood" (83). In this reading, Wordsworth's ideas are not contrary to evolution, but are restored from a distant evolutionary past. M. J. Savage goes so far as to write that "the God of evolution . . . borrows the beautiful and mystic tongue of Wordsworth, and speaks of 'a sense sublime . . . whose dwelling is the light of setting suns . . . the round ocean and the living air, / And the blue sky, and in the mind of man'" (71). Savage locates God in evolutionary nature, insisting that He is not the distant, immaterial spiritual being that theologians describe. Through this Wordsworthian, evolutionary Deity, he suggests, all life on earth, including humankind, is linked to the divine.

Victorian commentators recognized that the perceived conflict between science and faith was a central influence in matching Wordsworth's message with the late nineteenth-century moment. William Knight suggests that, unlike religion, Wordsworth's poetry was safe from the advancement of science:

His poetry is intrinsically durable; not only because—like all poetry of the first magnitude—it is a joy to the human race forever; but also because it has no mythological elements, which Science may some day compel us to lay aside. He carries us into a region altogether unaffected by the discoveries, which imperil a merely traditional faith. (*Studies in Philosophy and Literature* 314)

If for Knight, "merely traditional faith" was becoming extinct in the wake of evolutionary theory, Wordsworth's work would live on. Wordsworth's writing, he asserts, is not only safe from the revelations of evolutionary thinkers, but confirmed by them as "Wordsworth's poetry moves in a sphere . . . to which [science's] widest generalisations bear witness, and pay tribute" (314). Stephen, on the other hand, contends that "Wordsworth's teaching, profound and admirable as it may be, has not the potency to silence the skepticism which has gathered strength since his day" (174). Evolutionary theory was the major driver of this pervasive and increasing skepticism, and Victorians of differing ideologies brought Wordsworth to bear on this discussion.

Stephen predicted that Wordsworth couldn't overcome scientific skepticism partially because his idyllic representation of nature appeared radically different after Darwin, whose work invalidated some of the poet's central ideas. Stephen ponders this position in "Wordsworth's Ethics," attributing to the poet "a too facile optimism."

Wordsworth, he writes,

seems at times to have overlooked that dark side of nature which is recognised . . . in the scientific theories about the fierce struggle for existence. Is there not a teaching of nature very apt to suggest horror and despair rather than a complacent brooding over soothing thoughts? Do not the mountains which Wordsworth loves so well, speak of decay and catastrophe in every line of their slopes? Do they not suggest the helplessness and narrow limitations of man, as forcibly as his possible exaltation? This awe which they strike into our souls has

its terrible as well as amiable side; and in moods of depression the darker aspect becomes more conspicuous than the brighter. (148)⁷

When read against evolutionary theory, some of Wordsworth's most benign ideas can appear sinister. Darwinism questions not only Wordsworth's representations of nature, but also nature's influence on humanity. Stephen writes, "If we admit that we have instincts which are the very substance of all that afterwards becomes ennobling, have we not also instincts which suggest a close alliance with the brutes?" suggesting that Wordsworth's "high instincts" have a lower, more animalistic side. Stephen continues, "If the child amidst his newborn blisses suggests a heavenly origin, does he not also show sensual and cruel instincts which imply at least an admixture of baser elements?" Such a reading casts a dark Darwinian shadow over Wordsworth's writing. Ultimately, unlike some of his contemporaries, Stephen lets Wordsworth off the hook: "To say that Wordsworth has not given a complete answer to such difficulties is to say that he has not explained the origin of evil" (148-149).

For some critics, Wordsworth provided consolation and direction in the face of evolution. John Ruskin wrote in 1880 that *The Excursion* had been the Book of Life, second only to the Bible for him, and that he had "used Wordsworth as a daily text-book from youth to age, and [had] lived . . . in all essential points according to the tenor of his teaching" ("Wordsworth and Byron" 349). Victorians who didn't find adequate answers in Christianity found strength in Wordsworth. As Leslie Stephen writes, "Other poetry becomes trifling when we are making our inevitable passage through the valley of the shadow of death" (135). His poetry provided meaning against a Darwinian backdrop of

⁷ In pointing out the inaccuracies in Wordsworth's idealization of a dangerous natural world, Stephen anticipates Aldous Huxley's argument in his 1929 essay "Wordsworth in the Tropics."

death and extinction. In Wordsworth, readers such as Richard Holt Hutton found "the permanent in the transient, that discovered the light in darkness, that felt the strength in weakness, the joy in suffering, the life in death" (112). Many considered Wordsworth's writing particularly well suited to provide comfort and insight to those grappling with the painful, uncertain questions raised by Victorian science. As Knight writes,

There is no influence so good and gracious as Wordsworth's, so directly *sanative*, to those who have felt a relaxation of fibre, from long pondering the 'riddle of the painful earth,' or brooding over the antinomies of our intellectual and moral nature.⁸ . . . There is a well known sense of hopelessness, when one is beaten down before the mysteries of the universe . . . a feeling of languor and indifference. . . . To one, in such a mood of apathy or life-weariness, the influence of Wordsworth is incomparable. His poetry is a moral tonic, re-invigorating the heart. He's great as a poet, but even greater as a moralist, providing guide-posts in ethics. . . . He, of all poets, best helps you to know where you are, what direction to take, and how to travel forward with serenity, and even with joy. (*Studies* 315)

If evolutionary doubt was the malady for such readers, Wordsworth's poetry was "the moral tonic"; for those disoriented and disappointed by religious disillusionment, his verse showed them "guide-posts in ethics" and "the possibility of turning grief and disappointment into account . . . transmuting sorrow into strength" (315). John Stuart Mill famously relates in his *Autobiography* that Wordsworth's poetry helped him recover from a nervous breakdown. Mill also found Wordsworth to be a sort of antidote against the selfish, perhaps even Darwinian, struggle of the world: "A source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure which could be shared in by all human beings which had no connection with struggle [. . .] would be made richer by every improvement in the condition of mankind" (148). For these Victorians, Wordsworth perfectly filled a gaping hole that evolution had painfully opened.

⁸ Knight quotes Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "The Palace of Art" (213).

In *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, Stephen Gill explains Wordsworth's growing popularity in the 1870s and 80s, a period he labels "a Wordsworth renaissance," as a reaction against the tendency of Swinburne, D.G. Rossetti, and other members of the "Fleshly School of Poetry" to "divorce art from morality, matter from form, and artist from man" (216). Wordsworthians championed their poet as a great man and moral guide, in contrast to William Morris's description of the poet as an "idle singer of an empty day" ("The Earthly Paradise" l.7). Wordsworthians used this phrase not just for Morris, but for many of the Pre-Raphaelites, whom they viewed as the antithesis of the poetic ideal. Gill writes that these critics "present a Wordsworth who matters . . . not only because he has a message which can instruct, sustain, and console, but also because his poetry demonstrates, against the aesthetic tendencies of the day, that this is poetry's true office" (216).

I would add to Gill's commentary that a major reason the day seemed so empty and the song so idle for at least some of the Pre-Raphaelites was that they were widely viewed as void of meaning and direction in Darwin's wake.⁹ Although this anti-Wordsworth poetry in some ways grew out of Darwinism, some critics insisted that it meant regression, praising Wordsworth for pointing the way towards progress. As Edward Caird wrote, "We can't give the title of sacred poet to the 'idle singer of an empty day,' but only to him who can express the deepest and widest interests of human life; nay, only to him who is in sympathy with the progressive movement of mankind" (154). Caird declared that "Wordsworth can stand this test as well as any poet who ever

⁹ See John Holmes's discussion of Swinburne's and Meredith's engagement with evolutionary theory (46-74, 107-116, 197-212, 245-260).

lived," and considered that the spiritual and ethical elements of Wordsworth's verse constituted "deep[er] and wide[r] interests of human life" than the materialist, skeptical poetry of those who came after him. Poetry such as Wordsworth's, he predicted, "in the long run, 'humanity will not willingly let die'" (154). In this view, it was the Darwinian poets who were ironically headed towards extinction. Wordsworth's resurgence in opposition to Pre-Raphaelite poetry, then, was wrapped up in evolutionary theory, and his revived popularity coincided with Darwin's. Indeed, from 1859 into the twentieth century, Wordsworth's and Darwin's influence as measured by references in books and periodicals have a strikingly similar trajectory, rising and falling together and both reaching their height during the period covered by this study. While such measurements are admittedly taken from still rough digital instruments, their close correlation suggests a connection between the two writers' currency that is more than coincidental (see Figure 1, 14).

These readers not only sought answers to evolutionary questions in Wordsworth's poetry, but also drew on the poet to revise Darwin's view of nature. For Brooke, a fundamental tenet of Wordsworth's poetry is that nature's way is the opposite of the harsh struggle for survival, which represents "what man has made of man," but is foreign to the natural world:

[One] characteristic of the life of Nature is its quietude, untroubled ecstasy. We are "pressed by heavy laws," tormented by doubt, and rent by struggle . . . [while] Nature's life is at peace, for her children never wage a foolish strife with her; nor does self enter their hearts to make them weary of life. Deep calm is at her heart . . . there is "Central peace subsisting at the heart / Of endless agitation." (*Theology in the English Poets* 104)

Though a revision of evolutionary theory, the emphasis on interconnection as "the whole world [is] linked together" in "ceaseless intercommunion" in this view of nature paradoxically resembles Darwin's vision (105). However, the interdependence of Darwin's "entangled bank" is based on competition, whereas these Wordsworthian natural interactions are "founded on the unutterable love which flowed through all things . . . as each plant and hill, cloud and stream . . . delight[s] in social intercourse like friends who love each other---there is no jar, no jealousy, no envy there---their best joy is in being kind to one another" (105). While some Victorians struggled with the insignificance of the human species to nature "red in tooth and claw" and "careless . . . of the type," others found in Wordsworth "nature's longing to unite herself to us," and were "impressed with delight by the love which all things seem to bear us" (Tennyson "In Memoriam" LVI.15, LV.7-8, 105). There is a kind of willful ignorance in Brooke's description, as if in response to evolution he needed to create a ridiculously idyllic version of nature in order to make the point that natural interactions could be interpreted in other ways than the violent struggle for survival. Whereas many evolutionists considered that our strongest instinctual drives promoted selfish competition while struggling for survival in a godless world, critics like Brooke found that they were "rescued in Wordsworth's poetry from the sight of our Self in Nature, and enabled to see God in it" (119). In Wordsworth's writing, they emphasized, "nature teach[es] seriously and sweetly through the affections, melting the heart, and through the instinct of tenderness, developing the understanding" and sympathy (119).



Figure 1. "Wordsworth, Darwin." *Google Books Ngram Viewer*.

Wordsworth's and Darwin's influences were so intertwined that late Victorians not only used Wordsworth's poetry to respond to evolution, but also viewed the poet himself through an evolutionary lens. Hutton lamented that the period's Wordsworth criticism "hardly attaches enough importance to the general intensity and rugged power of the man," but many of the poet's critical portraits of the period emphasize his personal success in Darwinian terms (122). Shaipr began his essay by tracing Wordsworth's lineal descent in order "to show that in the wisdom of Wordsworth, as in so many other poets,

the virtues of an ancient and worthy race were condensed and bloomed forth into genius," suggesting that his poetic powers were biologically inherited through long evolution ("Wordsworth the Man" 9). Many critics of the period emphasized Wordsworth's physical prowess. Not only was he "the oldest born of the poetic brotherhood" of Romantics, but also the "hadiest," outliving his literary rivals by many years. Critical accounts of Wordsworth's childhood seem to predict this vitality, as "he was foremost in all schoolboy adventures . . . the hadiest cragsman at the harrying of ravens' nests" and paddling "the sturdiest oar" in the boyhood boat races (13). Such strength enabled the poet to succeed in his literary battle, persevering "against all adverse criticism and the want of popular appreciation" (Knight 288). Knight attributed Wordsworth's poetic accomplishments to his "unusually fine senses," which enabled him to "pierce through [a scene] to discern the underlying suggestions, the genius loci, with which [it] was charged" (302). During this period, the common image of Wordsworth was of the retired poet, surrounded at Rydal Mount by his wife, sister, and offspring, and the critical emphasis on his domestic life can be read as a celebration of the poet's Darwinian triumph. Shairp wrote that "few poets have been by nature so fitted for domestic happiness, and fewer still have been blessed with so abundant a share of it" (*Studies in Poetry* 46). While some readers will recognize in these portraits the influence of Thomas Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*, these representations, whatever other predecessors helped shape them, had an unmistakable Darwinian association for the late Victorians.

Alternately, critics often portrayed Wordsworth as having withdrawn from the competitive struggle of life---a decision they both praised and attacked. Arthur Hugh

Clough criticized the poet for not taking an active part in the (Darwinian) struggle: "It was his business to walk about this world of life and action, and avoiding life and action, have his gentle thoughts excited by flowers, and running waters, and shadows on mountain sides" (513). This mocking description feminizes the poet for failing to engage in life's battle. Pater describes Wordsworth "taking leave, without much count of costs, of the world of business, of action, and ambition" and also what "for the majority of mankind counts as sensuous enjoyment" (47). Other critics celebrated this tendency, emphasizing that Wordsworth rose above the Darwinian struggle. He was "self-removed from the crowd of men and from the more everyday interests of the world" (Brooke 268). "It was his instinct," wrote Brooke, "not to read for a prize at Cambridge," declining the competitive examinations as he was "removed from little enmities and low desires" (*Theology* 149). Though the age placed high value on competition, action, and production, critics praised Wordsworth for "liv[ing] in peace far from the strifes of men . . . and the disturbing lusts of the world" (285). "The idle life was good for him," as Brooke explained, "there was no need for him to do anything but drift in wise passiveness" (*Theology* 151). These critics projected the competition of Darwinian nature onto modern society, and placed Wordsworth in an idyllic, peaceful natural world "little disturbed by the ambitions and rivalries of civilization." Those concerned with evolution's troubling ethical implications could point not just to Wordsworth's poetry, but also to his biography to counter its dark side. Similarly, readers who viewed Darwinism favorably could find support for their position in Wordsworth's life as well as in his writing.

Creative Writing

In addition to Victorian critics, creative writers grappled with the relationship between Wordsworth's influence and evolutionary theory in their work. The bulk of this dissertation will examine this engagement in the work of Arnold, Eliot, and Stevenson. To give a sense of the background against which these three wrote, I will look more briefly at a broad group of creative writers in this section. These writers vary widely in genre, ranging from lyric poets to children's fantasy novelists, but also in ideology. Their stances towards these entangled influences span from using this intersection to reaffirm their Christian faith to dismissing Wordsworth's writing as empty fallacies in the face of evolution. Tonally, the writing which emerges from these positions ranges from hopeful exuberance to aching despair. Several of these writers undergo a sort of evolution of their own, developing in their response to these influences, and moving through different points along this continuum.

Thomas Hardy is one of the first authors readers might think of as likely to figure in a study of this topic. While scholars have long recognized both Wordsworth's and Darwin's influence in Thomas Hardy's work, none have seriously explored their intersection, which changes over the course of Hardy's career.¹⁰ In *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), Hardy criticizes the Wordsworthian traits of "tenderness" and "powerful feelings," emphasizing that these cultivated emotions grate painfully against Darwinian realities (Preface 598). To the extent that William Boldwood, along with Gabriel Oak and Sergeant Troy, develops strong feelings for Bathsheba Everdene, he suffers intensely.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Peter J. Casagrande's "Hardy's Wordsworth: A Record and a Commentary," Dennis Taylor's "Hardy and Wordsworth," Phillip Mallet's "Hardy, Darwin, and the Origin of Species," and Roy Morrell's "Hardy, Darwin, and Nature."

After Bathsheba rejects his proposal and marries Troy, he is “agonized” and wears “an expression deeper than a cry”---an echo of Wordsworth’s “thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears” (281, “Intimations Ode” 206). Boldwood’s suffering results from losing the brutal competition of sexual selection. His feelings are so strong that he cannot pursue his biological self-interest. Not only does he refuse to seek another partner when Bathsheba marries, he is too heartbroken to look after his crops, all of which are destroyed through his neglect. In a Darwinian world, overly refined sensibilities can be materially detrimental as well as painful.¹¹

Bathsheba’s first encounter with Troy illustrates the messy and destructive combination of Wordsworthian feeling and evolutionary instinct. Passing on a dark path at night, Bathsheba’s skirt becomes “entangled” in Troy’s spur (190). Hardy’s word choice recalls Darwin’s metaphor of the “entangled bank”: a swarming site of encounters between species, marked by the conflict and complexities of sexual and natural selection. Under pretense of “set[ting her] free,” Troy makes the knot worse and unabashedly praises her beauty (413, 191). He defends his unceremonious behavior, saying, “Half the pleasure in a feeling lies in being able to express it in the spur of the moment,” a speech recalling Wordsworth’s “spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling” (192). Bathsheba gives voice to Hardy’s concern in her question, “How long have you been afflicted with

¹¹ Hardy makes the point about the conflict between Wordsworthian feelings and nature more directly in *The Woodlanders* (1887). In predicting Melbury’s sufferings, which would result from his beloved daughter’s bad marriage, Hardy quotes Wordsworth’s “The Small Celandine”: “Melbury, perhaps, was an unlucky man in having within him the sentiment which could indulge in this foolish fondness about the imprint of a daughter’s footstep. Nature does not carry on her government with a view to such feelings, and when advancing years render the open hearts of those who possess them less dexterous than formerly in shutting against the blast, they must suffer ‘buffeting at will by rain and storm’ no less than Little Celandines” (19). Hardy elevates this relatively obscure and un-Wordsworthian poem to represent nature in several allusions in order to emphasize that in this minor poem, rather than in his major work, Wordsworth’s representation of nature was accurate and consistent with evolutionary science.

strong feelings then?" (192). Powerful feelings and instinctual drives not only cause personal pain, they also lead characters astray, as Hardy describes the rationale for Bathsheba's disastrous marriage decision: "Troy's deformities lay deep down from a woman's vision, whilst his embellishments were upon the very surface; thus contrasting with homely Oak, whose defects were patent to the blindest, and whose virtues were as metals in a mine" (222). Entangled by instinct, however, the lovers marry, bringing intense agony on themselves and others.

As a solution to these conflicts, Hardy casts Gabriel as a revised Wordsworthian figure who corrects the defects of Darwinism. Gabriel exhibits the Wordsworthian trait of being affected "by absent things as if they were present" (603). "Apt to idealize the removed object with others, notably those whose affection flow deep and long," his feelings for Bathsheba strengthen after her departure (38). He also has a keen appreciation for nature's beauty and can read the natural world to determine the time and predict weather. Far from claiming to be a "chosen son" of nature, Gabriel realizes that the natural world is indifferent towards him; he is a Wordsworthian figure without the egotistical sublime. The narrator attributes his powers to endure life's hardships to his recognition "that among the multitude of interests by which he was surrounded, those which affected his personal well-being were not the most absorbing . . . Oak meditatively looked upon the horizon of circumstances without any special regard to his own standpoint in the midst" (347). Understanding his relative insignificance in nature, Gabriel doesn't expect any special attention or care from it. He has no illusions of a teleological world which will arrange circumstances in his favor. Such expectations,

coupled with strong Wordsworthian feelings, become liabilities after Darwin. If Gabriel's mindset enables him to endure nature's harsh realities, it also helps him avoid Darwinian defects such as the pure pursuit of self-interest, as he asks Bathsheba, "Are you not more to me than my own affairs, and even life?" (227). In Gabriel, Hardy combines Wordsworthian and evolutionary ideas to propose a less self-focused outlook that will be ethically and emotionally viable following Darwinism.¹²

Though Wordsworthian principles conflict with evolutionary theory in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Wordsworth wins out in the end. In spite of Gabriel's abiding love of Bathsheba, he rises above the Darwinian competition of sexual selection. When Farmer Boldwood pursues Bathsheba, Gabriel is determined not to stand in his way: "Convinced of the impossibility of his own suit, a high resolve constrained him not to injure that of another" (166). Gabriel advises Bathsheba in her relationships with a generous "disinterestedness of opinion" (166). At one point, Gabriel even gives way to Boldwood physically, ceding his place at the table at Bathsheba's side (185). Though Gabriel falls short in the Darwinian contest, having "lost in the race for money and good things," he maintains a selfless love for Bathsheba, who is "more to [him] than [his] own affairs, and even life" (223). When she marries Troy, Gabriel retains a Wordsworthian sympathy, "[rising] above his own grief in noticing Boldwood's." After Troy's disappearance, Boldwood's chances appear much better, and he counts himself "a sort of successful rival . . . partly through [Gabriel's] goodness of heart" (388). When Troy

¹² Troy, by contrast, has unrealistic expectations of nature as he egotistically imagines himself at the center of a teleological narrative: "He was the hero of his story, without whom there would have been no story at all; and it seemed to be only in the nature of things that matters would right themselves and at some proper date would wind up well" (375). Such expectations tend to be frustrated in Hardy's work as "a true narrative, like time and tide, must run its course and would respect no man" (67).

returns to reclaim Bathsheba, his violent, Darwinian rivalry with Boldwood takes them both out of the running, as Boldwood shoots Troy and is imprisoned for murder. Though Gabriel resists the competitive behavior which Darwinism prescribes, he ultimately achieves Darwinian success, outlasting his rivals and marrying Bathsheba.

While the Wordsworthian Oak sits out the struggle of sexual selection and ultimately wins, Wordsworthianism fares worse in Hardy's work as his career progresses. In *The Woodlanders* (1887), Giles Winterbourne is every bit the Wordsworthian hero that Oak is. He is the character closest to nature and is skilled in reading its signs and mysteries as a planter and woodsman, enjoying "intelligent intercourse with nature" much like the communicative "correspondent breeze" between nature and Wordsworth in *The Prelude* (327, l.35). Hardy describes Giles's appearance while working during the harvest as that of "autumn's very brother" (204). Like Gabriel, Giles withdraws from the competition of sexual selection, literally standing aside for his rival, Fitzpiers, who marries Grace Melbury notwithstanding the understanding that she was to marry Giles (147). Fitzpiers "capture[s] her . . . as if she had been a bird," and wins the Darwinian contest (147). While Gabriel is seemingly rewarded for withdrawing from selfish competition, resisting Darwinism gets Giles nowhere. Despite his closeness to the natural world, he dies with a fever from exposure to the elements, painfully disproving Wordsworth's conviction that "nature never did betray / The heart that loved her" ("Tintern Abbey" 122-23). During the violent storm, "branches smite the roof in the manner of a gigantic hand smiting the mouth of an adversary . . . followed by a trickle of rain, as blood from the wound" (285). The scene of Giles's suffering is marked with the

signs of Darwinian struggle as the "trees . . . wrestl[e] for existence, their branches disfigured with wounds resulting from their mutual rubbings and blows . . . surrounded by rotting stumps of those of the group that had been vanquished long ago" (288).

Though to Grace, in her grief, "the whole wood . . . seemed to show the want of [Giles]" after he died, nature is cruelly indifferent to the death of her Wordsworthian follower.

While Giles is dying in the cold, other life forms are quick to take advantage of his misfortune in the struggle for resources and survival. "Various small members of the animal community . . . [are seen] eyeing [his hut] inquisitively with a view to winter quarters," and a thrush eats his breakfast (283, 288).

By the time Hardy wrote *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), he was criticizing Wordsworth outright in his fiction. In describing the undeservedly difficult and precarious situation of the Durbeyfield children, Hardy's narrator ironically quotes Wordsworth's "Lines Written in Early Spring," complaining that "some people would like to know whence the poet whose philosophy is in these days deemed as profound and trustworthy as his song is breezy and pure gets his authority for speaking of 'nature's holy plan'" (24). As natural selection is driven not by a teleological purpose or benevolent force, but by chance and merciless competition, Wordsworth's phrase strikes a bitterly false note for Hardy. Tess's tragedy hinges on ancestral inheritance, the precariousness of sexual selection, and the chance timing of her encounters with Angel Clare and Alec d'Urberville. Her father's coincidental discovery that he was a descendent of an ancient noble family, the family horse becoming fatally "entangled" with a mail coach, Tess's consequent visit to the d'Urberville's estate where she meets her rapist, and

Angel Clare's initial rejection of Tess as a dancing partner in a Darwinian display of sexual selection are among the chance instances of the novel with strong evolutionary resonance, which ultimately lead to heartbreak, murder, and execution (35). Faced with such prospects in "life's battle," Wordsworth offers little consolation as

to Tess, as to not a few millions of others, there was ghastly satire in the poet's lines: "Not in utter nakedness / But trailing clouds of glory do we come." To her and her like, birth itself was an ordeal of degrading personal compulsion, whose gratuitousness nothing in the result seemed to justify and at best could only palliate. (11, 332)

Hardy's fiction became increasingly bleak in part because he became further convinced that Darwinism, with its accompanying uncertainty, disillusionment, and pain, beat out Wordsworth's work in their philosophical struggle for survival.

If readers would expect to see Hardy featured in this study, many may not be familiar with Emily Pfeiffer, a poet who was well respected in the late Victorian era, but has since been largely forgotten.¹³ Like Hardy, Pfeiffer emphasizes that evolutionary theory has painfully debunked Wordsworthian myths of nature in her volume *Songs and Sonnets*. Though Pfeiffer agrees with Hardy on the stakes and tensions in Wordsworth's and Darwinism's entangled influences, the development evident in her writing leads to a different conclusion. In Pfeiffer's "To Nature," the speaker laments that the "loathed abstraction" of natural selection has replaced her Wordsworthian sense of divine nature.

¹³ Emily Jane Pfeiffer (1827-1890) was born in Oxfordshire and spent most of her life in London. The poet has been all but overlooked in contemporary scholarship, but enjoyed a good critical reputation in Great Britain and America during her life. She was praised as being "among the very first rank of living poets," and an anonymous reviewer in *The Spectator* wrote that her sonnets were "among the finest in the language" (qtd. in Pfeiffer 5). Admirers of her work included Algernon Charles Swinburne and Oliver Wendell Holmes, who wrote of *Songs and Sonnets*, "a rare poetic beauty belongs to these noble poems; they are full of the highest and noblest inspiration" (qtd. in Pfeiffer 6). Born Emily Davis, she was kept from a formal education by her father's ruinous losses in banking. In 1853, she married Jürgen Edward Pfeiffer, a wealthy German merchant living in London, and sought to compensate for her lack of formal schooling with a twelve-year program of rigorous study before her poetry was published.

In a clever reversal of Wordsworth's lament that nature "moves us not," Pfeiffer describes the "pitiless force" of nature as "all-moving, all-unmoved" ("The World is Too Much With Us" 9, 9). For Pfeiffer, the problem with Darwinian nature, based on constant change, is not that "it moves us not" but that we do not move *it* from indifference to our existence and that we risk extinction if we fail to move with it.

While Pfeiffer's speakers have lost Wordsworth's faith in a benevolent nature, Wordsworthian desires remain as a source of anguish. Whereas Wordsworth is grateful for a cultivated "heart, the fountain of sweet tears; / And love, and thought, and joy" that responds to the natural world, Pfeiffer's nature is a "dull fount of joy, unhallowed source of tears, / Cold motor of our fervid faith and song, / Dead, but engendering life, love, pangs, and fears (9-11, "The Sparrow's Nest" 19-20). Deprived of the myth of nature's care, Wordsworthian emotional responses are rendered hollow and bitter. Pfeiffer laments that an indifferent, uninspiring natural world still endows humanity with an unfulfilled longing for the transcendent: "If at last, man's thirst for higher things / Be quenched in dust," she asks, "why—born for creeping—should he dream of wings?" ("To Nature IV" 8). She utters a "vain prayer" to nature that "this wild life [be] reprov'd, / And trampled into nothing in thy rage!" with far less hope than we see in Wordsworth's "prayer" to "Nature [which] never did betray / The heart that loved her" ("Tintern Abbey" 122-124, 12, 13). For Pfeiffer, in our relationship to nature we are "slaves of a despot, conscienceless and *nil*" ("To Nature III" 5). Though the world is governed by "mad chance," we "might still rise, and with one heart agree / To mar the ruthless grinding of thy mill!" (6-8). As her prayer becomes a threat, her defiance of Darwinian nature also

subverts Wordsworth, who would have never dreamed that his “all of us have one human heart” would be a rallying cry in revolt against the natural world, which Pfeiffer terms “matricide” (“The Old Cumberland Beggar” 153). In sorrowful resignation, her speaker asks if “with Order, Love and Hope are dead?” (“To Nature” 8).

As the volume continues, Pfeiffer’s speaker draws on Wordsworth’s influence to answer this question, ultimately finding meaning and solace in evolutionary theory. Her poem “Past and Future” describes an enlightened awakening from an Edenic “sweet dream of paradise” (9, 11). This awakening is more than the disillusionment following Darwinism, but rather marks a new beginning. The Wordsworthian dream “still holds us, but would seem / Before us, not behind” (11-12). The Edenic setting suggests that Pfeiffer is not only drawing on but revising foundational myths. If *Paradise Lost* requires revision, so too does *The Prelude*, and Pfeiffer’s speaker awakens from the dreams of a Christian Deity and of Wordsworthian benevolent nature to mark “the golden age of science and endeavour” (14). Celebrating evolutionary theory as a new dawn in human development gives Pfeiffer a frame of reference in which we can find “the good from the lowest root which waxes,” just as Wordsworth could be inspired by “the meanest flower that moves” (13, “Intimations Ode” 205). “A Chrysalis” moves further towards this new phase in its opening image with both evolutionary and Wordsworthian resonance:

When gathering shells cast upwards by the waves
Of progress, they who note its ebb and flow,
 . . . surely come to know
That the sea level rises; that dark caves
Of ignorance are flooded. (1-5)

For Wordsworth, just as a child believes he hears in a seashell “mysterious union with its native Sea . . . Even such a Shell the Universe itself / Is to the ear of Faith,” imparting “authentic tidings of invisible things; / Of . . . ever-during power; / And central peace” (*The Excursion* IV.1134-40). In Pfeiffer’s poem, however, these Wordsworthian shells are washed up as lifeless husks of a dead philosophy, invalidated by evolutionary theory.

Riding “the waves of progress” beyond these relics, Pfeiffer finds beauty and transcendent value in evolutionary theory. She listens not to the poet’s seashell, but to the evolutionary past of progress: “Leaning down the ages, my dull ear, / Catching their slow-ascending harmonies, / I am uplift of them, and borne more near” (9-11). She comes to see her origin as elevating, rather than demeaning. Coming “more near” her predecessors, she is encouraged by the prospect of future development, placing her faith in the evolutionary law of progress: “I feel within my flesh—laid pupa-wise— / A soul of worship, tho’ of vision dim, / Which links me with wing-folded cherubim” (12-14). Cocooned in a pupa, Pfeiffer’s speaker anticipates the next phase of evolutionary development in religious language and imagery, which point not to a Christian afterlife, but to the promise of metamorphosis. Given the tremendous span of human evolution, she can only conceive of future possibilities with “vision dim.” In the distance, however, Pfeiffer sees “law [which] comes to mean . . . the Love that saves,” evoking a picture of moral evolution which draws more on Herbert Spencer than on Darwin (8).¹⁴

While Pfeiffer may not be holding Wordsworth’s seashells up to her ear with evolutionary faith, we still find her “gathering” and using them. “The Children of Light”

¹⁴ In *Social Statics* (1851), Spencer argues that Social Darwinism must be allowed to run its course and that the “universal warfare” of nature is “a discipline which is pitiless in the working out of good,” and would ultimately lead to a more advanced and moral society (363).

is addressed to “all ye child-hearted ones, born out of time, / Born to an age that sickens and grows old . . . a tragic moment, dark and cold, / Fair blossoms opening in an alien clime” (1-4). Pfeiffer’s opening recalls Wordsworth’s poetic focus on childhood generally, and specifically “My Heart Leaps Up,” in which the speaker’s heart responds to nature with the same enthusiasm and joy in adulthood as it did in childhood, as “the Child is Father of the Man” (7). Pfeiffer’s language also evokes William Knight’s expression of a critical commonplace: “to look on nature as Wordsworth did . . . we must retain the heart of childhood, with its natural wonder, delight, admiration, and reverence” (311). The “child-hearted ones” Pfeiffer addresses are Wordsworthian spirits living in a Darwinian age in which the poet’s ideas no longer seem viable. She encourages these “young hearts and warm” to “spring forward to your prime, / But lose not that child-spirit glad and bold” (5-6). To these belated Romantics, she urges,

Oh worshipful young hearts that love can move,
 And loveless loneliness contract with fear,
 Hold fast the sacred instincts which approve
 A fatherhood divine, that clear child-eyes
 May light the groping progress of the wise. (10-14)

They are to keep their enthusiasm and love of nature as they move forward with a corrected understanding of what nature actually is. Having passed through the painful process of questioning and reconciling these competing ideologies, the speaker points her audience towards beauty and transcendent value within evolutionary nature---a “fatherhood divine.” Her celebration of evolution resembles Darwin’s famous phrase that “there is grandeur in this view of life” and that the process of evolution and the beings which develop from it are “most beautiful and most wonderful” (413). The

Wordsworthian desire for the transcendent, then, which the speaker initially laments as a needless torment, is a “sacred instinct,” a biological and literary inheritance of “sacred disquietude [and] divine unrest,” which have led her to find meaning and beauty in nature (“Evolution” 9).

Of course, not all of the creative writers who engaged with Wordsworth's and Darwin's conflicting influences gave up their Christian faith. For Gerard Manley Hopkins, the entangled philosophies had deep religious significance. Hopkins's imitation and revision of Wordsworth's "The World is Too Much With Us" in "God's Grandeur" have been well documented, and don't require much rehearsal here.¹⁵ Hopkins, a Jesuit priest, does not see nature as an indifferent, hostile force "red in tooth and claw," but rather as a testament of Christianity. In "God's Grandeur" he wrote that "the world is charged with the grandeur of God" (1). He further illustrated this idea in a sermon: "All things therefore are charged with love, are charged with God and if we know how to touch them give off sparks and take fire, yield drops and flow, ring and tell of him" (195). Noteworthy here is that all things in nature are "charged with love," which seems a far cry from the Darwinian picture of a self-interested, violent struggle for survival. Discovering the love inherent in the natural world, however, requires a Wordsworthian capacity to recognize it---"to know how to touch" nature in communion. Hopkins wrote in a letter to Richard Watson Dixon that "Wordsworth's particular grace" was "his spiritual insight into nature" (235). For Hopkins, this anti-Darwinian lesson on nature is available to us "because the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods," testifying of God and helping us recognize His love in nature (13-14). Concluding his poem on this note,

¹⁵ See Donald Rackin's "'God's Grandeur': Hopkins' Sermon to Wordsworth."

Hopkins offers a corrective to Wordsworth. Speaking more as a "worshiper of nature" than an Anglican, Wordsworth privileges Paganism over Christianity, exclaiming, "Great God! I'd rather be / A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn" than lose a spiritual connection with the natural world (9-10). For Hopkins, Wordsworth's priorities here are backwards: Christianity is the only way to truly understand and access nature's power, and nature testifies of Christianity.

While it may initially appear, as Jon Holmes writes, that Hopkins essentially ignores Darwinism, he projects God's grandeur and love onto the very image most commonly considered the "archetype of predatory nature": a falcon---demonstrating a Wordsworthian tendency to read the Divine in the natural world (23, 159-164). In "The Windhover," Hopkins portrays the terrible beauty of the falcon riding the wind, swooping down in pursuit of its prey in Darwinian language. Praising "the achieve of; the mastery of the thing," he notes its "brute beauty and valour . . . pride, [and] plume" (8-9). The combination of showy plumage, brute strength, and a prideful insistence on one's own interests make up a Darwinian recipe for success. While some of his contemporaries would have viewed such an image as an embodiment of why Christian faith was no longer tenable, Hopkins exclaims, "the fire that breaks from thee . . . [is] a billion / Times told lovelier, more dangerous," suggesting that the falcon's ferocious beauty is a testament to the infinitely greater power, grandeur, and love of its Creator (10-11). Hopkins doesn't see any incongruity between this Darwinian portrait of a predator and its dedication "To Christ our Lord."

Hopkins, like Hardy and Pfeiffer, undergoes his own development. A decade after writing "God's Grandeur" and "The Windhover," his poetry shows a change from celebrating the Divine in the natural world to emphasizing that faith ultimately transcends nature. In his 1888 "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire," he describes the relentless march of evolution with death and extinction in its wake: "Million-fueled, | nature's bonfire burns on" (9). Against the backdrop of deep time and deep space, his speaker begins to despair over man's fleeting and seemingly meaningless existence: "Man, how fast his firedint | his mark on mind, is gone! . . . all is in an enormous dark / Drowned. O pity and indig | nation! Manshape . . . death blots black out . . . vastness blurs and time beats level" (11-16). Just when all seems lost, Hopkins reasserts his faith: "Enough! the Resurrection, / A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, | joyless days, dejection" (16-17). For Hopkins, the devastation of evolutionary nature would not matter in the end. Though "flesh fade[s], and mortal trash / Fall[s] to the residuary worm; | world's wildfire, leave[s] but ash," he clings to his belief that "in a flash, at a trumpet crash, / I am all at once what Christ is, | since he was what I am, and . . . [become] immortal diamond." Thus the natural becomes comparatively unimportant compared to the eternal, and doubt and anxiety concerning evolutionary nature gives way to "the comfort of the Resurrection," as expressed in the poem's full title. Though nature is eventually overshadowed in Hopkins's writing, he doesn't let go of Wordsworth. In another letter to Dixon written in 1886, he praised the "Intimations" Ode:

There have been in all history a few, a very few men, whom common repute . . . have treated as having had something happen to them that does not happen to other men, as having *seen something*. . . Human nature in these men saw something, got a shock; wavers in opinion . . . is in a tremble ever since. . . . In

Wordsworth when he wrote that ode human nature got another of those shocks, and the tremble from it is spreading. . . . I am, ever since I knew the ode, in that tremble. (*Letters* 240)

Hopkins's admiration of the ode wasn't simply because of its stylistic execution. Of Wordsworth's exploration of spiritual origins and instinct, which was frequently appropriated to apply to evolutionary science, he writes that "the interest and importance of the matter were here at the highest, his insight was at its very deepest, and hence to my mind the extreme value of the poem" (240). In an intellectual climate of scientific skepticism, Hopkins praises Wordsworth not only for his "lovely gift of verse," but for his "divine philosophy," which asserted that "we come / From God, who is our home," rather than from primate ancestors (65-66).¹⁶

Charles Kingsley, a clergyman in the Church of England and personal friend of Darwin, integrated evolution and Christianity even further with Wordsworth's help. In Kingsley's *The Water Babies*, the orphan chimney sweep Tom's miserable life changes when he falls asleep in a stream, grows gills, and becomes an amphibious creature. Though a children's book, the novel is filled with evolutionary concepts, citing Darwin and Huxley and referring to evolutionary research on apes, barnacles, and insects as it follows Tom's metamorphosis and adventures. Kingsley also relies heavily on Wordsworth, taking four of the eight chapter epigrams from his poetry. The opening chapter's epigram from Wordsworth's "Lines Written in Early Spring" suggests a new, evolutionary application of his phrase "to her fair works did Nature link / The human soul which through me ran," as Tom joins the animal kingdom in his first experience with the

¹⁶ Many Victorian writers, including Arnold and Meredith, made the opposite assessment: appreciating the strength of Wordsworth's poetry required laying his debunked philosophy aside.

natural world (5-6). Tom's exploitation as a sweep provides a vivid illustration of Wordsworth's sentiment "And much it grieved my heart to think, / What man has made of man" (7-8). As Tom becomes familiar with his aquatic surroundings, however, he realizes that such cruelty is part of nature from his close encounter with fierce otters and from witnessing a Darwinian parliament of fowls, in which a crow is sentenced to death by pecking for failing to eat the eggs of the rival grouse.

Seeking to counter the dark side of nature with Wordsworthian morality, Kingsley quotes "Ode to Duty": "Stern lawgiver! yet thou does wear / The Godhead's most benignant grace. . . . Thou doest preserve the stars from wrong; / And the ancient heavens, through / Thee, are fresh and strong" (41-42, 47-48). Kingsley's nature is ruled by the god-like Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, who punishes cruelty, and her kinder sister Doasyouwouldbedoneby, who teaches ethics and helps those who fail in the survival of the fittest. Ultimately, these deities' mechanistic enforcement of the golden rule corrects the injustices of Darwinism. To advance in this world requires unselfishness, not thriving at others' expense, as Tom develops the capacity to see his fellow water babies only after saving a lobster from capture, whereas selfish behavior leads to regression. Tom learns about the devolution of one selfish society, the nation of Doasyoulikes: "The longer they . . . behaved like dumb beasts, who only do what they like, the stupider . . . they grew" until they became apes (152). To continue his development, Tom must "go where [he does] not like to go and do what [he does] not like, and help somebody [he does] not like" (142). For Kingsley, to do one's duty rather than pursue pleasure is to follow Wordsworth's teaching, and distinguishes humans from animals.

Kingsley links Tom's transformation into a water baby to Wordsworth's account of preexistence and birth in the "Intimations Ode." Much like Wordsworth's description of "our birth [as] a sleep and a forgetting," Tom doesn't initially remember his former life on land: "He'd forgotten all since that sweet sleep. When you came into this world," the narrator reasons, "and became a land baby, you remembered nothing. So why should he when he became a water baby?" (79). Darwin viewed our fetal development---our time as water babies---as a microcosm of our evolutionary past. In *The Descent of Man*, he cited human embryo's tails, glands resembling those of fishes, and webbed hands and feet as evidence of evolution from lower life forms (Ch. 1. 14-17). Kingsley admits to his readers that we can't be sure about our existence before birth, but encourages them to trust Wordsworth's vision: "There was a wise man once, a very wise man, and a very good man, who wrote a poem about the feelings which some children have about having lived before." He then quotes the "Intimations Ode," "The soul that rises with us, our life's star, / Hath elsewhere had its setting. . . . Trailing clouds of glory, do we come / From God, who is our home.' [and closes:] There, you can know no more than that. But if I was you, I would believe that" (80). Science which concerns itself with disproving such notions, positioning itself against religion, earns Kingsley's scorn. The professor who refuses to acknowledge that Tom is a water baby, since water babies cannot exist, has failed to learn what "wise men know [:] that their business is to examine what is, and not to settle what is not" (70). Kingsley draws on Wordsworth again in making this condemnation, quoting "The Tables Turned":

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect

Misshapes the beauteous forms of things:--
We murder to dissect. (117)

Kingsley maintains a Wordsworthian sense of wonder towards evolutionary nature, but is keenly interested in preserving, and further developing, Christian morality. Wordsworth is a useful intermediary for him between science and faith, as his poetry can be understood from both perspectives. Kingsley seeks to reconcile the divide between these views, emphasizing that both science and scripture suggest that we can and will change (50). Tom's aquatic transformation is analogous to baptismal cleansing and Christian rebirth. Kingsley's hope for the future blends Christian exaltation with evolution: "we are here but as the crawling caterpillar, and shall be hereafter as the perfect fly" (50).

Wordsworth's and Darwin's entanglement is much less harmonious in the poetry of George Meredith. In "Hard Weather," Meredith writes that nature's "passion" and "all her mind . . . devolve on them who read aright / Her meaning and devoutly serve" (97, 101-02). The concept of reading nature has a Wordsworthian charge, as Wordsworth emphasized that the natural world was the ultimate source of knowledge and that for those who "learned the meaning of all winds . . . the hills [and] fields" became "like a book" ("Michael" 48, 70, 73). The devout service Meredith describes also owes something to Wordsworth's self-description as "a worshipper of Nature" ("Tintern Abbey" 152). Evolutionary theory, however, ensures that Meredith's reading and service of nature differ markedly from Wordsworth's. Indeed, the two poets' pictures of the natural world are so different that his word choice of nature's passion and mind *devolving* on its followers suggests not only passing onto them, but also degenerating through an evolutionary process. For Meredith, those "who read [nature] right" recognize that it is a

“savage . . . slayer,” fallen from Wordsworth's exalted pedestal (“The Thrush of February” 121-122). Her “cherished offspring” are not those who, like Wordsworth, possess a “heart that love[s] her,” but are “the sons of strength” who succeed in the struggle for survival (145-146).

In “The Lark Ascending,” Meredith's description of the bird parallels his assessment of Wordsworthian Romanticism: “sweet to the . . . ear . . . a song of light . . . sheer lyrical,” but Wordsworth's vision of nature as a benevolent, inspiring presence was, for Meredith, “simple” and “irreflective” (13, 37-40). While Wordsworth represented nature's conscious communicativeness as a “correspondent breeze” bringing “blessing[s]” and inspiration, Meredith considers that “naught be promis'd from the seas, / But only a soft-ruffling breeze” (61-62). For Meredith, the consciousness ascribed to Wordsworth's “blessing in this gentle breeze” isn't there, but is instead a projection, however beautiful, from the poet's mind (*The Prelude* I.1). Meredith might have used these lines to describe Wordsworth as well as the lark: “For singing till his heaven fills, / 'Tis love of earth that he instils . . . And he the wine which overflows / To lift us with him as he goes” (65-70). Wordsworth's “spontaneous overflow” comes from his own mind, rather than powerful feelings which nature gives him. His song fills and creates the heavens, and not vice versa. For Meredith, Wordsworth's vision of transcendence in a benevolent nature is no longer valid; his poetry is only valuable “as long / As you crave nothing save the song,” or accept the poetry while rejecting its debunked ideas (84-85). Meredith stresses that his engagement with nature, free from the illusion of its consciousness or special care of him,

is both more true to reality and less egotistical, and encourages Wordsworthians to "reject your proud title of elect" ("The Woods of Westermain" IV.33).

Creative writers in the late Victorian era took a variety of different positions towards Wordsworth's and Darwin's simultaneous influences in their work. While exploring points of tension and painful conflict, Pfeiffer ultimately expresses a hopeful, even triumphant reconciliation of these philosophies. For Hardy, the two influences were irreconcilable as he shifted from privileging Wordsworth to ultimately siding with Darwin. A similarly disillusioned recognition of these incongruities led Meredith to dismiss Wordsworth's message. In contrast to these secular perspectives, Hopkins ultimately uses Wordsworthian insight into nature to demonstrate that Christianity transcends the natural world, deemphasizing, if not refuting, Darwinism in favor of his faith. Kingsley also uses these entangled influences to reassert his religious beliefs, highlighting the compatibilities between Wordsworth's writing, evolution, and Christianity.

Creative and Critical Interventions: Wordsworth and Culture in the Work of Matthew Arnold

When Matthew Arnold, who had known Wordsworth personally since childhood, penned the poet's elegy "Memorial Verses" in 1850, and a second literary tribute to his predecessor, "The Youth of Nature," two years later, the Victorian spiritual crisis in response to evolutionary theory was already well underway. Though Darwin wouldn't publish *On the Origin of Species* for another nine years, the work of scientists like Charles Lyell and Robert Chambers was already prompting British writers and thinkers to grapple with evolutionary ideas. Both Arnold's poetry and criticism reveal a connection between Wordsworth's writing and evolutionary theory. Arnold turned to Wordsworth for comfort in the face of scientific skepticism, and criticized and revised his work in response to evolution. As his career progressed, he engaged with Darwin explicitly. His preoccupation with these entangled cultural forces also prompted Arnold to help shape the poet's influence and rethink the function of criticism itself. While most recent studies of Wordsworth and Arnold have focused on Arnold's poetry and, at times, his scholarship on Wordsworth specifically, this chapter demonstrates that the intersection of Wordsworth's and Darwin's ideas was centrally important to both Arnold's critical and

creative writing, including his most influential works: *Culture and Anarchy* and "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time."¹⁷

In the year of Wordsworth's death, his successor as Poet Laureate, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, published *In Memoriam A.H.H.*, which is, at least in part, an effort to come to terms with death and loss in the face of deep time and evolution. In his painful attempt to find solace following his friend Arthur Hallam's passing, Tennyson turns to nature, which contrasts starkly here with Wordsworth's benign vision. "Finding that of fifty seeds / She often brings but one to bear," his friend's life seems insignificant in the natural struggle for survival spanning millions of years. "Nature red in tooth and claw" is not only "careless of the single life" but of entire species (LV1.15, LV.8, 11-12). Ultimately, Tennyson's speaker arrives at a tenuous faith in the promises of Christianity, and seeks to bolster them with evolutionary principles. In this view, "all this work of Time" culminates in "man / Who throve and branch'd from clime to clime, / The herald of a higher race," and continues on the path of evolutionary development "from more to more" and "move[s] upward, working out the beast, / And let[s] the ape and tiger die" (CXVIII. 1, 13-14, 17, 27-28). The afterlife thus becomes merely the next phase in human development, as the dead "are breathers of an ampler day / For ever nobler ends" and "no longer half-akin to brute" (CXVIII. 6-7, Epilogue 133). Tennyson keeps a slippery hold on "the truths that never can be proved" in the face of Victorian science,

¹⁷ See, for example, Lawrence Kramer's "The 'Intimations' Ode and Victorian Romanticism," U. C. Knoepfelmacher's "Dover Revisited: The Wordsworthian Matrix in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold," Kristian Smidt's "The Beaches of Calais and Dover: Arnold's Counterstatement to Wordsworth's Confession of Faith," David J. DeLaura's "The 'Wordsworth' of Pater and Arnold: 'The Supreme, Artistic View of Life,'" Mark Jones's "Recuperating Arnold: Romanticism and Modern Projects of Disinterestedness," Stephen Gill's *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (168-188), and Alan Grob's *A Longing Like Despair: Arnold's Poetry of Pessimism*.

which would only become more difficult for Victorian thinkers like Arnold to maintain after Darwin began to publish his work on evolution (CXXXI.10).

While most of Arnold's poetry was written before the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, it anticipates the concerns that Darwin's work would raise and reflects anxiety that was already taking root in Victorian culture. His two elegies on Wordsworth, "Memorial Verses" and "Youth in Nature," each mourn the loss of Wordsworth's unique insight into nature. He apostrophizes the Rotha River in "Memorial Verses," saying, "few or none / Hears thy voice right, now he is gone" (73-74). In "Youth of Nature," Arnold signals the loss of nature's seer as "the valleys are flooded with haze," suggesting obstructed vision, since "in the shadow Wordsworth lies dead" (7, 9). Arnold laments that while

He was a priest to us all
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,
Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad.
He is dead, . . .
And darkness returns to our eyes. (53-58)

For Arnold, as for Tennyson, the death he mourns is even more painful because of Victorian concerns with extinction. With Wordsworth's death, Arnold writes, "the last poetic voice is dumb" (4). The qualifier "last" does not just refer to Wordsworth's position as the final surviving major Romantic poet, but to the impossibility of his replacement. The work of other Romantics could be taken up by others:

Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power? (60-63).

Wordsworth's powers could not be passed on---"Others will strengthen us to bear--- / But who, ah! who, will make us feel?" (66-67). As Arnold laments, "He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day / Of his race is past on the earth" (56-58). Arnold considers that Wordsworth would have no poetic posterity. His literary seeds were squandered on infertile soil, and his prophecy of "youthful Poets, who among these hills / Will be my second self when I am gone" would go unfulfilled ("Michael" 38-39). Wordsworth could never be replaced because the Victorian environment, in Arnold's view, was incapable of supporting a writer of spiritual transcendence: "Well may we mourn, when the head / Of a sacred poet lies low / In an age which can rear them no more!" (48-50).

For Arnold, the Victorian period could not raise another Wordsworthian poet because evolutionary thought had significantly changed the dominant perception of nature. As he surveys the Lake District landscape that would always be connected to Wordsworth, Arnold reflects, "These survive!---yet not without pain, / Pain and dejection to-night / Can I feel that their poet is gone" (25-27). In "The Youth of Nature," the places Wordsworth represented in his poetry, such as the sheepfold in "Michael" and the pillar-shaped rock formation in "The Brothers," show no change in response to the loss of their poet. Though "he lent a new life to these hills," "Nature is fresh as of old, / Is lovely" (13, 10-11). Nature is indifferent to the death of its bard, taking no particular notice that "a mortal is dead" (12). To be sure, nature's unresponsiveness to sorrow and death is a Wordsworthian theme in itself---the brook at Green-head Gill remains "boisterous" after Michael's devastating loss, and nature reclaims "The Ruined Cottage" following Margaret's tragedy. Wordsworth, however, shows considerably less anxiety about this

than does Arnold. Wordsworth calmly accepts and even finds comfort in this reality, as we simply join "earth's diurnal course" in death as nature takes us to itself ("A slumber did my spirit seal" 6).¹⁸ Arnold, however, must come to terms with this in the context of evolution, which gives him no such solace and raises urgent questions.

As Arnold considers the disconnect between Wordsworth's death and the indifference of his beloved Lake District landscape, he apostrophizes the scene, and asks if there were any truth behind Wordsworth's faith in nature's inspiring power, or if it were merely the poet's creation:

For, oh! is it you, is it you,
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,
And mountains, that fill us with joy,
Or the poet who sings you so well?
Is it you, O beauty, O grace,
O charm, O romance, that we feel,
Or the voice which reveals what you are? (59-65).

Arnold asks a question similar to the one Wordsworth raises in his moment of crisis in "Tintern Abbey," "If this / Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! . . . how oft have I turned to thee, / O sylvan Wye!" (49-57). But whereas Wordsworth has a solution, if not an answer, in his recollection of the Wye, Arnold lacks this direction.

Though Wordsworth and Arnold raise the same question, whether the inspiration they experience objectively exists in nature or is the creation of the poetic imagination, they come to very different answers. Wordsworth comes to the conclusion that the "joy / Of elevated thoughts" and "sense sublime" don't come entirely from nature, but instead are "half-creat[e]d / And . . . perceiv[e]d" (95-96, 107-108). His inspiration is not only "in

¹⁸ See also "Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower" (1-12).

the light of setting suns, / And the round ocean, and the living air," but also "in the mind of man" (97-100). Ultimately, this discovery is not a disappointment, but brings "abundant recompense" for his supposed loss of connection with nature (89).

Wordsworth's view both brings him closer to nature and gives him increased poetic confidence. His counsel to Dorothy reflects his creative cooperation with nature, as he tells her to remember both their experience at the Wye and his exhortations (145-147). He remains a "lover" and "worshiper" of the natural world, maintaining the "cheerful faith that all which we behold / Is full of blessings" (133-134).

Arnold's line of inquiry leads to a strikingly different view of nature and with it an outlook on poetry far removed from Wordsworth's. Arnold asks if nature's "beauty . . . grace . . . charm . . . [and] romance" are "like daylight and sun, / Shared and rejoiced in by all?" (63-67). His elaborations on the alternative possibility, however, suggest that he believes that nature's gifts are reserved for a more select group:

Or are ye immersed in the mass
Of matter, and hard to extract,
Or sunk at the core of the world,
Too deep for the most to discern?
Like stars in the deep of the sky,
Which arise on the glass of the sage. (68-73)

This second possibility evokes both geology and astronomy and with them Victorian anxieties about deep time and deep space. Arnold's language points to the discoveries of Charles Lyell, whose study of "the core of the world" demonstrated that the earth was far older than was previously thought, and of William Herschel, whose observations by telescope ("the glass of the sage") revealed that there were more than 50 times as many galaxies outside of our own than Charles Messier, the late eighteenth-century French

astronomer, had catalogued. These scientific developments contributed to an uneasy sense that for all of the Victorians' economic, scientific, military, and cultural achievements, they were merely an infinitesimal speck in an unfathomably vast universe and a momentary blip on a staggeringly long historical record. What's significant about Arnold's reflection is that, with Wordsworth's death, nature's secrets belong not to poets, but to scientists.

The scientific discoveries of the period shape nature's answer to Arnold's inquiry. He learns that the value that Wordsworth and others ascribed to nature is indeed "set in the world" and remains in nature; though "the poet who sings them may die, / But they are immortal and live" (80, 84-85). Had nature's answer stopped here, Arnold's speaker might have carried on cheerfully enough, but nature goes on to explain that not only is "the singer less than his themes," but that even at its best, Wordsworthian nature poetry is "weak [and] cold" when compared to nature, which it can never hope to understand or express (89, 92, 95). Nature mocks the Wordsworthian expectations to the contrary:

Will ye scan me, and read me

 Will ye claim for your great ones the gift
 To have render'd the gleam of my skies,

 Uttered the voice of my hills?
 When your great ones depart, will ye say:
All things have suffer'd a loss,
Nature is hid in their grave? (119-128).

The poem's devastating conclusion, spoken in nature's voice, not only reveals Victorian anxiety about the new view of nature science had presented, but also the insignificance of artistic expression in the face of that reality:

Race after race, man after man,
 Have thought that my secret was theirs,
 Have dream'd that I lived but for them,
 That they were my glory and joy.
 ---They are dust, they are changed, they are gone!
 I remain (129-134).

What makes this answer so painful for Arnold is that all of Wordsworth's faith in nature's sublime power is confirmed, but poets have no part in it. If Wordsworth sees himself as working together with nature in the creative process, Arnold imagines being shut out by an indifferent natural world. True to form, Arnold draws his poetic energy from deprivation, as this loss provides him with his subject. Nature doesn't care about all those who have gone before, claiming to know and reveal its secrets. They are somewhat pitifully represented visually on the page by a dash: "---They are dust." While Wordsworth confidently projects that his poetry will remain efficacious after his death, Arnold isn't sure that it's possible to write poetry of lasting value in the Victorian age. If, in outliving his contemporaries and lingering well into the Victorian period, as Arnold wrote in "Memorial Verses," Wordsworth "upon a wintry clime / Had fallen---on this iron time / Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears," then the time would only harden, and the doubts only deepen as the period progressed and the scientific record of evolution grew stronger (42-44). This view of nature, aided and supported by Victorian science, can be a difficult place from which to write inspired Wordsworthian verse, which makes Arnold mourn not only Wordsworth's loss, but the impossibility of poetic succession. Arnold took this lesson to heart, and gradually turned his attention away from poetry and towards criticism until he gave up verse almost entirely.

* * *

Arnold mourns Wordsworth's loss in part because he feels that Wordsworth's poetry helps to answer questions and fulfill needs which evolutionary theory fails to address. Arnold considered traditional Christianity and the literal interpretation of the Bible to be largely invalidated by Victorian science. As he reflects in "The Study of Poetry" in 1880, "Our religion has materialized itself . . . in the supposed fact . . . and now the fact is failing it" (4). For many Victorians, the "fact" of the biblical account of the earth's age and creation had been debunked by the geological and biological advances of Lyell, Darwin, and others.¹⁹ As Arnold responds to evolutionary theory and its unsettling suggestions, he turns to Wordsworth. He cites Darwin's "interesting proposition" in *The Descent of Man* "that 'our ancestor was a hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointy ears, probably arboreal in his habits'" (130). The problem, he writes, is that Darwin never tells us what we are to do with this knowledge, how "to relate this proposition to the sense in us for conduct, and to the sense in us for beauty" (131). If Darwin ignores this general question, Wordsworth answers it.²⁰ In his essay "Wordsworth" Arnold explains that the poet's "superiority" is that "he deals with more of

¹⁹ Arnold's specific claims for Wordsworth parallel his larger argument on the relationship between science and literature. Responding to T.H. Huxley's argument that science should take precedence over literary studies in university curriculum in "Literature and Science," Arnold contends that "the importance of humane letters in a man's training becomes not less, but greater, in proportion to the success of modern science in extirpating what it calls 'medieval thinking'" (119).

²⁰ Other major Wordsworth critics shared Arnold's sense of the ethical deficiencies of Darwinism. Richard Holt Hutton wrote in Darwin's obituary, "What Mr. Darwin does not seem to me to have treated with anything like the subtlety and depth with which he investigated the laws of organic change, is the psychology of human nature . . . he failed to enter into the moral phenomena." In Darwin's anxiousness to prove evolution applied to morality, Hutton argues, he misses the mark "as if there was nothing in the higher phase not found in lower phases. There can be no more persistent instinct than self-love, but this hardly ever suggests the word 'ought' when it comes into collision with less persistent instincts like compassion. It is very often indeed the least persistent motive which wields the talisman of ethical obligation" (151).

life than [other poets] do; he deals with life, as a whole, more powerfully” (9).

Wordsworth answers the question of “how to live,” not, Arnold notes, in his didactic moments, but in his song, as described in the Prospectus to *The Recluse*,

Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope.
And melancholy fear subdued by faith,
Of blessed consolations in distress,
Of moral strength and intellectual power,
Of joy in widest commonalty spread. (10)

This passage is included in the Preface to *The Excursion*, which most of Arnold’s contemporaries considered Wordsworth’s crowning achievement. For many Victorians struggling to come to terms with the violence and chaos of evolutionary theory, grappling with its ethical implications, and dealing with challenges it posed to religious beliefs, Wordsworth’s message was highly valued.²¹ Wordsworth pays a high price for Arnold’s approval, however. Like Arnold’s other “touchstones,” his poetry is reduced to a catalogue of striking lines and isolated phrases. In the face of evolutionary uncertainty, Arnold takes and administers doses of Wordsworth as the poetic equivalent of pain reliever.

For Arnold, Wordsworth’s poetry provided the meaning and guidance necessary to deal with Victorian science. While evolutionary theorists described the workings and origins of biological life, Arnold predicts in “The Study of Poetry” that “more and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to *interpret life* for us, to console us, to sustain us” (18, my emphasis). Arnold considered that the strength and solace needed

²¹ In his review of Arnold’s *Selections from Wordsworth*, John Addington Symonds describes how Wordsworth fulfills needs that science cannot meet: “What Science is not called upon to supply, the fervour & the piety that humanize her truths, & bring them into harmony with permanent emotions of the soul, may be found in all that W. wrote” (700).

in what could be the disorienting and disheartening age of scientific progress would come from poetry rather than religion, as “most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry” (18). He enlists Wordsworth specifically to illustrate the point that “without poetry, our science will appear incomplete,” writing, “Finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry ‘the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science;’ and what is a countenance without its expression?” (20).

Furthermore, Arnold uses Wordsworth to counteract what he considers the narrow pursuit of self-interest implied by Darwinism. In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold refuses to further class-based political interests, as competing classes battle for preeminence, seeking to benefit at the expense of the others. He rejects this Darwinian struggle in favor of “Culture” or “the best which has been thought and spoken in the world,” which, he argues, “leads us to accept no perfection which is not a general perfection, embracing all our fellow-men with which we have to do” (110). This “sympathy,” he writes, “binds humanity together” as “we are indeed, as our religion says, members of one body, and if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it” (110). This “unconscious poetry” of Christianity likely came to Arnold more directly and powerfully in Wordsworth’s “we have all of us one human heart” (“The Old Cumberland Beggar” 153). Arnold points to this alternative to Darwinism not only in Wordsworth’s content, but in his poetic practice. “Wordsworth’s poetry is great,” he writes, not only “because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joys offered to us in nature, but because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it”---a departure from the “egotistical sublime” commonly attributed

to the poet (“Wordsworth” 15). For Arnold, Wordsworth’s poetic joy is more than solitary pleasure, but “is also accessible universally” as “joy in widest commonalty spread” (16). Though Arnold enlists the more communal and sympathetic elements of Wordsworth's poetry against evolutionary self-interest, as I will discuss later in this chapter, Wordsworth doesn't go far enough in this direction to satisfy him.

* * *

Though Wordsworth became for Arnold an important antidote to evolution's more troubling implications, the period's scientific discourse also led him to critique his predecessor's work. While on the one hand, Arnold’s emphasis on “Culture” is an endorsement of Wordsworth against evolutionary theory, it is a revision of the poet on the other hand, as “Culture” replaces “Nature.” Whereas Wordsworth chooses to represent rural subjects because “they hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived,” Arnold emphasizes the importance of studying “the best which has been thought and said in the world” (297). Each writer believes that connecting with these “best” influences of nature and culture, respectively, will largely solve social problems and cure immorality. As Wordsworth praises nature as “the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being,” Arnold describes culture as “the *true nurse* of the pursuing love, and sweetness and light . . . the true character of the pursued perfection” (“Tintern Abbey” 109-111, 145, my emphasis). For Arnold, Victorian science changed nature’s meaning and associations so dramatically that it could no longer perform the role Wordsworth had ascribed to it.

One of Arnold's criticisms of the poet in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" is his insufficient knowledge of culture: "I admire Wordsworth, as he is, so much that I cannot wish him different . . . But surely the one thing wanting to make Wordsworth an even greater poet than he is---his thought richer and his influence of wider application---was that he should have read more books" (17). Arnold's complaint is partially the result of his own deep learning---he wanted Wordsworth to be more like him.

The criticism that Wordsworth should have read more books, however, goes beyond Arnold's academic bent, and centers on his perception of Wordsworth's excessive self-focus---a Romantic tendency which, in his view, Victorian science only made worse. While Arnold uses Wordsworthian sympathy against Darwinian selfishness, he also criticizes Wordsworth's egocentrism, revealing the deep ambivalence behind his engagement with the poet. While Arnold insists that he "cannot wish [Wordsworth] different" in "The Function of Criticism," he goes on to do just that, lamenting his relatively narrow reading. Such divided responses reflect Wordsworth's versatility in the age of evolution and the complexity of his intersection with Darwinism. Keats famously criticized the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime, and Victorian critics repeatedly linked Wordsworth with egotism because of his dominant mode of self-analysis. For Arnold, as for many Victorians, such inward vision carried new associations of the pursuit of self-interest at others' expense in the struggle for survival. Arnold's concept of culture in *Culture and Anarchy* seeks to counteract this selfish tendency, and implies a revision of the egotistical sublime. Arnold emphatically avoids Wordsworthian self-

focus, insisting that "the notion of culture . . . leads us to accept no perfection which is not a general perfection" (110). Arnold's culture rests on the "main and pre-eminent" foundation of social love---"the love of our neighbour, the impulses towards action, help, and beneficence, the desire for removing human error, clearing human confusion, and diminishing human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it" (8). In revising Wordsworth, Arnold considers that his poetry falls short in this regard.

Arnold is critical of Wordsworth's poetic isolation and self-focus because of its potential to prevent the kind of sympathy that culture requires and evolution supposedly threatens. For Arnold, Wordsworthian solitude is not only morally dangerous in Darwin's wake, but also naive. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* reveals a picture of a tightly interconnected natural world---"an entangled bank" of organisms in a network of complex relations, which shapes development and evolution (760). Similarly, Arnold considers that moral, intellectual, and cultural development are not individual pursuits: "Perfection, as culture conceives it, is not possible while the individual remains isolated. The individual is obliged, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection" (13). Arnold's criticism that Wordsworth should have read more books is, in part, another way of saying that he should have looked outside of himself more, and engaged more with other thinkers rather than pursuing truth alone in nature---an environment that actually discourages solitude. Arnold's suggestion that the way for Wordsworth to engage with others is to read more books may seem strange, given how

bookishness was often associated with solitude and solipsism, as with George Eliot's Casaubon in *Middlemarch*. But Arnold engages with Wordsworth the poet more than Wordsworth the man, and is concerned with the formative, evolutionary interactions that wider reading would have given him through literary selection.

Arnold's poetry further develops his criticism of Wordsworth's self-focus. His elegy for French poet Etienne Pivert de Senancour, "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann,'" includes Wordsworth as one of the few "spirits who have reign'd / In this our troubled day . . . to see their way," but also notes the limitations of his sympathetic vision: "but Wordsworth's eyes avert their gaze / From half of human fate" (53-54).²² In "Resignation," Arnold uses the language of Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* to highlight this shortcoming and suggest that the poet fails to meet his own standards. Arnold's description of "the poet, to whose mighty heart / Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart" recalls Wordsworth's definition of the poet as one "endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness . . . and a more comprehensive soul" (144-145, 603). Arnold stipulates, however, that the poet should not use this advantage merely for self-exploration, but should "[subdue] that energy to scan / Not his own course, but that of man" (146-147). While Wordsworth calls on poets to "descend from [their] supposed height" of poetic diction and use the "real language of men," Arnold uses this imagery to criticize self-absorbed and aloof poetry: the poet, he writes, should be

²² Thais E. Morgan explains this line as "a serious criticism to Wordsworth's blindness as a result of his 'egotistical sublime'" (437). She cites the contrast between Wordsworth's representation of the vagrants in "Gipsies" with Arnold's in "Resignation": "Wordsworth's persona . . . comes very close to disdain that 'same unbroken knot / Of human beings' who revisit 'the self-same spot' without ever reading the significance of nature (1-2). . . . The gipsies seem barely human to the speaker, until he refigures them into social rebels . . . [a] motif of Romanticism . . . [whereas] Arnold's speaker is both too realistic not to notice the gipsies' squalor and too critically aware of the pathetic fallacy to demand that they read any special meaning into nature" (437-438).

"mingled with the crowd," not standing at "some high station . . . look[ing] down . . . on a populous town," and saying, "I am alone" (608, 164-169). Without this sympathetic interest in others, other poetic accomplishments are insufficient:

Though he move mountains, though his day
 Be pass'd on proud heights of sway,
 Though he hath loosed a thousand chains,
 Though he hath borne immortal pains,
 Action and suffering . . .
 He hath not lived, if he lives

only focused on himself (148-153). Arnold's formula parallels that of St. Paul: "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing," and places the sympathetic, outward focus of culture above Wordsworthian self-exploration (148-153, 1 Cor. 13:2).

Victorian science prompted Arnold to remove nature, in his poetry, from its Wordsworthian pedestal---not only replacing it with culture as a guiding influence, but emphasizing its indifference and even hostility towards humankind. His poem "In Harmony with Nature" dismisses its title's Wordsworthian notion as the doctrine of "restless fool[s]," and sets up nature as a malicious influence to be overcome: "Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more, / And in that *more* lies all his hopes of good. / Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood" (1, 5-7). Whereas Wordsworth emphasizes nature's role as an inspiring influence and moral guide---an ideal to which we should aspire---here personal development requires rising above nature, which is cruel rather than caring. Arnold writes that while "Nature is fickle, man hath need of rest" (9). If evolutionary nature is always changing and developing (a departure from Wordsworth's repeated

representation of calm tranquility), then Arnold posits rest and stability as the ideal.

When Arnold does describe human development, he does not use nature as a model of progress. Nature is a starting point rather than a destination, which humans must move beyond in order to reach their potential: "Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends; / Nature and man can never be fast friends. / Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!" (12-14). In "Resignation," which several scholars have read as an inversion of "Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth's "motion, and a spirit that impels / All thinking things, all objects of all thought, / And rolls through all things" becomes, for Arnold, "that general life . . . whose dumb wish is not miss'd / If birth proceeds, if things subsist; / The life of plants, and stones, and rain" (100-102, 191-195).²³ Arnold is resigned to the emptiness of the evolutionary struggle for survival and the disappointment of mere subsistence in the absence of Wordsworth's sublime vision of a nature which "leads from joy to joy" and is "full of blessings" (125, 134). Recognizing that nature is "mute," Arnold doesn't seek to divine inspired communication from the features of the landscape, but instead projects his own ideas onto them, "lend[ing] their life a voice," and concludes that they "seem to bear rather than rejoice" (263, 269-270).

Arnold's engagement with Wordsworth, specifically "It is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free" and "Near Dover, September, 1802," in "Dover Beach" has been well

²³ Like Wordsworth in "Tintern Abbey," Arnold's speaker addresses a favorite sister who accompanies him as he revisits a landscape from years ago and reflects on the connections between past and present experience. Fausta, to whom the poem is addressed, is Jane Arnold. Both Knoepfmacher and Gill have analyzed Arnold's revision and pointed out the connection in these lines specifically (19, 183). I would add that Arnold's phrase "the life of plants, and stones, and rain" echoes Wordsworth's elegy for Lucy: "No motion has she now, no force; / She neither hears nor sees, / Rolled round in earth's diurnal course / With rocks and stones and trees" (5-8). Although Arnold describes life using Wordsworth's language of death, Wordsworth's vision is more hopeful. Lucy has been taken in by nature, as described in "Three years she grew in sun and shower." She is one with the earth and safe from sorrow and pain. Arnold's "life," by contrast, is purely physical, without meaning or transcendent connection with nature.

documented.²⁴ The parallels in setting, form, language, and imagery in Arnold's poem and "Beauteous Evening" serve to reinforce their strikingly different tones and conclusions. Wordsworth reads the "calm" and "tranquil" scene as a sign of Deity ("that mighty Being") and His benevolence ("the gentleness of heaven"), whereas Arnold notes how far the "sea of faith" has receded and counters Wordsworth's faith in nature, explaining that the world "hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain" (1, 4-6, 21, 33-34). What studies on Arnold's revision have not mentioned, however, is that his departures from Wordsworth are directly informed by Victorian science. Although "the sea is calm," "the tide is full," and "the cliffs of England stand, / Glimmering and vast . . . in the tranquil bay," a reader of Charles Lyell and other Victorian scientists would recognize in this scene an unsettling story of deep geological time, next to which the pain and unfulfilled needs with which Arnold's speaker struggles appear insignificant (1-5). Arnold notes "the grating roar / Of pebbles which the waves draw back and fling" which, as U. C. Knoepflmacher points out, contradicts Wordsworth's description of nature's music as "neither harsh nor grating" (9-10, 22). The constant movement of these pebbles, of course, makes significant impacts over millions of years, as seen in the nearby cliffs, and "with tremulous cadence slow" this relentless, indifferent tide "bring[s] / The eternal note of sadness in" (13-14).

Arnold's deviations from his predecessor's views lead him to set up Wordsworthian formulas in his poetry, only to have them undercut or cruelly reversed. In "The Youth of Man," Arnold's speaker recognizes the prospect of death and extinction,

²⁴ See U. C. Knoepflmacher's "Dover Revisited: The Wordsworthian Matrix in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold," Kristian Smidt's "The Beaches of Calais and Dover: Arnold's Counterstatement to Wordsworth's Confession of Faith," and Alan Grob's *A Longing Like Despair: Arnold's Poetry of Pessimism*.

acknowledging that nature will outlive humanity. More troublesome to him is that nature is utterly indifferent to this fact:

Thou who seest us die
Seest us change while we live;
Seest our dreams one by one,
Seest our errors depart:
Watchest us, Nature, throughout,
Mild and inscrutably calm. (5-10)

Nature's calm tranquility, which Wordsworth celebrates, here becomes an insult, as nature shows no concern for the drama of human life. Again, Darwinism makes nature's indifference more troubling for Arnold than it was for Wordsworth. Whereas Wordsworth frets that nature "moves us not," Arnold laments that nature is entirely unmoved by us ("The world is too much with us" 9). While Wordsworth repents of his discordant sorrow while nature is cheerful, pledging, "No more shall grief of mine the season wrong," Arnold considers that the cheerfulness of the season wrongs his grief (26).

"The Youth of Man" and "The Terrace at Berne" also make pained departures from comforting Wordsworthian precepts. Much like Wordsworth's return to the Wye Valley in "Tintern Abbey," the aged couple in "The Youth of Man" "stand and listen" again in the "self-same garden" where they had stood "with the halo of youth" years earlier (17). While in "The Youth of Nature" the powers and beauties of the natural world are entirely its own without need of human assistance or Wordsworthian "half-creat[ion]," the youth in this poem have the opposite perspective, believing that "Nature is nothing: her charm / Lives in our eye which can paint, / Lives in our hearts which can feel" (106, 35-37). While this claim revises Wordsworth's nuanced view of his

collaborative creative process with nature, the final two lines owe something to his "mighty world / Of eye and ear" (105-106). Like in Wordsworth's experience, "the past returns---they feel / What they are, alas! what they were. / They, not Nature, are changed" (93-95). Arnold sets up a Wordsworthian expectation for some lesson or advantage to come out of this sad recognition:

Hush, for tears
 Begin to steal from their eyes!
 Hush for fruit
 Grows from such sorrow as theirs! (97-100).

Victorian critics recognized the Wordsworthian theme of gaining beneficial experiences and learning important lessons from adversity.²⁵ While Wordsworth, in "Tintern Abbey," realizes that he has changed with "somewhat of a sad perplexity," he finds "abundant recompense" for his loss and "life and food / For future years." Arnold's couple, by contrast, experience no such consolation (60, 88, 64-65). Their sorrow yields only bitter fruit:

And they remember,
 With piercing untold anguish,
 The proud boasting of their youth.
 And they feel how Nature was fair.
 And the mists of delusion fall from their eyes;
 And they see, for a moment,
 Stretching out, like the desert
 In its weary, unprofitable length,
 Their faded, ignoble lives. (101-111)

²⁵ In his essay "Wordsworth's Ethics," Leslie Stephen makes an observation that many of his contemporaries shared: "Wordsworth's favorite lesson is the possibility of turning grief and disappointment into account . . . [of] transmuting sorrow into strength" (166).

For Wordsworth, the epiphany experienced in nature on memory and the passing of time would bring "healing thoughts of tender joy" in difficult times, whereas for Arnold, these lessons bring only suffering (145).

"The Terrace at Berne," as Gill notes, also evokes "Tintern Abbey" from its opening lines:

Ten years!---and to my waking eye
Once more the roofs of Berne appear;
The rocky banks, the terrace high,
The stream!

Arnold echoes Wordsworth's opening: "Five years have passed; five summers, with the length / Of five long winters! and again I hear / These waters" (182). The speaker's recollections of Marguerite, however, become a source of pain rather than the comfort that Wordsworth assigns to such memories. The concluding stanza devastatingly parallels Wordsworth's "My Heart Leaps Up." Wordsworth writes,

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 (1-4).

Whereas Wordsworth's days are "bound each to each by natural piety" in this way, those of Arnold's speaker are linked by disappointment:

I knew it when my life was young;
I feel it still, now life is o'er.
---The mists are on the mountain hung,
And Marguerite I shall see no more (9, 49-52).

Arnold's poetry, like his criticism, also revises Wordsworth to elevate culture over nature. Wordsworth initially tries to ignore or minimize the man-made images in "Tintern Abbey," observing the "plots of cottage ground, these orchard-tufts, / Which, at this

season, with their unripe fruits, / Among the woods and copses lose themselves” (11-13). While acknowledging the signs of civilization, he maintains that they remain “green to the very door” and do not “with their green and simple hue, disturb / The wild green landscape” or “houseless wood” (14-15). Wordsworth portrays the cultivated bushes separating tracts of land as part of nature, saying, “These hedge-rows, [are] hardly hedge-rows, [but] little lines / Of sportive wood run wild” (16-7). This initial privileging of nature over culture reflects Wordsworth's anxiety about the source of his inspiration in the poem's opening. He doesn't want to believe that nature's inspiration has been "a vain belief" created by his own mind, and thus downplays the images of human activity at the scene (51).

By contrast, in "Resignation," Arnold's speaker extols the symbols of cultivation as a welcome relief from nature's harshness. After navigating "some two hours' march with serious air" and making a "wavering line" across a wild landscape of "winds," "heat," "hills," and virtually "no life," Arnold's speaker reaches civilization with these celebratory lines: "O joy! again the farms appear. / Cool shade is there, and rustic cheer" (68-75). This phrase echoes Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode," in which after lamenting the "soul[']s . . . earthly freight" of "custom . . . with a weight, / Heavy as frost," he exclaims

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive! (131-134, my emphasis).

Whereas Wordsworth celebrates the natural as a relief from the cultural, Arnold does the opposite. After outlining the gifts and responsibilities of a poet, Arnold emphasizes that

he best "sees the gentle stir of birth / When morning purifies the earth," not from a wild, secluded landscape, but "lean[ing] upon a gate" and viewing "the pastures . . . lawn . . . hedge . . . [and] flock" (170-183). Knoepfelmacher notes another cultural revision in Arnold's poem---because the landscape itself is meaningless, he imposes meaning on it through cultural references to Homer, Orpheus, Gothic warriors, Islamic pilgrims, and others ("Dover Revisited" 21). In "Lines Written in Kensington Gardens," Arnold's speaker celebrates the artificially cultivated space, reflecting, "scarce fresher is the mountain sod" (17). The gardens seem to have all the lively activity and benefits of nature: "Here at my feet what wonders pass, / What endless active life is here!" That Arnold can experience this "amid the city's jar" makes it all the more remarkable (13-14, 38).

If, for Wordsworth, transcendence and revelatory self-knowledge are available through an engagement of the mind with nature, Arnold stresses that we access these gifts through culture, or interaction with others. His poem "The Buried Life" emphasizes this message through ironic parallels with Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode" from its opening lines. While Arnold's speaker "feel[s] a nameless sadness o'er me roll," Wordsworth's speaker notes, "to me alone there came a thought of grief" (3, 22). Both poems lament the social and cultural forces which prevent people from being their true selves, as Arnold writes that fear of being met with "blank indifference, or with blame" leads people to conceal the "genuine self," and Wordsworth describes how custom weighs down the soul as the "shades of the prison-house begin to close / Upon the growing boy" (19, 36, 67-

68). Both poems show an interest in the origins of the inner life. Arnold describes "an unspeakable desire / After the knowledge of our buried life" and

Our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us---to know
Whence our lives come and where they go (47-54).

With the development of evolutionary theory, inquiry into our origins and the "wildness" of the "heart" carried new associations; the question of "where [our lives] go" seemed much less certain. Wordsworth's desire to understand the origins of the inner life, of course, leads him to declare that "our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting" and that "trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home" (58, 64-65). For both writers, we only catch glimpses of our origins and true selves through flashes of insight. In Arnold's "rare" moments "a bolt is shot back somewhere in the breast," and Wordsworth's "shadowy recollections" and "first affections" become clear when "our souls have sight" of our spiritual origin and true selves "in a moment" (77, 84, 151-152, 167-168).²⁶

These similarities make the poems' key difference more emphatic. Both the recognition "that there hath passed away a glory from the earth" and the revelation of spiritual origins come from nature in the "Intimations Ode" as part of Wordsworth's response to "meadow, grove, and stream" (18, 1). While this formula is what we would

²⁶ Gill notes the revision of the "Intimations Ode" in Arnold's "Stanzas on a Gipsy Child by the Sea-shore." The poems' profound difference in tone is partly due to Arnold's sense of a harsh, indifferent nature in comparison with Wordsworth's exalted natural visions. In stark contrast to Wordsworth's "child of joy" who "trailing clouds of glory . . . come[s] from God," Arnold's gipsy boy is filled with a deep and profound "infant gloom," which "clouds [his] forehead, and fore-dates [his] doom." The child's sorrows are partially due to his early recognition of the emptiness and pain in the struggle for survival, as his "was not the shelter, but the fray," as he has to learn early how to navigate "the throng'd fields where winning comes by strife."

expect from Wordsworth, Arnold emphasizes that transcendence is found in social connections with a loved one. He recognizes that the inner life is absent from light conversations with his beloved, and tries to capture it not through solitude in nature but by attempting to "read . . . [her] inmost soul" (11). He longs to access their real selves, "Ah! well for us, if even we, / Even for a moment, can get free / Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd," again echoing the language of the "Intimations Ode" (26-28).²⁷ For Arnold, impressions of our true origins and spiritual life come not from mountain solitude, "but often, in the world's most crowded streets . . . in the din of strife" (45-46). Through contact with others, and by extension culture, we find transcendence. For Arnold, we access the sublime

Only---but this is rare---
 When a beloved hand is laid in ours, [and]

 Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
 When our world-deafen'd ear
 Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd---
 A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
 And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again

 A man becomes aware of his life's flow. (67-88)

Arnold's formula of experiencing inspiration through loving connections with others is far removed from Wordsworth's poetry, in which other people fade out of sublime moments. Though Wordsworth and his friend are "side by side /Pacing, two brother Pilgrims" on their Alpine hike in *The Prelude*, they are "alone / Each with his humour" (VI.478-79). Often, the closer the relationship, the more isolated Wordsworth's representation of it. For most of "Tintern Abbey" we are under the impression that

²⁷ Relief from the "yoke" and "prison-house" of convention which "hath now [the] heart" of the boy in Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode" comes "in a moment."

Wordsworth is alone at the “wild secluded scene,” with only his “thoughts of more deep seclusion” for company (5, 6). It is not until the fifth and final verse paragraph that we learn that his “dear, dear Sister” Dorothy is with him (121). When Wordsworth does address her, he tries to help her create a similar sense of isolation: “Let the moon / Shine on thee in thy solitary walk” (135-36). Wordsworth describes a similar moment in his last meeting with his brother, John, in "Elegiac Stanzas": "Here did we stop; and here looked round / While each into himself descends" (21-22). For Wordsworth, the best sociality is “society made sweet as solitude” (II.315).

* * *

While Arnold both enlists and revises Wordsworth in response to Victorian science, he also uses evolutionary arguments in making the case for the poet’s importance. In “Literature and Science,” he describes the linking of knowledge to our sense of conduct and beauty, identified in “Wordsworth” as the poet’s key strength, as a “fundamental desire” and “innocent instinct” (124). In studying literature which teaches “how to live,” we are “following the instinct of self-preservation in humanity” as “our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay” in the best poetry, strengthening future generations (126). The evolutionary language, for Arnold, is more than metaphorical. He returns to our ancestral “hairy quadruped,” quipping, “This good fellow carried hidden in his nature, apparently, something destined to develop into a necessity for humane letters” (130). Arnold uses Darwinism in his debate with “Darwin’s Bulldog” Huxley. Darwin writes that poetry is “so ancient” that our capacity for it likely developed with the musical voice in sexual selection (57). Poetry like that of

Wordsworth, Arnold argues, actually meets inherited instinctual needs, including “the instinct for beauty,” “the instinct for knowledge,” and “the instinct for conduct” (126). Darwin writes in *The Descent of Man* that “sympathy, though gained as an instinct, is also much strengthened by exercise or habit.” This, Darwin confesses, “affords the strongest argument for educating and stimulating . . . every human being” (531). As Arnold has demonstrated that Darwinism cannot teach us “how to live,” he makes an evolutionary argument for a broad, humanistic education based on both ancient and modern sources, which, like Wordsworth’s writing, can supply this deficiency. By adapting evolutionary ideas and language to his own ends, Arnold demonstrates the creative and competitive elements of literary selection, in which authors borrow and revise both from their literary predecessors and evolutionary scientists.

While Arnold revises Wordsworth, he also goes to great lengths to strengthen the poet’s legacy, which he sees as critical for the cultural descent of English literature. In his Preface to *Poems*, he describes the literary “confusion of the present times” with various potential influences giving conflicting messages and competing for young writers’ attention. “Such a guide” as was needed, he writes, “the English writer at the present day will nowhere find.” Wordsworth had died three years before Arnold’s Preface was published, and the other “excellent models” he recommends had been dead much longer. He counsels young writers to seek to “reproduce . . . something of their excellence, by penetrating [themselves] with their works and by catching their spirit” (9).²⁸

²⁸ Arnold also develops this theme in “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” and “The Study of Poetry.”

In a sense, Arnold's insistence on following good models such as Wordsworth relates to evolutionary theory. He suggests that current and future writers need strong literary ancestors in order to progress. To descend from the wrong poetic stock is to risk regression and fail to leave a progressing literary offspring. Thus, as a critic, Arnold is constantly setting poets in competition with one another, placing great emphasis on weighing and ranking their achievement in order to find the best models. So while, for Arnold, Wordsworth is inferior to Dante, Shakespeare, Moliere, Milton, and Goethe, he ranks above Chaucer, Dryden, Pope, Johnson, and Byron. In emphasizing the significance of such competitions for future generations, Arnold posits a sort of retroactive, artificial evolutionary process for literary history, which is more enduring and valuable for him than Darwinian natural selection and is entirely under his control. In "Wordsworth," Arnold writes that "to the poet himself [glory] can seldom do harm; for he, poor man, is in his grave, probably, long before his glory crowns him" (3). While Darwinian evolution is characterized by the struggle for survival, in Arnold's model, the real fight begins after death, and the prize is not just life, but immortality. In waging this battle on Wordsworth's behalf, Arnold helps to bring about the poet's desire to "not wholly perish . . . lie down, and be forgotten in the dust," but rather "that [his] verse may live . . . as a light hung up in heaven" guiding "youthful poets, who . . . will be [his] second self when [he] is gone" (*Home at Grasmere* 1032-33, "Michael" 38-39). In this way, Arnold the critic seeks to accomplish what Arnold the poet could not. Whereas Arnold the poet lamented that "[Wordsworth] is dead, and the fruit-bearing day / Of his race is past on the earth" as the "age could raise [such poets] no more" in "The Youth of

Nature," Arnold the critic aspires to change these conditions, artificially engineering a critical environment in which Wordsworth's influence could thrive (56-57, 50).

Arnold's critical efforts find a closer analogy in the artificial selection process Darwin describes than in natural selection. Arnold's essay "Wordsworth" prefaces his edited selection of Wordsworth's poems and seeks to cut out the poet's "inferior work" from the canon, as it is "imbedding the first-rate work and clogging it, obstructing our approach to it" (17). For Wordsworth to be restored to his deserved place of eminence, he writes, he would "need to be relieved of his poetical baggage" (17).²⁹ Arnold's editing can be seen as a sort of pruning or breeding technique: removing the undesirable and facilitating the development of the best traits. Arnold specifies that part of what needs to be weeded out of the Wordsworthian garden is the poet's religious philosophy as found in texts such as *The Excursion* and the "Ecclesiastical Sonnets." This editing makes Wordsworth more viable for Arnold in the wake of Victorian science, and helps ensure his future literary survival. In "The Function of Criticism," Arnold stresses that good, creative criticism is a preparation for great literature in "rendering it possible" (22). Literary genius, he explains, requires "a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere" or culture to reach its potential, and this environment needs to be cultivated by critics (22). If biological species adapt to their surroundings, Arnold considers that creative writers would also, and endeavors to shape that environment through criticism. The struggle for literary survival, then, requires critical assistance---interference with natural processes---to identify and promote the fittest, not unlike Darwin's gardeners and animal breeders

²⁹ For Arnold, this inferior work includes much of the poetry published before or after the years 1798-1808, *The Excursion*, and *The Prelude*.

and eugenicists like Francis Galton. Thus Arnold makes the literary selection process *cultural* rather than natural.

Arnold's artificial selection model of literary history implies that it is the critics, rather than the poets, engaged in the struggle that matter. The poets are simply the medium through which the critics battle each other in an artificial engineering of the canon. The literature itself becomes less important than the capacity of the critic to interpret it. Arnold's "Bacchanalia" emphasizes that the results of literary selection, or the competition among living poets, are less reliable and enduring than critical selection. In the poem, it is only after "the famous poets [have] sung and gone" and "the combatants are parted" that critics can accurately assess the actual winners and losers (II. 4, 10). He mistrusts the initial results of literary selection, hastily determined in the heat of the moment, preferring to wait until the dust has settled to assess the results. It is only

in the after-silence sweet,
Now strifes are hush'd, our ears doth meet,
Ascending pure, the bell-like fame
Of this or that down-trodden name,
Delicate spirits, push'd away
In the hot press of the noon-day. (II.13-18)

To rescue and promote the writers wrongfully buried in the literary contest is the work of the critic, who ensures that "the one or two immortal lights / Rise slowly up into the sky / To shine there everlastingly," as Arnold sought to do with Wordsworth (24-26). The critic's role is to assess the combatants and intervene, "to *make* the best ideas prevail" ("The Function of Criticism," my emphasis).

Arnold's preference for interfering with natural selection processes is also evident in one of his final poems, "Poor Matthias," which mourns a pet bird---incidentally one of

Darwin's most frequently used examples in demonstrating evolutionary principles.

Recounting when he and his young daughter purchased the bird, Arnold describes how "a bird, high-coloured, fat, [and] / Proud of port . . . dazzled Nelly's youthful eyne" (188-191). The characteristics which draw the child to the bird are the same ones which equip it for success in the Darwinian struggle, but in an artificial selection process, Arnold chooses a bird that is not obviously the fittest:

Far in, obscure, there stirr'd
On his perch a sprightlier bird,
Courteous-eyed, erect and slim;
And I whisper'd: "Fix on *him!*" (192-195).

Though Arnold elevates critical selection over poetic selection, he makes clear in "The Last Word" that the critical battle can be equally vicious and that the best critical efforts can sometimes fall on deaf ears, as his phrase "they out-talk'd thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee" highlights the brutal, animalistic nature of the critical struggle (9). Like poets, critics' battles are fought even after they're dead. Arnold's speaker looks forward to the time when "the forts of folly [will] fall" and his "body" will be found on the right side as the best ideas ultimately prevail (15-16).

As with artificial selection procedures, Arnold considered that his critical interventions, including those on Wordsworth's behalf, would have far-reaching effects. In *The Study of Poetry*, Arnold emphasizes the high evolutionary stakes of ensuring that growing numbers of readers were exposed to the best literature: "We are often told that an era is opening in which we are to see multitudes of a common sort of readers, and masses of a common sort of literature" (74). Arnold strongly opposed the view that "such readers do not want and could not relish" the best literature. Good literature, he argued,

"will never lose currency with the world . . . [or] lose supremacy. Currency and supremacy are insured to it, not indeed by the world's deliberate and conscious choice, but by something far deeper,—by the instinct of self-preservation in humanity" (75). The best critic, then, understands humanity's deep instincts and manipulates literary debates to ensure that people will have exposure to the best writing, which is often not "selected" in literary competitions.

Arnold's ideas on shaping the public's literary taste and education weren't limited to the indirect tools of criticism, but also included interventions on a mass scale through school curriculum. He wrote to Arthur Clough that "those who cannot read Greek should read nothing but Milton and parts of Wordsworth: the state should see to it" (*Letters* I.128). Though he made this comment three years before being appointed Inspector of Schools, while in that capacity Arnold had a reputation for being severe in his criticism of textbooks, many of which were rewritten as a result of his disapproval (Murray 121). Given his earlier pronouncement, it seems likely that he would have replaced some readings with Wordsworth among other changes. As Inspector of Schools, Arnold worked exclusively with compulsory, publicly funded elementary schools, which were still relatively new. These schools, he wrote, would have an "immense" and vitally important effect "in civilizing the next generation of the lower classes, who, as things are going, will have most of the political power of the country in their hands" (*Letters* I.17). It was important to Arnold that Wordsworth was part of this required reading not only for the benefit of people's minds, but also their morals and well-being, and ultimately the

strength of what he saw as the new democracy following the Reform Act of 1867.³⁰ If Victorians read Wordsworth and other touchstones, they could pass on this knowledge to their children, and Arnold's beloved culture would survive and thrive through the laws of inheritance. "A nation," he emphasized, "is furthered by recognition of its real gifts and successes; it is encouraged to develop them further" (17).

Arnold wrote in "Wordsworth," "Let our one study be to bring to pass, as widely as possible and as truly as possible, [Wordsworth's] own word concerning his poems:— [that they] 'will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, and will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier'" (22).

Arnold envisioned a path to progress, which led through Wordsworth's poetry, and didn't involve the selfish, violent struggle of natural selection, but drew on "benign tendencies" and made people "better." He hoped that his poetic and critical contributions to Wordsworth's reception would help make this a reality for his contemporaries and future generations.

³⁰ Other critics agreed with Arnold on the importance of maintaining future generations' access to Wordsworth. In 1864, Shairp emphasized that "a good Wordsworth commentary would be a boon to the younger part of this generation" ("Wordsworth the Man" 8).

3

Evolving from Wordsworth and Darwin in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*

Stephen Gill claims that “there is no strong case for arguing that Wordsworth’s poetry was an active, shaping agent in the later direction of George Eliot’s art as it was in the earlier” (165). The critical commonplace that “after *Silas Marner*, Wordsworth’s role in George Eliot’s creative life diminished” is inconsistent with Eliot’s letters and journals, which show that she read and reread the Wordsworth canon in its entirety many times from 1839 to the time of her death in 1880 (Gill 164). Eliot reread *The Prelude* with her husband, John Cross, only months before she died, and was reading F.W.H. Myers’ critical biography *Wordsworth* in the final days of her life (Pinney 21).³¹

If Wordsworth’s influence became less noticeable, Darwin’s became more central over the course of the novelist’s career, as critics such as Gillian Beer and George Levine have shown.³² While the Wordsworthian elements of Eliot’s final novel differ from her early fiction’s portrayals of rural life, I hope to demonstrate that far from abandoning the poet’s influence, *Daniel Deronda* (1876) represents her most confident engagement with his writing, in a literary dialogue best understood in relation to Darwinism. Barry Qualls’s book chapter “George Eliot and Religion” discusses the spiritual and even

³¹ For a concise and comprehensive record of Eliot’s reading of Wordsworth, see Thomas Pinney’s “George Eliot’s Reading of Wordsworth: The Record.”

³² See Beer’s *Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* and Levine’s “George Eliot’s Hypothesis of Reality” (139-220).

devotional role of Wordsworthian memory in *Adam Bede* and *Silas Marner*. He claims that “when she turned to *Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot gave up those ‘roots in memory’ that were defined by Wordsworthian nature” (130). On the contrary, I argue that Eliot holds onto the poet’s influence in representing memory and a number of other subjects in Wordsworthian terms in her final novel, but like many Wordsworthian concepts in late-Victorian literature, this was tested and modified against Darwinism, just as evolutionary ideas were subjected to Wordsworthian revision.

Though many critics have explored Wordsworth’s and Darwin’s individual influences on Eliot, few have attempted to understand how they are intertwined in her writing. Gillian Beer claims in “Darwin’s Reading and the Fictions of Development” that Eliot would achieve the union of poetry and science with “a form of flesh and blood” that Wordsworth looked forward to in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. In his illuminating study of the conflicted Romanticism of Eliot’s later fiction, Edward Dramin points out that Romantic discourse was useful to the novelist in counteracting the materialism of evolutionary theory, but his discussion of *Daniel Deronda* turns to the influences of Byron and Heine rather than Wordsworth (275). In this chapter, I want to extend and further develop Dramin’s point, and show that Wordsworth’s influence is “far more deeply interfused” with Eliot’s evolutionary concerns in her final novel than Dramin suggests (“Tintern Abbey” 95). Wordsworth and Darwin’s influences intersect in *Daniel Deronda* as Eliot uses each writer to revise the other and criticizes both in related terms. Her revision of Wordsworth was at least in part motivated by her anxieties about Darwinism, which, for her, gave self-focus new associations of abandoning ethical

responsibility toward others. Unwilling to accept what she viewed as “moral chaos” resulting from evolutionary theory, she turned to Wordsworth with renewed urgency both to enlist his assistance in revising its perceived flaws and to correct his poetry in light of Darwin’s discoveries (*Middlemarch* 113).

Eliot’s central criticism of Wordsworth is similar to Keats’s concept of the egotistical sublime: that by focusing too heavily on himself, the poet’s writing endorses self-absorption. In her reading, Wordsworth’s creative focus is misdirected as he suggests that his poetic powers are most profitably applied to contemplation of the self. In Wordsworth’s “Reply to Mathetes”---an essay on “the progress of the species” with Darwinian relevance---the poet describes an intellectual evolution from concern for others to self-analysis (*Selected Prose* 112). He gives the example of “a School-boy” whose “sympathies are touched” as he imagines that the extinguishing light from his candle is “an intimation and an image of departing human life . . . the life of a venerated Parent, of a beloved Brother or Sister, or of an aged Domestic” (118). As he matures, however, and enters “the period between Youth and Manhood,” the boy’s concern for “the bodily life of another” gives way to “solicitude . . . for the moral life of himself” (118). Wordsworth explains that with intellectual development comes the recognition that duty to self and conscience is our first priority, and that all secondary interest in others must grow out of that primary care. Because our development requires “sinking into ourselves,” Wordsworth counsels, “let the Youth go back . . . to Nature and to Solitude . . . instead of being propelled restlessly towards others in admiration or too hasty love, he [should make] it his prime business to understand himself” (119). Thus, for Wordsworth,

sympathetic concern for others represents a lower stage of intellectual development than self-contemplation. Before Wordsworth meets and helps the discharged soldier in Book IV of *The Prelude*, he is “disposed to sympathy, / With an exhausted mind, worn out by toil,” implying that focusing his attention on someone else is a welcome mental respite from his grueling self-contemplation (380-381). In Book II, while arguing for the superiority of poetry to science, Wordsworth writes that it is a “hard task to analyze a soul . . . not only general habits and desires / But each most obvious and particular thought” (232-234). While these lines may have made a fitting chapter epigram in *Middlemarch* or *Daniel Deronda*, Wordsworth’s meaning is diametrically opposed to Eliot’s emphasis on sympathy. The soul that Wordsworth finds so difficult to analyze is his own, and he puts his imagination to work in that challenging artistic exercise.

Though Eliot is also in the business of analyzing souls, she stresses that the imagination should take multiple perspectives and study various subjects in seeking to understand other people. Her fiction suggests that sympathy is the supreme objective of the imagination---a difficult intellectual task requiring mental effort and discipline. Though she does not use Wordsworth’s description of the “hard task” as an epigram, she echoes his language in *Middlemarch*, describing a character who fails to accomplish the feat: “Fred Vincy fancied that he saw to the bottom of his uncle Featherstone’s soul, though in reality half of what he saw there was no more than the reflex of his own inclinations. The *difficult task of knowing another soul* is not for young gentlemen whose consciousness is chiefly made up of their own wishes” (121, my emphasis). Here Eliot suggests that self-focus comes easily and naturally to the self-centered, whereas

sympathetic understanding of others takes exceptional vision and imaginative capacity.³³

Eliot emphasizes the intellectual inferiority of such self-centered thinking. She notes in *Daniel Deronda* that “want of sympathy condemns us to a corresponding stupidity” (510). In *Middlemarch* she similarly emphasizes, “It is a narrow mind which cannot look at a subject from various points of view” (Chapter VII, 80). Implicit here is her critique of the egotistical sublime.³⁴

If Eliot criticizes Wordsworth for not engaging with others enough, she considers Darwinian relations to be the wrong kind of interaction. Darwin’s writing emphasizes that natural organisms are interconnected, “bound together by a web of complex relations” (90).³⁵ This network is a site of violence and death as all living things compete for survival with one another. One of Eliot’s central objections to Darwinism is her belief that selfish and violent treatment of others should not yield progress and that evolutionary theory provides an insufficient foundation for morality. She would not have approved of the lack of altruism in Darwin’s view of development. He explains that

natural selection cannot possibly produce any modification in any one species exclusively for the good of another species, though throughout nature one species incessantly takes advantage of, and profits by, the structure of another. But natural selection can and does often produce structures for the direct injury of other species. (179)

³³ Other critics have highlighted this departure from the Romantic imagination in George Eliot’s fiction. Dramin argues that she, more than other Victorians, is critical of Romantics’ egocentrism (273-274). Margaret Homans contrasts Wordsworth’s solitary and self-absorbed vision of childhood with George Eliot’s, which necessarily involves other people, and points out that her characters’ Wordsworthian childhood visions are thwarted by social needs or circumstance (229-230).

³⁴ Like Edward Dramin, Forrest Pyle argues that George Eliot presents Romanticism as either “fevered Byronic excess or sympathetic Wordsworthian morality” (276). I argue that Eliot’s view of Wordsworth is more critical than these scholars have suggested.

³⁵ For a discussion of George Eliot’s use of Darwin’s metaphor of the web, see Beer (18-19, 153-160).

Darwin traces the development of morality to “the social instinct” through natural selection, noting that “those animals which were benefited by living in close association . . . [and] took the greatest pleasure in society would best escape various dangers, whilst those that cared less for their comrades, and lived solitary, would perish in greater numbers” (77). In Eliot’s reading of Darwin, apparently unselfish concern for others is ultimately about self-interest.³⁶ For Eliot, as for *Daniel Deronda*, the competitive premise of Darwin’s theory “that our gain is another’s loss . . . is one of the ugly aspects of life” which should be resisted as far as possible (284).

Like *Deronda*, Eliot resents Darwin’s implication that one must take the path of selfishness to find success, and she counters this view with a model of benevolent moral evolution in the novel.³⁷ Gwendolen Harleth appears perfectly poised for evolutionary triumph: “Gwendolen looked lovely and vigorous as a tall, newly opened lily . . . there

³⁶ Darwin specifically defends himself against this charge in *The Descent of Man*, arguing that the social instinct is, by definition, without conscious motive and that it often sharply differs from the individual pursuit of pleasure. He writes, “Thus the reproach is removed of laying the foundation of the noblest part of our nature in the base principle of selfishness” (94). In making this defense, however, he also divorces selfless behavior from conscious choice---a crucial component of Eliot’s ethics. Notwithstanding this rebuttal, Darwin traces the primitive development of sympathy to self-interest as “each man would soon learn that if he aided his fellow-men, he would commonly receive aid in return. From this low motive he might acquire the habit of aiding his fellows,” which “strengthens the feeling of sympathy” (157). He also connects these feelings “to another and much more powerful stimulus . . . the praise and blame of our fellow-men” (158).

³⁷ Nancy L. Paxton describes how George Eliot and George Henry Lewes “collaborated in resisting . . . [the] easy application of the principles of natural selection to human life; they stressed instead the mediating power of human society in shaping and qualifying human behavior” (183). She prepared Lewes’s *Study of Psychology* (1879) for publication after his death, and would have agreed with the following passage describing a social evolution from selfishness to sympathy. “In relation to Nature, man is an animal; in relation to culture, he is social. As the ideal world rises above and transforms the sensible world, so culture transforms nature physically and morally, fashioning the forest and the swamp into the garden and meadow-lands, the selfish savage into the sympathetic citizen” (71-72, qtd. in Paxton 183). Lewes goes on to describe the capacity for altruistic love as the uniquely human characteristic that distinguishes people from animals, saying, “The law of animal action is individualism, its motto is ‘each for himself against all,’ the ideal of human action is altruism, its motto is ‘each for others, all for each’” (qtd. in Paxton 184). I am attempting to further Paxton’s point here by describing how the transforming influence of culture that Lewes envisions takes the form of sympathetic interpersonal interactions in George Eliot’s fiction.

was a reaction of young energy in her” (122). The floral simile emphasizes that as an organism, Gwendolen is set to conquer her competition in the Darwinian world of natural and sexual selection, as Darwin writes in *On the Origin of Species* that “the more vigorous plants gradually kill the less vigorous” and “the most vigorous individuals . . . will generally leave most progeny,” “very vigorous” offspring which “will have the best chance of flourishing and surviving” (101, 106). In revising evolutionary theory, however, the novel accounts for an anti-Darwinian, altruistic energy which Gwendolen lacks. Tracing the childhood development of Deronda’s sympathy, the narrator explains, “A boy who is fond of somebody else’s pencil-case may not be more energetic than another who is fond of giving his own pencil-case away,” suggesting that those with unselfish sympathy are no less able to thrive than the self-interested (151). Eliot’s metaphor linking morality with organic growth in Book I implicitly revises Darwin’s notion of progress by competition: “Goodness is a large, often a prospective word; like harvest, which at one stage when we talk of it lies all underground, with an indeterminate future . . . [a] germ prospering in the darkness” and later “put[ting] forth delicate green blades” (56). If Gwendolen’s embryonic goodness is left unnurtured, and she fails to morally evolve, she risks living up to the moral degeneration and decay implied in the volume’s title “The Spoiled Child.” The novel emphasizes that selfish instincts should be resisted and, as Mordecai argues, “dutiful love” should “lift the needs of animal life into religion” (453). Sympathetic characters demonstrate that such selfless sympathy can be attained: Mrs. Cohen, for instance, is “capable of rejoicing that another’s plant blooms though her own be withered” (530).

As Eliot critiqued both Darwin and Wordsworth in this way, she also recognized a dialogue between them, and used each one to counterbalance and revise the other. This dynamic is evident in her presentation of the novel's title character.³⁸ Deronda is endowed with the qualities of a poet described in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.³⁹ As Wordsworth seeks subject matter in “common life” and “ordinary things,” Daniel has a “strong sense of poetry in common things” (597, 321). He also shares the poetic traits of “sensibility,” “enthusiasm,” and “tenderness” outlined in the preface. Deronda’s Wordsworthian traits are emphatically employed to benefit those around him. His sympathy defines his sense of poetry in daily life, as the narrator asks, “How should all the apparatus of heaven and earth make poetry for a mind that has no . . . tenderness [or] sense of fellowship?” (175). Sensibility and tenderness describe his responsiveness to others, and even his enthusiasm is defined sympathetically as “a [supreme care] for grand and general benefits to mankind” (485). By emphasizing the selfless and interactive nature of Deronda’s poetic qualities, Eliot implies that Wordsworth took the opposite approach in self-

³⁸ Deronda’s childhood evokes Wordsworth. His boyhood home and its surrounding landscape carry great emotional value for him as he “appropriated it all with affection” (143). Affection is similarly rooted in landscape throughout Wordsworth’s poetry as “land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for [the] domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written, which makes them objects of memory” (“Notes to Poems Founded on the Affections,” *Complete Poetical Works* 129). Perhaps even more distinctly Wordsworthian than Deronda’s childhood is his adult recollection of it. Of his childhood home, Deronda states, “I carry it with me. . . . To most men their early home is no more than a memory of their early years, and I’m not sure but they have the best of it. The image is never marred. There’s no disappointment in memory, and one’s exaggerations are always on the positive side” (362). These words recall the “forms of beauty” (25) Wordsworth describes in “Tintern Abbey”---the “picture of the mind” he carries with him from his prior visit to the Wye (62). Wordsworth’s disappointment as the present moment mars the image in his memory is a central tension in the poem.

³⁹ Edward Dramin has argued that the Romantic influence in *Daniel Deronda* is more Byronic than Wordsworthian as he reads Grandcourt as the Byronic id, Gwen as the Byronic ego, and Daniel initially as the Byronic superego. After Deronda transcends Byronism, Dramin contends, he becomes the Wordsworth of the later books of *The Prelude*. Useful as I find Dramin’s study, I hope to show that Deronda is a Wordsworthian figure throughout the novel.

contemplation, taking “the growth of [his own] mind” as his epic theme, and seeking solitary inspiration in nature.⁴⁰

Deronda’s disappointing Cambridge education parallels the poet’s experience in Book III of *The Prelude* (1850). As Wordsworth wished his studies “had an ampler range / and freer pace,” Daniel had a “yearning after wider knowledge” than could be acquired in the university’s “narrow tracks” (499-500, 151). However, whereas Wordsworth neglected to seek a scholarship in pursuit of his poetic vocation, Deronda failed because he was helping Hans Meyrick succeed. Daniel not only reverses what Eliot reads as the egotistical sublime, but rejects the self-interested competition of natural selection. Fearing that the competitive Cambridge environment may have an evolutionary effect on his development, Daniel seeks instead “an apprenticeship to life which would not shape him too definitely, [or] rob him of the choice that might come from a free growth” (153). As Sir Hugo puts it, Deronda does not “want to be turned out in the same mould as every other youngster” (55). For Eliot, the insignificance of the individual will in natural selection undermines the personal ethical decision, as the organism does not choose to change.⁴¹ Thus, in seeking “a free growth” for Deronda, she resists Darwinism. She misreads Darwin in order to revise him---channeling his observations on the origin of species to the moral life of an individual (Bloom 5). Daniel’s return to his boyhood home following his fateful trip to Genoa parallels Wordsworth’s return to the Wye, as he has changed significantly while the setting has remained the same: “Deronda walked about

⁴⁰ Anne Mellor imagines Wordsworth’s female contemporaries revising and critiquing his work in a similar way in *Romanticism and Gender*.

⁴¹ See Beer (190-195).

this room with a strange sense of metamorphosis in his own life. The familiar objects around him . . . seemed almost to belong to a previous state of existence . . . so deep and transforming had been the impressions he had lately experienced” (655). Deronda’s recollection of his “previous state of existence” both evokes Darwin’s portrait of our “earlier state of existence” and Wordsworth’s remembered “past existence” at the familiar scene above Tintern Abbey (*The Descent of Man* 117, 149). However, whereas Wordsworth’s solitary development occurred in “lonely rooms,” the changes in Daniel’s life result from his interactions with others, in this case Gwendolen and his mother (25). In departing from Wordsworth, Eliot also employs evolutionary diction to misread and revise Darwin. An individual, rather than a species, is transformed, highlighting the importance of personal moral development, and Daniel experiences this “metamorphosis” not by competitive struggle, but through benevolent interpersonal contact.

While Eliot criticizes both Wordsworth and Darwin, her portrayal of Deronda on the Thames shows how each writer is useful to her in her revision of the other as their two mutually disruptive influences intersect. She makes Daniel’s Wordsworthian status explicit, noting that he is “trailing clouds of glory” from his childhood---a direct quotation of the “Intimations Ode” (157). He takes to his boat in “a contemplative mood” because “he could nowhere else get the same still seclusion which the river gave him,” just as Wordsworth seeks “a more deep seclusion” at the Wye and Derwent rivers (157). Deronda sings as he rows, emphasizing his role as a poetic figure. When he lodges his boat, he reposes in an attitude of “solemn passivity,” not unlike Wordsworth’s state of “wise passiveness” in which nature “can feed [his] mind” in “Expostulation and Reply”

(24, 23).

Deronda “looks out for a perfect solitary spot where he could lodge his boat against the bank”; however, his Wordsworthian search for solitary contemplation along the bank are frustrated by its Darwinian entanglements. The setting comes to resemble Darwin’s metaphor at the conclusion of *On the Origin of Species*---“an entangled bank, clothed with many plants . . . birds . . . insects . . . and worms . . . so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner . . . [all] produced by laws acting around us.” Though Deronda looks for “a solitary spot” (160), he finds, unlike Wordsworth, that in a Darwinian world “the river [is] no solitude” (160, 158).⁴² He is repeatedly interrupted in his solitary introspection by other people, as he passes several people and a barge. Eliot reinforces the contrast between Deronda's and Wordsworth's experiences by setting her character on the Thames---historically one of the most connected and travelled waterways in the world---as opposed to the relatively isolated River Wye, which passes through wilderness areas and a few small towns as a quiet border between England and Wales. Given the crowded environment, Deronda's thoughts wander from himself to others. While “Deronda of late . . . had been occupied chiefly with uncertainties about his own course . . . those uncertainties, being much at their leisure, were wont to have . . . wide-sweeping connections with all life” (160). With his thoughts extending outward, he reflects on “the hopelessly entangled scheme of things,” reinforcing Eliot's allusion to the entangled bank. For Eliot, Wordsworthian solitude is no

⁴² Argyos argues that “Eliot tacitly assumes that the individual is so very constituted by his/her role in a social context that even if s/he were to wish for the kind of [Wordsworthian] isolation necessary for solipsistic self-immersion, someone would eventually emerge to break the spell and return one to the sobering influence of the claims of others” (27).

longer viable after Darwin, who revealed an interconnected natural world and demonstrated not only that man is a social animal who dislikes being alone, but that solitude is uncondusive to survival (*Descent of Man* 81).

Recognition of the bank's entanglements causes Deronda's reflections to differ sharply from Eliot's reading of Wordsworthian self-contemplation. The scene can be read as her revision of Wordsworth's extended simile describing himself in Book IV of *The Prelude* "as one who hangs down-bending from the side / Of a slow-moving Boat" (256-57). The Wordsworthian boatman is characteristically concerned about "part[ing] / The shadow from the substance" in the water as he "sees many beauteous sights" and "fancies more" (261-264). Deronda mirrors this dual consciousness with "half-speculative, half involuntary" thoughts---a phrase which also recalls Wordsworth's poetic vision in "Tintern Abbey"--- defined as what he "half-create[s] / And what perceive[s]" (160, 107-108). While Deronda's scene on the Thames is laden with Wordsworthian language and imagery, his boat carries him far from the poet's inward reflections, as his experience becomes externally focused and social. Wordsworth's mind, rather than natural surroundings, becomes his focus as his boat-side view is "crossed by a gleam / Of his own image" (258-259). In contrast to this self-focused figure, Deronda "lay . . . level with the boat's edge, so that he could see all around him, but could not be seen. . . . He was forgetting everything else in . . . identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape" (160). Thus, while Wordsworth's boat ride becomes an occasion for an almost narcissistic self-

contemplation, Deronda's selfhood fades out from the scene, giving way to the world around him. Deronda's Wordsworthian "half-speculative, half involuntary" reflections relate to Darwinism and the relationship between instinct and agency. Importantly for Eliot, Daniel can transcend the natural self-centered thinking with which he sets out and *choose* to perform this sympathetic mental exercise.

Even these unselfish solitary reflections are interrupted by the entanglements of the bank, as "the sense of something moving on the bank opposite" Daniel draws his attention to Mirah, a distressed and frightened Jewess about to attempt suicide. Fortunately, Mirah's plans are thwarted by the interactive setting as she is brought out of "apparent solitude" by "the sign of discovery from the opposite bank" (161). The surrounding scenery visually reinforces this sense of interconnection as the image of the rising moon is "*entangled* among the trees and buildings" (163, my emphasis). Daniel saves Mirah from suicide, and she changes the course of his life, ultimately marrying him. Thus, Deronda's "solitary excursion" (another Wordsworthian phrase) becomes a profoundly consequential social experience through Darwinian entanglements.⁴³ While these interconnections disrupt the pursuit of the egotistical sublime, they enable Eliot to achieve one of her major aims for the novel, as she "meant everything in the book to be related to everything else there" (xiv). Eliot's ambition has evolutionary relevance; the biologist and environmental advocate Barry Commoner has written that the first law of ecology is that "everything is connected to everything else" (9). Eliot reinforces the

⁴³ John Glendening has argued that late Victorian novelists retained the negative connotations of entanglement from earlier literary traditions, while it was an attractive network of interdependency for Darwin (18). My analysis suggests that George Eliot considered both the benign and threatening elements of this image.

theme of natural interconnection with her chapter title "Meeting Streams." Just as streams and rivers intersect, Deronda's initially solitary experience blends with Mirah's. In addition to its social significance for the characters and their interrelationships, this meeting has important consequences for Daniel's personal growth, and highlights Eliot's notion of individual development through selfless interaction: "Deronda felt himself growing older this evening and entering on a new phase in finding a life to which his own had come---perhaps as a rescue" (165).

Just as Darwin's language and imagery in the scene undermine its Wordsworthian elements, Eliot employs Darwinism only to subject it to a Wordsworthian revision. She presents Deronda as one of a "type" or species. Equally important as natural selection in describing the species' origin is Darwin's theory of sexual selection through which we can interpret the scene, knowing that Daniel and Mirah eventually marry. We read that Daniel's "appearance was of a kind to draw attention" (158). According to Darwin, such a distinction makes for a significant advantage in the competition for females (*Origin* 214). We can also hear in Deronda's song, likened to "an insect murmur," a mating call, as Darwin theorized that the vocal chords were better developed in men than in women through sexual selection. Later Mirah returns this call and sings for Daniel with a beautiful though weak voice, which is compared to "a bird's wooing" (315). For Darwin, of course, sexual and natural selection render the entangled bank not only a site of interdependence but of violent competition and death. While Mirah offers a religious justification of suicide ("death and life are one before the Eternal"), in Eliot's misreading one might view an indifferent Darwinian nature "red in tooth and claw," in which life and

death are “hopelessly entangled” and equally insignificant (160).

Eliot uses the scene’s Wordsworthian presence to temper and even contradict this dark side of Darwinism. As Deronda rows, he doubts the value of the competitive struggle, “question[ing] whether it were worth while to take part in the battle of the world” (157). Wordsworth wondered the same thing while at Cambridge, and concluded that it was not. The statement that the adult Deronda “bore only disguised traces” of his childhood recalls Darwin’s point that we “still retain traces of our primordial [state], a shore washed by tides” (*Descent of Man* 161). Daniel, however, shows signs of origin not from an animal ancestry, but a “seraphic” childhood, from which he is still “trailing clouds of glory.” Eliot applies Wordsworth’s sense of exalted origins to Daniel, not to object to Darwin’s science, but to emphasize that “you could hardly have seen his face . . . without believing that human creatures had done nobly in times past, and might do more nobly in time to come” (141). In spite of Darwin’s arguments on *The Descent of Man*, she emphasizes with the allusion to Wordsworth an origin of noble action, similar to the “later-born Therasas” of the Prelude to *Middlemarch*, “the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur,” and maintains that humans can overcome their selfish animal nature.⁴⁴

The main thrust behind this Wordsworthian revision of Darwin is one of the poet’s most radical propositions: “Love of Nature Lead[s] to Love of Mankind” (*The Prelude* VIII). For Wordsworth, human interaction with nature prepares the affections, “fastening on the heart . . . so that we love, not knowing what we love, / And feel, not

⁴⁴ Darwin briefly muses on this possibility, seeing “not the least inherent improbability . . . in virtuous tendencies being more or less strongly inherited.” He voices some doubts on this, however, and posits that virtues are primarily acquired “through habit, instruction and example, continued during several generations” (98).

knowing from whence our feeling comes" (*The Prelude* VIII.169-172). In this way, nature becomes the "anchor . . . guide . . . [and] guardian . . . of all [our] moral being" ("Tintern" 110-112). For Eliot, linking the amoral natural world with the self in a Darwinian age could be seen as embracing pure self-interest at the expense of others. Thus she makes Deronda's connection with nature unselfish as he attempts to think outside of himself and focus on the natural scenery. Deronda's concentration on nature transfers to his kind and selfless treatment of Mirah, or leads to the love of mankind. After preventing her suicide, Daniel's relationship to Mirah becomes the exact opposite of Darwinism---rather than killing to survive, Deronda swears, "I will die before I let any harm come to you" (161).

For the egotistical Gwendolen this sympathetic imaginative exercise would be unthinkable: "Solitude in any wide scene impressed her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself"---a sensation which "made her tremble" (52). Eliot's narrator reflects that Gwendolen may have developed greater sympathy had she enjoyed a Wordsworthian connection with native landscape from childhood:

Pity that Offendene was not the home of Miss Harleth's childhood, or endeared to her by family memories! A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and kindly acquaintance with all neighbors, even to the dogs and donkeys, may spread not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood. At five years old, mortals are not prepared to be citizens of the world . . . to soar above preference into impartiality. . . . The best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's own homestead. (16)

Had Gwendolen developed a "tender kinship for the face of the earth" she might have acquired sympathetic concern for others. This passage evokes Wordsworth's Michael, who had such a connection with his native landscape, which "like a book preserved [his] memory . . . these fields, these hills / Which were his living Being, even more / Than *his own Blood*" (70-75, my emphasis). Eliot's "best introduction to astronomy" alludes to Wordsworth's reflection in "There is an Eminence" that "the star of Jove, so beautiful and large / In the mid heav'ns, is never half so fair / As when he shines above" the landmark named for his sister (10-12). Eliot represents such sympathy as "a sweet habit of the blood"---a kindness which becomes biological, links people with animals, and is shaped by the physical environment. With the help of Wordsworth, Eliot reformulates the violent, evolutionary instinct which connects us with nature as an unselfish concern for others.

In addition to positioning Darwin and Wordsworth against sympathy, Eliot uses them to address problems inherent in the concept of sympathy itself. Her first concern with the sympathetic imagination is its destructive potential for those who fully exercise it. That embracing nature can lead to less, not more, concern for self is seen in Mirah's description of her suicide attempt---an extreme, anti-Darwinian extension of Deronda's imaginative exercise in nature: "It seemed I was not thinking at all, but only the sky and the river . . . were in my soul. And what was it whether I died or lived? . . . I gave myself up" (189). Mirah's physical position and mental activity parallel Deronda's, signaling Eliot's critique of the extent of their sympathy, which leads to a carelessness regarding their own lives. Ellen Argyos claims that sympathetic imagination for Wordsworth

threatens the individual identity and authority, as seen in the annihilation of the Winander Boy, while it comes with no such loss for Eliot (325). I would argue that both Mirah's and later Deronda's sympathies are linked to a carelessness regarding their own lives. Thus Eliot shares Wordsworth's anxiety, albeit to a lesser degree, regarding the potential of sympathy to extend to destructive lengths. Mirah's suicidal extension of a Wordsworthian sympathy with nature recalls the Lucy poems, which emphasize that too close of a connection with the natural world means death. Wordsworth compares Lucy to a "flower" who "grew in sun and shower" until nature took her in death, leaving her with "the silence and the calm / Of mute insensate things" ("Three Years" 1-2, 17-18). "A Slumber did my spirit seal" shows the same union with nature in death:

No motion has she now, no force;
 She neither hears nor sees;
 Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
 With rocks, and stones, and trees. (5-8)

Eliot's recognition of excessive sympathy's dangers informs both her ethical emphasis and her character portrayal. Wordsworth himself recognized the egotism which Eliot criticizes, but was also conscious of extreme sympathy's risk of self-annihilation, as he describes his youthful tendency to mentally obliterate the external world, adding "in later periods of life I have deplored a subjugation of an opposite character" (*Poetical Works* 4:464).⁴⁵ Argyos concedes that Eliot may be unwittingly demonstrating this danger in her opaque and unrealistic characterization of Deronda, but I would argue that in representing Daniel, who, for John Holloway and other critics, "has all the tedium of a

⁴⁵ Wordsworth wrote to Dorothy in 1789 "I have again relapsed into Egotism . . . and must here entreat you to pardon this fault," and again a year later "but away with this outrageous Egotism" (*Letters* I.37, 62). Keats expressed a similar idea as both a complaint and a boast: "When I am in a room with People . . . I am in a very little time annihilated" (*Letters* I: 387).

paragon," Eliot purposefully flattens his character to demonstrate the problem of discarding self-regard entirely (140). As Sir Hugo counsels Daniel, "It is good to be unselfish and generous, but don't carry that too far. It will not do to give yourself to be melted down for the benefit of the tallow-trade; you must know where to find yourself" (156). The narrator also observes that Daniel's "many-sided sympathy . . . threatened to hinder any persistent course of action" (307). This criticism tempers Eliot's revision of Wordsworth, suggesting that some degree of self-focus is necessary. The priggishness which has irritated critics stems from Deronda's attempts to teach Gwendolen unselfishness and his efforts toward cognitive self-annihilation through sympathy. For Wordsworth, this is an imaginative and intellectual failure; for Darwin, it's a death sentence. In *Middlemarch* Eliot presents a slightly different, more healthy form of sympathy in Dorothea Brooke, who asks herself, "What should I do---how should I act now . . . if I could clutch my own pain, and compel it to silence, and think of [others]?" (606). To *clutch* one's own pain or needs is not to dismiss or ignore them, but rather to hold them close and manage them in a way that enables thinking of others also. Dorothea's sympathy actually depends on more self-awareness, rather than less. Such self-concern would have rounded out Deronda's character, but would not have demonstrated the problematic potential of sympathy, which late Victorian writers commonly offered as a corrective to the egotistical elements of both Wordsworth's and Darwin's philosophies.

Eliot is also concerned with the opposite problem---sympathy's potentially narcissistic elements. Daniel's effort to think outside of himself can be seen as egocentric

as he projects his own consciousness onto the external world. Paradoxically, striving to think outside of oneself requires a measure of self-focus, and even self-aggrandizement. In attempting this, Deronda fails to recognize what Gwendolen understands but shies away from---"immeasurable existence aloof from [him]." Mirah sheds light on the inherent selfishness of self-sacrifice in her interpretation of a story Mordecai shares "of a Jewish maiden who loved a Gentile king so well" that she sacrificed her life by dying in the place of his lover, so that he might be happy. Mirah, struggling with her own jealousy of Gwendolen's involvement with Daniel, replies, "She wanted the king when she was dead to know what she had done, and feel that she was better than the other. It was her strong self, wanting to conquer, that made her die" (629). Thus self-annihilation can involve a sense of superiority, which, for Eliot, can be just as dangerous as the lack of sympathy.

Eliot seeks to work through these potential pitfalls, and develops a model of moral evolution through benevolent interaction in the novel. We see this benign entanglement in Deronda's relationship with Gwendolen---a revision of violent Darwinian interaction. Daniel first crosses Gwendolen's path when he observes her gambling and later returns the necklace she pawned to offset her losses, anonymously expressing "the hope that she will not again risk the loss of it" (14). Gwendolen bristles at this intrusion, reflecting that "he knew very well that he was *entangling* her in helpless humiliation" (14, my emphasis). This, of course, is only the first of many interventions between the two, as Sir Hugo observes to Daniel, "There must be an *entanglement* between your horoscope and hers" (614, my emphasis). While Gwendolen initially views this interposition as Daniel's

means of exerting superiority over her, she comes to see that this is a different form of entanglement than Darwin's. Daniel seeks to disentangle Gwendolen from the Darwinian struggle, selfish competition based on chance, in order to engage her in morally uplifting interaction leading to sympathy. He teaches her to recognize these entanglements and be "conscious of more beyond the round of [her] own inclinations . . . [to] know more of the way in which [her] life presses on others, and their life on [hers]" (388).

Daniel helps Gwendolen in a process of moral development which Eliot represents in evolutionary terms. Gwendolen suffers pains of conscience after she knowingly wrongs the Glashers in marrying Grandcourt, and then sees her murderous wish fulfilled in his death. Deronda seeks to guide her in channeling her pain toward sympathetic development: "This sorrow, which has cut down to the root, has come to you while you are so young . . . in your spring-time" (658). He counsels her, "Try to think of it, not as a spoiling of your life, but as a preparation for it," predicting, "You will find your life growing like a plant" (658). Deronda's words of comfort and encouragement to Gwendolen are "like the touch of a miraculous hand" to her, which "seemed the beginning of a new existence" (659). Gwendolen seeks to replace her earlier selfish energy with its altruistic counterpart: "so pregnant is the divine hope of moral recovery with the energy that fills it" (659). The language of pregnancy here signals the beginnings of a new moral life, conceived by benevolent interaction rather than the Darwinian competition of natural reproduction. Gwendolen's letter to Daniel on his wedding day shows signs of a recognition of her prior selfishness and a nascent sympathetic concern for others: "Do not think of me sorrowfully on your wedding-day. . . . I only thought of

myself, and I made you grieve. It hurts me now to think of your grief" (694-695). As Gwendolen signs off, she is developing a desire "to make others glad that they were born," and experiencing the early stages of moral evolution (694).

Deronda's guidance of Gwendolen parallels Wordsworth's direction of Dorothy in "Tintern Abbey." Wordsworth sees his past self in Dorothy, saying, "In thy voice I catch / The language of my former heart, and read / My former pleasures in the shooting lights of thy wild eyes" (117-120). Like Wordsworth, Deronda sees glimpses of his former self in Gwendolen, who has "an inborn energy of egoistic desire," which he seeks to channel toward altruism (33). Her determination to "do what was pleasant to herself" and "strike others with admiration" made up her "ardent sense of living" (31). Eliot's familiar adjective *ardent* recalls Deronda's "ardour" in his childhood self-preoccupation (141). There is an echo of Dorothy's "wild eyes" (120, 139) and "wild ecstasies" (139) in descriptions of Gwendolen's speaking "wildly" (584) and her imagination's tendency to "[fly] to wild actions" (503). Eliot's language here both recalls Dorothy and emphasizes Gwendolen's animalistic nature, as she is more selfish than sympathetic. While Wordsworth foretells potential trouble yet to come for Dorothy, the description of her possible future suffering makes a fitting record of Gwendolen's past difficulty, especially her marriage to Grandcourt, where "solitude . . . pain . . . fear . . . [and] grief" were all "[her] portion" (144-145). Particularly resonant with Gwendolen's plight is the description of "rash judgments," "the sneers of selfish men," "greetings where no kindness is," and "all / The dreary intercourse of daily life" (130-132). Gwendolen's decision to marry Grandcourt against her conscience was a particularly costly "rash

judgment,” and the loathsomely selfish Grandcourt’s speech to his wife is often marked by sneers.⁴⁶ Like Wordsworth, Deronda looks ahead to a future separation from his pupil, but promises that they will maintain a companionship of the mind: “We shall not be quite parted . . . I will write to you always . . . We can perhaps never see each other again. But our minds may get nearer” (691).

For all of their similarities, however, the relationships between Deronda and Gwendolen and between Wordsworth and Dorothy in “Tintern Abbey” also have their stark differences, which underscore Eliot’s revision of Wordsworth’s self-turned perspective. Deronda has several interviews with Gwendolen throughout the novel. Their final conversation, Deronda apologetically acknowledges, differs from all the others in its content: “I have things to tell you which you will almost think it a want of confidence on my part not to have spoken of before. They are things affecting *my own life---my own future*” (686, my emphasis). Prior to this final meeting, all of their conversations had focused solely on Gwendolen. Only in revealing his Jewish origin and plan to marry Mirah would Deronda discuss himself with Gwendolen for the first time. By focusing his attention on his companion throughout the text and then briefly addressing his own life at the end, Deronda reverses Wordsworth’s order in “Tintern Abbey,” in which the poet talks about himself at length as if Dorothy isn’t even present, acknowledging her only at the poem’s end. Another contrast is that “Tintern Abbey” is a monologue, while Eliot uses dialogue to represent Deronda and Gwendolen’s interactions.⁴⁷ Obvious as this

⁴⁶ See *Daniel Deronda* 506, 522, 581.

⁴⁷ Several critics have explored the significance of genre in Wordsworth’s influence on George Eliot, including U. C. Knoepfelmacher, Forrest Pyle (147-171), Margaret Homans (223-230), and Sarah Gates

difference may be, unlike Wordsworth, Eliot gives the poet's pupil a voice. Indeed, more of the novel is about Gwendolen than the Wordsworthian title character. Thus it is Gwendolen, not Deronda, who pronounces her future: "I shall think of you"---"I shall remember your words---every one of them"; whereas Wordsworth issues the parting directive to Dorothy, "Remember me, / And these my exhortations!" (691, 660, 146-147). In this way, Eliot reverses Wordsworth's self-focus just as she critiques and revises the Darwinian notion of an animalistic concern for self.

Eliot's revisions of Wordsworth here are meant to correct the perceived sexism as well as selfishness of his work. As a woman writer, Eliot is interested in giving women like Mirah and Gwendolen expressive agency; unlike Wordsworth, who wrote as "a man speaking to men" and who usually kept women, such as Dorothy, silent in his poetry (Preface, 603). In focusing her novelistic lens on these characters, she seeks to demonstrate greater sympathy than Wordsworth. She considers the female imagination as more sympathetic and thus more powerful than its male counterpart (Knoepflmacher 107-111). Eliot often compared her novel writing to motherhood, and wrote that she had an "unused stock of motherly tenderness which sometimes overflow[s]" (*Letters* V: 52). Her language here echoes Wordsworth's famous description of poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," but emphasizes that her creative "feelings" are feminine and nurturing---a biological maternal instinct (598).

The physical nature of this sympathy signals her gendered engagement with Darwin as well as Wordsworth. Eliot felt that evolutionary theory redefined love as biological instinct, stripping women of their dignity by denying their intellectual and

moral capacities.⁴⁸ She would have shared Gwendolen's indignation at being "examin[ed] . . . as a specimen of a lower order," as evolutionary science considered women to be (6).⁴⁹ In order to counter this sexism, she highlights and extends a Darwinian concept more to her liking: that women have "greater tenderness and less selfishness" than men "owing to [their] maternal instincts" (*Descent* 564). While Darwin considers man's greater selfishness a "natural and unfortunate birthright," it comes from his greater degree of ambition and competitiveness, which have led to his superior development (563). Eliot reinterprets this difference as a sign that women had reached a higher rather than a lower station than men through moral evolution, saying that they possessed a "moral art to mend nature" or combat the selfishness of natural selection (qtd. in Paxton 211).⁵⁰ Though her realism prevents this moral hierarchy from consistently taking shape between her male and female characters, in representing sympathetic men, like Deronda, she both feminizes and elevates them.⁵¹

This gendered revision can also be seen in Deronda's "entanglement" with Mirah. The privileged position Mirah assumes in the scene is markedly different from the emphatically marginal, even invisible place of Wordsworth's companion, his sister Dorothy, in "Tintern Abbey." Eliot's narration encourages a comparison between Mirah and Dorothy specifically, using the language of "Tintern Abbey" and altering its

⁴⁸ See Paxton (92-94).

⁴⁹ Darwin argued that men were physically and intellectually superior to women, whose "faculties," he wrote, "are characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization" (311).

⁵⁰ Paxton has explored the ways in which Eliot's acceptance of evolutionary theory conflicted with her feminism. Kate Flint has written on the danger of women submitting to male power and influence in Eliot's work (166-169).

⁵¹ See Flint (176-177) and Gates (705-716).

rhetorical situation to criticize Wordsworth's poetic treatment of his sister. Wordsworth initially gives the impression that he is alone at the Wye, emphasizing the "silence" and "seclusion," and only addressing his sister Dorothy in the final verse paragraph: "For thou art with me" (19, 7, 118). Ironically, his "dearest friend" is conspicuously absent for most of the poem (139). While Wordsworth's focus is on himself even while in Dorothy's company, Mirah's sorrowful image remains with Deronda as he contemplates her appearance and wonders about her history even after rowing past her. Then "his mind glanced over the girl-tragedies that are going on in the world, hidden, unheeded, as if they were but tragedies of the copse or hedgerow" (160). While Deronda is keenly aware of the world's "girl-tragedies," as marginal in most people's consciousness as their surrounding scenery, Wordsworth seems to give preference to the "hedge-rows" and the "woods" over Dorothy (16, 13). Indeed, it seems that Dorothy's place in the poet's mind and even her physical presence at the Wye "among the woods and copses lose themselves," along with the other peripheral scenery in the distance, which, unlike Dorothy, is nonetheless acknowledged immediately in the first verse paragraph (13). Eliot's use of Wordsworthian scenic descriptions "copse [and] hedgerow" suggests a criticism of Wordsworth's imagined solitude, and of his ignoring his sister here, as her place in the poem is largely "hidden, unheeded" (160). Indeed, Wordsworth, like Deronda, "found that the river [is] no solitude," but for most of the poem, he acts as if it is (158). Dorothy is ignored and made invisible at the expense of Wordsworth's poetic self-interest, which for Eliot may be the "girl-tragedy" of the poem.⁵² When Eliot recasts

⁵² Margaret Homans argues for a similar revision of Dorothy's role of the silent sister in *Mill on the Floss*, reading Maggie and Tom Tulliver as a recasting of Wordsworth and Dorothy.

and idealizes the Wordsworth / Dorothy relationship, she ensures that Mirah's experience differs from that of the novel's other sisters the Meyricks, "who," like Dorothy, "knew what it was to have a brother, and to be generally regarded as of minor importance in the world" (560).

If Deronda is a revised Wordsworthian figure in his interactions with Mirah and Gwendolen, Mordecai stands in for the poet in his relationship to Daniel. Mordecai stands on Blackfriars Bridge, surveying a sublime scene reminiscent of Wordsworth's "Westminster Bridge," in which "the grey day was dying gloriously" in the "monumental calm" and "brooding glory" of the sky reflected in the river (422). Mordecai indulges in Wordsworthian reflections about his connection with the scene, his memories there, and how the place measures changes in himself, much like in "Tintern Abbey":

See the sky, how it is slowly fading. I have always loved this bridge: I stood on it when I was a little boy. . . Here I have listened to the messages of earth and sky; when I was stronger I used to stay and watch for the stars in the deep heavens . . . It has sunk into me and dwelt with me. (423)

But while these reflections could be the solitary musings of the Romantic poet, they are spoken directly and purposefully to Deronda, who unlike Dorothy, takes center stage as the interlocutor. Mordecai echoes Wordsworth's opening phrase, "Five years have passed; five summers, with the length / Of five long winters," but emphasizes his companion in the lapse of time: "I have been waiting for you these five years" (423). Placing the Wordsworthian Deronda in the place of the pupil, as well as poet, reinforces Eliot's emphasis on the significance of interpersonal contact for moral development, as characters who guide others need guidance themselves. Eliot repeatedly represents society as a web, which is non-hierarchical and entangled. In this model the characters

who help others are also in need of help themselves.

While this scene reshapes Wordsworth's interaction with Dorothy, it relies on the poet's notion of the "second self." In "Michael," Wordsworth relates the shepherd's story

For the delight of a few natural hearts,
And with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful poets, who among these Hills
Will be my second self when I am gone. (36-39)

Wordsworth looks again toward his future literary descendants in a time "surely yet to come" at the close of Book XIII of *The Prelude*: "Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak / A lasting inspiration . . . what we have loved / Others will love; and we may teach them how" (441-45). Similarly, Mordecai addresses Deronda early in their conversation on the bridge as "my new life---my new self---who will live when this breath is all breathed out" (423). Mordecai envisions a literary second self who, among other things, will translate and publish his writings under his own name.

As Eliot draws on Wordsworth's poetic trope, she also recasts it in Darwinian terms. Mordecai tells Deronda, "You will be my life: it will be planted afresh; it will grow. You shall take the inheritance; it has been gathering for ages" (428). The second self becomes an organic transplantation. Mordecai recognizes Deronda's quest to learn of his ancestry ("you are not sure of your own origin") as aligning with his attempt to spawn a spiritual offspring (429). Linking progenitor and progeny is a Darwinian "inheritance" which, like the evolution of natural selection, "has been gathering for ages." While the processes of natural and sexual selection which lead to passing down of inheritance over the ages are violent and competitive, the circumstances in which Daniel is offered his spiritual inheritance are emphatically benign, as Mordecai asks for his "soul's

brotherhood” (432). In Darwin’s world, the succession of generations is anything but a peaceful process, but *Deronda* emphasizes the affectionate nature of ancestral connections: “To delight in doing things because our fathers did them . . . enlarges the range of affection---and affection is the broadest basis of good in life” (357). As Eliot revises the Wordsworthian notion of the second self to make it less self-focused, she also feminizes it, again linking sympathy with femininity and maternity. She compares Mordecai’s “yellow consumptive glance” toward Daniel to that of the dying mother when “her one loved son visits her bedside, and the flickering power of gladness leaps out as she says, 'My boy!'---for the sense of spiritual perpetuation in another resembles that maternal transference of the self” (425).

Again, the influences of Wordsworth and Darwin, and Eliot’s revisions of each, intersect here. Chapter XL of Book V, depicting this fateful meeting on the bridge, immediately signals the poet’s presence with an epigram from *The Excursion*. The quotation is from the Wanderer’s long speech to the Solitary in Book IV “Despondency Corrected.” In the verse paragraph preceding the quoted passage, the Wanderer lectures his dejected friend on the virtues of “solitude” and “blest seclusion,” which foster calmness, hope, humility, and repentance (1031, 1035). Consistent with her primary revision of the poet, Eliot emphasizes the need to come out of solitude, stressing the communal elements of the passage by using it to introduce a meeting of characters with significant repercussions. It is likely that Eliot would consider that the Solitary’s isolation was the reason his despondency required such thorough correction, and her use of the Wordsworth quotation imposes an emphatically communal reading on his lines:

Within the soul a faculty abides,
 That with interpositions, which would hide
 And darken, so can deal, that they become
 Contingencies of pomp; and serve to exalt
 Her native brightness. (423)

For Eliot, these interpositions are benign intrusions of other lives on ours, which in eliciting our love and sympathy “serve to exalt” us; whereas for Wordsworth, these exalting “interpositions” of the soul lie in the individual’s connection with nature, which he reinforces with a natural simile “as the ample moon, / In the deep stillness of a summer even, / Rising behind a thick and lofty grove.”

These interpersonal entanglements lead to moral evolution. Mordecai emphasizes the importance of such connections, stating, “You are not listening to one who raves aloof from the lives of his fellows” (426). Mordecai has faith that Daniel’s Jewish ancestry will be revealed because of his belief that “the world grows, and its frame is knit together by the growing soul . . . [other] beings [are] knit with us in the growth of the world” (430). These interconnections recall Darwin’s entangled bank; however, unlike in his Malthusian model in which the bank’s resources are limited and some are bound for extinction in the resulting struggle, in Eliot’s more benign vision, social and emotional resources grow along with the soul in extending circles of sympathy without competition (*Origin* 12). In accepting Mordecai’s influence and inheritance, Daniel commits to try to perform the same beneficial office for others: “At the least, I may awaken a movement in other minds, such as has been awakened in my own” (688). Again, Eliot’s person-to-person model for individual and social growth uses a Darwinian notion of entanglement, but on markedly different terms. This form of evolution, unlike Darwin’s, is emphatically

unselfish as Daniel says of his mother's attempt to conceal his Jewish heritage: "The effects prepared by generations are likely to triumph over a contrivance which would bend them all to the satisfaction of the self" (468).

Eliot's mode of engagement with Wordsworth and Darwin is itself a revision of their writing. While immersing herself again in Wordsworth's poetry in 1858, she wrote that she was filled "with fresh admiration for his beauties and tolerance for his faults" (*Letters* II.423). Her engagement with both the poet and the naturalist demonstrate this dual awareness of what she considers both the virtues and the shortcomings of their work. Her criticisms of their perceived failures are tempered with generous acknowledgements of their successes, and she often draws on one to correct the other. Thus she acknowledges the sympathetic value of a Wordsworthian love of nature and emphasizes Darwin's ethically significant theme of interrelatedness and his notion that women are naturally sympathetic. In this way she practices what she preaches. She sees her role as a novelist in a Darwinian entanglement with other writers, but she considers these relationships less competitive than Darwinism would suggest. She simultaneously rejects Wordsworthian solitude. Unlike the poet, she does not admonish us to "quit [our] books," but embraces her place in a literary network or, to use one of Eliot's favorite metaphors, a web. She shows an active engagement with her predecessors and a keen awareness of how her writing relates to theirs, refusing to work in isolation.

Eliot's approach to her precursors relates to her partner George Henry Lewes's evolutionary comments on literary history and influence in a review of Matthew Arnold's *Merope*, which would certainly have been familiar to her. Lewes's warning on the

dangers of literary imitation parallel Eliot's concern with the potentially destructive excesses of sympathy, and shed light on her engagement with Wordsworth's and Darwin's influences. In his review Lewes criticizes Arnold's fixation on the Classics. While acknowledging that "scorn of the past [is] . . . as unwise as scorn of 'our wondrous Mother-Age,'" he stresses that failure to evolve, whether in literary or biological terms, means stagnation and death:

With whatever reverence and retrospective longing the Past is regarded, it should always be regarded as *past*: it should have historical, not absolute significance: it is our Ancestry, and not our Life. And as the retention in our organism of the elements which *have lived* is in itself a fatal source of destruction, poisoning the very life these elements once served, so in the onward progression of Humanity the old elements must pass away, transmuting to successors the work they had to perform: 'Et quasi cursores vitae lampada tradunt!' ⁵³ (78)

However much Eliot may have admired predecessors such as Wordsworth, she understood the vital need to move beyond them, recognizing that what had given his poetry life would be a death knell in her work. Thus her engagement with her literary influences required revision and criticism, if not outright competition. Eliot would have agreed with Lewes's critique of the straightforward imitation:

All conscious imitation is weakness, and that "models" produce no real good, though little harm, because the servile mind is one which if emancipated would not be strong. To study models with a view to *emulate* them is not the same as to study them with a view to *imitate* them; the one is an invigorating---the other an enervating study. (82)

The uncomplicated imitation or "copying" Lewes condemns is analogous to Eliot's concept of extreme, destructive sympathy, as both forms of engagement lead to self-annihilation in complete surrender to the other. Lewes and Eliot recognized, along with many Victorian writers to grapple with Wordsworth's and Darwinism's entanglement,

⁵³ "And as if the runners hand over the lamp of life!"

that "all models are dangerous to minds that 'copy' them," and actively revised both the poet's influence and evolutionary theory in their work---engaging with their predecessors in a Darwinian struggle, but changing the rules of the game as they did so. Victorian writers like Eliot didn't view literary influence as the sort of direct copying that Joseph Carroll and Richard Dawkins describe in their studies of Darwinian cultural transmission (192, 203).

The last two chapters' epigrams in the novel's eighth and final book "Fruit and Seed", a title which foregrounds biological descent, also suggest that Eliot honors as well as revises her predecessors. The penultimate chapter opens with these lines from *The Prelude*:

The human nature unto which I felt
That I belonged, and revered with love,
Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit
Diffused through time and space. (Book VIII, 608-615)

In light of her engagement with Wordsworth's self-focus, this quotation suggests a recognition that his emphasis on his own mind was more broadly a study of "human nature" motivated by "love"---that his song was more than just an egotistical solo performance, but "the music of humanity" (92).⁵⁴ While Eliot awards Wordsworth a place of privilege at the end of her final novel, she is careful to conclude with an emphasis on the growth of her mind with an original epigram, formally reinforcing that she is adding to and moving beyond the poet with the last word. The final chapter's opening questions the natural chronology of the harvest: "The seasons are mingled . . .

⁵⁴ Ellen Argyros has argued that the Romantic value of feeling over thinking and of the imagination as a perceptual and moral faculty were influential in developing Eliot's notion of sympathetic imagination (21-28).

fruit and blossom hang together . . . harvest and spring-time are continually one” (693). Her epigram uses a biological metaphor of planting and harvesting, representing her progression away from the poet with evolutionary implications. Gillian Beer has demonstrated that in *Daniel Deronda*, “for the first time in [Eliot’s] work, the dependence of the future on the past is brought into question” as the novel disturbs the progression of causal sequence (169). Eliot’s disruption of chronology in the epigram removes the sense of inevitability from evolution.⁵⁵ Questioning natural sequences in this way emphasizes that her departures from Wordsworth and Darwin are far from being merely the fruits of their planted seeds, but rather represent her own deliberate decisions, preserving her intellectual independence and emphasizing her ethical choice to replace selfishness and sexism with sympathy.⁵⁶ Thus Eliot uses and modifies evolution as a conceptual framework for progressing away from Wordsworth and Darwin, whose simultaneous influence helped shape her final novel.

⁵⁵ For critical discussions of Eliot’s doubts that evolution meant progress, see Shuttleworth (60-63, 109, 217), Paxton (85), Beer (18, 146, 193).

⁵⁶ For a discussion of the importance of the individual’s decision in George Eliot’s ethics, see Beer (190-95).

4

"Trailing Clouds of . . . Primal Sympathy": Robert Louis Stevenson's Evolutionary Wordsworth

While crediting 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 influence, I examined Stevenson's copy of Wordsworth's *The Poetical Works* at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. The six-volume set is filled with markings and annotations in Stevenson's hand indicating careful and repeated reading.⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸ Even Stephen Gill's encyclopedic *Wordsworth and the Victorians* makes no reference to Stevenson.

In Stevenson's marginalia to Wordsworth, praise and criticism are often intermingled, reflecting his deeply ambivalent response to the poet. Stevenson's

⁵⁷ For a limited but useful discussion of this revealing source see George S. Hellman, "Stevenson's Annotated Set of Wordsworth."

⁵⁸ See John Beer's *Romantic Influences: Contemporary, Victorian, Modern* and Donald D. Stone's *The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction*.

inscription, still legible 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 to voluntarily miss." Next to "Strange fits of passion have I known," Stevenson penned the back-handed compliment, "How perfect . . . the first verse only is feeble," and closed his largely critical review of "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 writing. 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" (sic, *Letters* 3:339). Stevenson corrected Wordsworth's grammar and wrote the ironic exclamation "verse!" next 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).⁵⁹ 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 penned "a splendid sonnet" in the margin of "It is not to be thought of that the Flood" (MS II.320, III.61).

If Stevenson's conflicted Romantic inheritance has been overlooked, his engagement with Victorian science has been less neglected in recent years. Julia Reid's *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* explores Stevenson's ambivalent engagement with evolutionary thought, arguing that his interest in the primitive spanned

⁵⁹ For more on Stevenson's criticism of Wordsworth's prosaic verse, see his letter to P.G. Hamerton (5: 91-92).

across his writing career. Reid's study outlines Stevenson's intellectual engagement with theorists such as Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer and personal associations with other evolutionary thinkers, emphasizing his interest in the controversies and contradictions among divergent theories of evolution. Reid's work has prompted other scholars of literature and science to reexamine Stevenson's writing.⁶⁰ Stevenson's divided response to Wordsworth, I will argue in this chapter, was largely due to his preoccupation with evolutionary theory, as these cultural forces intersect in his work. Linking these influences, I will discuss how Darwinism shaped Stevenson's reading of Wordsworth, leading Stevenson to both revise and retain Wordsworth's poetry, and how evolutionary theory shaped the novelist's view of their literary relationship. My hope is both to contribute to our understanding of Stevenson's engagement with Victorian science and to prompt broader examinations of Romanticism in Stevenson's writing.

The interrelated influences of Wordsworth and evolutionary theory preoccupied Stevenson from the beginning of his career. In "Cockermouth and Keswick," published when he was 21 years old, Stevenson begins the 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 as he explains his choice to delay 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* 101-102). Beneath this witticism lies the

⁶⁰ See, for instance, Allen MacDuffie's "Irreversible Transformations: Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Scottish Energy Science," Anne Stiles's *Popular Fiction and Brain Science in the Late Nineteenth Century*, and Olena Turnbull's "Robert Louis Stevenson and Nineteenth-Century Theories of Evolution: Crossing the Boundaries between Ideas and Art."

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's forgotten most of the trip. Stevenson describes meeting a hat-maker 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" (107-108). This offer recalls Wordsworth, in "Tintern Abbey," directing Dorothy's experience in order to 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 doesn't 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, 140-142). 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.

While Stevenson would later explore the tensions and incompatibilities between evolutionary theory and Wordsworth's writing, this early essay also suggests that the

discourse of evolution 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 philosophy may not be entirely sound, the benevolent sentiment behind it has a refreshing and redemptive quality that Stevenson needs 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).

Stevenson's use of the "Intimations Ode," his most frequently cited Wordsworth text, sheds light on his evolutionary interpretation of the poet's work. Leslie Stephen's 1876 essay "Wordsworth's Ethics," published in his *Cornhill Magazine* the same year Stevenson began writing for it, recasts the ode in Darwinian terms, and further solidified Stevenson's perception of the link between Wordsworth's poetry and evolutionary theory.⁶¹ Stevenson repeatedly evokes Wordsworth's well-known phrase "trailing clouds

⁶¹ Stephen anticipates links between Wordsworth and evolution that Stevenson would continue to explore: the analogy between Wordsworth's poetic notion of children's heavenly preexistence and primitive instinct, the poet's supposed neglect of nature's dark and violent side, and the power of the mind, through a Wordsworthian cultivation, to recognize harmony beneath nature's chaos. However, 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. For more on Stephen's essay, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation (2-3).

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).⁶² Here deeds in life, not exalted 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). Thus Stevenson temporalizes Wordsworth's spirituality, and naturalizes his theology.

While Wordsworth celebrates divine purpose and origins, his words aptly describe Stevenson's view of instinctual inheritance. In his evolutionary reading, 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, "first affections," and "shadowy recollections," which "are yet a master light of all our seeing" and behavior (143-155). Stevenson borrows Wordsworth's elevated language to describe animal instincts and suggest their shared ancestry with humans in "The Character of Dogs": "Instinct . . . [the dog] certainly possesses. Inherited aptitudes are his, inherited frailties. Some things he at once views and understands, as though he were awakened from a sleep, as though he came 'trailing clouds of glory.' But with him, as with man, the

⁶² Stevenson worked furiously on his unfinished final novel *The Weir of Hermiston* until the final hours of his life.

field of instinct is limited" (126). In his essay "On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places," Stevenson describes being in a place where "old fighting men of the Norse breed had planted a double castle" (10). He enters the fortress 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" (VII.185, 11). Stevenson's suggestion of inherited ancestral memory draws on Samuel Butler's evolutionary theory of unconscious memory. Stevenson wrote that his ancestors' experiences were "in the very knot and center of my being" ("The Manse" 114). In the face of this age-old ancestral memory of tribal violence at the ancient site, he quotes the poet again, 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 ("Intimations Ode" 11, 157-158).

I. Stevenson's Evolutionary Criticism and 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 view of human relationships and poetry.

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 radically revises 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?" 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 tempting prospect of blindly following 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 unconscious," and Archie finds her only on an "off chance" (75). Leaving the lovers at the mercy of chance places them firmly on Darwinian soil, as *On the Origin of Species* emphasizes that "natural selection can do nothing until favourable variations chance to occur"; thus evolution's winners and losers are determined partially through random variation (563).⁶³ Kirstie engages in a self-display of beauty and vitality similar to what Darwin describes in sexual selection:

⁶³ Stevenson favored Darwin's view of evolution, which emphasizes chance, uncertainty, and extinction over Spencer's more progressive, teleological narrative (Reid 109, Darwin 506-507).

"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" (76).

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. (76)

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 (76). 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" (Book II 187-190). 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* 598). Stevenson departed from contemporary anthropological understandings of primitive instincts by representing "survivals" or returns to these drives as common rather than exceptional---a "stubbornly persistent force of savagery" constantly threatening to burst through the veneer of civilization (Reid 123-124). For Stevenson these instincts are never far away, which 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" (166-168). Stevenson's work suggests that we didn't leave our primitive instincts in the ocean, but that "the primal sympathy / Which having been must ever be" (184-185). Stevenson both borrows and revises 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 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 the 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"

(7). Of Bellairs, Dodd relates that "his taste for literature was naïve and unaffected; his sentimentality, although extreme and a thought ridiculous, was plainly genuine" (258). 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 in *The Wrecker* give him no moral stability or refuge from his "latent and essential madness" (268). 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 . . ." (268). These animalistic threatenings show the dark side 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.⁶⁴ In *The Weir of Hermiston*, Archie's unplanned, emotional

⁶⁴ 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!" (140). 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" (4). 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" (95). 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 (95).

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" (22). 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" (61). 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" (61). 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 [sic]" (4: 259-260). In this one quality, he muses, the child would be father of the man. This "natural impiety" 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" (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" (127-129, 3:203). Stevenson noted his last two years of inactivity due to ill health, relating his doctor's 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" (165-166). 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" (213). Notwithstanding his scorn for "native talk," he believes that he is hearing an *aitu*, or evil spirit, and determines to pursue it (212). 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" (214). 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 also commonly associated with 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 is employed as a weapon in the Darwinian competition for resources and survival.

No discussion of the dark side of primitive nature 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, 166-168). 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, 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). Her emotional association of the state of the natural 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."⁶⁵ The maid then sees Mr. Hyde and an older man who emanates "an innocent and old-world kindness" (26). Given the scene's introduction, we might think of the apparently similar roadway 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). In a savage spontaneous overflow, Hyde beats the older man to (and for some time after) death with "ape-like fury" (27). 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.

II. Wordsworth's Enduring Value for Stevenson

If Wordsworth's writing was no longer adequate for Stevenson, we must ask why it's 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 the dark side of the period's scientific discourse. 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

⁶⁵ See William Knight's "Wordsworth" (309).

sensibilities (3). In seeking to cultivate this Wordsworthian power, Stevenson recognizes nature's harshness, 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 doesn't quite reach in "Tintern Abbey") (133-34, MS II.154). 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" (184-187). Wordsworth's presence in the essay is also marked by Stevenson's statement that when we can't 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). 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,

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. ("Books" 164-165)

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 isn't Wordsworth's *ideas* about nature that Stevenson values---he doesn't 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 made better and happier by the encounter. Writing to a friend about Samoa, Stevenson reflects: "On the frontier," 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). Because Stevenson "take[s] in" Wordsworth, he finds the violent chaos of nature is bounded and tempered: "trees in a still well-walled garden." For him, 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, it speaks "to what is best in us," which allows Stevenson to use it to address what he sees as moral problems with evolutionary theory.

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. (8:361)

Stevenson experienced anxiety that he had not fulfilled his ancestral inheritance as a lighthouse engineer, lamenting, "I ought to have been able to build lighthouses and write *David Balfour* too" (*Letters* 8:235). He also likely experienced some self-conscious regret about being childless---failing in the Stevensons' struggle for survival in a Darwinian sense. In this quotation, as the writer ages, he feels he is becoming "more of a bewildered child." For some evolutionary theorists, this would signal negative regression, a harmful step backwards towards primitivism and away from progress. While failing according to evolutionary biology, however, Stevenson experiences 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, "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 and above all hideous old women moved in me a sort of panic horror" ("Memoir" XXIX.157-158). Stevenson's childhood aversion to the deformed and elderly is an inherited trait that, while beneficial in natural selection, he finds morally objectionable. He's progressed beyond this primitive instinct, but the growth which removes the man from the child paradoxically brings Stevenson closer to Wordsworth. As Stevenson has developed sympathy, he has internalized 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). 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," 363). Wordsworth's poetry, then, softened evolution for Stevenson, and provided a gentler perspective from which to approach nature and assess his own life.

A Darwinian Literary Relationship

Stevenson's simultaneous rejection and retention of Wordsworth's poetry are central to his view of their literary 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). 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 (604, 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, 600).

Notwithstanding the essay's debt to Wordsworth, it is highly critical of him, specifically revising his poem "Personal Talk," which Stevenson marked in his edition (MS IV.200). 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, 55-56).⁶⁶ 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

⁶⁶ 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.

"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, and . . . radically more contemptible" (44-48, 69). 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 liv[ing] . . . after in the blood, the heart still hot within you" (64-65). 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. Stevenson's competitive instinct is certainly evident in his annotations. Next to "The Solitary Reaper," Stevenson notes the earlier version of a line and writes "old reading (and better)" (275, MS III.17). Stevenson's criticism packs an evolutionary punch, suggesting that the poet was regressing rather than advancing. Indeed, Stevenson's marginal comments are a record of one author's Darwinian engagement with another. Its pages give us an image of Stevenson, pencil in hand, physically and 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 describes as a primitive "ape-like trick" in Hyde's struggle for survival (64, 101). 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. The margins become a battleground for exploiting perceived weakness of another and asserting superiority. Of course, when Stevenson combats Wordsworth in his marginalia the poet is already dead, and Stevenson's annotations don't 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. 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 efforts to transform himself into Hyde were successful because of the "thorough and primitive duality of man," Stevenson's ambivalent engagement with Wordsworth is due to the two-sided nature of literary influence (79). As a reader of

Wordsworth, Stevenson possesses 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, which encompasses both the competitive struggle of Fruscione's "literary rivalry" and the benevolent collaboration of Schulze's "web of friendship."

Stevenson's conflicted relationship with Wordsworth is informed at every point by evolutionary theory. In "Books Which Have Influenced Me," Stevenson names Wordsworth as one of the authors to whom he "played the sedulous ape" as an aspiring young writer (144). On the one hand, the metaphor is clearly self-deprecating, as it suggests lower life forms servilely imitating more advanced beings. However, the Darwinian implication of the phrase places Stevenson in a competitive struggle for survival with his predecessors. His imitation becomes emulation, revealing an ambition to surpass his models. In a letter to Edmund Gosse, Stevenson addresses the poet from his own later historical moment: "Ah Wordsworth, you would change your note if you were alive today!" (5: 84-5).⁶⁷ Stevenson 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. This criticism is ironic and only half-heartedly given, as Stevenson 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. In a letter to Henry

⁶⁷ 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.

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" ("Fidelity" 52, MS IV.207).

Representing literary production in terms of fertility recasts literary competition as natural selection, as Stevenson imagines a link between his lack of posterity and unfinished literary work. While he represents 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" (5:200-201), alluding to Wordsworth's "sonnet's scanty ground" ("Nuns Fret Not" 11). The need to give a reminder of his literary accomplishments signals a certain 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.⁶⁸ 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 physical world's harsh realities---conditions which only render the poetry more valuable. Equally significant is the later reflection on this inscription, written some years later: "Sententious gentleman!" showing that while Stevenson revised Wordsworth, he also found it worthwhile to return to him again and again (MS I). 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" (79-90). 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. Again, if evolutionary theory enables Stevenson to advance beyond Wordsworth, the poet, in turn, helps him resist this discourse as the very act of

⁶⁸ Stevenson apparently meant this criticism seriously. The final markings in his Wordsworth edition are roughly halfway through *The Excursion* (Book V, 369-385), 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 in mortality was too precious to devote to a poem whose "best hope" was "in heaven" (Book I, 574).

reaching back to his literary ancestor for something of present value can be seen as anti-evolutionary.

Entangled Arguments: Wordsworth, Evolution, and the Preservation Movement

Before Hardwicke Rawnsley led the British conservation movement and co-founded the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty in 1895, the Anglican clergyman and environmental activist was involved in more humble preservation projects. The first of these was establishing a marker, with "Elegiac Stanzas" carved in stone, in 1881 at Westmorland's Grisdale Tarn, where Wordsworth saw his brother John for the last time. A few years later, he assisted his fellow members of the Wordsworth Society with the purchase and public opening of Dove Cottage.⁶⁹ For Rawnsley and his associates, the Lake District landscape was inseparably connected with Wordsworth's poetry, and the poet's presence loomed large in the struggle to preserve the countryside from industrial development at the end of the century. Wordsworth's association with the movement was partly due to his earlier environmental efforts. In 1844, he waged a public campaign against the Kendal and Windermere Railway in both prose and verse. In his *Guide to the Lakes*, he wrote that the region was "a sort of national property in which every man has a right and interest, who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy" (93). The later struggle echoed and extended Wordsworth's arguments. The movement centered on opposing both the extension of the railway through the Lake

⁶⁹ The Wordsworth Society, established by William Knight in 1880, was dedicated to furthering Wordsworth scholarship and promoting the poet's legacy.

District in 1876, which was successful, and the conversion of Lake Thirlmere into a reservoir for Manchester in 1878, which was not.

Environmentalists carried the poet's banner from the campaign's beginning. In 1876, Windermere resident and conservationist Robert Somervell published *A Protest Against the Extension of Railways in the Lake District*, which was nationally circulated and featured a preface by John Ruskin.⁷⁰ Somervell makes Wordsworth's relevance to the movement clear by beginning his argument with a seven-page recap of the poet's protest thirty-two years earlier. He includes sonnets "Proud were ye, mountains" and "On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway" and lengthy excerpts from Wordsworth's two letters to *The Morning Post*. Wordsworth Society founder William Knight read a letter from Ruskin in the society's fourth meeting on 2 May 1883, declaring that the society's "grand function must be to preserve as far as possible in England the conditions of rural life which made Wordsworth himself possible" (*Transactions* 4). At the same meeting, Rawnsley proposed the formation of a Permanent Lake District Defense Society, and the Wordsworthians answered his call. Of the victory against the railway companies, Rawnsley declared, "To Wordsworth is owed all thanks for the winning of it. . . . We may fitly thank him in the strength of whose spirit the victory was gained" (*Transactions* V.45). Evocations of Wordsworth in the campaign ranged from highlighting his general association with the landscape to calls to preserve specific artifacts like the Rock of Names, which was ultimately submerged by the Thirlmere

⁷⁰ As Stephen Gill points out, the *Protest* was Ruskinian throughout, and was made more emphatically so by the addition of Ruskin's preface. While Ruskin was a central influence in the movement, "Wordsworth had [given] the originating language and discourse" to the movement, and "it is in the *Guide to the Lakes* that one finds the germ of the National Trust's long gestation" (260).

Reservoir.⁷¹ Wordsworth's influence infiltrated the movement at every level, from Parliamentary speeches referencing the poet to the smallest financial contribution to the Lake District Defense Society, enclosed in a note bearing this Wordsworthian sentiment: "Will you kindly receive this mite from a Birmingham working woman, in grateful remembrance of a holiday in the district, whose never-to-be-forgotten beauties have been a joy to her through many hours of toil in dirt and smoke" (*Transactions* 71).

Indeed, as Stephen Gill puts it, "Without the drive of Wordsworthians the National Trust of 1895 would not have come into being" (260). That a poet who had been dead for nearly half a century held this kind of influence on such a significant and far-reaching social and political movement is remarkable. For Somervell, Wordsworth was relevant to the debate because he "wrote not only with a view to the circumstances of his own day, but plainly foreseeing the revival of the attempt to penetrate the heart of the district, in the future" (11-12). Many later Victorians saw Wordsworth as both a poet and a prophet, whose message---not only about literature or philosophy, but also politics---resonated with their later historical moment. Like his enduring significance in late nineteenth-century literature, Wordsworth's importance to Victorian conservationism had much to do with evolutionary thought.

The history of the period's environmental movement and of Wordsworth's influence in the campaign has been thoroughly studied.⁷² My purpose here is to

⁷¹ The Rock of Names, on which William, Dorothy, and John Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Mary and Sara Hutchinson had carved their initials, was a landmark at the halfway point between the two poets' homes. In 1836, Wordsworth published a poetic apostrophe to it as a note to *The Waggoner*.

⁷² See Harriet Ritvo's *The Dawn of Green: Manchester, Thirlmere, and Modern Environmentalism*, Scott Hess's *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship: The Roots of Environmentalism in Nineteenth-Century Culture*, and Stephen Gill's *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (246-260).

demonstrate the ways in which the intersecting influences of Wordsworthian and Darwinian thought shaped the conservation debates. These arguments, which took place in newspapers, periodicals, parliamentary hearings, and pamphlets, rested on a conflict between Wordsworthian and Darwinian ideas. While, for the most part, Wordsworthian conservationists framed their arguments against Darwinism while their opponents used evolutionary rhetoric, each side drew on their adversaries' ideology when it suited their purposes. These conflating cases not only show the pervasiveness of both Wordsworthian and Darwinian ideas in the period, but also serve as further evidence of their complex entanglement in late Victorian culture.

The preservation movement was inherently anti-evolutionary in its orientation towards time and progress. At the most fundamental level, Darwinian nature is constantly changing, and many evolutionists saw change in terms of development and improvement. Conservation, of course, is about stopping change, and preserving the status quo.⁷³ Wordsworth's protest sonnet, "On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway," decries the "ruthless change" of industrialization, and Darwinian theory only rendered these complaints more urgent as it raised the stakes to bear on issues of survival and extinction (6). Late Victorian environmental debates often took on the opposing terms of past and future. In the debate over the Thirlmere Scheme, the Manchester Corporation routinely argued in the name of progress---they would use the most advanced engineering to harness Thirlmere's water supply, molding nature to solve a major problem of the modern age, and lead the nation into new technological frontiers. As Harriet Ritvo

⁷³ It is worth noting that modern green politics rejects conservationism because it seeks to preserve natural resources expressly for their continued sustainable use by humans.

emphasizes, Manchester had no distinguished history, and was quintessentially a city of the future, elevating progress over the past (37-65). By contrast, these industrialists characterized their Wordsworthian opponents as "old fogies" who were out of touch with modern times (Brierley 11). In evolutionary terms, these representations suggest that the preservationists had failed to adapt, and were on their way to extinction along with their outdated philosophy.

Though many members of the Wordsworth Society were elderly, their attachment to the past went far beyond their age. Stephen Gill describes the consistent theme of the Society's meetings during its existence from 1880 to 1886 as one of Wordsworthians long past their prime fixating on the past:

Lord Houghton . . . reminisced over his youthful enthusiasm of the 1830s and before the next meeting he was dead. Similarly James Russell Lowell . . . observed that he had already had his say over twenty years ago and that it was "as wearisome to repeat one's-self as it was to repeat others." Aubrey de Vere's memories reached back to the 1830s, as did those of Lord Selborne, who . . . recalled the beginning of a lifetime's worship "at the innermost shrine of Wordsworth," during his undergraduate days at Oxford. (238)

From an evolutionary vantage point, things didn't look promising for the Wordsworth Society, as the consistently backward-looking, even regressive outlook of its members didn't promise any sort of new life or forward progress for their work. While this mode can be partially explained by the members' ages and Wordsworth's own emphasis on the value of personal memory, it also resists evolution. Matthew Arnold, who was elected their first President, described the atmosphere of one of the meetings: "The grave would have been cheerful compared to the view presented by . . . the assembled Wordsworth Society" (*Letters* 2 May 1883). In his presidential address, Arnold represented himself as

one who had life's "inevitable close" in sight, and was weary of "life's business . . . its labour and contention" (*Wordsworthiana* 123). Arnold's stance of tired resignation is an implicit rejection of and withdrawal from the Darwinian struggle for survival.

The Wordsworthians' emphasis on the past extended to their representations of the Lake District landscape. Samuel Barber's *Beneath Helvellyn's Shade: Notes and Sketches in the Valley of Wythburn* emphasizes the "old world character . . . [and] charm" of the region (21). Environmentalists feared that if the railroad and water works companies were allowed to use the land, "there will be no scrap of country left to show . . . what England was like a hundred years ago," as MP James Bryce warned in the House of Commons (*Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* 1733). Keeping the Lake District from modern development was a way of holding evolutionary forces at bay, and preserving a primitive past. As one preservationist argued, the Lakes represented "the only district now remaining in England where, on anything like a great scale, Nature is to be seen in its primitive simplicity" (Wilson 214). As the bishop of Carlisle insisted, "Thirlmere is among the choicest of English lakes" because "it is as wild as it was centuries ago" (*Extracts* 3). Knight's *The English Lake District As Interpreted in the Poems of Wordsworth*, published in the same year the Thirlmere Scheme was debated in the House of Commons, anxiously describes places "undergoing change, and becoming more difficult to identify every year" (13). Rawnsley was saddened to find in the Lake District "a time and a race of men and women fast fading away" (339). Wordsworth himself represents the district in much the same terms as "Michael" and "The Ruined Cottage"

both describe how historical change is destroying certain elements of traditional life there.

For many opponents of the Lake District development proposals, a key argument for preserving the past was its connection with Wordsworth. Knight confidently asserted that "as long as [the Lake Country landscape] stands, the radiance of Wordsworth's genius will shed a more ethereal light over the whole district, and will disclose the inmost soul of Nature, and the boundless significance of life to the English [people]" (248). Those who championed the poet's cause in Parliament argued that "tourists desire to see the country as it was when Wordsworth made it famous," and insisted that "the land should remain as the poets found it" (1735). William Pember railed against the developers' disregard for this past and its associations, describing their opponents as materialistic philistines who "sneer[ed] at the traditions which [Wordsworth] has made sacred" (10). Resisting modern development in the Lake District meant preventing "the country of Wordsworth [from becoming the] black country" of industry. Preserving the valley as it was in the poet's time allowed visitors "to feel there, with Wordsworth, the silence that is there among the hills" (Wilson 214).

The personal immediacy of this concern over maintaining access to Wordsworth through his native landscape characterized many of the preservationist arguments. For some conservationists, the Lake District needed preservation not only as a place of natural beauty or even for its association with Wordsworth, but as a "happy hunting ground for the spirits of poets" (*Hansard's* 1746). Decades after Wordsworth's death, Rawnsley interviewed as many locals as he could who remembered the poet, "to find out

what of Wordsworth's presence still lingered" and "the extent to which he remained a living presence among the dalesmen" ("Reminiscences of the Westmorland Peasantry" 339). Such efforts to connect with the spirit of the deceased Wordsworth implicitly contradicted Darwin's materialist vision and the related ascension of agnosticism.

Attempting some form of contact with the literary dead in this way built on a long Romantic tradition, which scholars such as Paul Westover and Samantha Matthews have described, and coincided with the rise of spiritualism in the period. One of the most prominent Wordsworth critics of the era was Frederic William Henry Myers, whose 1880 *Wordsworth* was the first serious literary biography written since the time of the poet's death. Myers was a leading spiritualist and founding member of the Society for Psychical Research.⁷⁴ Myers served on the provisional committee to raise funds for the purchase and preservation of Dove Cottage. For such Wordsworthian spiritualists, the stated goal of preserving Wordsworth's home and native landscape "for the eternal *possession* of those who love English poetry" may have had a dual meaning, as part of the appeal of literary tourism was coming into proximity with the spirit of the deceased author (Brooke 14, my emphasis). William Knight's disclaimer in the preface to *Wordsworthiana: A Selection of Papers Read to the Wordsworth Society* isn't entirely convincing: "We do not wish [Wordsworth] back amongst us, but we desire that his influence should increase" (vii).⁷⁵

⁷⁴ The society published accounts of séances and held a high-stakes test of spiritualism in 1894, which failed miserably when the medium, Eusapia Palladino, was exposed as a fraud.

⁷⁵ Spiritualism itself can be seen as consistent with Wordsworth's and evolutionary theory's entanglement in its appeal to both Romanticism and science. Spiritualists sought to access the spiritual world, to move beyond the material and find transcendence, but they also attempted to anchor these experiences with scientific evidence, including the table rapping reportedly made by spirits which could be translated into a

Punch published a dramatic poem in which Wordsworth actually appears as a ghost along with Coleridge, Southey, and the Lady of the Lake "in the neighborhood of the Rock of Names" above Thirlmere to seek the assistance of Punch in protecting the beloved scene (49). Wordsworth's presence in the preservation movement was nowhere more immediate than in the effort to rally around the threatened Rock of Names. In his note to *The Waggoner*, Wordsworth prophesied that the rock's "monumental power" would last "long as for us a genial feeling / Survives" and would be there for any "in need of healing" (62, 59-60). He charges the marker to continue its service after he is dead: "And fail not Thou, loved Rock! to keep / Thy charge when we are laid asleep" (67-68). Given its significance, it is with a "thought of pain" that he reflects on any "that would impair it or profane" (63-64). In the *Punch* poem, "A Talk by Thirlmere," Wordsworth's spirit speaks in righteous anger, "Be the Engineers / Accursed that profane our holy Meres!" Coleridge describes the Manchester developers as "more ruthless than my Mariner, who slew / The blameless bird," and Punch vows to take up their cause against the "Cottonopolis" of Manchester, which plans to desecrate the lake for "greed of cash." Coleridge emphasizes the value of the region as "a sunbeam of a long forgotten age," a living link, which, though "fleeting," points back to a primeval past, although "the mammoth is to dust decayed." Punch expresses his reverence for the setting's literary associations, implicitly encouraging his readers to do the same: "We treasure . . . the ways which once [the poets] trod" whose lives and writings make "these glens and glades . . . sacred." Preserving the poets' haunts, the poem suggests, would keep their spirits in

sort of Morse code, spiritual communications transcribed by mediums to be objectively studied by others, and photographic documentation.

peace. Wordsworth Society member and professor Campbell Fraser declared that "at least the vales of Cumberland and Westmoreland, charged with the spirit of Wordsworth, must be left undisturbed by the sound of railway" (*Transactions* V.51). If the sound of the railway would disturb Wordsworth's spirit, preservationists must have thought submerging the Rock of Names in an industrial reservoir would have him rolling in his grave. One has to wonder if, for those preservationists inclined toward spiritualism, the question of "What would poor Wordsworth say if he could speak now?" was more than rhetorical (Spice 17).

For the environmentalists, plans to modernize the Lake District represented the worst of Darwinism. In the debate on the reservoir for Manchester, they often depicted their opponent as a violent, predatory animal ready "to pounce upon Thirlmere." *Punch* represented Manchester Corporation as a raven, "an ugly, sooty bird of prey . . . black and croak[ing]" ("A Cry from the Agony Column" 85). As Jonathan Holmes has demonstrated, the bird of prey was an important and recurring symbol of the violent Darwinian struggle in the later part of the nineteenth century (159-164). Industrial developers and their supporters, Ruskin charged in his preface to Somervell's *Protest*, were motivated only by "care for their bellies"---an accusation suggesting a kind of primitive, animalistic drive in contrast to the literary culture of the preservationists (4). Somervell described the meaningless, almost animal existence that would result from developing the district for the railway, when the Lake District people would "be nothing more than ironmongers, and . . . live [their] lives, and die, and be buried amid the sweat and dust, the darkness and flame of [the] forges" (59). If the industrialists got their way,

Ruskin warned, "stupid herds of modern tourists" would swarm the secluded landscape, bringing aesthetic and moral pollution with them (5). Somervell similarly characterized the encroaching developers, "whose prime principle is to make money," as a "restless herd" (57).

Some residents of the Lake District emphasized that they had much to lose in evolutionary terms. One landowner, using the language of descent and extinction, worried about what development would mean for him and his offspring: "Our Lake property is my children's inheritance. Without it, as a country family, we are stamped out--blotted out" (*House of Commons* 330). This man likely would have agreed with Wordsworth's description, in a letter to Thomas Poole about the poem "Michael," of "the love of property, *landed property*, including the feelings of inheritance, home, and personal and family independence" as one of "the most powerful affections of the human heart" (9 April 1801, qtd. in *The Major Works* 701). Evidently, he felt that losing his ancestral land would mean the disruption or rupture of his family line, as it did for Wordsworth's Michael. Wordsworth's statement owes something to Edmund Burke's emphasis on preserving inherited institutions from the home and family to the church and government in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, and Wordsworthians' arguments on inheritance surely drew on Burke as well. But some of Burke's ideas took on Darwinian associations, with the stakes raised from instability and violence to endangerment and extinction. For many late Victorians, these "powerful affections" were understood as evolutionary instincts, biologically inherited for the survival of the species.

Depicting their opponents as selfishly engaging in a violent struggle for resources enabled preservationists to make broader critiques of the costs and excesses of the economic system. Manchester was a case study for the brutal inequalities of modern capitalism, which had been famously condemned by Friedrich Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* and Thomas Carlyle in *Past and Present*. Those who argued for the expansion of the railroad reasoned that "in these days of competition, it is absolutely necessary to bring a railroad as near as possible to [Lake District mines and manufacturers] in order to enable [them] to pay" (*Hansard's* 1742). Conservationists responded with Ruskin that their opponents were driven merely by "lust of gain," "cruelty," and the "frenzy of avarice" (1).

Of course, in making these arguments, preservationists were taking a page from the Wordsworthian book, as he had lamented in "On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway" the "rash assault" of the railway from "the busy world" of industry, which would spoil not only the "bright scene" for the "traveller's rapturous glance," but also destroy the inherited "paternal fields" of the dalesmen (2, 3, 9-10, 8). In "Proud were ye, Mountains," written as part of the same protest, Wordsworth decries the "power" of "the thirst for gold" which "wills that [the] peace [and] beauty" of the Lake District "shall be sold" (4, 6). Wordsworth's followers shared his concern that "getting and spending, we lay waste our powers" to recognize and appreciate nature's value ("The world is too much with us" 2). They questioned the corporations' assessment of value, arguing that the natural beauty of the lakes was "incalculable" and "could not be paid for in money" ("Minutes of Evidence" 286, 288). They also sought to turn the benefits of

modern convenience and consumer culture away from their opponents and onto their side, asking, "cannot England afford the luxury of one place of peaceful beauty?" (Somervell 45). The Lake District, they suggested, would provide an invaluable refuge from the capitalistic rat race: "In these days of high-pressure and competition the value of places where the beauty of Nature may be enjoyed, apart from the disturbing influences of railway and factory, is such as cannot be estimated in gold" (*Transactions* V.18).

Wordsworth provided his followers not only with a model for arguing against the limitations of a selfish materialism, but also an antidote against its effects, as Knight wrote that his "poetry [could] lift us above ourselves, to what is great, elemental, and enduring" (vii). For Knight, "though poetry has changed since Wordsworth died, he has deeper things to teach us, in our nineteenth century haste and high pressure, than any other poet" (317). Wordsworth's "wise passiveness" was a kind of antidote against the competitive frenzy of the day, which was intensified by evolutionary ideology. The conservationists' arguments against the utilitarian case for industrial development was consistently dismissed as "sentimental." As Gill points out, "for many Wordsworthians there was a strong element of sentiment" in their positions (253).⁷⁶ Somervell embraces the label, writing that "if we have any purer love than the love of gain, any joy in the works of God, any care for rest, or any thoughts of peace---call these things 'sentiment' if you will, but they are noble sentiment, that is worth preserving" (59). Preservationists held up these thoroughly Wordsworthian values as alternatives to self-interest, thus replacing Darwinian instinct with Wordsworthian "noble sentiment." Similarly,

⁷⁶ For discussions of the history of "sentiment" as a critical term in political debate, see Harriet Guest's *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution* and Christine Levecq's *Slavery and Sentiment: The Politics of Feeling in Black Atlantic Anti-Slavery Writing, 1770-1850*.

Somervell argued that more than "legislative interference" to preserve the Lake District landscape, the innate "evil . . . rooted in the selfishness that seeks its own advantage at the cost of the well-being of others" had to "be dealt with . . . We have to cut down *that*, and cast it out" in order to ultimately succeed in the environmental struggle (29-30).

Ultimately, instinctual self-interest and the Darwinian imperative to thrive at the expense of others in a zero-sum competitive struggle, Somervell suggests, would be incompatible with the conservation movement. In order for the Lake District to be preserved in time from the relentless change of evolution and kept separate from the harsh struggle for survival, the nation's collective self-interested and competitive instincts would need to be rooted out. As these are universal instincts, he applies his criticism generally, even including his fellow environmental advocates:

We are none of us guiltless in this matter . . . by the patronage we give to the production of cheap and specious rubbish, ---by our encouragement of those sharp tradesmen, who wring their "extraordinary bargains" often out of the dire necessities of those from whom they buy, ---by our grudging or refusal of a just price for honest and good work, ---by our every act of wastefulness, or wanton gratification of the thirst for luxury . . . we are aiding and abetting, by all the means in our power, the spread of the squalor and wretchedness, which we profess to abhor. (30)

This holistic view of consumerism is analogous to Darwinian nature---"an entangled bank" of competition and interconnection, in which the gains and triumphs of one organism or species are the losses and defeats of another (Darwin 760). For Somervell, the task of preserving Wordsworth's Lake District required not only opposing the interests of one corporation, but rejecting the economic applications of Darwinism. He argued against the claim that faster, more direct transportation was necessary for workers

in northern industrial towns to enjoy the scenery, quoting Wordsworth to call for changes in their conditions of labor and living standards:

If we are ever to raise men to communion with the power of nature, ---to develope [sic] in them the 'wise passiveness' of the 'heart that watches and receives' her lore---it will not be merely by giving them occasional and hurried glimpses of strange beauty, but by dignifying the labour and adorning the surroundings of their daily life. (23)

While the environmental battle was generally waged along these ideological lines, both Wordsworth and evolution were so deeply intertwined and embedded in late Victorian culture that preservationists sometimes couched their protests in Darwinian terms, and industrial developers occasionally used Wordsworthian arguments. The environmental advocates used anti-Darwinian rhetoric in relation to the land, but often drew on an evolutionary framework in discussing the effects of the development schemes on people. Some of the most common conservationist claims to draw on evolution were those that considered the native Lake District population as biologically distinct, and voiced concern about the effects of changing their natural habitat or exposing them to other groups of people. The Lake District natives were sometimes considered to be especially robust because of the experiences of their ancestors. In *The English Lake District*, Harriet Martineau writes of the inhabitants of Buttermere:

These Quarrymen are a hardy race, capable of feats of strength which are now rarely heard of elsewhere. No heavy-armed knight who ever came here to meet the Scot---and there were such encounters on this spot in the ancient border wars---carried a greater weight or did more wonders in a day than these fine fellows. (246)

She also describes how the ancient Britons struggled to hide from the Romans in the mountainous terrain (53). Such inherited ancestral experience, together with protection

from damaging modern influences, it was believed, gave the Lake District natives valuable genetic assets. Ruskin wrote that

the Border peasantry, painted with absolute fidelity by Scott and Wordsworth . . . are hitherto a scarcely injured race; whose strength and virtue yet survive to represent the soul and body of England before her days of mechanical decrepitude and commercial dishonour. There are men working in my own fields who might have fought with Henry the Fifth at Agincourt without being discerned from among his knights. (7)

With their inherited ties to better times, Ruskin suggests, the Lake District people had escaped the regressive effects of modern evolutionary development.

These favorable traits, however, were considered threatened, as the Lake District natives were often represented as an endangered species that needed protection. In proposing the formation of a permanent Lake District Defense Society at a Wordsworth Society meeting, Rawnsley stressed that

the Cumbrian and Westmoreland peasant, for all the attempts to spoil him, for all the tourist prices and presents, is as yet a character unspoiled. It does credit to his moral sinew that it is so; he is sorely tempted and tampered with. But these dalesmen are made of such rare peasant stuff that it is worth preserving. (*Transactions* 76)

He also related an anecdote in which the Windermere Station manager told a visitor he need not lock his doors in the Lake District, and could safely leave his bags anywhere outside of Windermere Station, as the honest residents were "none of your Liverpool nor London folk up here" (77). Ruskin wrote that he "could take his tradesman's word for a thousand pounds" (7). This moral integrity, along with the distinctive Lake District culture and Wordsworth's beloved plain speech that came from long association with nature, were at risk. Conservationists spoke of the Lake District peasants as if interactions with other people would change them as a species. They were particularly concerned

about the locals being contaminated by the low morals of city dwellers---a process that some observers thought was already underway. Rawnsley looks back with a nostalgia that owes something to the "Intimations" Ode's lament that "there hath passed a glory from the earth:"

The more one went about seeking for such good life and manners and simple piety as Wordsworth knew and described, the more one was disappointed to find a characteristic something faded away, and a certain beauty vanished that the simple retirement of old valley-days of fifty years ago gave to the men amongst whom Wordsworth lived. The strangers with their gifts of gold, their vulgarity, and their requirements, have much to answer for in the matter. (18, 339)

Environmentalists suggested that increased commercial tourism and the modern influences in the region, like the introduction of a rival species in a natural habitat, would have a transformative, evolutionary, and disadvantageous influence on the Lake District natives.⁷⁷

Tampering with the Lake District population by changing their environment, preservationists contended, would have serious national consequences. As Somervell claimed, "We may find that by destroying country districts, and levelling them up with an imported population, we have 'killed the goose which lays the golden egg'" (27). He goes on to quote an article from the *Times* in January of 1876: "The military, transit, and trade all get their best men from rural districts." The best "domestic servants" are from "the villages." The writer then explains the reason for the nation's strength and emphasizes the quality of the Lake District people through the framework of natural selection:

The wonder is how Mother Nature withstands the incessant drain. But at this moment, in many a rural nook, the farmers are wild with indignation at the

⁷⁷ The irony behind this argument is that the Wordsworthians themselves, both tourists who came to trace the poet's path and London transplants like Ruskin and Rawnsley, were by their presence changing the native population.

impossibility of keeping the more promising lads and the necessity of putting up with the worst---that is, with any they can get. Yet, strange to say, this residuum, left on the soil because it has not the spirit, or the knowledge, or the physical power to seek its fortune elsewhere goes on producing children that lords and ladies might envy it . . . Supplying Her Majesty with by far the most useful, most loyal, and most convertible portion of her subjects . . . In summing up the wealth of a country, the *quality* of its men will surely count for something. (27-28)

In evolutionary terms, the Lake District population represented some of the "fittest" people in the realm---they possessed the "best" traits, and Britain risked losing this precious resource by changing their environment. The article shows that preservationists recognized the evolutionary implications of this prospect, as it draws an analogy between developing the Lake District and converting a natural space into a hunting ground. Both projects would serve "to depopulate a district, to expatriate the poor [or weaker species] . . . and prepare it for a larger population than it had before." The biological principles, the writer emphasized, were the same whether the "population [was] of brutes, [or] of men" (28).

This framework led conservationists to emphasize evolutionary principles of inheritance, and argue that future generations would be worse off if industrialization changed the Lake District. Dove Cottage, Stopford Brooke claimed, needed to be preserved not just for Wordsworth enthusiasts, but "for the pleasure and good of the English race" (15). If the industrialists had their way, Ruskin warned in "A Letter from Wakefield," the Victorians' descendants would "never know nature, [and would] grow hard and sour in childhood with the riddle of their joyless lives" (qtd. in Somervell 69). As Rawnsley saw it, the more people who visited a preserved Lake District, "the better

for the future of England's thought and high feeling" (78). For future generations to appreciate and benefit from the Lake District, they would need to bring Wordsworth with them. These "sons of toil and doubt," spiritually stunted from the erosion of religious belief since Darwin and worn out by the relentless, evolutionary struggle of modern capitalism would ultimately come, "Wordsworth in hand, 'to see, and honor, and believe'" (78). Many who opposed the development of the district emphasized their responsibility to their descendants. Preservationists fought on their behalf, insisting with Somervell that England should not "spoil [future generations'] free and birthright inheritance in the loveliness of this Cumberland valley," and that, in Ruskin's words, "cotton and iron [could not] compensate a child robbed of his God-given birthright of earth and sky" (14, 69). As Knight insisted, "the dales in their beauty were the heritage of every Englishman." "We have to consider," he stressed, "not ourselves only, but the interests of those who will come after us . . . such scenes of natural grandeur or loveliness as are still unspoiled will be doubly dear to the next generation" (*Transactions* V.4). While preservationists couched these arguments in nationalistic terms, this rhetoric also had evolutionary relevance, evoking a global Darwinian struggle, which I will discuss further later in the chapter.

Literature and art itself were part of the inheritance England stood to lose. As Ruskin asserted, the rural landscape had "made Wordsworth possible," and poets could not develop in his place if the environment irretrievably changed. If the Lake District was industrialized by corporations, Rawnsley asked, "Where are our poets and artists to draw their inspiration in the future, and where are the masses to cultivate those higher feelings

which make it alone possible to understand the artists and poets?" (75). Somerville urged that "if we care to have poets and painters, we must give them room to grow and run wild in," as if artists were like fish limited in their growth by a small pond. "Manchester," he noted, with its industrial works and urban slums, "can't produce them" (75). Just as Victorian writers viewed literary influence and history in Darwinian terms, preservationists saw the artistic, literary, and intellectual future of the country through the biological lenses of evolution and the environment. Whereas Arnold emphasized the importance of cultivating a critical environment that was conducive to literary progress, these activists considered that the physical environment would have a direct effect on future writers and readers.⁷⁸

Co-opting their opponents' arguments on competition, conservationists sought to convince the public that developing the Lake District would make England less competitive in a global Darwinian struggle. Proponents of the Thirlmere Scheme exulted that "Manchester has boldly pressed forward where London and Liverpool have hesitated" (Gardner 73). The reservoir "present[ed] a fruitful employment for the energies of ambitious men" and a chance to "advance science" in a world-class industrial work (74). Whereas supporters of the plan emphasized Manchester's progress relative to other English cities, its opponents highlighted a broader, international competition with different criteria for success. In the parliamentary hearing on the Ambleside Railway Bill, Bryce used the American National Park system as an example and asked his fellow Britons, "Are we to show ourselves less sensitive to the value of natural beauty than the

⁷⁸ For more on the nineteenth-century environmental movement's links with literature and its reliance on cultural, aesthetic, and class-based factors, see Hess's *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship*.

people of California and New York, who have protected the Yosemite Valley and Niagra? Are we to fall behind America by allowing works to be made which will destroy what nature has bestowed?" (1735). To do so risked losing the picturesque beauty that, for Wordsworth and his followers, set England apart from other nations. While those in favor of expanding the railroad through the Lake District complained that the current route made tourists walk too far to access the best views, their opponents evoked national pride and pointed to the danger of becoming weaker than people in other countries: "Are the English so weak that they can't walk a distance that would be short in Switzerland?" (Somervell 45). Evolution made the prospect of becoming weaker than other nations due to technological development especially troubling for a nation struggling to maintain its global dominance amid the growing power of imperial rivals and the threat of domestic dissent in the campaign for Irish Home Rule. The associative link between Social Darwinism and British Imperialism is notorious, and the possibility of losing the global position as the "fittest" would have struck an evolutionary chord with the British public.⁷⁹

Environmental activists also sought to hijack the language of progress in support of their cause, repeatedly questioning and critiquing their opponents' definition of development. Somervell noted that industrial "progress" came at a terrible price: "Every step of [the nation's] advancing career is marked in its 'materially prosperous' districts by the darkening of the light of heaven and the defilement and destruction of the beauty of

⁷⁹ Paul Crook provides an overview of this connection, which has long been held as a historiographic consensus, in his argument against its actual significance. While Crook demonstrates that Social Darwinism was not a serious justification for those administering the empire, he concedes that Darwinian phrases such as "survival of the fittest" and "struggle for survival" were repeatedly used in discussions as slogans, and that liberal opponents of imperial expansion consistently criticized the Empire in these terms (149-172). Social Darwinism was attached to public discussions of imperialism frequently enough, even if only superficially, that the suggestion that the English would become physically weaker than people of other nations would have certainly evoked evolutionary ideas.

the earth" (26). He lamented that "the sad progress of our industrial system" was actually bringing regression, a harmful shift backwards away from the principles that Wordsworth and his followers championed: "Year by year . . . the people are farther and farther separated from [the] holy influences" of God's works in nature (29, 26). They criticized their opponents' backward view of progress, as Somervell wrote,

Surely we must be blind to the real meaning of the word [*progress*], or else to the nature of the realities which we use it to denominate if we suppose that the change from the peaceful life of the country to the feverish stir of our filthy towns, and the endless mechanical drudgery of our own degenerate and degrading manufactures, is truly *progressive*. (55)

Thus the advancement of industrial capitalism required another kind of progress, which would preserve wilderness and provide a refuge from the harsh concrete jungle of the modern Darwinian struggle. Rawnsley suggested that the need for and appreciation of the Lake District retreat would increase in proportion to economic progress: "There is hope that as the next generation will be much more busy," it will "need the pleasure-grounds of Lakeland undestroyed" and "will be more capable of appreciating their peace and beauty undisturbed" (80). While conservationists represented their opponents' version of progress as not only a physical decline, but a moral, spiritual, and artistic degradation, they emphasized that the environmental movement itself was a sign of true progress. In *The Manchester and Thirlmere Scheme*, Somervell noted the progressive development of the appreciation for natural settings: "The sentiment of beauty in Nature, and the love of mountain scenery, have been much developed in late years, and are likely to increase in power and importance" (44). Turning the tables, Professor Edward Dowden of Dublin, a pioneering scholar in Romanticism, implied that their opponents were the ones stuck in

the past: "As one century generally discovers the sins of its predecessors, and is hard on them . . . the twentieth century, so close at hand, may grow indignant with the nineteenth for its destruction of so much that forms part of the true wealth of life, and resolve to act more wisely" (*Transactions Cumberland* 79).

The industrialists also attempted to use the preservationists' arguments, sometimes couching their claims in Wordsworthian terms. In addition to representing their projects as progressive adaptations of the future, the Manchester Corporation also sought to reclaim the past from their opponents, paradoxically suggesting that developing the reservoir made them the true preservationists. Whereas the conservationists argued that the Thirlmere water works would destroy the area's primitive, natural condition, developers claimed that they would restore the lake to its larger primeval status following the Ice Age. As the Select Committee of Parliament explained, "In former times, the lake was much larger than it is at present . . . the proposal of the Corporation is to . . . restore the lake to its ancient condition" (*Report from Select Committee* iv). For one supporter of the Thirlmere Scheme writing in *The British Architect*, the claim that this massive industrial project was "simply a work of restoration" reached too far (174). Gently mocking the corporation's stated purpose of turning back the evolutionary clock, he quipped, "We are not told to what geologic age and to what climatic conditions the lake is to be restored" (169). He joked that the engineer, John Bateman, should make the primitive restoration complete:

Bateman might further distinguish himself. If he could give us an iceberg or two, convert the mountain backs into glaciers, recall a pair of mammoths, and a few primeval elephants, with an intermixture of extinct deer, the restoration would be

complete, and what a deliciously cool summer resort we should have within our own shores! (169).

Oddly enough, this rationale for transforming Lake Thirlmere into a reservoir for Manchester sounds strikingly similar to the contemporary conservation movement of "rewilding"---an effort to bring back vanished animals---which is gaining traction in Great Britain and Europe.⁸⁰

Supporters of the Lake District development projects also sought to appropriate arguments based on the beauty of the setting from their opponents. In the parliamentary hearing on the Ambleside Railway, MP Henry Labouchère of Northampton, a supporter of the railroad expansion, contested the charge that it would destroy the natural beauty of the region with the argument that "the railroad itself is a beautiful object. I know of nothing more pretty than . . . viaducts"; and that the steam from the trains is "only an artificial cloud" (1742). Similarly, the Thirlmere reservoir would improve the scene's natural beauty. In partially submerging the lake's island, two islands would be formed. The Manchester Corporation also cited the "positive opinion" of W. Broderick Thomas, a landscape gardener of "large experience," that "the large lake would enhance the beauty of the scenery," neglecting to mention that he was on the company's payroll (v). Of

⁸⁰ English conservationist Derek Gow maintains a herd of Heck cattle, bred to resemble the wild aurochs featured in prehistoric European cave paintings, which went extinct 400 years ago. He hopes that they can be reintroduced into the wild (Werth). Conservationists are seeking to protect the Scottish Wildcat, which dates back to the Ice Age in Great Britain. Less than 100 remain in the Scottish Highlands---a fragile link to the land's primitive past (*Save the Scottish Wildcat*). The Dutch Foundation "Rewilding Europe" seeks to reintroduce lost species and promote endangered species with plans to "rewild" roughly 2.5 million acres across Europe. They attribute the comebacks of wolves, raptors, vultures, brown bears, wolverines, and bison in Europe to successful conservation initiatives. Advocates of rewilding have also celebrated the recent mysterious reappearance of wild beaver in Devon, which were hunted to extinction in England and Wales in the twelfth century, and have not been seen in the U.K. for 500 years. Some of the more ambitious European advocates of rewilding even propose importing elephants and rhinos to approximate primitive mammoths and woolly rhinoceros, which once roamed Europe (Werth).

course, their opponents mocked these claims as presumptuous. Even commentators generally sympathetic to the corporation's argument rejected this exaggeration, as one remarked in *The Saturday Review*,

There is something suspicious in [their] anxiety . . . to make out more than is really wanted for the purposes of their argument . . . They insist that the beauty of Thirlmere valley will be absolutely increased by the works which the Corporation proposes to construct . . . For picturesque effect, Nature may be safely backed against the Corporation of Manchester. (200)

One observer wryly noted in *The Saturday Review*, "We ought perhaps to be thankful that the Corporation of Manchester have not measured themselves against Nature in the construction of mountains as well as in the construction of lakes" (489).

Proponents of the Thirlmere Scheme inverted the accusation of destroying natural resources by emphasizing that nature itself was wasteful and destructive. As the former Baptist minister turned journalist Henry Dunckley put it, Manchester wanted only the "wasted water," which flows away to the sea. Another commentator emphasized that "the superfluous waters of mountain lakes" would be put to much better use by the Manchester Corporation. Implicit in this emphasis on nature's waste and excess is the Darwinian notion that nature has no teleological order. Far from interfering with some grand natural plan or designed outcome, the developers were assisting nature by correcting its inefficiencies and preventing needless waste. Those in favor of the Manchester plan used evolutionary ideas to suggest an apparently conservationist justification for redesigning and reshaping the natural setting. As one defender of the scheme warned in *The Saturday Review*, "If mind does not step in and check the waste of blind force, soon there will be no lake at all to talk about" ("Thirlmere in the House of

Commons" 200). Whereas Wordsworth regretted in his protest letter on railway expansion in the Lake District any work in which "art interfere[s] with and take[s] the lead of nature," in the developers' view, such guiding intervention was necessary (*Guide* 147). The unsettling notion that nature was driven by "blind force" was used to justify the supposedly more purposeful management of the corporation.

Dunckley framed his attack on the preservationists with Wordsworthian ideas, suggesting that their opposition to the Thirlmere Scheme revealed a failure to understand and internalize some of the poet's most important tenets. In outlining the stakes of the debate, he emphasized the selfishness of opposing the reservoir. Granting the argument that the project would change or lessen the scenic value, he reasoned that the "enjoyment [of] a few connoisseurs, perhaps one or two hundred in a season, [who] linger on [Thirlmere] for perhaps half an hour" was a small price to pay, considering that "nearly a million of human beings" were in need of "water . . . the first necessity of life" (171, 173). After directly chastising his opponents for selfishness, Dunckley made his attack even more personal as he moved onto Wordsworthian turf, suggesting that the preservationists were deficient not only in sympathy, but also in their aesthetic sense and understanding of nature. These shortcomings, he emphasized, came from "a sluggish imagination and a defective sense of beauty" (174). As Wordsworth had written about the "correspondent breeze" between humanity and the natural world, had "consider[ed] man and nature as essentially adapted to each other," and had centered much of his best work on the intersections between nature and culture, his followers must have bristled at Dunckley's condescending explanation that "man and nature form but one great whole"

(*The Prelude* I.35, 174, Preface 606). Adding insult to injury, he lectured his opponents on how the aesthetic applications of this Wordsworthian doctrine contradict their assumptions:

No work of art, the interpreter of nature, can pretend to be great unless it stirs some human emotion, and tells some story that all of us can comprehend. But if this earthly home and all of its occupants are so closely aligned and bound to each other by so many spiritual correspondences, that surely must be an imperfect conception of nature, which leads us to suppose or permits us to feel that any part of it which is beautiful in itself becomes less beautiful when it ministers to the wants of man. (174)

Thus, harnessing Thirlmere to help the residents of Manchester in no way diminished its beauty. "In worshipping some little bit of physical beauty," he asserted, the spiritually and morally stunted conservationists were blind to the "higher beauty of benevolence and self-denial" (172).

For Dunckley, the Wordsworthian preservationists' love of nature was based on a false view of the natural world, which led to a distorted ethical vision. His statement that "a love of nature, as displayed by some of her professed votaries, may easily acquire a tinge of misanthropy" implies that his opponents miss Wordsworth's mark, as he wrote that the "love of nature lead[s] to love of man" (169, *The Prelude* VII). In opposing this "humane, benevolent proposal," he suggests, those guarding the Lake District in Wordsworth's place had failed to learn the poet's lesson that "we have all of us one human heart" (170, "The Old Cumberland Beggar" 153). In order to overcome these shortcomings, he suggests that those who disagree with him "should seek out some wise physician of souls. Their spiritual culture is defective. They are shorn of one half of their human sympathies . . . they are incomplete as artists because they are incomplete as men"

(175). His prescribed solution echoes the language of Matthew Arnold, J.S. Mill, Knight, and other critics who considered that Wordsworth's poetry stimulated sympathy and had "healing power." In recommending such a guide, Dunckley suggests that either the conservationists had chosen in Wordsworth the wrong leader, or that they completely misunderstood him, failing to recognize his most basic teachings.

With this reversal of rhetoric, Wordsworth's poetry and evolutionary theory---the nineteenth century's two defining visions of the natural world---were again coming together and clashing. These philosophies, so deeply entrenched in Victorian culture, were so persistently defined against each other that partisans on opposing sides could seamlessly reverse the polarity and continue their debate. Wordsworth's and Darwin's entangled influences went beyond the work of creative writers and critics. It reached past even their expansive views on literary influence and history and the relationship between science and literature. The contested intersection of Wordsworthian and Darwinian ideas influenced late Victorians' view of the world and their place in it. In a very real way, these conflating and conflicting philosophies shaped their environment through the success of a far-reaching and enduring conservation movement. That the Lake District today looks much like it did in Wordsworth's time remains as a tangible reminder of the consequential relevance of these dialogic influences.

Conclusion

It seems surprising that so many late Victorians thought of Wordsworth's and Darwin's influences as somehow connected. At first glance, we might not expect the writing of a poet and a biologist, separated by more than half a century as well as discipline, to have much dialogue with or bearing on one another. Wordsworth's vision of nature, however, was deeply entrenched in the period's literary and cultural climate, and Darwin's writing on the unity of nature, origins, instinct, and the connections between humans and the natural world seemed to take up quintessentially Wordsworthian subject matter. Consequently, for many late Victorians, responding to Darwinian evolution meant revisiting Wordsworth's poetry. They recognized both correspondence and conflict in these two dominant philosophies of the natural world. On the one hand, both Darwin and Wordsworth envisaged unifying, revolutionary paradigms of nature and our place in it. On the other hand, their ideas on the relationship between nature and morality, human origins, and instincts were radically different.

We see evidence of the intersection and conflict of these two influences again and again on the pages of the period's fiction, poetry, criticism, and even public debates. Victorian writers, it seemed, couldn't get very far in their engagement with Darwin's influence without addressing Wordsworth, and consideration of the poet's influence often raised evolutionary questions. In this way, their influences became entangled: brought together in a conflicting and mutually transforming way. Persistently linked and defined

against one another, Wordsworthian and Darwinian views of the natural world came to have an uneasy interdependence in the period.

A broad range of Victorian writers engaged with these interacting influences from various ideological positions and for different purposes. They came back to Wordsworth to reinterpret, reaffirm, and revise his ideas in response to evolutionary theory.

Commentators on both sides of the fierce debates between science and religion after the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* sought to enlist Wordsworth in their cause. Critics and creative writers used Wordsworth to contest and revise Darwinism and vice-versa. While the two influences were generally in conflict, many writers adapted and modified elements of each of their work to propose their own inquiries, theories, and solutions---both using and revising their predecessors' writing.

As Victorian writers engaged with these simultaneous and conflicting influences, they began to see Darwinian natural selection as a model for literary influence and history. Creative writers positioned themselves in relation to their predecessors in evolutionary interactions and successions. Like relationships between organisms and species, these meetings were both competitive and cooperative. In using Darwin's framework, however, they didn't uncritically adopt it any more than they accepted Wordsworth without question. Instead, they creatively modified evolutionary theory for their own purposes. "Literary selection" was closer to Harold Bloom's model of misreading and revision than Richard Dawkins's and Joseph Carroll's straightforward, sociobiological accounts of Darwinian cultural transmission, in which ideas are copied and replicated like genes and Darwinism is not an idea that writers engage with as much

as an objectivist explanation of literature's biological source and content.

Writers like Eliot, Stevenson, and Arnold considered their relation to Wordsworth and Darwin in these terms. Eliot's explanation of her writing as an “unused stock of motherly tenderness which sometimes overflow[s]” makes the novelistic imagination biological, and is part of her larger revision of the self-focused and self-interested emphases of both Wordsworth's and Darwin's work (*Letters* V: 52). Eliot uses each of these influences to revise the other. Darwinian entanglement corrects Wordsworthian solipsism, and Wordsworth's emphasis on the individual self helps her reassert the significance of the will in evolution. This revision enables her to frame her evolution away from her predecessors as ethical decisions rather than passive inheritance.

Stevenson revised Wordsworth's ideal of the solitary thinker in nature to insist on the value of competitive, Darwinian literary engagement. He framed both his criticism and praise of Wordsworth in evolutionary terms. Emphasizing the parallel between biological reproduction and literary output, he turned to Wordsworth both as a rival and comfort in considering his life's work and legacy. Like Eliot and Stevenson, Arnold recognized the model of literary selection, but privileged the role of critics over creative writers in forming the canon and shaping literary history. Revising both Wordsworth and Darwin with his concept of "Culture," he directs artificial or critical selection in an effort to preserve and shape Wordsworth's influence after Darwin. Canonical writers were not the only ones to engage with and modify this dialogue to suit their purposes, as these conflicting influences shaped social and political debate in the conservation movement. The two philosophies were so thoroughly entangled that preservationists and their

industrial opponents could make their case in either Wordsworthian or Darwinian terms, just as critics and creative writers of various positions drew on both writers' work.

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