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DICKENS IN THE CONTEXT OF VICTORIAN CULTURE: AN  
INTERPRETATION OF THREE of DICKENS'S NOVELS  
FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF DARWINIAN NATURE

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the  
University of North Texas in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Sangwha Moon, B.A., M.A.

Denton, Texas

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The worlds of Dickens's novels and of Darwin's science reveal striking similarity in spite of their involvement in different areas. The similarity comes from the fact that they shared the ethos of Victorian society: laissez-faire capitalism.

In *The Origin of Species*, which was published on 1859, Charles Darwin theorizes that nature has evolved through the rules of natural selection, survival of the fittest, and the struggle for existence. Although his conclusion comes from the scientific evidence that was acquired from his five-year voyage, it is clear that Darwinian nature is reflected in cruel Victorian capitalism.

Three novels of Charles Dickens which were published around 1859, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, and *Our Mutual Friend*, share Darwinian aspects in their fictional worlds.

In *Bleak House*, the central image, the Court of Chancery as the background of the novel, resembles Darwinian

nature which is anti-Platonic in essence. The characters in *Hard Times* are divided into two groups: the winners and the losers in the arena of survival. The winners survive in Coketown, and the losers disappear from the city. The rules controlling the fates of Coketown people are the same as the rules of Darwinian nature. *Our Mutual Friend* can be interpreted as a matter of money. In the novel, everything is connected with money, and the relationship among people is predation to get money. Money is the central metaphor of the novel and around the money, the characters kill and are killed like the nature of Darwin in which animals kill each other.

When a dominant ideology of a particular period permeates ingredients of the society, nobody can escape the controlling power of the ideology. Darwin and Dickens, although they worked in different areas, give evidence that their works are products of the ethos of Victorian England.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Literary works must be understood in the context of the culture that produced them. One must have a comprehensive understanding not only of the works but also the intellectual and materialistic atmosphere in order to put the works in context. Stephen Greenblatt says that "most texts are virtually incomprehensible when they are removed from their immediate surroundings,"<sup>1</sup> adding that "to recover the meaning of such texts, to make any sense of them at all, we need to reconstruct the situation in which they were produced" (Greenblatt, 227). This means that, despite our romantic cult of originality, most artists are themselves gifted creators of variations upon received themes. As culture is "a particular network of negotiations for the exchange of material goods, ideas, and--through institutions like enslavement, adoption, or marriage"-- people (Greenblatt, 229), the works are structures for the accumulation, transformation, representation, and communication of social energies and practices.

Henry Plotkin's definition of culture as "the totality of thoughts, actions and artifacts of a social group or

society"<sup>2</sup> is not so different from the statement of John Brenkman in his book, *Culture and Domination*:

Culture does not stand above or apart from the many other activities and relationships that make up a society, including the socially organized forms of domination, exploitation, and power pervasive in . . . society and its history.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, culture is "a site of reciprocal relationships and mutual understandings" (Brenkman, vii). It is natural, therefore, that literary texts must be understood in the context of the culture that produced them.

During the Victorian era, unlike previous periods, England had experienced the dramatic transition from an agricultural to an industrialized society. The character of Victorian England is "an age of transition."<sup>4</sup> Walter Houghton explains the meaning of transition:

By definition an age of transition in which change is revolutionary has dual aspects: destruction and reconstruction. As the older of doctrines and institutions is being attacked or modified or discarded, at one point and then another, a new order is being

proposed or inaugurated.<sup>5</sup>

Through the transition, England established prosperity in the nineteenth-century. The monarchy was proving its worth in a modern setting, and the aristocracy was discovering that free trade was enriching rather than impoverishing their estates. And through a succession of legislation in Parliament, the condition of the working classes was also being gradually improved. Generally speaking, England had enjoyed a growing sense of satisfaction through English wisdom and energy. When we speak of Victorian complacency or stability or optimism, the reason that the phrase, "the age of improvement,"<sup>6</sup> lingers in our minds is that the nineteenth-century is a period of prosperity. The Great Exhibition in 1851 with its Crystal Palace is one symbolic event that represents the mid-Victorian mood.

In addition to improvement and prosperity, another prominent aspect of the Victorian period is the expansion of science. Many developed and improved scientific implements increased scientific knowledge. One of the scientific developments was the theory of evolution, which had been developing for decades. Darwin made mention of the contribution of his predecessors in the preface to "Historical Sketches of the progress of opinion on the origin of species previous to the publication of the first



edition of this work,"<sup>7</sup> acknowledging that without the work of various scientists like Linnaeus, de Maillet, Erasmus Darwin and Lyell, his *The Origin of Species* could not have been written. Loren Eiseley points out that there were at least two scientists who paved the path for the publication of *Origin*. With the publication of Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*(1832), the long history of the earth, which is indispensable for the understanding of evolution of life, was proved, and through Robert Chambers' anonymously published and immensely popular work, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*(1844), which sparked a debate about creation and evolution , Darwin could escape the huge shock which brought the destruction of the fundamental concept of the human being. Darwin's modest expression, "I have only opened a path that others may turn into a high road,"<sup>8</sup> suggests that the mood of evolutionary theory was pervasive at that time.

In the last chapter of *The Origin of Species*, through his famous image of "an entangled bank," Darwin shows how nature is intertwined and in nature how his "laws" work among animals and plants:

It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds

singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us. These laws, taken in the largest sense, being Growth with Reproduction; Inheritance which is almost implied by reproduction; Variability from the indirect and direct action of the external conditions of life, and from use and disuse; a Ratio of Increase so high as to lead to a Struggle for Life, and as a consequence to Natural Selection, entailing Divergence of Character and the Extinction of less-improved forms. (*Origin* pp.456-60)

Although every life in nature seems to exist separately, they are all connected through some rules controlling them, and, when we understand the rules well, we can easily and correctly understand nature's laws.

Through the metaphor of the "entangled bank" for ecological interdependence, Darwin distinguished his own work from other evolutionary theories. We tend to think of the individual organism as dynamic and the environment as static--but the environment, being composed of so many more

varied components than the individual, is prone to unforeseeable and uncontrollable changes. The world Darwin proposes can be felt either as plenitude or muddle. Although Darwin was much wounded by Herschel's description of his theory as "the law of higgledy-piggledy,"<sup>9</sup> the phrase exactly expresses the dismay many Victorians felt at the apparently random energy that Darwin perceived in the natural world. Darwin's thinking was "anti-Platonic, was anti-essential." (Beer, 23)

Darwin's evolutionary ideas can be divided into three phrases: the struggle for existence, the survival of the fittest, and natural selection. The struggle for existence is an argument that every life in the earth is ceaselessly struggling to live.

Hence, as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life. (*Origin* p.116-7)

This was not Darwin's original idea but was developed from Malthus. Darwin solved his problems about evolution when he

was reading *Essay on Principles of Population*. Darwin later wrote in his autobiography:

In October 1838 . . . I happened to read for amusement Malthus on *Population*, and being well prepared to appreciate the struggle for existence which everywhere goes on from long continued observation of the habits of animals and plants, it at once struck me that under these circumstances favorable variations would tend to be preserved and unfavored ones to be destroyed. The result of this would be the formation of new species.<sup>10</sup>

Darwin had long appreciated the importance of artificial selection practiced by animal breeders. But until Malthus's vision of struggle and crowding catalyzed his thoughts, he had not been able to solidify his theory. If all creatures produced far more offspring than could possibly survive, then the struggle for existence would direct evolution under the simple assumption that survivors, on the average, are better adapted to prevailing conditions of life.

Darwin's second rule is the survival of the fittest, which derives from the first rule. As there is not enough food in the earth to feed all the animals and plants, it is natural that all animals and plants are at war to get food,

and only animals who can get the food can survive.

Owing to this struggle for life, any variation, however slight and from whatever cause proceeding, if it be in any degree profitable to an individual of any species, in its infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to external nature, will tend to the preservation of that individual, and will generally be inherited by its offspring. (*Origin*, 115)

The third rule, natural selection, is the result of the first two. In the long history of the earth, only the fittest have survived. Nature seems to select the fittest as people select the domestic animals for their own purposes.<sup>11</sup>

The offspring, also, will thus have a better chance of surviving, for, of the many individuals of any species which are periodically born, but a small number can survive. I have called this principle, by which each slight variation, if useful, is preserved, by the term of Natural Selection, in order to mark its relation to man's power of selection. (*Origin*, 115)

And Darwin concludes:

Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.

(*Origin* pp.456-60)

As mentioned above, it is hard to discriminate Darwin's ideas on evolution from those of others. Rather, critically speaking, his ideas seem to be the manipulation of his predecessors' ideas supported by the abundant evidences he obtained during his five-year-journey. The idea about evolution was so pervasive among the intellectuals in nineteenth-century England that Robert Chambers and Alfred Wallace published their works, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844) and "On the Tendency of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely from the Original Type (1857)," independently of Darwin. Therefore, it seems a very generous use of evidence in biology would have been possible for this study of evolution, which would see it as

inevitable that all writers were affected by such theory.

Beer explains thus:

In the mid-nineteenth century, scientists still shared a common language with other educated readers and writers of their time. There is nothing hermetic or exclusive in the writing of Lyell or Darwin. Together with other scientific writers such as G. H. Lewes, Claude Bernard, John Tyndall, W. K. Clifford, and even so far as his early work is concerned Clerk Maxwell, (writers whose works ranged through psychology, physiology, physics and mathematics) they shared a literary non-mathematical discourse which was readily available to readers without scientific training. Their texts could be read very much as literary texts. (6-7)

This situation is applied to the case of Darwin. The power of Darwin's writing in his culture is best understood when it is seen not as a single origin or 'source,' but in its shifting relationships to other areas of study. As Darwin's notebooks, reading lists, library, and annotations all show,<sup>12</sup> he was immensely alive to concurrent work in a range of disciplines, including not only other directly scientific work but history, historiography, race-theory, psychology, and literature. The problems raised by his writing often

manifest themselves most acutely when they are transferred into another field. Equally, his work was profoundly affected by common concerns. An ecological rather than a patriarchal model is most appropriate, therefore, in studying his work. Darwinian theory has, then, "an extraordinary hermeneutic potential--the power to yield a great number of significant and various meanings" (Beer, 10).

This revolution must take place not only in the minds of scientists but in the beliefs of other inhabitants of the same culture if the theory is to reach its full authority--an authority which rests upon an accepted congruity between theory and nature. Beer says:

In the mid-nineteenth century it was possible for a reader to turn to the primary works of scientists as they appeared, and to respond directly to the arguments advanced. Moreover, scientists themselves in their texts drew openly upon literary, historical and philosophical material as part of their arguments.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps this can best be expressed by analogy. We now live in a post-Freudian age: it is impossible, in our culture, to live a life which is not charged with Freudian assumptions, patterns for apprehending experience, ways of perceiving relationships, even if we have not read a word of Freud.



Freud sufficiently disrupted all possible past patterns for apprehending experience, and his ideas have been so far institutionalized that even those who query his views, or distrust them, find themselves unable to create a world cleansed of the Freudian. This was the nature also of Darwin's influence on the generations which succeeded him.

It seems to me that the most important fact in Darwinism is related not with religious or scientific fields but with sociology. Darwinian theory is essentially multivalent and will not resolve to a single significance nor yield a single pattern. It renounces "a Cartesian clarity, or univocality". (Beer, 23)

In its imaginative consequences for science, literature, society and feeling, *The Origin of Species* is one of the most extraordinary examples of a work which included more than the author imagined. Beer says:

The reason for focusing on *The Origin of Species* is that it was widely and thoroughly read by his contemporaries. Reading *The Origin* is an act which involves them in a narrative experience. (Beer, 24)

Evolution has been so imaginatively powerful because all its indications do not point one way. It is rich in

contradictory elements which can serve as a metaphorical basis for more than one reading of experience.

This dissertation is concerned with Dickens's phrase, in relation to evolutionary theory, that "a fact is not quite a scientific fact at all."<sup>14</sup> Evolutionary ideas seem even more influential when they become assumptions embedded in the culture than when they were the subject of controversy. Evolutionary ideas seem to be crucial to the novel during that century not only at the level of theme but at the level of organization.

The purpose of this dissertation is to show the way Dickens can be interpreted within Victorian scientific culture, especially on the point of view of the ideas of Charles Darwin. Heretofore, very little work has been done on this topic. Although they do not show the direct relationship between Darwin and Dickens, recently Gillian Beer's pathbreaking book, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* and George Levine's *Darwin and Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction*<sup>15</sup> are the only book-length studies to date. Beer concentrates on the relationship between Darwin and George Eliot and Thomas Hardy in her book, and George Levine concentrates on additional Victorian novelists including Charles Dickens. In addition to those

two books, Robert Young's *Darwin's Metaphor*<sup>16</sup> and Peter Dale's *In Pursuit of a Scientific Culture*<sup>17</sup> are helpful for our understanding of Victorian scientific culture. Young explains "nature's place in Victorian culture," and Dale explains "science, art, and society in the Victorian age" from the viewpoint of positivism.

In the following chapters, I develop my ideas through *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). In *Bleak House*, Dickens uses two different narrators in order to show the ultimate connectedness of the apparently unconnected. With the question continued throughout all of the novel, "what connection can be there be?" Dickens shows the narrative technique that arranges incoherently separate events to the coherent. The hidden bond that connects people with people reminds us of Darwin's hidden bond that implies the construction of natural a system.

In *Hard Times*, Dickens shows one distinct aspect of evolution: the survival of the fittest. Although the novel is the story of the people of Coketown representing various aspects of Victorian urban life, the author shows, at least, two types of characters, the winner and the loser, in an industrialized city as the arena for existence.

*Our Mutual Friend* is an intricate pattern of mutual

relationships conducted in a chaotic environment by individuals seeking their own advantage and acting without either a superintending intelligence or a common end. In the novel, as in the case of the court of Chancery in *Bleak House*, Dickens shows the merciless predation for money through the world surrounding the inheritance of the "dustheap" as the central symbol of his fictional world. A corrupting society in Victorian London, ruled and moved by greed and ambition, is a synonym for Darwin's "entangled bank" in which lives are constantly destroying and destroyed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *BLEAK HOUSE*

*Bleak House* was published in 1852-53 in the format for most of Dickens's novels, the monthly shilling serial. Although *Origin* was not published yet by the time he wrote the novel, evolutionary hypotheses were so widely known among the Victorian intellectuals that nobody seems to have escaped from the basic ideas of evolution. Dickens, as a journalist who kept abreast of current events, wrote a review of Chambers's anonymously published book, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* in his journal.<sup>18</sup> Dickens was familiar with evolutionary ideas when he wrote *Bleak House* even though the book was published before the coming of *Origin*.

Critics have dealt with five major themes in *Bleak House*: the abuses of the court of Chancery; the establishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England; political misgovernment; the London slums; and what Dickens calls "Telescopic philanthropy," the ignoring of crying social needs at home for the spurious excitement of sending out missions abroad.<sup>19</sup> In addition to those interpretations of the novel, in this dissertation, I want

to show another possible interpretation of the book: *Bleak House* as a cultural product of Victorian society in which scientific concepts were widely pervasive.

In the first chapter, I stated the possibility of a common denominator between Dickens and Darwin in spite of their different vocations. Though we know that there is no explicit or ostensible connection between them, if we take a close look at them, we find considerable similar aspects between *Bleak House* and *Origin*.

The first similarity between the two works is of characteristics in the two worlds. For example, we can find serious similarity between chancery as a major metaphor in *Bleak House* and nature as a ruling metaphor in *Origin*. It is not an overstatement that almost everything in the novel is actually connected in some way to Chancery, whether it is explicit as in the case of Krook or implicit as in the case of the disease, poverty, or even fog. Clearly, Chancery stands as some kind of world in which various elements of the novel organize themselves. Therefore, as the novel opens, we see the world of Chancery as one in which the normal division of time, space, and species seem to have collapsed into each other:

As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but

newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard to Holborn Hill.<sup>20</sup>

This scene, reminiscent of the creation story in Genesis, is a description of nineteenth-century London. There, dogs "undistinguishable in mire" (5) from the mud that surrounds them, and the people adding "new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest" (5) make us feel that the world of Chancery is not distinctive and clear. The indistinctness of Chancery is developed in the opening sentences on fog, beginning with "Fog everywhere" (5).

In the world of Chancery in which everything is undistinguishable, the fog shows once more that everything is not clear:

Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights.  
Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs, fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. (5)

The fog also affects the people of London: "Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on the deck" (5). Kay Wright defines the nature of the world of Chancery.

The world of *Bleak House* cannot be read, by either the characters of the reader, as one that is simply knowable. Rather, . . . , it is a world where categories are constantly crossing, where what seems familiar becomes strangely unfamiliar as we look more closely, and where the inhabitants are sometimes so baffled by the world around them that they can no longer survive in it.<sup>21</sup>

Chancery is a symbol of an inefficient and corrupt court system. The interesting point, however, is that Chancery cannot be adequately explained by seeing it in simple moral terms, as Trevor Blount says when he argues that the court represents "evil" that "will end by poisoning itself."<sup>22</sup> Nor does it fit a logical context of simple cause and effect as the main cause of the social problems in the novel. Rather,



Chancery is much more important as an emblem of the principle of chaos that Dickens associates with modern urban life. This characteristic of Chancery reminds one of the following sentences on Darwinian nature:

The continuum of time is, in Darwin's world, an aspect of the continuum of life itself and of all other sharply defined categories. The boundaries between species and varieties blur, and the further Darwin carries his investigations the more this is the case.<sup>23</sup>

In other words, Darwinian nature is as anti-platonic and anti-essential world in which everything experiences everlasting changing. As one aspect of the world, in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case, we have a close-up view of Chancery. As the narrator tells us, it is "so complicated that no man alive knows what it means . . . no two Chancery lawyers can talk about it for five minutes without coming to a total disagreement as to all the premises" (52); Chancery cannot be explained clearly, and those who insist that they understand it are operating under an illusion. Chancery undermines any effort to explain its working in clear-cut terms. Most obviously, it is a court of law which impedes justice rather than championing it. The documents related to various cases serve more to block communication

than to foster it, and the more one studies those documents, the less he or she understands them. Whatever Chancery is, it is beyond grasping through language or logic. It cannot be grasped since it evokes a powerful ambivalence.

Through the whole story of this novel, the author shows us:

the all-pervading legal world of the Court of Chancery: presented as corrupt and life-destroying, a ghastly parody of a Court founded to administer justice and equity. It is a world that includes the novel's central and terrible slum, Tom-all-Alone's since this desirable property is in Chancery, of course: the subject of an interminable law-suit like the case of Jarndice and Jarndice that dominates the novel.<sup>24</sup>

In this novel, the narrative technique that differs from Dickens's other novels is the usage of two different narrators who narrate two incoherent-looking worlds: the anonymous third-person narrator, and Esther Summerson. The two narratives--the impersonal, detached narrator's in the present tense--and Esther Summerson's--the involved heroine's, in the past, recording events that had happened several years earlier--provide connections between the two narrators' stories. About this narrative technique, Graham

Storey explains thus:

Dickens clearly attempts--and often attains--a new depth of focus by his switching of points of view between the two narrators; and this is helped by obviously intended juxtapositions and deliberate overlaps between the two. Examples are the beginning of chapters 52 and 57, where we are given Esther's responses to major events--Tulkinghorn's murder and Lady Dedlock's flight--which have already been described by the third-person narrator.<sup>25</sup>

The use of the double narrative undoubtedly contributes to this deliberate opaqueness: consciousness of the unfolding of events is sometimes given to one narrator, sometimes to the other; at times the full significance of the events seems hidden from both.

Dickens uses this technique quite consciously for his own ends: to show the ultimate connectedness of the apparently unconnected. The connection Dickens achieves in *Bleak House*, the bringing together of many seemingly disparate plots and a host of disparate characters--the powerful sense, above all, that there is no escape from such interconnection, that "no man is an island",<sup>26</sup> however high or low in the social

scale--is the true, encompassing theme of *Bleak House*. J. Hillis Miller says of the two different tenses:

The present tense describes a world which seems to come into existence from moment to moment under the eyes of the passive spectator as he finds, from moment to moment, the language to describe it: "On the morrow, in the dusk of evening . . . ."<sup>27</sup>

In ordinary past-tense narration events are recounted in chronological sequences, but they all exist at the very beginning of the narration in the mode of already having happened. Here, at any moment of the narration, certain events have just happened, another is happening, and others have not yet come into existence.

The structure of Esther's first-person narrative is quite personal and continuous as compared to the impersonal and discontinuous third-person narrator. She gives the record of her own self-discovery, both literal and psychological, and her eventual salvation through marriage to Allan Woodcourt. Dickens's double narrative technique is immediately connected with the story in the novel.

Although the main plot of this novel is the discovery of Esther Summerson's parentage, the continued question

through *Bleak House* is about connections. The third-person narrator asks,

What connexion can there be, between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the whereabouts of Jo the outlaw with the broom, who had that distant ray of light upon him when he swept the churchyard step? What connexion can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of this world, who, from opposite sides of great gulfs, have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together!

(197)

Dickens shows the narrative technique that arranges incoherently separate events to the coherent plot. Until well past the middle of this novel, the reader does not realize clearly the connection among the events. The juxtaposition of the two worlds of Chesney Wold and Tom-All-Alone's in sequential chapters implies a "hidden bond," (*Origin* 104) which is laden with moral ramification. This connection brings to mind Darwin's question of how the natural system is constructed, and how we can find the "hidden bond":

All true classification is genealogical; . . . .  
 community of descent is the hidden bond which  
 naturalists have been unconsciously seeking, and not  
 some unknown plan of creation. (p.404)

Darwin's understanding of such natural connections of  
 definitely different worlds implies the destruction of the  
 visual bonds between limited categories. Both *Bleak House*  
 and *The Origin of Species* say, in their different ways, "the  
 culture's preoccupations with 'connexion' where physical  
 juxtaposition, as in the cities, seemed to reveal startling  
 spiritual, even biological discontinuity."<sup>28</sup>

In this novel, Esther is the character who links the  
 apparently unrelated city and rural life, poverty and  
 wealth, lower class and aristocracy, and she is a figure for  
 the moral bond that society ignores. And Jo is another  
 character who connects the two worlds through  
 Mr. Tulkinghorn, the rich and powerful lawyer. Jo's position  
 as a crossing sweeper performs this function. Dickens's  
 preoccupation with discovering connections links him in one  
 way with a tradition of narrative technique and in another  
 to Darwinian styles of investigation and explanation.

In *Bleak House*, although critics say the major metaphor  
 is Chancery<sup>29</sup>, it seems to me that the metaphor is neither a

"thread" nor a "chain" but what I prefer to call a "narrow track of blood," for this metaphor develops not only the narrative line but, also, the notion of tracking and pursuit. Indeed, in Dickens's novel, where the lives of several characters--Jo, Gridley, Nemo and Lady Dedlock--are intertwined, detection and the detective can be the main plot of *Bleak House*. More than two-thirds of the novel passes before Tulkinghorn is murdered, yet in those pages we read, for example, of the pursuit of Jo by Bucket, of Esther by Guppy, of Nemo and Lady Dedlock by Tulkinghorn, and of Mr. Snagsby by Mrs. Snagsby.

. In the pursuit of the detected, the main weapon of Bucket is induction, the same procedure used by Darwin, who writes:

On first examining a new district nothing can appear more hopeless than the chaos of rocks; but by recording the stratification and nature of the rocks and fossils at many points, always reasoning and predicting what will be found elsewhere, light soon begins to dawn on the district, and the structure of the whole becomes more or less intelligible.<sup>30</sup>

In this respect, Dickens's world often seems to be a series

of narrative enactments of Darwin's theory. Gillian Beer speaks of the "apparently unruly superfluity of material" in Dickens's novels, "gradually and retrospectively revealing itself as order of instances serving an argument which can reveal itself only through instance and relations."<sup>31</sup>

*Bleak House* is Dickens's most elaborate working out of the way all things are connected, and connected by virtue of mutual dependence and relationship. The answer to the question, "What connection can be there?" is that Esther is Lady Dedlock's daughter. Mr. Guppy and Mr. Tulkinghorn detect this relationship immediately. But all characters eventually connect, in other literal ways, from the brick makers to Jo, Richard, Mr. Jarndyce, Skimpole, Boythorn, and Sir Leicester himself.

The great dramatic moments in Dickens are often framed by apparently irrelevant natural scenes. The most impressive one is the passage in *Bleak House* that precedes the ominous images of allegory pointing above Mr. Tulkinghorn's head on the evening of the murder.

A very quiet night. When the moon shines very brilliantly, a solitude and stillness seem to proceed from her, that influence even crowded places full of life. Not only is it a still night on dusty high roads



and on hill-summits, . . . , but even on this stranger's wilderness of London there is some rest. . . . In these fields of Mr. Tuklinghorn's inhabiting, where the shepherds play on Chancery pipes that have no stop, and keep their sheep in the fold by hook and by crook until they have shown them exceeding close, every noise is merged, this moonlight night, into a distant ringing hum, as if the city were a vast glass, vibrating.

(p.584)

The passage effectively implies the event by description of some larger significance. It, however, does not express in its physical nature the moral condition at the center of the narrative. The vast silent scene which is disrupted only by the barking of the dogs-- "It has aroused all the dogs in the neighborhood, who bark vehemently." (p.584)-- is the scenic counterpart of Dickens's commitment to multiple plots. It seems to me that the natural world, for Dickens, contains and limits human action. Often, as in the passage just quoted above, in its vast and serene movement, the natural world is presented as indifferent to human ambition. Regardless of the arbitrariness and violence of human action, nature continues its regular movement, has its own plot, as it were, which inevitably crosses with and absorbs the human plot. This indifference to society or morality is

not different from Darwin's description of nature:

We behold the face of nature bright with gladness, we often see superabundance of food; we do not see, or we forget, that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life;. . . . (p.116)

The novels of Dickens are constructed thematically on the conception of society as integrally unified, with the revelation of that unification a central element of plot as well as theme. It is clear in the relation between Esther and the Dedlocks. The mutual dependencies on which organic life depends in Darwin are dramatized socially in Dickens through his elaborate and multiple plotting and through his gradual revelations, often through the structure of a mystery plot, of the intricacy of relations disguised by sharp demarcations and definitions of classes.

Dickens's world, then, is as much a tangled bank as that evoked by Darwin at the end of the *Origin*:

It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting

about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us. (p.456)

Of course, Dickens takes the metaphorical, Christian view,<sup>32</sup> that Darwin was to make literal, that we are all one and deny our brotherhood at our peril. And he strains his plotlines to do it. Darwin tells us that seeing all organisms as "lineal descendants of some few beings which lived long before the first bed of Cambrian system was deposited," (458) makes them seem to him "ennobled" (458). The world is a tangled bank on which "elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent upon each other in so complex a manner," struggle and evolve yet further into the "most beautiful and wonderful of forms" (460).

It is not, however, simply in the fact of complex interrelationship and interdependence that Dickens's and Darwin's worlds seem similar. Between the two writers, there is another similarity: the energy for life. Dickens's novels are densely peopled with characters who are eager to live, as in the case of Jo. Darwin, in his book, shows the unaccountable variation in order to explain how, in nature,

the eagerness for life is strong. Relentless in the pursuit of detail, Darwin qualifies almost all generation, even his own charting of the descent of species, with the muted and powerful "nature."

Victorian society and the Dickensian fictional world are akin to Darwin's encyclopedic urge to move beyond the typical. In this point, Darwin again moves above the rationalist law-bound science that Dickens shows with Chancery. Darwin is not very interested in types, and although Dickens's characters seem to be types, they are atypical in their excesses.

This kind of type, in its multiple manifestations in *Bleak House*, is very much in the Darwinian mode. As Michael Ghiselin has suggested,<sup>33</sup> the Darwinian revolution depends on its overthrow of essentialism. For Darwin, knowledge is not attainable unless we learn to see the multiplicity of variants that lie beyond the merely typical. In the history of science, nineteenth-century biology revolutionized the science paradigm because it displaced mathematical models, however briefly, as an ultimate belief.<sup>34</sup> Darwin's *The Origin of Species* insisted that we could not understand the development of species unless we recognized that individual variations were always occurring, and that the world is filled with development from variations which might once

have been considered aberrant.

Owing to this struggle for life, any variation, however slight and from whatever cause proceeding, if it be in any degree profitable to an individual of any species, in its infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to external nature, will tend to the preservation of that individual, and will generally be inherited by its offspring. (p.115)

Thus, mixing and denial of absolute boundaries in Dickens's world is a common ground in Darwin's biology. In Darwin, the unaccountable variation, the crossing of sexes and varieties increases vitality. In the old model, life was determined by separate creation by God, and it was eternally separated into ideal and timeless orders. In the Darwinian model, life is enhanced and changed by slight disturbances and by chance.

Dickens goes on to the loss of stasis and ideal innocence. But Dickens always struggled back toward the possibilities of essentialist thought and morality. The aberrant comes round to the ideal, at last.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *HARD TIMES*

Like most Victorian novelists, Dickens presents his fictitious world through the people living in an imaginary realm. The world that Dickens creates is a reflection of his contemporary society, mid-Victorian England, and his characters are, in E.M. Forster's terms, "flat characters"<sup>35</sup> like unchanging figures carved on marble. George Levine's explanation that "the familiar Dickensian character has a sharply defined nature, a singular essence normally conveyed in a few tricks of manner"<sup>36</sup> is an exact statement of Dickens's method. In postmodern criticism emphasizing the unstable aspects of subject, Dickens studies are not popular in recent literary criticism. If we see Dickens from the viewpoint of culture instead of subjectivity, however, we can find a barometer to understand Victorian culture.

*Hard Times* represents various aspects of Victorian urban life in the fictitious city of Coketown. In the novel, Dickens shows not only a range of characters but also an industrialized city as the arena for existence. As a representation of Victorian people and society, *Hard Times* is a good example for understanding of Victorian culture.

One of the prominent Victorian cultural aspects in the novel is the implicit presentation of evolution. As stated in chapter one, the concepts of evolution, "the struggle for existence," "the survival of the fittest," and "natural selection," or the basic idea of evolutionary theory had been pervasive among Victorians, at least intellectuals.

There were many views on evolution before Darwin, and there have been many since. His theory found ostensibly scientific form for the ideologies that dominated Victorian society and was received by that society, despite some turmoil, with remarkable speed; its language pervaded its literature-had already found some voice in it before he ever published the *Origin*.<sup>37</sup>

Although the novel appeared five years before the publication of Darwin's revolutionary work, *The Origin of Species*, they share various basic ideas of evolutionary thought in spite of their explicit difference. In the novel, the first distinct aspect of evolutionary thought is the presentation of society as the place for "the struggle for existence." In Darwin's book, a revolutionary interpretation of nature is that nature is not a peaceful place for inspiration and rest, but a process of struggle: ". . . from the war of nature, from famine and death, . . ." (*Origin*

116). This archetypal image of the *Origin* as the war of nature Darwin said he had borrowed from Alphonse de Candolle. Darwin writes in the 1842 outline before the publication of the book:

De Candolle, in an eloquent passage, has declared that all nature is at war, one organism with another, or with external nature. Seeing the contented face of nature, this may at first be well doubted; but reflection will inevitably prove it is too true.<sup>38</sup>

In *Origin*, Darwin states the concept this way:

We behold the face of nature bright with gladness, we often see superabundance of food; we do not see, or we forget, that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life; or we forget how largely these songsters, or their eggs, or their nestlings, are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey; we do not always bear in mind, that though food may be now superabundant, it is not so at all seasons of each recurring year. (*Origin* 116)

Unlike Romantic ideas of nature as a healing power in the



writings of Wordsworth, or a spiritual being stimulating our imagination in Coleridge, to Darwin nature is a battle ground. Darwin's view of nature coincides with Dickens's idea of Victorian urban life that cities are the places for struggle. For example, in Coketown, there are always various kinds of conflicts between people, and the essence of the conflicts is not different from the struggle in nature. Like birds "destroying life" and the "nestlings destroyed by birds," Coketown people, whether they realize it or not, destroy other people's lives in Coketown. As a result, the winners stay and enjoy their present situations, and the losers are destroyed or leave. The demagogue orator, Slackbridge, stays in town on account of his ability to control the workers with his flattering oration, while a Coketown "hand," Blackpool leaves for another city to search for a new job. Bounderby stays in the town in spite of his divorce from Louisa on account of his economic power, whereas the wretched unnamed wife of Blackpool leaves to get drunk in another place. In the love game with Harthouse, Louisa can stay in town triumphantly with the help of Sissy, while Harthouse is headed for another "boring town" with defeat that "made him ashamed of himself" (175).

Coketown as the arena for existence is, in Blackpool's words, "a muddle" in which there is "no way out," and the laws controlling the city are not interested in the fate of

an individual. Bounderby's advice to Blackpool, "the institutions of your country are not your piece-world, and the only thing you have got to do is, to mind your piece-world," (61) summarize the nature of the society. In Bounderby's words, "the good Samaritan was Bad economist" (160), in a sense, is a suitable expression of the jungle-like feature of Coketown in which Victorian materialistic commercialism is pervasive under the influence of laissez-faire.

Another similarity between the Coketown of Dickens and the nature of Darwin is that neither is interested in human affairs. As objective beings, Coketown and nature stand apart from human society. Although the city as society is connected with its inhabitants, Coketown, in fact, is not interested in people's happiness or unhappiness. Coketown is portrayed as a savage or a beast unconcerned with human affairs:

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. . . .It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long,

and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. (22)

This image of Coketown as a being unconcerned with human affairs once more appears in connection with the disappearance of Blackpool after the robbery of Bounderby's bank:

The smoke-serpents were indifferent who was lost or found, who turned out bad or good; the melancholy mad elephants, like the Hard Fact men, abated nothing of their set routine, whatever happens. (188)

Like an automaton, Coketown goes on, not having any interest in anybody. The power making the society move is not morality, philanthropy, or intellectuality, but self-interest and cold commercialism.

Darwin's nature is not so different from Coketown. In nature, there is no human morality or celestial rules for lives. By "nature," Darwin means "only the aggregate action and product of many natural laws, and by laws only the ascertained sequence of event" (*Origin* 88). Neither the animals nor the plants are governed by rules connected with human lives or heavenly rules. Nature has its own rule

regulating the animals and the plants in it. Darwin says:

It is so easy to hide our ignorance under such expressions as the "plan of creation," "unity of design," &., and to think that we give an explanation when we only restate a fact. (452)

Darwin's nature is a being different from the hierarchy of "the great chain of being"<sup>39</sup> or god's predetermined plan. In his book, *Darwin and the Novelists*, George Levine explains that

Darwin's "laws" have no moral significance. Although they can be adapted for moral purposes (and were, immediately and continuingly), they do not answer questions like "Why?" except in physical or probabilistic terms . . . Survival in Darwin's nature is not *morally* significant. Adaptiveness is not designed, being the mere adjustment of the organism to its particular environment, and it has no direction. There is no perfection in Darwin's world, no intelligent design, no purpose. Fact may not be converted to meaning.<sup>40</sup>

Like Darwin's world having "no moral significance," "no

perfection," "no intelligent design," "no purpose," the world of Coketown is indifferent to "moral significance."

Laws governing the fates of people in Coketown are not different from natural laws deciding the destinies of creatures in nature. Although they are not "constantly destroying" each other for food, Coketown people constantly compete for survival in the city. This competition divides them into two types: winners, who remain in society, and losers, who are exiled from society. The result, whether winners or losers, is not different from Darwin's explanation of extinction: "I think it inevitably follows, that as new species in the course of time are formed through natural selection, others will become rarer and rarer, and finally extinct" (*Origin* 154). Their acceptance or banishment is determined by their ability. Darwin explains thus:

Hence I am inclined to look at adaptation to any special climate as a quality readily grafted on an innate wide flexibility of constitution, which is common to most animals. On this view, the capacity of enduring the most different climates by man himself and by his domestic animals, and such facts as that former species of the elephant and rhinoceros were capable of enduring a glacial climate, whereas the living species are now all tropical or sub-tropical in their

habits, ought not to be looked at as anomalies, but merely as examples of a very common flexibility of constitution, brought, under peculiar circumstances, into play. (*Origin* 181)

Bitzer is an example of the survival of the fittest through adaptability. A former student of Gradgrind's school and later porter at Bounderby's bank, he is a prototype of natural selection. In the beginning chapter of the novel, Dickens's description of Bitzer reminds us of a chameleon which is skillful in transformation. His features appear clearly when he is compared with Sissy.

But, whereas the girl was so dark-eyed and dark-haired that she seemed to receive a deeper and more lustrous color from the sun, when it shone upon her, the boy was so light-eyed and light-haired that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little color he ever possessed. (9)

Bitzer's colorlessness is repeated later when he appears before Gradgrind who intends to send Tom abroad. In that scene, Bitzer, "his white eyelashes quivering, his colorless face more colorless than ever, as if he ran himself into a white heat," (210) is a symbol of transformation.

As a chameleon in the jungle of Coketown, Bitzer's power comes from cold commercialism or materialism. Dickens says:

He had grown into an extremely clear-headed, cautious, prudent young man, who was safe to rise in the world. His mind was so exactly regulated, that he had no affections or passions. All his proceedings were the result of the nicest and coldest calculation . . . .

(88)

Bitzer's character is revealed in the treatment of his mother. He gives her the smallest possible amount of tea,

first, because all gifts have an inevitable tendency to pauperize the recipient, and secondly, because his only reasonable transaction in that commodity would have been to buy it for as little as he could possibly give, and sell it for as much as he could possibly get . . . .(88-

9)

Bitzer's philosophy for survival, as stated in terms of buying and selling, is nothing but laissez-faire capitalism. Bitzer is very skillful at surviving there.

Sissy Jupe is another character successfully surviving in this city. She shows that she can survive in two

extremely different worlds: the circus and the Gradgrinds. As a member of the circus and as a family member of the Gradgrinds, Sissy performs well as if she seemed to know what her roles were in the circumstances.

In the circus, she is welcomed by the members and audience, and at the Gradgrinds, she is loved by the members not only for her management of the household affairs of the family but also for the rescue of Louisa. As time passes, she turns out to be a lovable character, and in the last chapter the narrator says that Sissy is the only person who achieves real happiness. The fact that she is the only person having children is reminiscent of a statement by Darwin:

When we reflect on this struggle, we may console ourselves with the full belief, that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply. (*Origin* 129)

In *Hard Times*, one of the famous characters is Josiah Bounderby, "a banker, merchant, and what not . . . who could never sufficiently vaunt himself a self-made man" (16). Bounderby is an eminent example of the winner in the struggle for survival. He constantly boasts of the ascent



from "his old ignorance and his old poverty," (17) although his claim turns out to be a pure fabrication when his mother appears. The reason he brags of his ascent is that he wants to emphasize his adaptability. Bounderby says when he meets Sissy at her poor house:

"I han't a shoe to my foot. As to a stocking, I didn't know such a thing by name. I passed the day in a ditch, and the night in a pigsty. That's the way I spent my tenth birthday. Not that a ditch was new to me, for I was born in a ditch." (17)

His purpose is not to encourage her but to vaunt his adaptability. Compared with his "old poverty," he resents "turtle soup, veal meat and a golden spoon," because they have been acquired without assistance.

At the beginning of this chapter, I said Coketown is the representation of Victorian society in which cold laissez-faire commercialism was widely pervasive. In the description of Bounderby, "a metallic laugh" (p.17) is symbolic of the Victorian cold laissez-faire commercialism. Bounderby's brilliant success in business is brilliant on account of his ascent from "old poverty."

Bounderby's self-applause for his past and present spreads through the novel until the coming of his mother and

the exposure of his lying. The reason he exaggerates the past is that he wants to vaunt his strong will-power, compared with that of other people. Bounderby boasts that he is the man who can be called "the fittest" in the jungle of Coketown.

If Bounderby, Bitzer, and Sissy Jupe represent the fittest, Signor Jupe, Blackpool, and the Gradgrinds are typical examples of losers. The common denominator of the losers is that they do not adapt to the conditions of Coketown for various reasons. Signor Jupe cannot survive on account of decline of health, Blackpool because of his honesty, and the Gradgrinds because of defective educational philosophy. In most cases, the fates of the defeated are death, or banishment from the society. In *The Origin of Species*, when Darwin argues that "heavy destruction inevitably falls either on the young or old"(119), one can also see that is the explanation for the wretchedness of Signor Jupe, Blackpool, and the Gradgrinds.

Signor Jupe is a typical example of an old and weak man whose luck runs out with the decline in his health. Although he appears only through the account of other characters, Dickens's presentation of the fate of Signor Jupe is the duplication of evolution theory of the destruction of the young or old. When he explains the disappearance of Signor Jupe, Mr. Childers says:

". . . he has cut. He was goosed<sup>41</sup> last night, he was goosed the night before last, he was goosed to-day. . ."

"Why has he been-so very much-Goosed?" asked Mr.

Gradgrind, forcing the word out of himself, with great solemnity and reluctance.

"His joints are turning stiff, and he is getting used up," said Childers. (29)

According to Mr. Childers, Signor Jupe did not perform well because of aging, and he disappears leaving Sissy to the members of the circus. What attracts our attention is the attitude of Coketown people toward the old man. Although the stiffening of joints is a natural process of aging in human biology, Coketown society, especially the audience of the circus, admits aging as not a natural process but as a vulnerable point of Signor Jupe. Like predators attacking their prey, the audience of the circus "goose" Signor Jupe.

The reason Signor Jupe departs from Coketown is not that he can't stand his continuous failures in the performance but that "he has lastly got in the way of being always goosed." In other words, he cannot stand being weak. For Signor Jupe, death is the predictable result; thus at the end of the novel, we hear of his death, knowing the meaning of the return of the old man's faithful dog. Darwin's repeated explanation of natural selection through the

survival of the fittest, " variability from the indirect and direct action of the eternal conditions of life . . . and as a consequence of natural selection, entailing divergence of character and the extinction of less-improved forms" (Origin 456) is one possible interpretation of Signor Jupe as a loser.

Another example of the defeated is Blackpool, a "hand" of Coketown industry. Unlike old Signor Jupe, who suffers from his weakening physical condition, Stephen Blackpool, "a good power-loom weaver, and a man of perfect integrity" (p.52), suffers from the social relationship with his fellow workers. Blackpool's wretched death is not the result of his declining physical condition but that of his deficient sociability in Coketown. As the result of Blackpool's inability to adjust to the situation, his banishment from Coketown comes from his refusal to join the union on account of the promise to Rachael.

No one, excepting myself, can ever know what honour, an' what love, an' respect, I bear to Rachael, or wi' what cause. When I passed that promess, I tow'd her true, she were th' Angel o' my life. 'Twere a solemn promess. 'Tis gone for 'me, for ever. (120)

Although he is a good man to keep his promise, ironically

his strife to keep the promise causes his death on the moor away from the city. The narrator says that Blackpool

held no station among the Hands who could make speeches and carry on debates. Thousands of his compeers could talk much better than he, at any time. He was a good power-loom weaver, and a man of perfect integrity. What more he was, or what else he had in him, if anything let him show for himself. (52)

Blackpool, "less-improved forms," is an example of the defeated in the battle of Coketown and as a result, he is forced to move to another place. The description of Blackpool shows why he is the defeated and should depart:

He had been for many years, a quiet silent man, associating but little with other men, and used to companionship with his own thoughts. (109)

Blackwell had long been an isolated person which means that he could not acquire any weapon through the competition/communication with other workers. Therefore, muddle in which everything is mixed and tangled, for Blackpool, is another wall that he cannot overcome. After the disappointing consultation with Bounderby, Blackpool is

described thus:

"Why then, Sir," said Stephen, turning white, and motioning with that right hand of his, as he gave everything to the four winds, "t'is a muddle. 'Tis just a muddle a'together, an' the sooner I am dead, the better." (61)

Although he calls the world "muddle," Blackpool does not recognize the reality of his world as a cruel arena to survive. Blackpool's muddle is the jungle as another face of Darwin's "an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, . . ." (*Origin*, 459). As an object of entangled social life, the city is "a muddle" and Blackpool is one prototype of the defeated in the arena.

Another case of losers is found in the Gradgrinds: Thomas, Louisa, and Tom. Their cases are different from the former two cases. They are neither old men having serious problems in their physical conditions nor "hands" lacking social power. They are well-educated people enjoying comfortable living situations. Their wretched fates as losers come from the limited scope of their viewpoints to the world. In the famous scene in the first chapter, Mr.

Gradgrind urges his students to keep their minds on "only facts, nothing but facts." Mr. Gradgrind believes that his materialistic educational philosophy is the only weapon to survive in the arena. In fact, Bitzer shows that Mr. Gradgrind's educational philosophy is his winning weapon in the cruel world. Bitzer's reply to Gradgrind's petition for Tom's escape presents how the weapon is strong and useful for his survival:

"I beg your pardon for interruption you, Sir," returned Bitzer; but I am sure you know that the whole social system is question of self-interest. What you must always appeal to, is a person's self-interest. . . ."

(211)

Unlike the case of Bitzer, however, the Gradgrinds's wretched fates come from the fact that they cannot accept the materialistic philosophy completely and consistently. Louisa and Tom did not accept it from the beginning of this novel.

He [Mr. Bounderby] went his way, but she stood on the same spot, rubbing the cheek he had kissed, with her handkerchief, until it was burning red. She was still doing this, five minutes afterwards. . . .

"You may cut the piece out with your penknife if you like, Tom. I wouldn't cry." (21)

Only their father believes that the educational philosophy is a useful weapon in the society. Therefore, when he abandons his philosophy, it is natural that Mr. Gradgrind could not be happy with his life.

Both the beginning paragraph of *Hard Times* emphasizing Gradgrind's educational philosophy-- "Now, what I want is, Fact. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else" (p.7)-- and the narrator's description of Coketown suggest the materialistic aspect of the city. The narrator says,

Fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the material aspect of the town; fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the immaterial. The M'Choakumchild school was all fact, and the school of design was all fact, and the relations between master and the man were all fact, and everything was fact between the lying-in hospital and the cemetery, and what you couldn't state in figures, or show to be purchasable in the cheapest market and saleable in the dearest, was not, and never should be, world without end, Amen. (22-3)



This materialistic description of Coketown is an implication of the characteristics. The educational philosophy appears as follows:

It was a fundamental principle of the Gradgrind philosophy that everything was to be paid for. Nobody was ever on any account to give anybody anything, or render anybody help without purchase. Gratitude was to be abolished, and the virtues springing from it were not to be. Every inch of the existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain cross a counter. And if we didn't get to Heaven that way, it was not a politico-economical place, and we had no business there.

(212)

The tragedy of the Gradgrinds comes from the fact that they have limited and defective educational philosophy which cannot be applied to the Coketown society completely. In the final chapter describing the future of Louisa, the fact that the narrator says that she never has children coincides with the argument of Darwin: "that any form which does not become in some degree modified and improved, will be liable to be exterminated. Hence we can see why all the species in the same region do at last, if we look to wide enough intervals of time, become modified; for those which do not change will

become extinct" (*Origin* 319).

In creating their literary characters, novelists do not stand apart from the intellectual, political, social and economic atmosphere of their age. Rather, the figures in novels serve as literal embodiments of the values, assumptions and beliefs--both conscious and unconscious--that shape it. Victorian novelists' shared preoccupation with their culture and their redefinition of the characters in their novels are another aspect of the spirit of the age.

For Dickens, the city increasingly becomes an emblem of an inescapable condition of existence no less than a physical place. And it is precisely in the city that the Dickens characters must, in a double sense, survive. In *Hard Times*, the plight of characters is literally and figuratively to seek their home under the condition of an era which was spreading the urban wilderness farther and faster than ever before. The characters in Coketown can be grouped in two types: winners and loser in the arena.

What Dickens creates, however, is not different from the world of Darwin in which all life struggles for existence. Darwin interprets nature extremely differently from the former philosophers, writers, and even scientists. He says:

All that we can do, is to keep steadily in mind that each organic being . . . , during each generation or at

intervals, has to struggle for life, and to suffer great destruction. When we reflect on this struggle, we may console ourselves with the full belief, that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply. (*Origin* 129)

Darwin's interpretation of nature is reflected in *Hard Times* though Dickens does not explicitly state the ideas of evolution in the book.

## Chapter Four

### *OUR MUTUAL FRIEND*

In his review of *Our Mutual Friend* Henry James said, "Our *Mutual Friend* is, to our perception, the poorest of Mr. Dickens's words. And it is poor with the poverty not of momentary embarrassment, but of permanent exhaustion. It is wanting in inspiration."<sup>42</sup> If, as James contends, Dickens was exhausted and out of imagination, it was the result of the pressures of his public readings and of his marital problems; Dickens did not seem to have power to match his former accomplishments. Another famous critic, Edmund Wilson, however, argues an opposite opinion on the novel in his famous book, *The Wound and the Bow*:

Dickens has here distilled the mood of his later years, dramatized the tragic discrepancies of his characters, delivered his final judgment on the whole Victorian exploit, in a fashion so impressive that we realize how little the distractions of this period had the power to direct him from the prime purpose of his life: the serious exercise of his art.<sup>43</sup>

These criticisms seem to stand as two polar positions taken on the novel from the traditional critical viewpoints. Instead of examining the artistic quality of the novel, however, recent studies relying upon contemporary literary theories focus on the following questions: "What does Dickens want to say in this novel? or how are Dickens's ideas constructed by his excellently manipulated images?"

To these question, a traditional critic like F. R. Leavis answers that the novel "represents the realism of neither fiction nor narrative, but of a mature vision of the world between, and shows us the meaning of a world governed by accident."<sup>44</sup> Or a Marxist critic like Raymond Williams responds that the novel is the presentation of "plays of city poverty and orphanage"<sup>45</sup> through "the phenomenon of industrial production and its immediate social and physical consequences."<sup>46</sup> And one of the leading modern critics, J.Hillis Miller, tries to interpret the novel by the angle of phenomenology, calling it "a great panoramic novel"<sup>47</sup> which "presents a fully elaborated definition of what it means to be interlaced with the world" (Miller, 280).

It seems to me, however, that what Dickens wants to describe in this novel is Victorian laissez-faire society in which money is the only power controlling people. When Mary Poovey, an excellent New Historicist about Victorian literature, argues that this novel is

an analysis of one of the most important problematics of the early 1860s: . . . the complex of financial, ethical, and legal questions introduced by the apparently limitless opportunities provided by new forms of capital organization and investment,<sup>48</sup>

her reading seems to give us an accurate way to understand Dickens in the cultural context of Victorian England. Therefore, in this chapter, I try to show how the Victorian culture is reflected in the fictional world of *Our Mutual Friend* and how it is connected with *Origin*.

As I discussed in the first chapter, one of the dynamics of British cultural formation in the nineteenth century is laissez-faire economics which resembles Darwin's natural selection. The aspects of Darwinian natural philosophy<sup>49</sup> are reflected in this novel in the struggle for money, sexual selection, and even the hidden relationships between the characters.

*Our Mutual Friend* open thus:

In these times of ours, though concerning the exact year there is no need to be precise, a boat of dirty and disreputable appearance, with two figures in it, floated on the Thames, between Southwark Bridge which is iron,

and London Bridge which is of stone, as an autumn evening was closing in.<sup>50</sup>

Surprisingly, the job of the two people in the boat, Lizzie and Gaffer, is fishing for drowned bodies, not fishes, and the purpose of their fishing corpses is simple: "in order to acquire money."<sup>51</sup> Actually, Gaffer's chastizing of his daughter, "As if it weren't your living! As if it weren't meat and drink to you" (p.3), when Lizzie blanches at the corpse in the boat, shows how "these times of ours" (1) are the world of merciless predation. Gaffer's response to his "pardner," Rogue, for stealing money from the corose,

"Has a dead man any use for money? Is it possible for a dead man to have money? What world does a dead man belong to? T'other world. What world does money belong to? This world. How can money be a corpse's? Can a corpse own it, want it, spend it, claim it, miss it? Don't try to go confounding the rights and wrongs of things in that way." (pp.4-5)

implies that there "was no neophyte" (p.5) in the cruel world. Gaffer's business-like-attitude toward corpses shows not only that he has a horrible moral blindness but also that money is the central matter in the fictional world. In this

novel, in fact, money is everywhere and in everything. In order to acquire money, however, everybody needs predation whether it is symbolic or literal.

All characters in this novel seek money without exception, and the theme of the novel can be called one man's preying on another for money. In the first scene, the fishing is another facet of this predation. Dickens's bitter description of the couple,

Half savage as the man showed, with no covering on his matted head, with his brown arms bare . . . still there was business-like usage in his steady gaze. So with every lithe action of the girl, with every turn of her wrist, perhaps most of all with her look of dread or horror; they were things of usage (1)

is nothing but the description of prey reminding us of Darwin's famous description of cruel nature:

We often see superabundance of food; we do not see, or we forget, the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life; or we forget how largely these songsters, or their eggs, or their nestlings, are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey; we do not



always bear in mind, that though food may be now superabundant, it is not so at all seasons of each recurring year. (*Origin*, 116)

The next chapter presents an absolutely different world from the first one. If the world of the first chapter is of the lower class, chapter two is the world of upstarts: "Mr. and Mrs. Veneering were bran-new people in a bran-new house in a bran-new quarter of London" (p.6). The comparison implied by the juxtaposition is showing another aspect of the predation in society. Richard Lanham explains the effect of the juxtaposition as follows:

The world of Podsnappery and Veneering is scarcely more than a polite form of the predatory behaviour. The Veneerings, if we may speak symbolically, have come up from somewhere in the vicinity of the river. As with Gaffer, it is money, but attitude toward one's fellow-man -- cold and mechanical -- which is significant. It is the money, though, which attracts that sympathetic and impoverished professional dinner guest, Twemlow.<sup>52</sup>

This pattern of predation is representative of the minor characters. Even down to the least important character--

hard, cold, and joyless--the pattern of predation is applied. For example, Silas Wegg, a shifty and unscrupulous rascal, attaches himself to Boffin like a leach. While still at the old stall, he "speculates," and "invests" a bow in Boffin. And he spends the rest of the novel in scheming to rob Boffin. He replies to Mr.Venus's query about Rokersmith's honesty, after the secretary had stopped by the "Bower" one evening with:

"Something against him?" repeats Wegg. "Something?" What would the relief be to my feelings-as a fellow- if I wasn't the slave of truth, and didn't feel myself compelled to answer, Everything!"(p.306).

Of course, Silas Wegg's dishonesty to Mr. Venus is to get the power over Rokersmith which is a matter of predation.

Dickens presents us with a still more nightmare-like predator, Venus, the retailer of the bones of the dead. Venus's bone-shop looks like a laboratory containing the corpses of animals, birds, and even men.

"You're casting your eye round the shop, Mr.Wegg. Let me show you a light. My working bench. My young man's bench. A Wice. Tools. Bones, wariuous. Skulls, wariuous. Preserved Indian baby. African ditto. Bottlee

preparations, various. Everything within reach of your hand, in good preservation. The mouldy ones a-top. What's in those hampers over them again. I don't wuite remember. Say, human various. Cats. Articulated English baby. Digs. Ducks. Glass eyes, various. Mummied bird. Dried cuticle, various. Oh dear me! That's the general panoramic view." (p.81)

Like the birds of prey which Dickens presents throughout the whole novel, Venus is another preyer irritating Wigg, who lost a leg in a hospital amputation. Although Wegg now wishes to buy the bone back, Venus wants to keep it for the sake of "human various" variety in his shop. Comic and bizarre as the pair are, their illustration of the general "predation" is unmistakable. Therefore, we can say that the world of *Our Mutual Friend* is full of predators, each trying to live at the expense of the others. Sometimes the moral blindness is as pathetic as repugnant, as with Gaffer Hexam. But in every case, Dickens's verdict is clear: society is so arranged that its members, if they are to survive, must prey off one another.

Dickens can interpret the predation as a gasp of horror at the Victorian conception of a laissez-faire society. The novel can be construed as a savage attack on Industrial

Capitalism, as a system which converts a presumably benign state of natural society into a jungle in which the rule of predation controls everything. Then the question rises: what is the predation for? The answer is simple: for money. Briefly speaking, as money has anonymity and its depersonalizing pressures people, it entails the mechanization of personality and of personal relations. And the effects of accumulating money make people the killer and the destroyed. All other human attributes are squeezed out. People tend to become indistinguishable from things, and vice versa. This materialistic viewpoint in this novel is not much different from the viewpoint of Darwin. About that George Levine explains:

Darwin's theory thrust the human into nature and time, and subjected it to the same dispassionate and material investigations hitherto reserved for rocks and stars.<sup>53</sup>

The novel is full of imagery making precisely this point. The grisly humor of Twemlow as a table, in the earlier pages of the novel, is a good illustration:

There was an innocent piece of dinner-furniture that went upon easy castors and was kept over a livery stable-yard in Duke Street, Saint James's, when not is

use, to whom the Veneerings were a source of blind confusion. The name of this article was Twemlow . . . Mr. and Mrs. Veneerings, for example, arranging a dinner, habitually started with Twemlow, and then put leaves in him, or added quests to him. Sometimes, the table consisted of Twemlow and half-a-dozen leaves; sometimes, of Twemlow and a dozen leaves; sometimes, Twemlow was pulled out to his utmost extent of twenty leaves. (p.6)

Bradley Headstone has learned his job purely by rote:

He had acquired mechanically a great store of teachers's knowledge. He could do mental arithmetic mechanically, sing at sight mechanically, blow various wind instruments mechanically, even play the great church organ mechanically. From his early childhood up, his mind had been a place of mechanical stowage. The arrangement of his wholesale warehouse, so that it might be always ready to meet the demands of retail dealers . . . .(p.217)

In metaphor as in character, human personality is described as materialistic things similar to Gradgrind's defective

educational philosophy in *Hard Times*. In this novel, of course, Dickens's persistent theme is the benign capacity of people. We, however, cannot deny the general mechanization of the spirit which has been a literary theme since the Industrial Revolution began.

Another way to understand this novel is to consider focus *Our Mutual Friend* is the story of John Harmon, the "friend" of the title, who has been brought back to England by the death of his father, a dust contractor, and gets the faithful love of Bella Wilfer whom old Harmon willed that his son should marry. As its title implies, this novel is an account of the mutual--though hidden--relationships among its characters. As in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, the basic ideas of *The Origin of Species* involve the study of "the mutual relationships" of organic beings to each other and to their environments. In the fictional world of this novel, individuals fiercely seek their own advantage under the shadow of death and with no sense of transcendent meaning. As in Dickens's other novels, the main plot of this novel seems to be an attack on Victorian political-economy and its laissez-faire foundation. Competition to survive, free trade between businesses, imperialism of Victorian England, racial extermination, and sexual inequality are important points that critics point out.

Darwin implies in *Origin* that the struggle for existence, natural selection, and even survival of the fittest are possible on the premise of death. Through deaths/offsprings which accumulate continuously, every species can move its genetic structures through biologically developed steps. In *Our Mutual Friend*, the controlling images/metaphors are the deaths of the characters, whether their deaths are real ones or fake. Dickens manipulates the story through the deaths of the characters. In the opening chapter, the Hexam family's fishing for the drowned and the dustheap as the riches for its inheritance are two important clues.

The connection between Dickens and Darwin in *Our Mutual Friend* is not simply one of analogy but quite direct and concrete. It is well known that there was a general climate of interest in natural philosophy in nineteenth-century England. During the century, many aspects of Victorian culture showed an involvement with science, and in this novel we can see the evolution theory in the dialogue between characters:

"As a two-footed creature;- I object on principle, as a two-footed creature, to being constantly referred to insects and four-footed creatures. I object to being

required to model my proceedings according to the proceedings of the bee, or the dog, or the spider, or the camel. I fully admit that the camel, for instance, is an excessively temperate person; but he has several stomachs to entertain himself with, and I have only one. Besides, I am not fitted up with a convenient cool cellar to keep my drink in." (p.93)

Howard Fulweiler in his article, "'A Dismal Swamp': Darwin, Design, and Evolution in *Our Mutual Friend*," shows how the general interest in natural philosophy was specially reflected in Dickens's own periodical, *All the Year Round*.<sup>54</sup> Fulweiler thinks that the garbage heap itself is the major metaphor of this novel and possibly relates to the journal review. He argues that "Kitchen-middens" in the journal bears an obvious analogy to the chief insight of *The Origin of Species*. "The accumulation of innumerable slight variations" (p.435) is the same as "kitchen-middens" which are "heaps of waste oyster-shells, cockle-shells, and waste of other edible shell-fish, mixed with bones of divers eatable beasts and birds and fishes . . ." <sup>55</sup> in the journal.

In the novel, as in the geological record in the natural world, the garbage mound is composed of various objects



whose position and value in the mound have no plan. All of society contributes to the pile, and the "dustheap" accumulates slowly by change and random selection. The relation of the mounds to scientific theory is made explicit by Mortimer Lightwood in chapter two when their existence is described as the livelihood of the dead Mr. Harmon:

"The growling old vagabond threw up his own mountain range, like an old volcano, and its geological formation was Dust. Coal-dust, vegetable-dust, bone-dust, crockery-dust, rough dust and sifted dust,--all manner of Dust" (p.56).

The dustheap is a mountain-like monument to accumulation. It, however, is also the symbol of the struggle of existence on account of the dustheap's value as riches.

In many Victorian novels including Dickens's, one of the outstanding characteristics is the endless searching for a will. The secret of the inheritance, the discovering of the legal heir, and the process of the search resemble the process of paleontology. This process is the riddle that Darwin struggled to solve in the natural world. The solution to the question of inheritance, not only in its Darwinian biological sense but in a human way, is that *Our Mutual*

*Friend* will arrive at its ultimate meaning.

The dustheap which stands as a major metaphor at the center of the novel is a good example of Darwinian evolutionary thought. The heap, though apparently just amorphous matter, represents a potentially enormous possible warehouse in which almost everything can be discovered. In other words, the dustheap is a hiding-place for vital signs. For example, we know that, as the story progresses, in the dust-heap the cash-box and the Dutch bottle are found.

The dust-heap is also in itself matter which can easily be re-invested like capital or put back into circulation. This characteristic of the dust-heap is shown at the end of the novel, with the mysterious carting away of the dustheap to some unknown but highly profitable destination. It is an outstanding illustration of the characteristic of the dust-heap. Like Darwin's nature in which all the chains about evolutionary evidences are buried, the dust-heap represents the encroaching meaningfulness of everything in the Victorian city, where nothing, not even the most elementary substance, is insignificant.

*Our Mutual Friend* is also a conversion story with social significance in an industrializing period. The story deals with class, wealth, and social mobility in Victorian society. Plot and moral action are tightly bound in a

multiple action that reminds us of *Bleak House*. Although the novel concerns a moral ordeal and test, especially in the case of Bella Wilfer, in *Our Mutual Friend* Dickens separates the subjects of money and class, dealing with them in different actions, though there is plenty of linking material in the chorus of the Veneerings and the Podsnaps.

The story of Bella and the Boffins might have involved a class problem, but it is simply interpreted as a fable about love and money, whereas the story of Lizzie Hexam and her rival lovers deals expressly with problems of changing social strata. For example, Bradley Headstone, the repressed, respectable, and passionate schoolmaster, is opposed to Eugene Wrayburn, the idle, debilitated, able, and perverse gentleman. Backed by Charley, Lizzie's clever and ambitious brother, these characters act out a splendid crime of passion, which is thickly documented as determined by social forces.

The best thing in the novel is the psychological study of crime. Although, in *The Origin of Species*, Darwin does not mention any social vice, when we expand his theory into the context of social Darwinism, it is possible that social vices are the results of struggles in society, including Victorian society.

In the analysis of Bradley, the teacher, Dickens moves

out of the so-called criminal classes to draw a new kind of monster whose violence, repression, and jealousy are part of a deadly struggle for respectability and sexuality. Like animals described in the chapter of "sexual selection" in *The Origin of Species*, Bradley does not go away beyond the limit of animals in the struggle for mating.

Dickens's method seems deceptively simple, using socio-psychological analysis. But what is admirable and far from simple is the social criticism with the control of contrary feelings.

During the scene in Bradley's schoolroom, for instance, Rogue Riderhood enters in the ridiculous guise of a friendly visitor who wants to put the children through their paces. The well-drilled chorus of children chirping their facts speaks fully for the education that has shaped Bradley.

Dickens creates a powerful anatomy of a corrupting society, ruled and moved by greed and ambition, that is fulfilled with fantasies of virtue and conversion. That contemptuous insight out of which he drew the Podsnap family and the rich dust heaps where the scavenging Wegg prods with his wooden leg is realized in sensuous detail and appropriate language for the description of the author's society. Dickens can point the virtue of a saint, but he often speaks in the neutral language that expresses neither

personality nor class, as in Mrs.Boffin or Lizzie, where style glosses over the social difficulties of class and marriage. Dickens seems to consider virtue as a weapon to survive in society rather than as Christian goodwill.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

It is commonly thought that science and literature have little in common because they inhabit different worlds. Generally speaking, literature is thought to be in the world of imagination and science in the world of fact. However, the two have, at least, one definitely common aspect: the treatment of facts through imagination, because "all the great scientific theories arose from a major leap of the imagination."<sup>56</sup> And as the treatment of facts is affected by the ethos of the period, though Dickens and Darwin do not seem to have any direct relationship, there are some common denominators between their works, especially Dickens's novels published around 1859 and Darwin's *The Origin of Species*.

A few recent critics like George Levine, Gillian Beer, and Howard Fulweiler do mention connections between the two Victorian authors.

The connection between Dickens and Darwin was not a simple one of analogy, however, or "something in the air," but was in fact quite direct. Not only was there a

general climate of interest in natural philosophy at mid-century, but this general interest was specially reflected in Dickens's own periodical, *All the Year Round*.<sup>57</sup>

Although he mentions the relationship, Fulweiler does not explain or pinpoint precisely what it is. George Levine's explanation is clearer:

No literate person living between 1836 and 1870 could have escaped knowing about Dickens. After 1859, the same would have been true about Darwin. While Darwin rewrote for nineteenth-century culture the myth of human origins, secularizing it yet giving it a comic grandeur and a tragic potential, Dickens was the great mythmaker of the new urban middle class, finding in the minutiae of the lives of the shabby genteel, the civil servants, the "ignobly decent," as Gissing's novelist Biffin called them, great comic patterns of love and community, and great tragic possibilities of dehumanization and impersonal loss.<sup>58</sup>

Levine does little more than state that the relationship between Dickens and Darwin was caused by the simultaneity of

their lives. His explanation is scanty and unsatisfactory, because we can imagine so many reverse cases. The connection between the two is developed to a somewhat greater degree by Gillian Beer, who says that

The organisation of *The Origin of Species* seems to owe a good deal to the example of one of Darwin's most frequently read authors, Charles Dickens, with its apparently unruly superfluity of material gradually and retrospectively revealing itself as order, its superfecundity of instance serving as argument which can reveal itself only *through* instance and relation (Beer's italics).<sup>59</sup>

Beer explains that the similarity between the works of Dickens and *The Origin of Species* was caused by Darwin's habit of reading Dickens.

This dissertation began with the thesis that, beyond the three citations mentioned above, there are many bases to find similarity between the two writers' works. This study began with an analysis of the atmosphere of the mid-Victorian age in which Dickens and Darwin lived. The dominant atmosphere of the period is the product of capitalism based on laissez-faire economic theory which



emphasized individuals' abilities to compete. Therefore, we can infer that laissez-faire atmosphere permeated individuals whether they recognized it or not. From this assumption, if we admit that Darwin's theory is the interpretation of given evidences, the works of Dickens and Darwin have serious similarity that is the ethos of their period. In fact the critic Michael Ruse argues:

an important factor in Charles Darwin's development of his theory of evolution through natural selection was the philosophy of science in England in the 1830s.<sup>60</sup>

This kind of approach to literature provides a materialistic interpretation of human beings, because this theory "thrusts the human into the dispassionate and material investigations hitherto reserved for rocks and stars" (Levine, p.1) and gives at least one major advantage: understanding of literary works in the context of the writer's times.

As previously mentioned, Dickens and Darwin were contemporaries. In 1859, Darwin published *The Origin of Species* which is a long argument about natural selection or the preservation of favored groups in the struggle for life. And a few years ago, Alfred Wallace wrote an article on evolutionary theory, pointing out

that two naturalists, Darwin and Wallace, independently discovered the principle of natural selection has aroused the interest of those who like to claim that the theory reflects the ideology of Victorian Britain.<sup>61</sup>

In other words, the evolutionary theory is the result of "a trend that reflected the changing power structure of British and indeed of Western society" (Bowler, 13). Darwin's evolutionary ideas supply the "scientific ability to penetrate areas of knowledge" to rationalists, or to liberals -- "an optimistic philosophy of progress," to liberals, or "undermining theory of moral values and social orders" to conservatives (Bowler, 13).

The ideas of Darwin in *Origin* can be summarized into three phrases: struggle for existence, survival of the fittest, and natural selection. In his book Darwin outlines by enormous evidences acquired during his five-year journey how natural selection occurs through the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest in the natural world.

From the sociological side, however, we can interpret evolutionary theory differently: "evolutionism as a means of demonstrating the superiority of new ways of looking at

nature and society" (Bowler, 23). In fact, in the mid-Victorian period, the middle class from the new industrialization was seeking to wrest control of society from the old landed interest, and Darwin and his major relatives came from a class which saw social progress as the result of individual human efforts. Therefore, we can infer that Darwinism is the centerpiece of the liberal philosophy in the Mid-Victorian period as progressionism of the middle class, and at the same time it is "a clear indication of the congruence between Darwin's thinking and the competitive ethos of Victorian capitalism" (Bowler, 170).

The ideas of Darwin mentioned above seem to have permeated Dickens's works published near 1859: *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). In *Bleak House*, the similarity that we can find easily is the characteristic congruence between the world of Chancery in Dickens and the natural world in Darwin. The Chancery world that is connected with all the characters and events is not different from Darwin's "entangled bank." *Bleak House's* opening statement, "as much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth," (1) and with "dogs "undistinguishable in mire," (5) is much like Darwin's description of inter-connection in "the entangled bank."

Another similarity between the two worlds is the undistinguishableness. Like fog spreading everywhere, the world of Chancery is constantly changing, where "what seems familiar becomes strangely unfamiliar as we look more closely."<sup>62</sup> This characteristic of Chancery reminds us of Darwinian nature in which "the boundaries between species and varieties blur."<sup>63</sup>

As one aspect of the "blurring" world, we have the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case. As the narrator tells us, it is "so complicated that no man alive knows what it means" (52); Chancery cannot be explained clearly, and those who insist that they understand it are operating under an illusion. This anti-Platonic and anti-essential world is another aspect of Darwinian nature.

Whatever Chancery is, it is beyond grasping through language or logic, and it cannot be comprehended since it evokes a powerful ambivalence.

In *Bleak House*, Dickens uses two different narrators in order to show the ultimate connectedness of the apparently unconnected. According to J. Hillis Miller "the present tense describes a world which seems to come into existence from moment to moment under the eyes of the passive spectator as he finds,"<sup>64</sup> and the past tense is the description of "the world which had passed away."<sup>65</sup> The

interconnection Dickens achieves in this novel is the same as Darwin's time conception.

Although the main plot of this novel is the discovery of Esther Summerson's parentage, the recurring question through all of *Bleak House* is "what connexion can there be?" Dickens employs a narrative technique that arranges incoherently separate events to the coherent plot. Until past the middle of this novel, we do not realize clearly the connection among the events. The hidden bond that connects people with other people reminds us of Darwin's hidden bond that implies the construction of a natural system:

All true classification is genealogical; . . . community of descent is the hidden bond which naturalists have been unconsciously seeking, and not some unknown plan of creation. (p.404)

As the story goes on, we find the characters, Esther, Jo, Tulkinghorn and even Rouncewell, who link the apparently unrelated city and rural life, poverty and wealth, lower class and aristocracy, and we can safely say that Dickens's preoccupation with discovering connections links him in one way with a tradition of narrative technique and in another to Darwinian styles of investigation and explanation.

One last thing that must be mentioned is a "narrow track of blood," because detection and the detective are a major plot of *Bleak House*. In the process of the detective story, the main weapon of Bucket is induction, which is the same procedure used by Darwin. In this respect, Dickens's world often seems to be a narrative enactment of Darwin's theory.

*Hard Times* shows one distinct aspect of evolution: the survival of the fittest. The novel is the story of the people of Coketown representing various aspects of Victorian urban life. In the novel, Dickens shows not only various types of characters but also an industrialized city as the arena for existence. *Hard Times* is the representation of Victorian people and society, and a good example for understanding of Victorian culture. As the implicit presentation of evolution, there are various kinds of conflicts between people, and the essence of the conflicts is the same as of nature. Like Darwin's case of birds "destroying life" and the "nestlings destroyed by birds," Coketown people, whether they realize it or not, destroy other people's lives. As a result, people are divided into two groups: the winners stay and enjoy their present situations, and the losers are destroyed or move on.

Bitzer, like a chameleon which is skillful in

transformation, Sissy Jupe, who is skillful in adapting herself in different situations, and Bounderby, who constantly boasts of the ascent from "his old ignorance and old poverty," (17) all belong to the category of winners. Signor Jupe, Blackpool, and the Gradgrinds are the losers. Signor Jupe is a typical loser who can no longer perform in the circus because of his declining physical strength. Blackpool suffers from the social relationship with his fellow workers. His wretched death is not the result of his declining physical condition but of his deficient sociability in Coketown. The Gradgrinds' unhappy fate as losers comes from the limited scope of their viewpoints to the world. Jameson hits on a central point when he calls this novel "the education of the educator,"<sup>66</sup> for their unhappiness comes from defective education.

Another similarity between the Coketown of Dickens and the nature of Darwin is that both show systems indifferent to human affairs. As objective beings, like "the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness" that swings its head "monotonously up and down" (22), nature and the Coketown system stand apart from human society. Darwin's nature is not so different from Coketown, for in each there is no human morality or celestial rules for lives. By "nature," Darwin means "only the aggregate action and product of many natural laws, and by laws only the

ascertained sequence of event" (*Origin* 88). That means that Darwin's world has "no moral significance," "no perfection," "no intelligent design," "no purpose," the world of Coketown is indifferent to "moral significance."

*Our Mutual Friend* shows "an intricate pattern of mutual relationships conducted in a chaotic environment by individuals seeking their own advantage and acting without either a superintending intelligence or a common end."<sup>67</sup> In the novel, the dustheap is the central symbol of the fictional world as was Chancery in *Bleak House*. The dustheap itself bears a clear analogy to the chief insight of *Origin*: "the accumulation of innumerable slight variation is the fundamental condition from which natural selection brings about change" (435). Like the geological record, the mounds are composed of old bones as well as other disparate objects whose positions and value in the dustheap have no plan. Instead, they simply accumulate. All of society contributes to the pile, and the dustheap grows slowly by chance and random selection. The whole story, which is developed with the search for the will of Hexam, is connected with the dustheap as generations are connected with natural selection through consecutive accumulation of small variations in genus.

In creating their literary characters, novelists cannot



stand apart from the intellectual, political, social and economic atmosphere of their age. The figures in fiction serve as literal embodiments of the values, assumptions and beliefs--both conscious and unconscious--that shape it. Victorian novelists shared a preoccupation with their culture, and their redefinition of the characters in their novels are another aspect of the spirit of the age. Dickens is not excluded, nor is Darwin is an exception, though he is a scientist emphasizing facts or objective evidence. This dissertation has attempted to find similarity between two really different fields in an attempt to develop a way to understand literary works through the context of the times in which the works were born, and, I believe, that kind of reading produces a valuable insight.

## NOTES

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10. Stephen Gould. *Ever Since Darwin* (Norton, 1979), 21.
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- 26.Storey. 20.
- 27.J. Hillis Miller. *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* (Harvard UP, 1958), 166.
- 28.Levine. 121.
- 29.Robert Donovan. "Structure and Idea in *Bleak House*." *ELH* 29 (1962): 188.
- 30.Charles Darwin. *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin 1809-1880*. ed. Nora Barlow (Norton, 1969), 98.
- 31.Beer. 8.
- 32.Karen Jahn. "Fit to Survive: Christian Ethics in *Bleak House*" *Studies in the Novel* 18 (1986): 367-380.
- 33.Michael Ghiselin. *The Triumph of Darwinian Method*. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1969).
- 34.see Levine Ch.5 "Darwin's Revolution: From Natural Theory to Natural Selection."
- 35.Flat characters were called "humours" in the seventeenth century and are sometimes called types, or caricatures. In their purest form, they are constructed around a single idea or quality.
- For more information see Forster, E.M. *Aspects of the Novel* (Penguin, 1976), 103-4.
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- 38.Stanley Edgar hyman. *The Tangled Bank: Darwin, Marx,*

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