

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

SANTA CRUZ

DICKENS AND DARWIN

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
Of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LITERATURE

by

Nirshan Perera

June 2012

The Dissertation of Nirshan Perera
is approved

Professor John O. Jordan, Chair

Professor Loisa Nygaard

Professor Richard Terdiman

Tyrus Miller
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Copyright © by

Nirshan Perera

2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Dickens's Darwin.....	1
Chapter One: Nemo's Daughter.....	10
Chapter Two: Pip's Progress.....	31
Chapter Three: Rokesmith's Forge.....	83
Conclusion: Drood's Death.....	140
Bibliography.....	143

ABSTRACT

“Dickens and Darwin”

by Nirshan Perera

This dissertation examines how Charles Dickens’s last completed novels, which appeared after the publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859), process Victorian anxieties about evolutionary origins and connections. I argue that Dickens’s thematic work with origins and identity—specifically in *Great Expectations* (1860-61) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65)—ultimately transcends the epistemological dislocations of Darwinism through an affirmation of self-determination and development over biological determination and origins. I examine how this is registered most powerfully in the novels’ emphasis on the liberatory and redemptive nature of self-narration and narrative fantasy. Furthermore, I read this aesthetic assertion as Dickens’s developing response to Darwinian evolutionary theory and a bridge between the social commentary of his last two completed novels. This aesthetic counterpositioning demonstrates how Dickens’s engagement with Darwinian science was complex and richly contradictory. I begin by summarizing and synthesizing Goldie Morgentaler’s and Anny Sadrin’s key work on issues of heredity and parentage in Dickens’s oeuvre. As Morgentaler and Sadrin have argued, Dickens’s work before 1859 primarily articulates a deterministic

vision of cohesion and continuity in personal and social identity. Dickens's treatment of self-formation, however, becomes increasingly critical of hereditary determinants and undergoes a radical unraveling in his post-*Origin* work. Building on Morgentaler's and Sadrin's work, among others, I argue that *Great Expectations* is ultimately unable to harmonize the deterministic tenets of evolutionary theory with the liberatory desires that underwrite any act of self-narration. Retrospective narration becomes a site for remaking origins and identity through the fruitful distortions of storytelling. Dickens's next and last finished novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, extends and heightens this work. I present an extended reading and recontextualization of the lengthy soliloquy that bisects the book—in which the central character hijacks the narrative authority of the novel's third-person omniscient narrator and seeks to remake himself through a conspicuous act of self-narration. The Harmon soliloquy grapples with issues of origin and predestination and privileges even more emphatically the self-germinating potential of the individual over hereditary and environmental determinants.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank John Jordan for his stewardship of my doctoral work and, more importantly, what stands behind it: my growth and maturation as a scholar and a teacher under his tutelage. John, you have been a mentor, teacher, and friend to me, and I hope, one day, to be something of the professor you are. I would also like to thank Loisa Nygaard and Dick Terdiman for their mentorship, encouragement, and friendship. Loisa, honestly some of my best memories of grad school are simply of talking to you in your office—I have always found your passion and enthusiasm as a scholar contagious and incredibly inspiring. Dick, your astute and exacting but patient and nurturing guidance is reflected in the pages that follow—thank you. I am very grateful to the Eugene Cota-Robles Program and the Anne and Jim Bay Endowment for Victorian Literature for their generous support of my graduate studies and doctoral research. Lastly, I would like to thank my family for their unwavering support and overflowing encouragement, especially my two baby girls—Zadie and Zoe, the best things I made in grad school—and my wife, Jen, who does not particularly like Dickens but who loves, loves, loves me. Joj, I'm excited we've gotten to this point but am more excited about what comes after! Thank you for demonstrating every day what you had engraved on my wedding ring ten years ago: "Barkis is willin'."

INTRODUCTION: DICKENS'S DARWIN

This is a study of Charles Dickens's treatment of self-determination before and after the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*. Building on the work of Goldie Morgentaler and Anny Sadrin, among others, I examine how Dickens's deterministic grasp of hereditary and social factors in the formation of the self gives way, in the Darwinian ferment of the 1860s, to a more flexible vision of identity that privileges the transmutative power of the individual will and imagination.

While I reference Dickens's journalism and short fiction, his speeches and personal correspondence throughout this study, I specifically highlight how the above trajectory emerges in Dickens's major novels—the main sites of his developing views on personal identity. Dickens's early and middle novels foreground and privilege the immutable forces of familial and social identity. Dickens's mature post-Darwinian work, however, articulates a new, self-directed sense of identity formation—one that emphasizes the power of the human creative consciousness and de-emphasizes the importance of hereditary, social, and environmental influences. Conspicuous family portraits—in novels like *Oliver Twist* (1837-39) and *Bleak House* (1852-53)—that function as fixed markers of social identity and the dictates of heredity are replaced in late period texts—like *Great Expectations* (1860-61) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65)—by outsize acts

of self-performance and role-playing, which enact Dickens's insistence (amid pronouncement's of his "permanent exhaustion"¹ in a Victorian world post-Darwin) on the inexhaustible capacity of the human imagination to renew and transform the self.

Much of the discussion that follows is anchored in a linked reading of *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*—the two novels Dickens completed after the publication of *The Origin of Species*, when he entered the post-Darwinian world, along with everyone else. The last decade of Dickens criticism—which has encompassed bicentenary celebrations of the birth of both Dickens and Darwin—has produced a particularly vibrant vein of criticism exploring Darwinian references and themes in Dickens's writing,² built on George Levine's foundational work in *Darwin and the Novelists*. *Dickens and Darwin* aims to both echo and extend the current critical conversation on how Dickens's post-Darwin fiction engages and processes Victorian anxieties about evolutionary origins and connections. I contend that Dickens's thematic work with identity, origin, and influence engages the epistemological dislocations of Darwinism but ultimately transcends them through a powerful affirmation of self-determination and development over biological determination and origins.

I specifically intervene in the ongoing critical discussion of Dickens and Darwin by demonstrating that this is registered most powerfully in the novels' emphasis on the cathartic and transformative capacity of self-narration and

narrative fantasy—on their affirmation of the capacity of the self, and the liberatory and redemptive nature of narrative and fantasy, to transmute hereditary determinants. I read this aesthetic assertion as Dickens’s developing response to Darwinian evolutionary theory and a bridge between the social commentary of his last two mature, completed novels. To trace this aesthetic counterpositioning as an evolving theme in Dickens’s last completed novels is to recognize that Dickens’s engagement with Darwinian science was complex and richly contradictory.

Although the title of this study is *Dickens and Darwin*, Dickens’s work is the central subject of my investigation. Others, most notably George Levine and Kate Flint,³ have written expansively on the interrelationship of Dickens’s and Darwin’s work and examined issues of reciprocal influence. This study, however, examines how Dickens appropriated some aspects of Darwinian science and rejected others—my work here is concerned with Dickens’s Darwin, with the contradictory ways in which Dickens deploys Darwinism and how it impacted his thinking on issues of identity development that were career-long concerns.

Dickens and Darwin is comprised of three chapters that progressively elaborate how Dickens’s writing deals with the development of the self and self-determination before and after 1859. Chapter one, “Nemo’s Daughter,” functions as a preface for the discussion in the two subsequent chapters, which deal with Dickens’s response to Darwinism. It surveys Dickens’s treatment of

personal identity—and associated ideas of origin, heredity, social adaptation, and environmental influence—in his major novels prior to the November 1859 publication of *The Origin of Species*. Surveying and synthesizing the work of Morgentaler and Sadrin, I assert that these issues were always central concerns in Dickens’s oeuvre, from *Oliver Twist* (1837-39) to *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). Dickens’s pre-*Origin* novels primarily articulate a deterministic vision of cohesion and continuity in personal and class identity. This understanding, however, undergoes radical disruption and change—a transmutation—in Dickens’s post-*Origin* work. Rejecting the *inexorable* concept of biological and social determinism highlighted by Darwin’s theory of an evolutionary process powered by natural selection, Dickens moves toward a new understanding of self-formation governed by an aesthetic of self-determination modeled on the mechanisms of self-narration.

Chapter two, “Pip’s Progress,” outlines some ways in which *Great Expectations* is working, in the immediate wake of Darwinism, with Victorian anxieties about origins, with the instability of hierarchical relations, with the fragility of narratives of progress, and with the startling implications of revealed relationships. We can see *Great Expectations* actively wrestling with the same issues and questions Darwin’s work unleashed in scientific circles, though it is dealing with them in a literary register. Kate Flint, writing specifically about Darwinian currents in *Great Expectations*, puts it this way: “Dickens shared a

common set of concerns, and to some extent a common language—both descriptive and metaphorical—in which to discuss them, with those working in what were ostensibly different disciplines” (153). While Dickens never wrote directly about evolutionary theory during this time—only three articles on Darwin’s work were published in *All the Year Round* in 1860 and 1861, none of them perhaps authored by Dickens⁴ (though he certainly had a hand in editing and approving them) and all of them addressing Darwin’s ideas in conflicted tones⁵—the epistemological dislocations produced by Darwin’s work, clearly animate the narrative of the first major novel Dickens began writing post November 24, 1859, in the new era ushered in by the publication of *The Origin of Species*.

Great Expectations, I argue in this chapter, offers a reaction to Darwinism that is ultimately unable to harmonize the deterministic tenets of evolutionary theory with the liberatory desires that underwrite any act of self-narration. In *Great Expectations*, retrospective narration becomes a site for re-enacting the trauma of origins that registers the reality of stagnation—an immobilization that is inscribed in the double-p alliteration of narrator’s very name, Pip (a name that he both gives to himself and is not permitted to give up)—as well as the necessary fantasy, however fragile, of release through the fruitful distortions of storytelling.

“Rokesmith’s Forge,” the third chapter, considers some ways in which Dickens’s next and last finished novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, extends and heightens this work. A rich vein of recent critical work on Dickens and science and Dickens and Darwin, specifically, has illuminated the direct invocation and reworking of Darwinian motifs and memes in *Our Mutual Friend*. I work to develop some of these insights by focusing, again, on the text’s affirmation of the capacity of the self, and the liberatory and redemptive nature of narrative and fantasy, to transmute hereditary determinants, which I read as a further elaboration of Dickens’s response to Darwinian evolutionary theory and the connective tissue that joins the imaginative work of his last two completed novels.

While my focus in this chapter remains on *Our Mutual Friend*, I assert more broadly that the characters in Dickens’s later fiction who resist or refuse to conform to the narratives that have been written for them engage in kind of a narrative rebellion that articulates a shifting aesthetic preoccupation with how the self-shaping capacity of the individual can be infinitely more powerful than biological, social, and environmental factors. For an ailing Dickens, working in what he surely knew was the denouement of his trajectory as a writer, this possibility of transcendence is firmly rooted in the imaginative capacity of the individual to transmute himself—the human creative consciousness, Dickens insists in his final fiction, is the most potent engine of transmutation.

Of particular note, this chapter offers a new reading of the notoriously problematic soliloquy at the center of Dickens's last completed novel, which most critics and commentators, from the nineteenth century to the present, have described as an aesthetic blunder, a blight that speaks to the waning imaginative powers of a once-great author. Building on the insights of Carol MacKay, in this chapter I argue that the lengthy soliloquy that bisects the book, in which the central character hijacks the narrative authority of the novel's third-person omniscient narrator and seeks to remake himself through a conspicuous act of self-narration, has a largely unrecognized centrality (as MacKay has noted, one discarded title for the novel, in fact, was *Rokesmith's Forge*). I read Rokesmith's soliloquy as a forceful enunciation of self-remaking and examine how the monumental soliloquy at the center of *Our Mutual Friend* intensely speaks to the self-creative and transmutative power of the benevolently directed individual imagination. Like Pip's transmutation of himself and his life story in *Great Expectations's* first-person narrative, Harmon-Handford-Rokesmith's soliloquy grapples with issues of origin and predestination and asserts the self-germinating potential of the individual over hereditary and environmental determinants.

In "Drood's Death," my conclusion, I briefly carry these thoughts forward to Dickens's last and unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

¹ See Henry James's review of *Our Mutual Friend* in *The Nation* (New York), 21 December 1865.

² In addition to Levine's *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction* (University of Chicago Press, 1988), see especially Goldie Morgentaler's *Dickens and Heredity* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000.); Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots* (London: ARK, 1985); Howard Fulweiler's "A Dismal Swamp: Darwin, Design, and Evolution in *Our Mutual Friend*" (*Nineteenth Century Literature* 49 [1994]: 50-74); Kate Flint's "Origins, Species, and Great Expectations" (*Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species: New Interdisciplinary Essays*. David Amigone and Jeff Wallace, eds. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Ernest Fontana's "Darwinian Sexual Selection and Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*" (*Dickens Quarterly* 22 [2005]: 153-71.); Nicola Bown's "What the Alligator Didn't Know: Natural Selection and Love in *Our Mutual Friend*" (*19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 10 [2010]. <http://19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/article/view/567/532>); and Ben Winyard and Holly Furneaux's "Dickens, Science and the Victorian Literary Imagination" (*19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 10 [2010]. <http://19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/article/view/572>).

³ See Levine's *Darwin and the Novelists* and Flint's "Origins, Species, and *Great Expectations*."

⁴ See Ella Oppenlander's *Dickens' All the Year Round: Descriptive Index and Contributor List*. Oppenlander's reference book is a rich attempt to reproduce Ann Lohrli's work tracing all the contributors of the anonymously published articles Dickens's previous journal *Household Words*. However, not having access to G.H. Wills office book for *All the Year Round*, which has been missing since the turn of the twentieth century when it was last cited by the editor B.W. Matz, Oppenlander's index understandably has many gaps.

⁵ See "Species," an eight-column article published on June 2, 1860; "Natural Selection," a 12-column article published on July 7, 1860; and "Transmutation of Species," a six-column article published on March 9, 1861. The overall tone of these articles is difficult to identify—some critics have construed them to be critical of Darwin's work, while some argue that they endorse it. All three articles praise Darwin's intellectual courage for

advancing provocative and revolutionary scientific ideas and detail his theories in layman's terms while remaining cautiously skeptical about some of the, especially human, implications of his work.

CHAPTER ONE: NEMO'S DAUGHTER

“No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; compared these every day associates with those of my happier childhood; and felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man, crushed in my breast. The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, was passing away from me, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written. My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander desolately back to that time of my life.”

—Charles Dickens, “Autobiographical Fragment”¹

For most of his writing life, Charles Dickens was deeply interested in how the past impinges on the present—a fascination that veers into the domain of self-obliteration in his autobiographical fragment. Though the narrative of the great author writing his way out of the traumas of the past has been a mainstay of Dickens criticism from the *The Wound and the Bow* (1941) forward, my work here builds particularly on two key thematic studies—Goldie Morgentaler’s *Dickens and Heredity: When Like Begets Like* (2000) and Anny Sadrin’s *Parentage and Inheritance in the Novels of Charles Dickens* (1994). Both Morgentaler and Sadrin trace a trajectory that I invoke in my work with Dickens and Darwin—a trajectory that highlights how Dickens’s novels deal with the past, and its relationship to the development of the self, in progressively complicated and nuanced ways. Both critics argue that Dickens’s early novels largely deploy a dynamic of simple

determinism that preserves social and personal identity through the protective continuities of heredity and inheritance. This initial model, however, is problematized and ultimately abandoned in the narratives of Dickens's later work, which increasingly configure heredity and inheritance as threats to the development of social and personal identity. In this chapter, I will foreground the readings of *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend* that follow by primarily reviewing and synthesizing Morgentaler's and Sadrin's studies—both of which contend that something of a critical vacuum exists on the subject of Dickens, heredity, and inheritance.

Morgentaler, in particular, asserts that that subject of Dickens and heredity has received insufficient critical attention, despite the fact that Dickens was centrally preoccupied with issues of heredity, “the biological process by which traits are transmitted from parent to child,” and there is “not a single one of his novels which does not carry some statement, no matter how playful or incidental, about the amazing resemblances between children and parents” (ix). She prefaces her investigation by noting that it does not matter that nineteenth-century theories of heredity “were all more or less incorrect”—even though an accurate understanding of genetics was a twentieth-century development, “even a mistaken theory can reap philosophical and aesthetic rewards” (ix). Morgentaler notes that heredity, a “seemingly self-evident process” in Dickens's novels, “lends itself to larger philosophical concerns . . . towards the formation of personal

identity, towards issues of descent, of history, and of time” (ix). Though Sadrin’s specific focus is on the economic and ontological *Bildungsromans* of Dickens’s protagonists, she similarly examines how the working through of parentage and inheritance becomes “a necessary step toward self-knowledge, self-definition, and self-acceptance” throughout Dickens’s oeuvre (x).

Morgentaler states that Dickens’s grasp of heredity, in his early work especially, articulates aspects of several popular nineteenth-century cultural beliefs about parental influence, particularly the doctrine of maternal impressions—a belief dating from classical times that emphasized the role of maternal influence, particularly in utero, on the identity and consequent development of the child (35). Although this idea, as Morgentaler notes, appears as early as *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-37) in the comic description of “Betsey Martin, widow, one child and one eye. Goes out charring and washing, by the day; never had more than one eye, but knows her mother drank bottled stout and shouldn’t wonder if that caused it,” . . . (441)² it acquires a more central and serious significance in *Oliver Twist*, Dickens’s first novel, in which maternal impressions for the foundling Oliver carry the unalterable stamp of his true class identity and its associated moral qualities. Referencing Juliet McMaster’s insight that looks and morality tend to be closely associated in Dickens’s texts,³ Morgentaler points out that the maternal features that are repeated in Oliver confer upon him “his biological inheritance which protects” him “from the

corrupting effects of his surroundings, and it is this same biological inheritance which ensures his happy ending, safely ensconced within the middle-class milieu of his parents” (37). Oliver is tellingly referenced as the “living copy”⁴ (*Oliver Twist* 93) of the maternal portrait that hangs in Mr. Brownlow’s bedroom, with which he has a nearly metaphysical relationship that expresses, as Morgentaler notes, a mystical sense of the power of heredity that resonates with the nineteenth-century concept of vitalism—the existence and transmission of mysterious vital forces that influence the development of living things (40):

The eyes, the head, the mouth; every feature was the same. The expression was, for the instant, so precisely alike, that the minutest line seemed copied with an accuracy which was perfectly unearthly. (93)

This scene of supernatural hereditary connection channeled through family portraiture—Oliver remarks, “The eyes look so sorrowful; and where I sit, they seemed fixed upon me . . . as if it were alive and wanted to speak to me, but couldn’t (*Oliver Twist* 90)—initiates a recognizable trope in Dickens’s fiction, Morgentaler observes, in which portraits “do the work of genealogy by demonstrating the persistence of features from one generation to the next” (41). This trope, she notes, invokes and plays with the confluent purposes of biological reproduction and artistic reproduction in the tradition of nineteenth-century portraiture: “Portraits are permanent records of family features which are simultaneously preserved through time and shielded from the ravages of time.

Heredity is the natural equivalent of portraiture, preserving family features over the course of generations and maintaining them intact despite the passing of time” (41). Family portraits in Dickens’s fiction, Morgentaler adds, function “not merely as signals of hereditary relationships but also as decoders of the mysteries of connection,” hinting “at heretofore unacknowledged family ties, thus making visible on canvas the hidden bonds,” the mysterious ‘connexions’ as they will become in *Bleak House*, “which link one character to another” (41).

Sadrin observes that the *Bildungsroman* of the orphan Oliver, lost in the wilds of the world, does not trace the traditional metamorphosis of the form; rather, Oliver’s journey back to his properly bourgeois self involves the recollection of an “embryonic life” that is buried deep within himself—a prenatal casting of class identity that he comes home to after he awakens at Mr.

Brownlow’s house:

The memories which peaceful country scenes call up, are not of this world, nor its thoughts and hopes . . . but beneath all this, there lingers, in the least reflective mind, a vague and half-formed consciousness of having held such feelings long before, in some remote and distant time; which calls up solemn thoughts of distant times to come. (262)

The narrative voice here, Sadrin notes, configures Oliver’s “progress” as a “pilgrimage to origins”—the text, she argues, creates a social fable that naturalizes the unalterable categories of Victorian class identity (41). Far from being a subversive exposé of “crime and poverty,” Dickens’s first novel narrates

a “return to order” in which “the homecoming of the lost child” primarily serves to redraw the divisions between “mutually exclusive worlds” (Sadrin 41).

Dickens, as Morgentaler observes, builds his first novel around the plot of hidden identity “which privileges the internal over the external” and works to “idealize the mysteries of biological inheritance” (45). This narrative device, which is something Dickens will continually return to and refine in his fiction, “relies on heredity as the mechanism by which nobility is encoded into the personalities of the disinherited, the orphaned, the illegitimate, and the outcast,” Morgentaler argues (45). Family and class connection, Dickens’s early novels demonstrate again and again, are most powerfully evident “in the blood of offspring” and the “the problem for the narrative is to resurrect the protagonist’s family out of the mists of time, to clarify the line of descent until it emerges from the obfuscating shadows of present confusion” (Morgentaler 46). There are “few truly autonomous beings in the Dickensian universe,” Morgentaler asserts, because identity is “conferred on the protagonist through his relationship to his own past” (46).

The strong dynamic of hereditary determinism that structures the narratives of Dickens’s early books also invokes the concept of “cyclical history” contained in the hereditary theory of preformation—the idea that identity is regularly and reliably repeated by offspring so “that all generations are more or less identical” (Morgentaler 46). Oliver, the virtuous orphan whose morality is a

kind of blood-borne inheritance, initiates a long line of Dickensian children who overcome immense hardships through an essential goodness that is an inherited, generational trait. This idea is directly conveyed, Morgentaler observes, again through a narrative reflection on portraiture, in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41):

If you have seen the picture-gallery of any one old family, you will remember how the same face and figure—often the fairest and slightest of them all—come upon you in different generations; and how you trace the same sweet girl through a long line of portraits—never growing old or changing—the Good Angel of the race—abiding by them in all reverses—redeeming all their sins . . .⁵ (525)

Little Nell “springs from a long line of sweet-natured angelic women, whose ancestry is demonstrated through the metaphor of the picture gallery” Morgentaler notes (47). Furthermore, Nell is “the culmination of this line, its apotheosis and finest product” who finally fulfills “the destiny of her line by remaining inviolate and pure—despite being constantly exposed to sexual threats” (Morgentaler 50).

According to Morgentaler, Dickens continues to configure heredity as an identity-determining “conservative force” in his early novels (60). Though his work with heredity becomes increasingly nuanced—for instance, his “opinions on the positive aspects of heredity” begin to alter (Morgentaler 52) and “his insistence on absolute determinism as a factor in the formation of the self”

becomes “more muted” (Morgentaler 53)—“the repetitive nature of hereditary endowment still stands for a stabilizing and secure element at the heart of life” (Morgentaler 60). Morgentaler, for instance, reads *Dombey and Son* (1846-48) as “an extended fable of heredity in which the evil forces of male dynastic ambition are aligned against the gentler and more humane qualities of love and affection handed down by mother to daughter” (53). Sadrin similarly reads the novel as a Lear story in which the elder Dombey’s “confusion of family and business relationships” destroy the sacrosanct narrative of generational reproduction and continuity (45):

But he loved his son with all the love he had. If there were a warm place in his frosty heart, his son occupied it; if its very hard surface could receive the impression of any image, the image of that son was there; though not so much as an infant, or as a boy, but as a grown man—the ‘Son’ of the Firm.⁶ (109)

As Sadrin observes, *Dombey and Son* is

notoriously, a novel that does not keep the promises of its title. With the death of little Paul in chapter 16, we realize that the henceforth superfluous ‘and son’ had been misleadingly ironic from the very start and we feel invited to interpret the structural and dramatic irony of the story as a welcome form of poetic justice, the well-deserved punishment of a proud and selfish father whom we have been educated to dislike for his cruelty to his daughter, his overbearing attitude to his domestics, his chilling affection for his son and heir, his businessman’s vision of private life. (44)

Since Dombey imagines his son as “the living embodiment of all his ambitions— affective, dynastic, economic,” family resemblance—“you Picture of your own, Papa!” (*Dombey and Son* 106) Miss Tox says to Paul—takes on strongly negative connotations as “Mr. Dombey’s indomitable pride is wrapped up in molding his son into a true replica of himself” (Morgentaler 53):

Paul and myself will be able, when the time comes, to hold our own—the House, in other words, will be able to hold its own, and maintain its own, and to hand down its own of itself . . . (61)

Dombey’s remark, for Morgentaler, demonstrates a strain of narcissistic self-absorption (Dombey, she notes, really “wants a copy of himself to love” [54]) that illustrates “the unsavory aspects of heredity” (54).

As Sadrin argues, the narrative, however, works from the outset to estrange the father from son (48):

Dombey was about eight-and-forty years of age. Son about eight-and-forty minutes. Dombey was rather bald . . . Son was very bald . . .
Dombey, exulting in the long-looked-for event, jingled and jingled the heavy gold watch-chain that depended from below his trim blue coat . . . Son with his little fists curled and clenched, seemed, in his feeble way, to be squaring at existence for having come upon him so unexpectedly. (11)

The narrative promise of linkage and continuity contained by the word “and” in the novel’s title—*Dombey and Son*—is immediately evacuated in the novel’s opening, Sadrin notes: “Deconstruction and construction are seen to be paradoxically connected from the first in Dickens’s narrative grammar. The

undermining of the father's plot is already at work in the narrator's syntax, weakening the foundations of the dream. Its full stops are like dead ends, preventing co-ordination" (48). This essential disconnection, Sadrin adds, continues right through to little Paul's deathbed scene (Sadrin 48), in which his father appears to him as an unrecognizable and frightening "figure with its head upon its hand . . . rarely lifting up its face" and painfully declaring at last " 'My own boy! Don't you know me?'" (*Dombey and Son* 222).

Patricia Marks has argued that *Dombey and Son* is principally concerned with issues of motherhood and female fertility, which the text configures in opposition to the sterility of masculine greed.⁷ For Morgentaler, however, Dickens's "unexpected and rather startling feminism here" is firmly located in "biological considerations": "What he is actually championing is not social, political, or educational equality for women, but an appreciation of their biological worth" (59). Florence, "one of Dickens's many female angels," "proves that a dynasty may spring just as well from the loins of a daughter, and that the result is a kinder, gentler, more loving line of descent (Morgentaler 59). Morgentaler notes that Dickens's manipulation of names particularly at the end of the text has clear genealogical implications: "In *Dombey and Son*, Mr. Dombey, who was named after his father, names his son after himself, while his daughter Florence names her son after her father and brother. Thus little Paul Dombey, who is named after his father, is reincarnated again in his nephew Paul

Gay, the son of his beloved sister Florence” (61). The recycling of names around Florence, the idealization of female love and fertility at the novel’s end stresses the succession and the revitalized continuity of the Dombey line: Referencing Diane Sadoff’s reading⁸ of the end of *Dombey and Son*, Morgentaler observes: “Little Paul, her brother reborn, links her to her father; Little Florence, herself reborn, links her to herself and to her mother” (61). Consequently, though *Dombey and Son* reflects on “the damaging effect of too strong an emphasis on the imperatives of bloodline and genealogy,” it “ends by resurrecting heredity as a positive force in human life” (Morgentaler 62).

Dickens’s “belief in the prescriptive grip of inborn traits” is destabilized further in *David Copperfield* (1849-50), Morgentaler argues (63). In this text, Dickens’s “favorite child,” “Dickens does not, as a rule, attribute talent to heredity, and certainly David’s literary gift, which is essentially Dickens’s own, is depicted in the novel as more the product of hard work and steadfast application than of inherited predilection” (Morgentaler 63). Though David’s literary beginnings are seeded in the books his father bequeaths him, his abilities, Morgentaler observes, are “ascribed to environmental factors, specifically the obsessive reading” he undertakes “to escape his miserable childhood” (63). In *David Copperfield*, Morgentaler argues, Dickens begins considering how “environment and experience may have a modifying effect on the raw material of hereditary endowment” as he “for the first time . . . posits the question of

nature versus nurture in terms of the difference between autonomy and determinism” (64).

The novel’s opening, for instance, frames David’s “obsessive thoughts about his father” in terms of a haunting, a “Hamletic opening” that articulates “the ghostly influence of the dead on the destinies of the living” (Morgentaler 65). Channeling his dead father’s infatuation with his child-bride, however, David’s “childhood adoration” of his childish mother initiates a behavioral pattern—“a model of attraction to girliness”—“that will culminate in his infatuation with Dora” (Morgentaler 66). This idea of identity development influenced by childhood environment “represents a new stage in Dickens’s understanding of heredity and its influence,” Morgentaler claims: “Dickens has transformed his previous reliance on hereditary resemblance as a means of explicating personality to a stress on the duplication of behavioral patterns from one generation to the next . . . to a notion of the individual reproducing during the course of his life the emotional patterns he has learned in childhood” (66). Though David, as Morgentaler notes, is “presented as bearing a strong resemblance to both his parents,” “resemblance is no longer defined as purely physical” and “now includes learned behavior as well as inherited predilection” (67).

What Betsey Trotwood, David’s adoptive mother, wants most for him is a break from the weak familial character he has inherited, Morgentaler notes:

But what I want you to be, Trot . . . I don't mean physically, but morally; you are very well physically—is a firm fellow. A fine firm fellow, with a will of your own. With resolution . . . With determination. With character, Trot—with strength of character that is not to be influenced, except on good reason, by anybody or anything. That's what I want you to be. That's what your father and mother might both have been, Heaven knows, and been the better for it.⁹ (283)

Betsey's exhortation to David, which repeatedly emphasizes his new name, Trotwood—an act of renaming which itself pulls David out of a line of descent—emphasizes the potential of individual development rooted in new environmental influences and, more importantly and centrally, the individual human will. It stresses, Morgentaler observes, the idea “that personality is subject to alteration through the free workings of the will and is not unalterably predetermined by inheritance” (68).

David's central quandary in the narrative—his struggle to “be the hero of my own life” (13) as he puts in the first sentence of the text, his self-reflexive fight to be the protagonist of his own life story, crowded with characters that overshadow him at every turn—is the struggle of the individual human will to wrest writerly control of one's own character and life narrative from others. David, Morgentaler notes, “is the first of Dickens's child protagonists to have the opportunity to be influenced by and to learn from events,” to be “shown as having the option of choice—and often choosing wrongly” (69).

However, the depiction of individual autonomy in *David Copperfield* remains problematic, Morgentaler argues (70). This is particularly visible, she notes, in David's eventual—and one could say predetermined—union to Agnes, the idealized figure of femininity that Dickens deploys in this text (70). A “mix of hereditary, cultural, and psychological forces predetermine David's attraction to Dora and stand in the way of his love for Agnes,” Morgentaler notes (70). Although we “are meant to understand that David finally breaks free of all . . . deterministic constraints when he recognizes Agnes's true worth,” Agnes is portrayed “in such idealized terms that she scarcely seems to be real” (Morgentaler 71). If Agnes's reality as a character is difficult to accept, Morgentaler continues, “it is even more difficult to accept David's marriage to her as the solution to the problem of personal autonomy versus determinism” (71).

David Copperfield, consequently, is “a chronicle of how patterns established in childhood and predetermined by heredity are repeated in adulthood,” but it also “suggests that these childhood patterns may be broken through the wisdom conferred by self-knowledge” (Morgentaler 71).

Dickens's work in *Bleak House* (1852-53), according to Sadrin, continues to examine the problematic aspects of parentage and inheritance by making Esther's “legacy of shame” central to the story primarily through the much remarked on, painfully self-effacing nature of her narrative voice (64-65). David

Copperfield's struggle to gain a voice in his own story is radically inverted in Esther's portion of *Bleak House*, in which her perpetual dilemma is keeping herself out of the story: "It seems so curious to me to be obliged to write all this about myself! As if this narrative were the narrative of *my* life! But my little body will soon fall into the back-ground now!"¹⁰ (40). As Sadrin notes, however, this narrative posturing is necessarily futile and frequently demonstrates a kind of "self-absorbing selflessness" as this dynamic of self-erasure paradoxically works to articulate Esther's presence, to "surreptitiously assert" her "as a heroine" (65):

I don't know how it is, I seem to be always writing about myself. I mean all the time to write about other people, and I try to think about myself as little as possible . . . but it is all of no use. I hope that any one who may read what I write, will understand that if these pages contain a great deal about me, I can only suppose it must be because I have really something to do with them, and can't be kept out (137).

Esther's essential namelessness—her absence of a hereditary context, her status as Nemo's daughter, no one's child—works intrusively in much the same way to constantly name her problematic presence. (As Miss Barbary tells her on her birthday, "It would have been far better, Little Esther that you had no birthday; that you had never been born!" [30].) As Sadrin observes, in this narrative of buried secrets and self-deception, the guilt, the familial shame that Esther incarnates, "will *not* be concealed" and, in fact, is constantly being made visible (66).

While *Oliver Twist*, as Morgentaler notes, is a narrative of an illegitimate child “redeemed and vindicated by his bloodline” (86)—a story of a orphan whose “inborn grace . . . presupposes the essential goodness of the parents from whom he sprang, and so absolves them of sin (86-87)—*Bleak House* presents an illegitimate child (a girl child, significantly) who is raised with the consciousness that she is “the emblem of parents’—especially her mother’s—sin, thereby emphasizing the innocent child’s complicity in biological processes over which she has no control” (89). For Morgentaler this shift is rooted in *Bleak House*’s examination of larger “issues of legality and legitimacy”—“Esther’s illegitimacy is generalized to imply a taint at the heart of society . . . Dickens’s choice of a bastard child as a co-narrator and central character creates reverberations throughout the text of his novel” (89).

Dickens, however, “champions Esther in the same way as he had earlier championed Oliver, by insisting on her essential goodness” (Morgentaler 89) and seeking to tie the inevitable revelation of her parentage to his “ultimate intention of contracting the entire web of society into a single entwining knot” (Morgentaler 93)—an overarching concept of human connectivity that is unambiguously apparent when social proclivities toward self-deception and willing blindness are peeled away. Esther’s central connection to everything the novel is about—her obvious identity as someone’s daughter—is most powerfully encoded in her appearance, her “double inheritance of looks,” the blended

features of which are the “tell-tale image of” her parents’ “forbidden union” (Sadrin 66). Esther’s remarkable appearance—a site of constant narrative obfuscation and effacement—articulates the identity of her parents to both everyone and no one, save Jo, “the street truth-teller,” who Sadrin notes (68) is the only character who plainly says of Esther ““She looks to me the t’other one”” (490).

Thus Esther’s disfigurement at the end of the novel is, for Sadrin, a kind of transformative moment that liberates her from hereditary taint and endows her with a new individual agency that removes her, in part, from an oppressive genealogy: “. . . at the end of the novel, the deformed has been transformed and the bastard child who has acquired for herself the right to be praised for her ‘true legitimacy’” [*Bleak House* 965] . . . can bear her inheritance ‘with a better kind of shame’” [*Bleak House* 275] (Sadrin 73). The “new face” (*Bleak House* 575) that Esther acquires at the end of novel, the heredity features of which have been effaced to the extent that no one can “think of any near tie between” (*Bleak House* 579) Esther and her mother, finally legitimizes Esther’s identity as Nemo’s—as no one’s—daughter. As Sadrin argues, “Esther exists as few Dickens heroes do: being a woman, with no need to transmit—and therefore inherit—any tokens of her origins, she has the privilege of existing as a heroine in her own right, self-made, self-written, self-t’othered, and when she looks in the glass, she needs only say ‘I am I’” (73).

Bleak House, the great novel of Dickens's middle period, demonstrates for Morgentaler "a looser model of development" that evolves away "from the strict determinism of his early novels" (157). Its innovative work with heredity and individual identity illustrates Dickens's "declining interest in heredity as a way of explaining heredity"—a shift that will find Dickens's exploring new ways to conceive of the "formation of the self" in his last three novels (Morgentaler 157). Morgentaler argues that Dickens's post-1859 novels in particular—*Great Expectations* (1860-61), *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65), and his unfinished work *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870-71)—show the author "discarding heredity entirely" in an "initial reaction to Darwin" that seeks "to blot out heredity altogether from his conception of human development and to replace it with the formative effects of environment" (157). Morgentaler speculates that "Darwin's theory allowed Dickens to shake off his earlier adherence to heredity as a way of explaining personality" and "escape the determinism" of his "earlier portrayals" of human development, in part, because "Darwin himself was so vague about how heredity worked" (157-58). Under "the influence of Darwin, Dickens lost both interest and faith in heredity, and his novels forsake this theme of hidden connection and interrelation," Morgentaler argues (199). In *Great Expectations* "this results in a demonstration that what binds one human being to another is a share in the same elemental nature (Morgentaler 199). In *Our Mutual Friend* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, however, "the notion of integrity usually associated

with heredity is replaced by images of dissolution and disintegration”

(Morgentaler 199).

Sadrin, similarly, argues that although Dickens’s final, mature work demonstrates his lifelong preoccupation with issues of parentage and inheritance, his engagement with these issues at the end of his writing life is markedly different, rejecting the strict determinism of succession (122). With its profusion of wills, *Our Mutual Friend*, in particular, is “the novelist’s testament of testaments, a final assessment of the question of parentage and inheritance that from *Oliver Twist* onward was so central” to his work (Sadrin 122). Sadrin offers an in-depth reading of Noddy Boffin’s role as a narrative “alchemist,” “pulling the strings of the plot” (143). She argues that Boffin, building on the earlier model of Magwitch, is an outsider who interrupts and mediates the dictates of parentage and inheritance (143). As Sadrin observes:

John Harmon is assuredly reinstated at the end of the book, recovering his father’s money and his father’s name, but he gets nothing in direct succession from his old sire: everything comes to him from the hands of Boffin, Boffin the servant, the ungentle, illiterate man who, by divesting himself of his inheritance, ensures the ‘genuine’ succession. Boffin’s role even makes John’s story much closer to Pip’s than might first meet the eye: formidable as it had seemed, the ghost of Old Harmon, which presided over the novel and haunted John’s memory, turns out to have been no more than his son’s Miss Havisham, a tyrant whose power to pass on money and the girl that went with it proves after all to have been quite deceptive. Boffin’s mediation is, after Magwitch’s, the greatest ideological revolution in the Dickens plot. (146-47)

In the two chapters that follow, I build on Morgentaler's and Sadrin's work on issues of heredity and inheritance in Dickens's work. The terrain I cover, however, is largely limited to his last two complete novels after the 1859 publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*—*Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*—though I address *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* very briefly in my conclusion. The reading I present of Dickens's post-1859 work—which argues that he abandons the strict hereditary, social, environmental determinism of his earlier fiction—builds on Morgentaler's and Sadrin's insights, as I have summarized and synthesized them here, in obvious ways. I argue, however, that Dickens replaces heredity and inheritance as key factors in the development of the self with a model that emphasizes the self-creative capacity of the human will and imagination—and I see this as the specific and central emphasis of his last completed novels.

-
- ¹ Qtd. in John Forster's *The Life of Charles Dickens*, vol. 1 (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, New York: EP Dutton, 1948), 22.
- ² Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (London and New York: Penguin, 2003).
- ³ See Juliet McMaster's *Dickens the Designer* (Totawa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1987), 4-7.
- ⁴ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (London and New York: Penguin, 2003). All subsequent references are to this edition of the novel.
- ⁵ Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (London and New York: Penguin, 2000).
- ⁶ Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son* (London and New York: Penguin, 2002). All subsequent references are to this edition of the novel.
- ⁷ Patricia Marks, "Dombey and the Milk of Human Kindness," *Dickens Quarterly* 11.1 (March 1994): 16.
- ⁸ Dianne Sadoff, *Monsters of Affection* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 60.
- ⁹ Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (London and New York: Penguin, 2004). All subsequent references are to this edition of the novel.
- ¹⁰ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London and New York: Penguin, 1996). All subsequent references are to this edition of the novel.

CHAPTER TWO: PIP'S PROGRESS

On May 18th, 1861—the day that the twenty-fifth installment of *Great Expectations* was published in *All The Year Round*, the installment which concludes the climactic scene of Magwitch's return in the novel and begins the dramatic dislocation of Pip's imagined genealogy as a gentleman of great expectations—"Monkeyana," a comic illustration with an accompanying squib was published in *Punch Magazine*.

Appearing about a year and half after the November 1859 publication of *The Origin of Species*, "Monkeyana" lampoons the intense debate Darwin's work produced over animal-human connections in general and the relationship between men and monkeys, specifically.¹ Although the poem's sharpest satire is directed at the specific noisy quarrel in contemporary scientific literature between Richard Owen and Thomas Henry Huxley over anatomical differences in the brains of humans and higher apes—Darwin and his progenitive work is directly lampooned in the third and fourth stanzas:

Then DARWIN set forth.
In a book of much worth,
The importance of "Nature's selection;"
How the struggle for life
Is a laudable strife,
And results in "specific distinction."

Let pigeons and doves
Select their own loves,

And grant them a million of ages,
Then doubtless you'll find
They've altered their kind,
And changed into prophets and sages.

Punch attributed the cartoon and squib to a contributor it identifies as “Gorilla,”

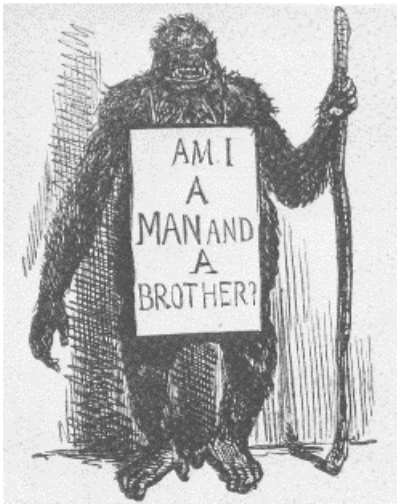


Figure 1

who writes from London’s “Zoological Gardens.”

Four days after “Monkeyana” was published,

though, in a letter dated May 22, 1861, Darwin

writes to Huxley to communicate his surprise that

the poem’s author is most probably Sir Philip Grey-

Egerton, a conservative politician and

paleontologist and a close friend of his cousin, and

Darwin opines testily: “I did not think it very good.”²

The visual text of
“Monkeyana” (figure 1), of
course, is a redrawing, a
recontextualization, of Josiah
Wedgewood’s 1787 iconic
abolitionist image (figure 2)—the
official seal of the Society for the
Abolition of the Slave Trade,



Figure 2

which was mass produced on medallions and brooches for men and women to

wear, and was widely printed in newspapers and abolitionist fliers on both sides of the Atlantic. This would have registered as a very obvious and immediate reference for *Punch's* mostly middle-class, educated readership, especially in May 1861, a month after the start of the American Civil War, which had renewed public discussion of slavery³.

Besides being a prominent late eighteenth-century abolitionist, a renowned English potter, and a rich industrialist who innovated many modern methods for mass factory manufacturing, not incidentally, Wedgwood was Darwin's grandfather and the founder of the family's fortune. Hence, *Punch's* cheeky reconception of his image would have had a very pointed, personal prick for Darwin. This is, undoubtedly, a source of his ire in the letter to Huxley.

What *Punch* is doing in this image is something that Richard Noakes describes as a standard move in its satirical treatment of scientific subjects. Noakes notes that when it focused on scientific material "the comedy of *Punch* often depended on mixing incongruous subjects, such as statesmen and medical quackery, steam locomotives and spiritualism, or civil servants and the behaviour of entozoa" (107). But what *Punch* is really doing here, I think, is rendering into immediate visual focus and making unmistakably apparent the clear connection between two only seemingly separate subjects.⁴

In fact, the two "incongruous" subjects that are being glued together visually in "Monkeyana"'s cartoon text—evolutionary science and nineteenth-

century racial politics—were always being intertwined in both pre- and post-Darwinian evolutionary thought. Anxieties around projected differences and boundaries between human “races” were always being read onto and alongside reflections on possible relationships between different “races” of plants and animals. Though Darwin would make his thoughts on human racial differences most explicit in his 1871 work, *The Descent of Man, The Origin of Species* is full of passages that read relationships and differences between far-flung flora and fauna through the lens of assumed, and culturally entrenched, human hierarchies. The following passage from Darwin’s first chapter on “Variation Under Domestication,” is typical:

A large amount of change in our cultivated plants, thus slowly and unconsciously accumulated, explains, as I believe, the well-known fact, that in a vast number of cases we cannot recognise, and therefore do not know, the wild parent-stocks of the plants which have been longest cultivated in our flower and kitchen gardens. If it has taken centuries or thousands of years to improve or modify most of our plants up to their present standard of usefulness to man, we can understand how it is that neither Australia, the Cape of Good Hope, nor any other region inhabited by quite uncivilised man, has afforded us a single plant worth culture. It is not that these countries, so rich in species, do not by a strange chance possess the aboriginal stocks of any useful plants, but that the native plants have not been improved by continued selection up to a standard of perfection comparable with that given to the plants in countries anciently civilised.⁵ (37-38)

The binary of civilized and uncivilized with respect to humankind is shifted here to read the natural world. Civilized and uncivilized man, very neatly, very

symmetrically, occupy radically different domains of cultivated and uncultivated plants. Relative notions of human gentility and cultural refinement are massaged into the botanical language of horticultural improvement. Civilized man and the “cultivated” plant species of the geographic zone he inhabits exhibit a “standard of perfection” that is conspicuously missing in the terrains of uncivilized man, like Australia and South Africa, which moreover do not contain a “single plant worth culture.”

Thus, what the “Monkeyana” cartoon is doing is registering not so much an incongruity as an essential connection, a problematic entanglement, of hierarchical human relationships, in evolutionary theory. Ideas about disparate levels of humanity, of civilization, cultivation, refinement, cultural improvement—gentility really—were always cropping up in the pursuit of unlikely connections between such radically different locales as modern England and colonial Australia, in the formulation of unexpected origins and surprising genealogies, which brings me back to Dickens and *Great Expectations*.

I want to outline some ways in which *Great Expectations* is working, in the wake of Darwinism, with Victorian anxieties about origins, with the instability of hierarchical relations, with the fragility of narratives of progress, and with the startling implications of revealed relationships.

I do not seek to draw a direct line between Dickens and Darwin—as critics like K. J. Fielding have cautioned against doing,⁶ Dickens possessed only a

layman's generalist knowledge of the scientific discourse of his day and attempts to read scientific veins in his work can be strained and misguided. Nevertheless Dickens's all-encompassing social imagination, as George Levine has argued,⁷ sought to document and anatomize all the tidal changes reorganizing the Victorian world. At the time Dickens was writing *Great Expectations*, Darwinism was at the forefront of these changes.

As Kate Flint notes, "*Great Expectations* is a text obsessed with origins" (152). From the very beginning of the book, we are planted in a world haunted by uneasy and unknown issues of parentage. Letters on graveyard tombstones, which should be firm indicators of familial identity and descent, present themselves instead as mysterious ciphers, against which the orphan Pip makes fanciful guesses about his parents: "The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, 'Also Georgiana Wife of the Above,' I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly"⁸ (3).

The solid genealogical lines that should be conveyed by family names have also become disrupted in a new surreal world that is defined by the reinvention of patronymic identity and the conspicuous remixing of markers of connection and kinship: "My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Phillip. My infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip" (3).

What's set up in just the first two paragraphs of the novel is an intense and disruptive play with traditional, stable notions of sources and origins and relations: This is a world in which inherited concepts of the self in relation to what came before just don't work anymore. It's a world that has broken with the idea of genesis through a Father/father figure and has pronounced itself anew, Pip.

We're steeped, in other words, in the provocative, world inverting (notably, one the first things that happens in the narrative is Pip is dangled upside down by the convict) implications of evolutionary science. The second paragraph of the novel, as many modern editions of the book note, contains a very direct topical reference to natural selection in Pip's observation that his brothers gave "up trying to make a living, exceedingly early in that universal struggle" (3). The muddy, misty, windy marshes that dominate and define Pip's place of birth and are the most concrete source he springs from in the novel, also strongly recall evolutionary ideas of elemental or primordial origins.

The first installment of the novel quickly sets up a complex play not just with developmental origins but also extinctions. The orphan Pip's dead parents are a part of this, as are his little brothers, the "five little stone lozenges" who can be read genetically, but also psychologically, as previous failed versions of Pip (3). (Pip's name in keeping with dense wordplay of Dickens's character-naming practices, has several connotations that are germane here: one main

meaning of its noun form is the minute seed of a fleshy fruit, one of many reproductive germs to be scattered. In another noun form meaning, however, a pip is a special example of its kind. Also, as a transitive verb, in one nineteenth-century British idiomatic expression, to pip, means to beat someone by a narrow margin.) While Dickens's deft comedy works to denature the perception of this in the reading, the first installment of *Great Expectations* is flooded with the fear of death—the beginning of the novel is driven by the intense terror of endings, Pip's fear of being murdered by convicts who emerge, in his imagination, from the deathly soil of the graveyard, but literally from the ubiquitous hulks—the ghostly prison ships which, along with the marshes, are the dominant imagery of the novel's beginning—which are first identified as “wicked Noah's ark[s]” at the end the first installment, a biblical reference that neatly yokes together ideas of both beginnings and endings, origins and extinctions (37).

The first installment of the novel also initiates a textual preoccupation with animal-human connections, which draws on Victorian anxieties about repellent, revealed relationships to the lower orders of things. George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, published roughly eight months previously, on April 4, 1860, also plays heavily with human-animal connections, reflecting the text's immediate post-*Origin* context. Whereas Eliot's text, in line with the organizing, moral metaphor of the Web in her work, deploys animal-human imagery in ways that emphasize harmony with the natural world and an idea of humanness

predicated on wide connectivity to the world, in *Great Expectations* animal-human imagery is much more fraught. Fusions of the animal and the human are most frequently frightening, unseemly, repulsive, and monstrous.

Victorian fears not just of human relationships with the animal world but also of human genesis from the animal world—fears focalized by Darwinism—are folded into the relationship between the orphan son Pip and his figurative father, the founder of his fortune and his rise in the world, the convict Abel Magwitch, who is explicitly and repeatedly represented through animal and bestial, and specifically dog, imagery. One of the first things the narrator Pip emphasizes about Magwitch is his growl (4); Magwitch refers to himself as a “wretched warmint” (17) and his “dog’s way of eating” reminds Pip of a “large dog of ours” (18); Magwitch later threatens to pull down Compeyson like “a bloodhound” (19); both of the men, when they are caught by the soldiers, are called, are “confound[ed]” as “two wild beasts” (33) while commands are given to the convict crew in the boat that comes to retrieve the prisoners “as if to dogs” (37).

The world-shifting threat of human connections to and origins in the animal world is focused around the dog-man body of Magwitch in the first section of the novel. Magwitch embodies a nightmarish fusion of the human and the animal that draws on Victorian fears about the implications of Darwinism. These implications are being psychologically displaced onto Magwitch and the

other convict characters in the book, but this is, from the beginning, an uneasy and ineffective displacement. Pip's umbilical connection to Magwitch from the start of the narrative emphasizes this. In the long, syntactically complicated metaphorical birth sentence that ends the third paragraph, Pip falls from the linguistic womb directly into the arms of Magwitch, who is thus figured as Pip's father from the beginning of the narrative. Pip's intense psychological connection to the convict is repeatedly emphasized in the first installments of the novel, which continually present him, albeit in comic terms, as another convict. This is conveyed, for instance, by Pip's state of virtual imprisonment and terroristic punishment in his sister's house, which is another hulk. The first thing that happens when he returns home is Joe "fence[s] him up behind his "great leg" to protect him from the rampaging Mrs. Joe (8). As John O. Jordan has argued in his reading of guilt as a key force shaping the retrospective narrative,⁹ Pip the adult narrator, who exorcises his guilt in writing his autobiography and enacts a "'narrative revenge' for what he considers past injustices" (80), can be read as the "horrible young man" (7) he's so frightened of, the compatriot of the convict who is the real devil in the pair. Pip, who becomes inordinately invested in his acts of thievery, imagines the bread and butter he secrets down his pant leg as a type of leg chain and when he is running back to the marshes, he imagines the cattle comically hailing him as a thief and notes: "I couldn't warm my feet, to which the damp cold seemed riveted, as the iron was riveted to the

leg of the man I was running to meet” (16). While in chapter two we get this wonderful interchange: “While Mrs. Joe sat with her head bending over her needlework, I put my mouth into the forms of saying to Joe, ‘What is a convict?’ Joe put his mouth into the forms of returning such a high elaborate answer, that I could make nothing of it but the single word ‘Pip’” (13).

Pip is also psychologically linked to Magwitch through the text’s human-animal imagery, which refuses to stay displaced onto Magwitch, which is always coming back to haunt Pip’s conceptions of himself, and which articulates, as Ivan Kreilkamp has argued, powerful anxieties about the fragility of human identity and narrative control.¹⁰ Magwitch calls Pip “a young dog” (4) and, later, a “young hound” (17). In the Christmas dinner scene in chapter four, Pip is fed scraps from table, as if he is a dog, and Mr. Hubble remarks that he is “naterally wicious” (24). When Pip first visits Miss Havisham’s he describes Estella giving him his food as if he were “a dog in disgrace” (57) and during a later visit, Estella takes him down to the yard again to eat and he is fed again “in the former dog-like manner” (82). During that same visit, Pip is the “prowling boy” that Herbert Pocket invites to fight and, after Pip beats Herbert soundly, he guiltily regards himself as “a species of savage young wolf, or other wild species” (84).

The recurrent dog imagery, which haunts Pip’s self-concept and crops up most poignantly in his interactions with Estella, works to psychically bind him to Magwitch. In a sense, as many psychological readings of the novel have

demonstrated,¹¹ there is no Pip/Magwitch divide: In the dense psychological register in which Dickens writes, which is full of doubles and doubling and rich psychic connections, where characters refract other characters, where aspects of one character are thrown onto others where they are incarnated in intense ways, Magwitch can be understood as a part of Pip—a thrown off self-aspect that is a repository for these intense anxieties about lowly origins, ignominious roots, ignoble connections and genealogies that have been suddenly posited. And yet these anxieties keep crossing over and coming back—they ultimately can't be confined or cast off, transported far enough away.

Pip's narrative—and it's important to emphasize that this is a first-person narrative, the exposition of one particular consciousness—is, in fact, crowded with characters that articulate, in really striking ways, his intense anxieties about sources and associations, characters that aren't characters inasmuch as they are projections of himself that he can't get away from, that keep reappearing and confounding his *Bildungsroman*.

Magwitch; the convicts that keep popping up everywhere, putting themselves in Pip's path, breathing in his hair; Trabb's boy, that eternally insolent and indefatigable arch-rival of Pip; the Avenger, the annoying and useless little boy that Pip hires as a genteel accessory and pompously, absurdly dresses up; Orlick, who enacts Pip's murderous psychological desires, who is the shadow self that first stays behind at the forge and then progresses on to work

for Miss Havisham, who hijacks Pip's narrative of himself in volume three of the book—all of these characters can be interpreted as small parts of Pip, pips of Pip, dimensions of the self that keep dragging it back to the origins it is trying to deny and the genealogy it is trying to efface.

The way that I am trying to read *Great Expectations*, and understand the cultural work it is doing within its immediate historical context, post the publication of *The Origin of Species* is this: The text is narrating a psychological process of simultaneously engaging with and warding off these disturbing ideas of origin and connectivity. Victorian anxieties about human roots in and ties to the lower orders of animals intertwine here with the anxieties of a burgeoning and upwardly mobile Victorian middle class—Dickens's readers and Dickens himself¹²—about their origins in and associations with lower social orders.

Magwitch, convict criminals, and working class characters more broadly in the book, all activate solidly middle-class social anxieties about mean and common sources and connections, and this is what Dickens's text is playing with in this tale of bourgeois aspirations, this story of an evolution from a working to a middle-class consciousness, this narrative of progress that somehow keeps getting closer to what it left behind even as it moves forward.

Pip's flight from the forge—which is a medieval occupation that seems in a way curiously displaced at this modern-industrial mid-Victorian moment, the forge with its connotations of connection and joining, welding things together

harmoniously¹³ (the pet name that Herbert gives Pip at the beginning of volume two, Handel, is, he notes, a reference to Handel's "Harmonious Blacksmith," which is what Pip is not, or more exactly what does he does not want, to be)—is actually an intricately delayed return to an essential something.

Numerous critics of *Great Expectations* have read Magwitch's re-entry in the novel as a scene of psychological confrontation and revelation.¹⁴ In many psychoanalytic readings of the novel, Magwitch's return articulates an attempt toward the integration of divided and fractured self—it narrates a movement toward the drawing in of the displaced, the return of the repressed, "the repressed as knowledge of self's other story," as Peter Brooks has noted, "which forces a total revision of the subject's relation to the order within which it constitutes meaning" (129).

The beginning of the last chapter of volume two, which presents Magwitch's return, strongly emphasizes a narrative turn into and toward the self by dramatizing Pip's loneliness. Everything has been pared down to Pip and just Pip: Herbert, away on business in Marseilles, is gone, and Pip has been reduced to the company of just himself. He is reading regularly, an activity of the solitary self, for long stretches of time, and dwells on his isolation and aloneness: "I was alone, and had a dull sense of being alone" (285).

Pip's subsequent description of the raging storm outside builds on this strong psychological current:

It was wretched weather; stormy and wet, stormy and wet; and mud, mud, mud, deep in all the streets. Day after day, a vast heavy veil had been driving over London from the East, and it drove still, as if in the East there were an Eternity of cloud and wind. So furious had been the gusts, that high buildings in town had had the lead stripped off their roofs; and in the country, trees had been torn up, and sails of windmills carried away; and gloomy accounts had come in from the coast, of shipwreck and death. Violent blasts of rain had accompanied these rages of wind, and the day just closed as I sat down to read had been the worst of all.

Alterations have been made in that part of the Temple since that time, and it has not now so lonely a character as it had then, nor is it so exposed to the river. We lived at the top of the last house, and the wind rushing up the river shook the house that night, like discharges of cannon, or breakings of a sea. (286)

The elements of wind, water, and mud that are repeatedly emphasized here—which pull the reader back to the marshes, Pip’s point of origin—link this moment psychologically with the scene of Pip’s figurative birth in the muddy, tumultuous graveyard of the book’s first chapter. This is a replaying of the first chapter, another birth scene, or, rather, a scene of potential psychological rebirth. Notably, the wind isn’t just staying outside; it’s resonating, penetrating in, outsides coming into insides: “The sound was curiously flawed by the wind; and I was listening, and thinking how the wind assailed and tore it, when I heard a footstep on the stair” (286). The wind is a marker not just of narrative suspense and foreboding, and it doesn’t just invoke the marshes in this pending moment of rebirth; its reach from the outside in also conveys the disruption of psychic boundaries and destabilization of the borders of the self.

This rupture is also conveyed in the rich suspense of Magwitch's climb up the stairs toward Pip:

"There is some one down there, is there not?" I called out, looking down.

"Yes," said a voice from the darkness beneath.

"What floor do you want?"

"The top. Mr. Pip."

"That is my name.—There is nothing the matter?"

"Nothing the matter," returned the voice. And the man came on.

I stood with my lamp held out over the stair-rail, and he came slowly within its light. It was a shaded lamp, to shine upon a book, and its circle of light was very contracted; so that he was in it for a mere instant, and then out of it. In the instant I had seen a face that was strange to me, looking up with an incomprehensible air of being touched and pleased by the sight of me. (287)

The fact that Magwitch's voice is disembodied is part of the suspense that the narrative is generating around this moment of revelation, certainly, but it's also a textual detail that links up with the psychological currents of this scene:

Magwitch, again, isn't another character inasmuch as he is a part of Pip that has been thrown off to the far reaches of the world, and here he is coming back, not as an individuated character at this moment, but as a voice without form, a voice from the subconscious, a voice "from the darkness beneath," that is hailing Pip toward a recognition of itself (286). The instrumentation of the lamp in this passage, the light of revelation, of self-insight, is also meaningful in this regard.

Pip continues:

Moving the lamp as the man moved, I made out that he was substantially dressed, but roughly; like a voyager by sea. That he had long iron-gray hair. That his age was about sixty. That he was a muscular man, strong on his legs, and that he was browned and hardened by exposure to weather. As he ascended the last stair or two, and the light of my lamp included us both, I saw, with a stupid kind of amazement, that he was holding out both his hands to me. (287)

Hand imagery¹⁵ in *Great Expectations*, in part, articulates the work the text is doing with divisions and unions, with splitting and harmonizing¹⁶. The boy Pip is brought up by hand, lives under the threatening tyranny of Mrs. Joe's hands; Jaggers, who's always obsessively washing his hands, also uses them as threatening rhetorical instruments (the menacing forefinger which he's always biting as if to stifle his all-consuming aggression). Estella ridicules Pip's coarse, laboring hands. The new name Herbert gives Pip in London is, again, Handel. In this passage, the hand imagery is clearly about connection, about drawing one split-off part of the self into the light of the other: "As he ascended the last stair or two, and the light of my lamp included us both, I saw, with a stupid kind of amazement, that he was holding out both his hands to me" (287).

Pip's recognition of Magwitch, a short while later, is figured as a flickering moment of intense self-recognition and, an almost inchoate, primal kind of self-recognition: "I could not recall a single feature, but I knew him! If the wind and the rain had driven away the intervening years, had scattered all the intervening objects, had swept us to the churchyard where we first stood face to face on

such different levels, I could not have known my convict more distinctly than I knew him now as he sat in the chair before the fire” (288). Pip calls Magwitch “my convict” and of course he’s used that possessive before to refer to him in the early chapters of the book, but in this scene, especially, that possessive collapses the boundary between the two—Magwitch is “my convict,” he is a part of the “me” that is narrating this text. And the hand imagery, at the end of this moment of recognition, engages both the magnetic pull of this insight and the effort of the self to ward it off, a simultaneous attraction and repulsion that characterizes any deep process of psychological dredging and revelation:

He came back to where I stood, and again held out both his hands. Not knowing what to do—for, in my astonishment I had lost my self-possession—I reluctantly gave him my hands. He grasped them heartily, raised them to his lips, kissed them, and still held them.

“You acted noble, my boy,” said he. “Noble, Pip! And I have never forgot it!”

At a change in his manner as if he were even going to embrace me, I laid a hand upon his breast and put him away.

“Stay!” said I. “Keep off! . . . (288)

I’m particularly interested in how the push and pull of the psychological process that is being described here, how the text’s intense engagement at this moment with surprising sources and repulsive associations, is possibly again both working with and warding off Darwinian ideas of human origins and connections. This process becomes most pronounced at the moment when Magwitch begins relating to Pip the true source of his wealth and rise in the world:

“Yes, Pip, dear boy, I've made a gentleman on you! It's me wot has done it! I swore that time, sure as ever I earned a guinea, that guinea should go to you. I swore arterwards, sure as ever I spec'lated and got rich, you should get rich. I lived rough, that you should live smooth; I worked hard, that you should be above work. What odds, dear boy? Do I tell it, fur you to feel a obligation? Not a bit. I tell it, fur you to know as that there hunted dunghill dog wot you kep life in, got his head so high that he could make a gentleman - and, Pip, you're him!”

The abhorrence in which I held the man, the dread I had of him, the repugnance with which I shrank from him, could not have been exceeded if he had been some terrible beast.

“Look'ee here, Pip. I'm your second father. You're my son—more to me nor any son.” (291-92)

This passage contains, most obviously, the re-emergence of that language of animality and bestiality that has been used to represent Magwitch and that also infects Pip's conception of himself, conveying his anxieties of innate inferiority and his pre-occupation with his ungentle origins. And Pip specifically locates his repulsion, his abhorrence of the returned specter of Magwitch, in the animal associations and comparisons the convict keeps calling up for him. Jordan has commented on the function of working-class English dialect in *Great Expectations* as a marker of Pip's origins.¹⁷ Magwitch's working-class dialect in his re-entry scene, which is jarring in the second volume of the book because there are so few working-class characters in this second movement of the text, also marks the return of Pip's lowly origins and connections here. Pip doesn't speak much compared to Magwitch in this chapter, in one sense; in other sense, though, he does because Magwitch is speaking for him, filling his chambers with

the sound of the voice, the dialect he's been trying to erase that penetrates the room from far away at this moment in the mode of the wind. And Magwitch's voice here—and I want to stress that I'm reading it as a voice separate from the Magwitch character, an outcast inner voice of Pip's—proclaims in very direct and literal language Pip's true genealogy: “Look'ee here, Pip. I'm your second father. You're my son—more to me nor any son” (292).

This portion of the text recalls the kind of abrupt inversions of conceptual hierarchies engaged by evolutionary theory—the sudden reversal of traditional conceptions of pre-eminence and superiority and stewardship. Magwitch, who at the beginning of the chapter, has addressed Pip as “Master,”¹⁸ suddenly takes possession of Pip in this passage, noting his no longer hidden identity as the real source and steward of Pip's rise in the world: “Yes, Pip, dear boy, I've made a gentleman on you! It's me wot has done it!” Later in the scene, he says, recalling the dreams, the aspiration, the great expectations that sustained him through horrors of his convict life in Australia: “The blood horses of them colonists might fling up the dust over me as I was walking; what do I say? I says to myself, 'I'm making a better gentleman nor ever you'll be!' When one of 'em says to another, 'He was a convict a few year ago, and is a ignorant common fellow now, for all he's lucky,' what do I say? I says to myself. 'If I ain't a gentleman, nor yet ain't got no learning, I'm the owner of such'” (293).

Magwitch's disclosed narrative effects a radical inversion of notions of ownership and control and presents a powerful subversion of Pip's identity as a self-possessed and authentic gentleman. What Magwitch's language—which is, again, significantly articulated as working-class dialect—is doing here is rendering Pip into another version of the boy Avenger—that ridiculous little boy whose services Pip purchases as a show of his wealth and rise in the world, whom he comically and absurdly dresses up in garish and ill-fitting clothes so he appears to be more than what he is: Magwitch very plainly declares Pip to be his own boy Avenger here, and this is a monstrous revelation.

The text's intense play in the scene of Magwitch's return with inversions of self-identity and concepts of control and power brings to a crescendo a motif it's been working with on which numerous critics have commented¹⁹—*Great Expectations's* rewriting of the *Frankenstein* myth, the fact that the text is littered with both indirect and direct allusions to Shelley's early-nineteenth-century story of monstrous creation and ghastly origination.

As Chris Baldick has demonstrated, the *Frankenstein* story had already entered powerfully into the popular imagination at *Great Expectations's* mid-Victorian moment²⁰. Shelley's narrative about the complex bond between the monster and the man who makes him, of the complexities of creation and control, is a rich intertext that Dickens is working with almost from the beginning of the book, from the moment Pip first meets Estella and she plants in him the

infection of shame and self-loathing. Pip's tortured developing perceptions of himself are frequently figured in terms of freakishness and monstrosity, which parallels the creature's first-person narrative in *Frankenstein*, its poignant description of the process through which it comes to perceive its own monstrosity.

For instance, when Pip returns home from his first visit to Miss Havisham's, he notes: "If a dread of not being understood be hidden in the breasts of other young people to anything like the extent to which it used to be hidden in mine—which I consider probable, as I have no particular reason to suspect myself of having been a monstrosity—it is the key to many reservations" (60). During a subsequent visit, Estella also calls Pip a "little coarse monster" after she slaps his face (75). At the beginning of volume three, Magwitch—who, like Frankenstein's creature, lives a "solitary hut-life" (309) in Australia—also narrates the terse story of his life for Pip and Herbert, and the story of his awakening to himself as a cast-off, abandoned child, in terms that sharply parallel the story that Frankenstein's monster tells of its awakening to its own identity as a cast off, abandoned creation.

The text's play with *Frankenstein* is also pronounced in Pip's description of how he decides to hire and outfit his boy Avenger: "I had got on so fast of late, that I had even started a boy in boots—top boots—in bondage and slavery to whom I might have been said to pass my days. For after I had made the monster

(out of the refuse of my washerwoman's family) and had clothed him with a blue coat, canary waistcoat, white cravat, creamy breeches, and the boots already mentioned, I had to find him a little to do and a great deal to eat; and with both of those horrible requirements he haunted my existence" (200).

Pip, in this comic passage, imagines himself as the father, the maker of this monstrosity, this freakish little boy formed, creature-like, "of the refuse of" his "washerwoman's family and assembled from a motley concoction of fancy garments, whom he is indissolubly connected to, who persecutes him with "horrible requirements" and "haunt[s]" his existence. The boy Avenger—who is a thrown-off incarnation, a tightly compressed reflection of Pip himself—is a backward refraction here of Magwitch's impending revelation.

As numerous critics have pointed out, the text's most direct allusion to the *Frankenstein* story, however, occurs in the first chapter of volume three, which continues and concludes the scene of Magwitch's return and tracks Pip's rising sense of horror at Magwitch's revelations: "The imaginary student pursued by the misshapen creature he had impiously made, was not more wretched than I, pursued by the creature who had made me, and recoiling from him with a stronger repulsion, the more he admired me and the fonder he was of me" (310).

In this line, Pip very directly projects himself as the student, Victor Frankenstein, pursued by Magwitch, the terrible creature he's made that he

wants to disavow, who haunts his every step; Pip, though, is also pointedly the creature, Magwitch's monster, the pet gentleman Magwitch has assembled alchemically from afar.²¹ In this *Frankenstein* reference there's a complex oscillation of self-abhorrence and abhorrence of the Other. Pip identifies himself with both the creator, Frankenstein, and his creature, which once again invokes the idea of deep psychological connection, that he is a part of Magwitch and Magwitch is a part of him—a relationship between creator and created, between figurative father and symbolic son, that is configured in terms of bondage and slavery²² in *Frankenstein*. Iain Crawford has described the *Frankenstein* resonance in the Pip-Magwitch pairing in these terms: “Just as Victor and the Monster are clearly alter-ego, Pip and Magwitch exist in a curious form of bondage to one another, each tied into the union by a series of events of which neither is fully aware. Where their relationship differs from the earlier one, however, is in that widely noted blurring of the roles of creator and created, man and monster” (627).

Frankenstein is frequently read as a text that is processing social anxieties about the creation of and the pending self-awakening of the proletariat in the context of nineteenth-century capitalism and the industrial revolution.²³

Shelley's 1818 text was composed in the second decade of the nineteenth century, when England was in the throes of the economic changes of capitalism and the industrial revolution, when there was a population explosion of the

working and the laboring classes and an incendiary compression of the population in urban manufacturing areas and a growing sense of working-class exploitation and bondage and slavery. In Marxist-inspired readings of the novel, Frankenstein's monster, who stalks and haunts his maker, Victor Frankenstein, the creature (assembled from body parts from all over) who represents the primal power of a monstrously self-aware multitude, is a figure of proletariat uprising. The creature is a nightmarish figure that pulls together the building fears of the bourgeoisie in Europe, the factory owners and the industrialists, about the impending self-awakening of the huge proletariat class that they've created and that their profits depend on—an unnatural creation that will become self-aware and stalk and destroy them²⁴. The first line of Marx and Engel's 1848 "Communist Manifesto"—"A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of communism"—is very much picking up and playing with these cultural anxieties about a pending, unnatural proletarian revolt, these projections of monstrous stalkings and hauntings.

Frankenstein is a central intertext for *Great Expectations* because it is completely animated by these cultural anxieties of creation and control and class identity formation—anxieties that were given a new life post the publication of *The Origin of Species*, which posited for many a ghastly theory of monstrous origins and repulsive connections. Discussing how Dickens's text retells the

Frankenstein story around the creation of a middle-class consciousness,

Crawford notes that

The concept of the gentleman, which provided an invaluable staging point in the rapidly shifting class structure of nineteenth-century Britain, is clearly essential to Pip's entire progress; it is also, however, important to the novel's treatment of nature and its reworking of *Frankenstein*. For Pip, as for Victorians at large, it is the code of gentlemanliness which tames the beast and acts as a civilizing force that enables a blacksmith's boy to climb up out of the marshes into a world that is both more sophisticated and, albeit rather problematically, cultivated. At the same time, however, this very stress upon the civilizing impulse also implies an admission of the proximity of the bestial, a conjunction of which few Victorians could fail to be aware . . . (636).

Crawford notes that the very idea of genteel development in *Great Expectations* is predicated on a problematic proximity to the ungentleel, the beastly, that any perceived development into a superior state necessitates a very strong and real connection to a perceived inferior state: In other words, you can't get away from origins. Crawford, in fact, observes that Pip and Estella (Pip's female parallel, the monster that Miss Havisham makes, that Miss Havisham plucks from the streets and forms into a lady, who incarnates the great expectations of her maker to wreak vengeance on the world) are "walking embodiments of the fact that the distinction between the criminal and conventional worlds is little more than a fictive convenience" (637).

Crawford also comments on the Darwinian currents of Dickens's re-conception of the inherited text of *Frankenstein*, observing: "The text at large . . . endorses Darwin's conception of the common ancestry of species and portrays the ancestry of the gentleman, and thus by implication of the bourgeoisie as a whole, in, if not the monkey, then at least the criminal classes" (638).

Crawford's argument that the text "endorses Darwin's conception of the common ancestry of species" works with a reading of *Great Expectations* that understands the novel's final trajectory as following the traditional male *Bildungsroman's* blueprint of greater insight and maturity and self-understanding, flowing from a standard narrative identity crisis. I want explore a case here, though, for the novel not doing this, for it, again, engaging with but ultimately resisting the full implications of Darwin's work. Levine, in his rich book chapter on Dickens and Darwin, has mapped out ways in which Dickens's literary imagination and Darwin's scientific perspective work synergistically, as well ways in which they are incompatible. Dickens's work, most notably—with its tangled, densely populated plots and its overarching emphasis on fertile superabundance and "'connections' both symbolic and literal"—resonates harmonically with Darwin's conception of "complex interrelationship and interdependence" in the biological world (Levine 149). Conversely, as Gillian Beer has noted,²⁵ the "gradually and retrospectively revealing" structure of Darwin's work in *The Origin of Species* "seems to owe a great deal" to Dickens—one of Darwin's

favorite authors (8). One general “radical difference” that Levine, and others, posit between Dickens and Darwin’s sensibilities is Dickens’s emphasis on the primacy of the human and the moral and his prioritizing of meaning over fact (140-141); in her reading of *Great Expectations*, Flint specifically notes that Dickens departs sharply from Darwin’s deterministic vision in his insistence that “one’s way in the world should be dependent on one’s own efforts, rather than on the status, power, even struggles of one’s predecessors”—a view I share and work to extend here (167).

Likewise, Morgentaler, in her rich study of Dickens’s shifting attitudes toward heredity in his novels,²⁶ observes that *Great Expectations*, as “an initial reaction to Darwin” (157), is an “attempt to blot out hereditary determinism . . . in favor of a more flexible model of human development” that reads human nature in a more “fluid and pliable” (82) manner. My argument here, in this sense, builds on both critics’ work, which, as Flint puts it, describes the progressive “relegation of the importance of biological origins” in *Great Expectations’s* engagement with evolutionary theory (167). In the reading that follows, though, I wish to emphasize the role that retrospective narration plays in this process, connecting Jordan’s insights about the creative distortions and dark psychological motivations of the retrospective narrator to the cultural work the text is, as I see it, actively engaged in, reflecting, refracting, and reworking Darwin-induced anxieties of irrefutable origin and connection.

At the beginning of volume three, Pip, reeling from Magwitch's revelations, says: "It was fortunate for me that I had to take precautions to ensure (so far as I could) the safety of my dreaded visitor; for, this thought pressing on me when I awake, held others in a confused concourse at a distance" (299). Pip proceeds to describe an almost manic state of fear that seizes him, which stems from the "impossibility of keeping" Magwitch "concealed in the chambers" (299); he imagines people, his servants "chronically looking in at keyholes," and then "groping about in the darkness" of his staircase he stumbles across an unknown man, "crouching in a corner" who "elude[s] his touch in silence," which prompts Pip to run frantically to summon the watchman of his building (299).

The opening of volume three thrums with the terror of discovery, the fear of being found out, and on the surface it seems as if this is activated by Pip's concern for Magwitch, who has returned to England and is now subject to execution. This fear and concern in this opening would seem to be activated by the noble instincts of a gentleman, the proper desire of a devoted son to protect his father who is in great danger. This passage, though, is, pointedly, not about Magwitch at all. This is a passage that is all about Pip and his instincts toward self-preservation. The chapter opens with "It was fortunate for me" and then the curious parenthetical aside is inserted, "(so far as I could)." The fear of discovery in this passage is rooted in Pip's instinct to protect himself, and he is, in fact,

profoundly ambivalent about protecting and saving Magwitch—that parenthetical comment, “(so far as I could),” particularly, is an insertion that betrays a narrative reluctance to move toward a reconciliation of the self, a narrative desire to eschew the idea of immutable origins and disempower the parental figures that represent this, and I want to emphasize this idea in the rest of this chapter.

Chapter two of volume three records the following interchange between Pip and Herbert in which they discuss what might happen if Pip rejects Magwitch:

“See, then,” said Herbert; “think of this! He comes here at the peril of his life, for the realization of his fixed idea. In the moment of realization, after all his toil and waiting, you cut the ground from under his feet, destroy his idea, and make his gains wormless to him. Do you see nothing that he might do, under the disappointment?”

“I have seen it, Herbert, and dreamed of it, ever since the fatal night of his arrival. Nothing has been in my thoughts so distinctly, as his putting himself in the way of being taken.”

“Then you may rely upon it,” said Herbert, “that there would be great danger of his doing it. That is his power over you as long as he remains in England, and that would be his reckless course if you forsook him.”

I was so struck by the horror of this idea, which had weighed upon me from the first, and the working out of which would make me regard myself, in some sort, as his murderer, that I could not rest in my chair but began pacing to and fro. I said to Herbert, meanwhile, that even if Provis were recognized and taken, in spite of himself, I should be wretched as the cause, however innocently. Yes; even though I was so wretched in having him at large and near me, and even though I would far far rather

have worked at the forge all the days of my life than I would ever have come to this! (314)

Given Magwitch's "fixed idea" of an indissoluble father-son relationship between him and Pip and his rash and savage nature, Pip and Herbert conclude that he might act recklessly and get caught and executed and Pip, who pushed him towards this, would be a murderer, and Pip notes that he is "struck by the horror of this idea."

Again, I want to read against the grain of what the retrospective narrator, who is reconstructing his life story, is presenting here. Because *Great Expectations*, and volume three particularly, which is propelled from and responds to Magwitch's reentry in the novel, is centrally concerned with enacting parricide through narrative—it is textually obsessed with blotting out problematic parental figures and the trauma of the sources and relationships they represent.

Great Expectations, ultimately, isn't so much a book about acknowledging or coming to terms with origins and connections and genealogies as it's about containing the trauma of one's origins and connections and genealogies through narrative: This is what Pip, the adult narrator who is composing this text, is actively doing throughout the book

The first chapter of volume three initiates a narrative process of containing and controlling Magwitch and what he represents. And this has been

a motif in the book throughout—the controlling and taming of parental figures through narrative. Mrs. Joe is bludgeoned and turned into a shell of her former self that wastes slowly away into death—and it should be emphasized that this what the adult narrator Pip does to her, that it is the active choice of the creative consciousness that’s composing this representation of his life. Miss Havisham is burned up, literally consumed by her own fire, and metaphorically by the rage she’s been stoking for so long, and despite Pip’s horror and all his ministrations of help, this, like Orlick’s assault on Mrs. Joe, is a psychological expression of his murderous, matricidal desires in narrative.

Estella’s mother, Jaggers’s housekeeper, is brutally broken by Jaggers, who conquers her wild “gypsy blood” (359) and subdues the savage in her—she is referred to as “a wild beast tamed” (358) at the end of chapter nine of volume three, when Wemmick recounts her backstory to Pip. Estella’s mother—whom Jaggers takes directly from her court case back to his house, as if she’s a human bit of portable property—presents a particularly perverse image of a parent figure who has been broken and used by Jaggers—with all the terrible connotations that the word “used” can have.

Wemmick’s home in Walworth is full of warmth and human connection and the life-nurturing love of a healthy home life, but there’s another way to read what’s happening in that delightful home. The weird figure of his father, his “aged P,” also presents an eerie image of a child’s control over a parental figure

who has been rendered completely innocuous and powerless in the narrative. The Pocket household, in which the parents are rendered as helpless and daft children, offers yet another intense and nightmarish projection²⁷ of parental incapacitation.

Magwitch's death, in chapter fifteen of volume three, accords with the parricidal impulses of Pip's narrative. Magwitch is notably struck on the head by the keel of the steamer as he goes under it—along with his chest injuries, the head trauma he receives induces a slow, suffering death, and this textual detail perhaps psychologically links Magwitch's death in the narrative to that of Mrs. Joe, who also receives a head injury, a blow to the back of her head that condemns her to a terrible, incremental death. In fact, the narrative seeds of this moment in the novel are planted in the text immediately before Pip's sister is discovered bludgeoned, when Pip, who had been loitering about town, is comically apprenticed by Mr. Wopsle to assist in a performative reading of a book the theatrically inclined Wopse has just purchased.

The text is *The London Merchant, or the History of George Barnwell* by George Lillo, a popular early eighteenth-century bourgeois tragedy. Wopsle's play narrates the story of George Barnwell, a young apprentice who is seduced into murdering his benefactor uncle, and is caught and hanged. Pip is read at in Pumblechook's parlor and is figuratively put into the role of George Barnwell, and he notes dolefully: "Even after I was happily hanged and Wopsle had closed

the book, Pumblechook sat staring at me, and shaking his head, and saying, 'Take warning, boy, take warning!' as if it were a well-known fact that I contemplated murdering a near relation, provided I could only induce one to have the weakness to become my benefactor (106-107).

This bifurcated allusion that references and foreshadows both Pip's narrative murder of Mrs. Joe in volume one and his narrative murder of Magwitch in volume three (the word "benefactor" references both characters, Pip's sister more immediately but Magwitch more strongly). The inclusion of Pumblechook in this scene adds to the suggestive parricidal currents of this scene: Pumblechook, who is an intense object of the adult narrator Pip's narrative loathing, is virtually the only character in the text who elicits a deep and direct hatred in Pip that borders on violence—his name, as Jordan has noted, is a play on the word "choke" and Pip's narrative indeed chokes him with Tar water in the first volume²⁸.

Pumblechook, who arrogantly and ridiculously seizes progenitive possession of Pip's good fortune, who says to Pip, immediately after the news breaks, "I give you joy of your good fortune" (139) and pompously inserts himself "as the humble instrument leading up to this" (139), Pumblechook whose eternal annoying refrain is to be Pip's "earliest Patron" and the "founder of [his] fortunes" (211), Pumblechook is a really distorted image of a father—his claim to be Pip's earliest patron and the founder of his fortune is a warped

assertion of fatherhood: What is a father is, after all, but one's earliest patron and the founder of one's fortunes? Pumblechook, very early on, develops an important function as a narrative scapegoat for Pip's patricidal impulses; he is a comic, absurd incarnation of Magwitch that is thrown off to another part of the book, and Pip's vicious narrative treatment of him is a displaced violent wrath toward a father figure that foreshadows what Pip's narrative will do more subtly to Magwitch in volume three.

Magwitch's poignant death scene—which is run through with Dickens's artful, perfectly calibrated melodrama—in many ways is prewritten and merely brings to fruition the deep narrative impulse toward parricide that has been there from the beginning. I think we need to actively read against the grain of Dickens's melodramatic plot of redemption, we need to read against the emotional flow of what the adult narrator Pip is constructing this scene to be and to mean, when he recounts:

“Dear Magwitch, I must tell you now, at last. You understand what I say?”

A gentle pressure on my hand.

“You had a child once, whom you loved and lost.” A stronger pressure on my hand.

“She lived, and found powerful friends. She is living now. She is a lady and very beautiful. And I love her!”

With a last faint effort, which would have been powerless but for my yielding to it and assisting it, he raised my hand to his lips. Then, he gently let it sink upon his breast again, with his own hands lying on it. The placid look at the white ceiling came back, and passed away, and his head dropped quietly on his breast.

Mindful, then, of what we had read together, I thought of the two men who went up into the Temple to pray, and I knew there were no better words that I could say beside his bed, than “O Lord, be merciful to him a sinner!” (420)

I don't think this is actually a scene of a noble, devoted son, casting away his shameful feelings about an ignoble father and embracing him at last; this isn't a scene of Pip, finally, at peace with himself and giving Magwitch peace in death. The very last words of this scene, the rich, resounding words that Pip closes this chapter with, which articulate a kind of final benediction for Magwitch—““Oh Lord, be merciful to him, a sinner!””—are drawn from Luke 18:13, and many modern editors of the novel note that Dickens is adapting this verse here. The original New Testament line is “be merciful to me” but it becomes “be merciful to him” in Pip's narration. This reformulation has been noted by many critics of *Great Expectations* and it can be interpreted in line with an interpretation of the novel that emphasizes Pip's self-insight—the blur between Pip and Magwitch implicit in the modification can be read as an image of final union. Another way, though, to describe what's happening in the slight modification of this biblical verse, though, is “misreading,”²⁹—this is a perhaps deliberate, but certainly telling, misreading and misrepresentation of the biblical verse by the adult narrator Pip. The extreme, tortured consciousness of a sinful state that is self-directed in the original is projected outward onto another in Pip's reworking.

This scene is essentially about displacement, which is something that the adult narrator Pip has been doing from the beginning. This isn't a scene of self-growth and self-insight, a harmonic moment of final forgiveness and integration. Rather, it is a psychological and linguistic casting off of Magwitch. Turning the "me" into a "him" in Pip's re-modulation of the biblical verse is a rejection of self-realization, a refusal of self-examination, and a re-illusioning, rather, of the self. What we get here as well is another narrative gesture of casting off, a final act of demonization and erasure in narrative as the sinful father Magwitch is transported again, not to Australia this time but to the hereafter, from which there is no return.

The final stage of Pip's *Bildungsroman* is full of evasions and misreadings that don't altogether conform to a narrative arc of greater insight and growth after a climactic crisis, a final test of strength and character. While Pip does act selflessly to advance the prospects of his friend Herbert, the third stage of Pip's great expectations narrate, overall, a process of re-illusioning, a deflection of self-insight and growth.

In the last chapter of the novel, in the rapid forward telescoping of the revised ending that is the standard in nearly all modern editions of the novel, Pip and Estella meet by chance in Miss Havisham's ruined garden, at the spot where they first met, and this is another conjuncture of beginnings and endings. They are meeting after a gap of over a decade—Estella has had a horrible and abusive

marriage to Bentley Drummle and is now a widow; Pip, who is still a bachelor, has returned to visit England from Cairo, where he has been living and working for the moderately successful merchant firm of Clariker and Company, Herbert's company that he is also a partner in now.

The way that both readers and critics of the novel have parsed the difference between the text's two principal endings—the unpublished manuscript ending which has Pip and Estella meeting by chance in London and parting unambiguously, and the published revised ending which puts them reuniting, perhaps for life, in Miss Havisham's garden—traditionally³⁰ is that the novel has one happy ending and one sad ending, and Dickens just swapped the sad ending for the happy ending he rewrote after consulting with Edward Bulwer-Lytton before publishing the last installment of *Great Expectations*.

A number of critics,³¹ however, have focused on the ambiguity of the novel's revised ending to argue that the two endings are not far apart at all—that they are both “unhappy” endings, though one—the one Dickens decided to publish—is much richer and more subtle in its closure. This interpretation can turn around the apprehension of another conspicuous act of misreading³² in the narration given by the adult narrator Pip, when he notes at the conclusion of novel:

“We are friends,” said I, rising and bending over her, as she rose from the bench.

“And will continue friends apart,” said Estella.

I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so, the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw the shadow of no parting from her³³ (442).

What Estella is actually telling Pip, very literally, very directly here, is that they will never be together—that the romantic union that Pip wants will never happen, that it is an impossibility. And yet, this is something that the adult Pip does not see, or else, refuses to see: “I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so, the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw the shadow of no parting from her” (442).

We can read these lines as Pip projecting a union in narrative that will actually never happen—the hand imagery, “I took her hand in mine” can metaphorically connote a marriage. In combination with a literal reading of “I saw the shadow of no parting from her,” this can produce an interpretation of the novel’s revised ending as a blissful union that will never be broken. And yet, this flies in the face of what Estella has just said very plainly—you and I will never be together. One way to read this revised ending is that the adult narrator Pip is evading the truth of Estella’s statement and transmuting it into a narrative projection of a harmonious union that erases the reality³⁴ of who they are and

what has happened. When Pip says “I saw the shadow of no parting from her,” the emphasis in this line needs to be placed on words “I saw,” and we need to ask ourselves what Pip sees, what is he capable of seeing, what does he want to see, what he refuses to see? This ending can be interpreted as a much subtler and therefore richer version of the original ending, which is a poorer conclusion precisely because it is so unambiguous about the fact that Pip and Estella can never be together.

What the narrator Pip is doing in the principal revised published ending is, again, something he’s been doing all along, transmuting the story of his origins and development, using fiction and fantasy to defuse and transform the pain of who he is and where he comes from, what’s happened to him and what will happen to him. I have been arguing in this chapter that *Great Expectations* is working, in the immediate wake of Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, with Victorian anxieties about origins and genealogies; these anxieties are transposed into a social and literary register in this narrative which describes the evolution of a middle-class consciousness, both drawing on and deconstructing the Victorian cult of the gentleman. And Dickens’s text, I contend, is engaging with but ultimately resisting the implications of problematic sources and connections through narrative transformation—a push/pull dynamic of attraction and repulsion that is a dominant motif in the book, a motif that is articulated in the

rich ambiguity of the novel's revised ending, which gestures toward both beginnings and endings, unions and partings, origins and extinctions.

Great Expectations is a novel that simultaneously acknowledges and evades the epistemological dislocations of Darwinism—a conflicted positioning that is achieved through the text's emphasis on the transformative release of narrative fantasy. If *Great Expectations* can be read as a text obsessed, as Flint puts it, with origins, it must also be read as a text that ultimately falls back on the cathartic capacity of fantasy to figure, defuse, and transform those discovered origins.

The narrative evasions and misreadings of the adult narrator Pip, the process of re-illusionment that takes place in volume three of the text, are the refined, genteel incarnations of the self-protective lies the boy Pip tells in the first volume—the stories, for instance, of black velvet coaches in houses, and wine and cake on gold plates, and immense dogs fighting over veal cutlets from silver baskets, the fantastic tales Pip spins for Mrs. Joe and Pumblechook of Miss Havisham to empower himself and ward off, for a time at least, his inevitable abuse. The potential inherent in fiction to deflect and transform what is painful or difficult to face is elaborated and demonstrated throughout the novel—even by Joe, that steadfastly transparent and unswervably honest moral center of the book, who counsels Pip that “lies is lies” and “[h]owsoever they come, they didn't ought come” (64) and yet, with Pip's help and complicity, presents the mollifying

fiction of Miss Havisham's "compliments or respects" to Mrs. Joe to soothe her injured feelings, certainly, but also to stave off her terrible rage (93).

The trauma-transmuting propensities of fantasy becomes a central theme in the second volume of the book, the second stage of Pip's great expectations which, importantly, describes the educational phase of Pip's *Bildungsroman*. Jaggers's office in London, for instance, is figured as a kind of dark *kunstkammer*, a bleak cabinet of curiosities, decorated with rusty pistols and sword and "dreadful casts" of executed clients (150). Jaggers's chamber is apprehended by Pip as a gruesome wonder room, where death is always being transformed into something else through morbidly fanciful acts of memorialization, another form of narration. Similarly, Wemmick's grotesque obsession with "portable property" is a kind of recuperative narrativization that fantastically commutes the death sentences of Jaggers's clients.

Wemmick's delightful homelife in Walworth, with its extraordinary mash-up trappings of a medieval castle and a colonial fort in the middle of London's metropolitan suburbs—which is opposed to the deathly business of Jaggers's office—offers yet another intense projection of how fantasy can rework the pain and difficulties of real life.

The Pocket household, that incarnation of the Jellybys of *Bleak House*, also presents a powerful, albeit unnerving, image of the capacity of fantasy to transcend a difficult reality. While Mrs. Pocket dwells in a dream life of antique

elite genealogies and aristocratic pretensions, an alternate world to be protected at all costs from “the affront of interference” (177), a domestic hell of horrific exploitation and chaos and ever-present child abuse seethes around her, “where infants” will indeed “be nutcracked into their tombs” with “nobody to save them” (178). Mr. Pocket’s Dickensian tic, what Pip describes comically as his periodic attempts to “put his two hands into his hair” and “lift himself up by it” is an image of self-mutilation that is also an expression of a desire to lift himself from the nightmarish reality he lives in (176).

Finally, and most centrally, as Pip, Magwitch’s pet gentleman, is the embodied filial fantasy Magwitch deploys to survive the horrors of his life in Australia and enact his revenge, Estella is Miss Havisham’s enfleshed fantasy, a new alternate heartless version of herself that is inoculated from the potential trauma of love, to be wielded against the world of men as her own girl avenger.

Lies, self-deception, distortion, forging, misreading, fantasy, fiction, narration—all of these things, which are linked permutations of the same thing, emerge in *Great Expectations* as powerful aesthetic responses that are capable of transmuting the cultural trauma inflicted by Darwin’s theory about the transmutation of species into something else, into literature.

Directly after Magwitch’s death in the novel, a weary Pip, stripped of his wealth and good name, crushed by his debts and besieged by creditors, sinks into the fevered depths of transformative sickness—the nineteenth-century

novel's standard trope for metamorphoses of character. The adult narrator Pip, recounts for us:

That I had a fever and was avoided, that I suffered greatly, that I often lost my reason, that the time seemed interminable, that I confounded impossible existences with my own identity; that I was a brick in the house wall, and yet entreating to be released from the giddy place where the builders had set me; that I was a steel beam of a vast engine. Clashing and whirring over a gulf, and yet that I implored in my own person to have the engine stopped, and my part in it hammered off; that I passed through these phases of disease, I know of my own remembrance, and did in some sort know at the time. That I sometimes struggled with real people, in the belief they were murderers, and that I would all at once comprehend that they meant to do me good, and would then sink exhausted in their arms, and suffer them to lay me down, I also knew at the time. But, above all, I knew that there was a consistent tendency in all these people—who, when I was ill, would present all kinds of extraordinary transformations of the human face, and would be much dilated in size—above all, I say, I knew there was an extraordinary tendency in all these people sooner or later to settle down into the likeness of Joe. (422)

What this much-discussed passage, which is located two brief chapters away from the conclusion of the text, describes is the emergence of Pip's narrative voice. This long paragraph is the counterpart of the long third paragraph of the book's beginning which delivers Pip to Magwitch. It is another exquisitely extended, syntactically complex narrative birth canal, at the end of which the adult narrator Pip, the writing consciousness who will actively reshape the painful material of his past, is reborn. Joe's kindly face, which calls Pip toward a

new consciousness here, is the parental placemark that indicates that this is a moment of narrative rebirth.

What this passage is describing is the final transformation of Pip into a narrator. The surreal manic-state that it invokes is consequent to the pregnant disease, the fertile infection of the writing process. This is the willed delirium, the invoked fever of the creative process, that can indeed confound impossible existences together, that can release one's life from the mortar work of reality, that can suspend the engine of the actual and hammer free the conception of one's part in the world. This is a pitch-perfect description of the gestative madness of narration—an exhausting mental struggle with real people, the raw material of narrative, which produces extraordinary transformations of the human face.

This is the surreal manic state of writing: Dickens before the mirror of his writing room at Gad's Hill Place, to all appearances a madman, miming the movement and facial gestures of his characters, wildly walking back and forth to his writing desk, muttering crazily, scaring his children off.³⁵

Great Expectations, as I've been reading it here, offers a reaction to Darwinism that is ultimately unable to harmonize the deterministic tenets of evolutionary theory with the liberatory desires that underwrite any act of self-narration. In *Great Expectations*, retrospective narration becomes a site of re-enactment that registers the reality of stagnation—an immobilization that is

inscribed in the double-p alliteration of narrator's very name, Pip (a name that he both gives to himself and is not permitted to give up)—as well as the therapeutic fantasy of release through the fruitful distortions of storytelling.

Robin Gilmour has commented that Dickens could so acutely render the “profound commentary on Victorian civilisation and its values” contained in his tale of a blacksmith's boy because “he was so deeply involved in the process of social evolution which . . . lies at the heart of the novel” (107). That Dickens, the self-made gentleman, one generation removed from his servant-class origins, that Dickens, the blacking factory's boy, never removed from the trauma of Warren's, harbored an originary “trauma from which he suffered all his life”³⁶ that was, itself, the rich source of his writing, has been much discussed since Edmund Wilson's *The Wound and the Bow* (5).

I do not wish to rehearse this subject here beyond noting again these lines from Bulwer-Lytton's play, *The Lady of Lyons*, that Dickens, reportedly, knew by heart and repeated often aloud,³⁷ that he adamantly insisted remain unaltered in the prompt-book for an 1867 production³⁸ that he advised, three years before his death:

Then did I seek to rise
Out of the prison of my mean estate;
And with such jewels as the exploring mind
Brings from the caves of knowledge, buy my ransom
From those twin jailers of the darling heart—
Low birth and iron fortune.

-
- ¹ While human evolution is not a subject that *The Origin of Species* deals with directly—Darwin would cautiously save the full explication of his views on that subject for the 1871 publication of *The Descent of Man*—the subject is clear subtext that was immediately apprehended, as evidenced by the scientific and public discussion of human evolution that Darwin’s work re-energized.
- ² As qtd in Fredrick Burkhardt’s *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 426. The artist who drew the “Monkeyana” cartoon remains unknown.
- ³ See Joanna Bourke’s discussion of “Monkeyana” in *What it Means to be Human* (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2011).
- ⁴ The tradition of political cartooning that’s rooted in the pages of *Punch*, in fact, consistently deploys the visual medium in surprising ways that immediately arrest attention, to articulate real and crucial connections between things that only appear to be dissimilar. As critics like Robert Harvey have discussed, *Punch* magazine has a crucial place in the genealogy of Western comics and comic journalism—among many other things, the word cartoon was coined in its July 15th, 1843, issue, which featured a penciling identified as “Cartoon No. 1” by the artist-illustrator John Leech; the term thereafter came to be applied broadly to any comical drawing. See Harvey’s “How Comics Came to Be” in *A Comic Studies Reader*, Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester eds., Jackson, MS, University Press of Mississippi, 2009, p. 25-45.
- ⁵ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species: A Facsimile of the First Edition* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003).
- ⁶ See Fielding’s “Dickens and Science,” *Dickens Quarterly* (December 1996), 3-19, and “Dickens’s Science, Evolution and ‘The Death of the Sun,’” with Shu Fang Lai, in *Dickens, Europe and the New World*, Ed. Anny Sadrin (St. Martin’s Press 1999), p. 200-209.
- ⁷ See Levine’s chapter “Dickens and Darwin” in *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction* (University of Chicago Press 1988).

-
- ⁸ Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, ed. Margaret Cardwell (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). All references hereafter are to this edition; additionally, chapter references hereafter follow this edition's reproduced three-volume format with the chapter numbers sequenced anew in each volume.
- ⁹ See Jordan's "The Medium of *Great Expectations*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 11 (1983), 73-88.
- ¹⁰ Ivan Kreilkamp has, interestingly, tied dog imagery in *Great Expectations* to the precariousness of identity and the precarious nature of the autobiographical project: "To be a dog is, in *Great Expectations*, to possess and to typify in a novel concerned with the precariousness of identity—a precarious or threatened identity, an identity falling short of the standard of full-fledged novelistic character, and so one is always in danger of being forgotten (82). See Kreilkamp's "Dying Like Dog in *Great Expectations*," in *Victorian Animal Dreams*, Deborah Morse and Martin Danahay, eds., Burlington, VT and Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2007.
- ¹¹ See, especially, Julian Moynahan's "The Hero's Guilt: The Case of *Great Expectations*," *Essays in Criticism* 10.1 (1960): 60-79. See also Peter Brooks' psychoanalytic reading in "Repetition, Repression, Return: The Plotting of *Great Expectations*," in *Reading for Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).
- ¹² While the trauma of identity rooted in Dickens's experiences in the blacking factory is well known and has been much discussed since Edmund Wilson's classic exposition in *The Wound and the Bow*, see especially Robin Gilmour's "Dickens and *Great Expectations*" in *The Idea of the Gentleman in Victorian Fiction* (London: George Allen, 1981).
- ¹³ As Jordan has noted in his counter reading of Pip's *Bildungsroman* as a retrospective narrative with strong chords of willful deception and self-deception, the theme of the forge also invokes the concept of falsification, as in forging and forgery. See Jordan's "The Medium of *Great Expectations*."
- ¹⁴ Again, see, especially, Moynahan's "The Hero's Guilt: The Case of *Great Expectations*" and Brooks's "Repetition, Repression, Return: The Plotting of *Great Expectations*."

-
- ¹⁵ See Charles R. Forker's "The Language of Hands in *Great Expectations*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 3.2 (Summer 1961): 280-93.
- ¹⁶ The novel's play with splits in this novel is perhaps articulated most delightfully in the Janus-faced character of the clerk Wemmick who inhabits two bodies—the cold, calculating, business-focused, machine-like, isolated, impenetrable Wemmick of Jagger's office who transmutes into the other Wemmick on the walk home, the playful, fanciful, warm, animate, incredibly loving and humanly connected Wemmick of Walworth. All of Wemmick's human life is thrown into the body he occupies only outside of work time; Dickens, of course, is playing here with ideas about the psychological split of modern man, how there's something about the nature of modern work that divides one from life.
- ¹⁷ See "The Medium of *Great Expectations*," p. 84-85.
- ¹⁸ The nineteenth-century colloquialism for a genteel boy, a very young gentleman, of course has the other connotation here too.
- ¹⁹ See especially J. Hillis Miller's *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 272-273; Chris Baldick's *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987); and Iain Crawford's "Pip and the Monster: The Joys of Bondage," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 28: 4 (1988), 625-648.
- ²⁰ See Baldick's *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- ²¹ Apart from its obvious Cain and Abel connotations, which convey how he and Pip are essentially connected, many critics of the novel have noted that Abel Magwitch's surname is also a conflation of "magician" and "witch," which invokes the alchemy involved in his work transmuting Pip into a gentleman.
- ²² In this regard, it may be germane to read *Great Expectations'* play with ideas of bondage and slavery in its rewriting of the Frankenstein myth in the immediate topical context of the American Civil War, which began a month before serial publication of the text started in *All the Year Round*. While Dickens, wishing to avoid re-invoking the U.S. controversy surrounding his treatment of America of in *American Notes*, tabooed the publication of

articles dealing with the American Civil War in *All the Year Round*, there are at least two topical references to the renewed public discussion of, perhaps U.S., slavery in *Great Expectations*—at the end of chapter twelve, when Pip’s sister, after a rampage, asks Joe “why he hadn’t married a Negress Slave at once?” (90) and, at the beginning of volume three, when Magwitch, recalling the story of his life, tells Pip that Compeyson “made me his black slave” (320).

²³ In addition, as Fred Botting has observed, the novel’s reception, when it was published anonymously in 1818, was clouded by its “apparent affiliation with radical political positions,” not the least of which was its dedication to her father, Godwin, the notorious radical (21-22). See introduction to *Frankenstein*, Ed. Fred Botting, New Casebooks series, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995, 1-20.

²⁴ Postcolonial re-readings of *Frankenstein* have also discussed the creature in terms of figuring British fears about the insurrection of colonial subjects and slaves. The 1791-1803 Haitian revolution, the colonial counterpart of the French revolution which closed the eighteenth century and began the nineteenth, is relevant to readings of the novel’s possible colonial currents, as is the intensification of the abolition movement in England in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century and what Mary Louis Pratt has called the “legitimation crisis” of Euroimperialism in the late eighteenth century, the growing conflict between its “egalitarian democratic ideologies at home and ruthless structures of domination and extermination abroad” (74). For a range of postcolonial readings of *Frankenstein* see Elizabeth Bohls’ “Standards of Taste, Discourses of ‘Race,’ and the Aesthetic Education of a Monster: Critique of Empire in *Frankenstein*,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 18.3 (1994), 23-36; Howard Malchow’s “*Frankenstein*’s Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *Past and Present* 139 (1993), 90-130; Joseph Lew’s “The Deceptive Other: Mary Shelley’s Critique of Orientalism in *Frankenstein*,” *Studies in Romanticism* 30 (1991), 255-283; Zohreh Sullivan’s “Race, Gender, and Imperial Ideology in the Nineteenth Century,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 13 (1989), 19-31; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s classic “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985), 243-261; and Ronald Bush’s “Monstrosity and Representation in the Postcolonial Diaspora” *Borders, Exiles, Diasporas*. Elazar Barkan and Marie-Denise Shelton, eds, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998.

-
- ²⁵ See Beer's study *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1983).
- ²⁶ See Morgentaler's *Dickens and Heredity*, especially chapters three and six.
- ²⁷ The narrative distortions of Dickens's first-person narrators often obscure nightmarish domestic situations—see, for example, Jordan's reading of the Peggotty household in "The Social Subtext of *David Copperfield*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 14 (1985), 61-92. The narrative motivations of Dickens's first-person narrators, and his comedy more generally, frequently work to denature and warp the often terrifying and bleak reality of the material that is being represented.
- ²⁸ See Jordan's "The Medium of *Great Expectations*," p. 77-78 particularly.
- ²⁹ Again, I would like to thank John Jordan; see his discussion of Pip's narrative distortions in "The Medium of *Great Expectations*."
- ³⁰ See Edgar Rosenberg's "Last Words on *Great Expectations*: A Textual Brief on the Six Endings," *Dickens Studies Annual* 9 (1981), 87-115. Although early reviews of novel noted both interpretations, they picked up as well on the ambiguity inherent in the revision(s).
- ³¹ See especially Jordan's "The Medium of *Great Expectations*."
- ³² See Jordan's "The Medium of *Great Expectations*," p. 80-81.
- ³³ The edition of the novel I am citing from reproduces the original revised ending which ran in *All the Year Round* and was published in the first British and American editions of the novel; I am working with this ending because my emphasis on the novel's cultural work with the specific sociohistorical context of 1860-1861, post the publication of *The Origin of Species*. Nearly all modern editions of the novel, however, prefer the slight revision Dickens introduced in the Library Edition of 1862, which rephrases the ending of the last line to read: ". . . I saw no shadow of another parting from her."
- ³⁴ A final union between Estella and Pip necessitates a belief in an alchemical change of character for Estella—the rapid telescoping of the revised ending can support this: Estella, who has previously said she does not have a heart, tells Pip that she has "given the remembrance of what" she "had thrown

away”—Pip’s unflagging love—“a place in my heart,” noting that “suffering has been stronger than all other teaching” (442). However, these details can also be read in line with an interpretation of the ending that emphasizes an improbably abrupt and strained narrative fantasy of a projected union.

- ³⁵ See Mamie Dickens’s vivid account of her father’s writing practices in “My Father as I Recall Him” (1886). See also Jordan’s discussion of this writing practice and Dickensian self-reference in relation to the trope of mirrors in chapter five of *Supposing Bleak House* (Charlottesville, VA and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011).
- ³⁶ Edmund Wilson, *The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature* (London: University Paperbacks, 1961).
- ³⁷ Qtd. in George H. Ford, *Dickens and His Readers* (New York: Norton, 1965), p. 162. See also Gilmour’s discussion in *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel*.
- ³⁸ See Dickens’s letter to the theatrical director and actor Charles Fechter, dated September 16, 1867 (*Letters* XI 430).

CHAPTER THREE: ROKESMITH'S FORGE

In the previous chapter, I examined how *Great Expectations*, Dickens's first post-*Origin* novel, is working in the immediate wake of Darwinism with Victorian anxieties about lowly origins and connections. I argued that the novel's thematic work with origins and adaptation engages the epistemological dislocations of Darwinism but ultimately transcends them through its affirmation of self-determination and development over biological determination and origins. And this is registered most powerfully in its emphasis on the cathartic and transformative capacity of self-narration and narrative fantasy.

In this final chapter, I will consider some ways in which Dickens's next and last finished novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, extends this work. A rich vein of recent critical work on Dickens and science, and Dickens and Darwin, specifically, has illuminated the direct invocation and reworking of Darwinian motifs in *Our Mutual Friend*. I will further develop some of these insights by focusing, again, on the text's affirmation of the capacity of the self, and the liberatory and redemptive nature of narrative and fantasy, to transmute hereditary determinants. I read this aesthetic assertion as a further elaboration of Dickens's response to Darwinian evolutionary theory and a bridge that connects the social commentary of Dickens's last two completed novels. To trace this aesthetic counterpositioning as an evolving theme in Dickens's final work is not to say that

Dickens dismissed or was antagonistic toward Darwinian science. Rather, it is to recognize that Dickens's engagement with Darwinian science was multifaceted, complex, and richly contradictory.

* * *

Readers of *Our Mutual Friend* will recall that halfway through the novel, in the chapter entitled "Solo and Duett," Dickens abruptly gives away the murder mystery that's been driving the plot. Walking home from a meeting in which he's menaced Rogue Riderhood in the garb of a grizzled seaman, John Rokesmith suddenly peels away his multiple disguises—his outlandish sailor's dress, the alias Julius Handford, the Rokesmith persona itself—to reveal that he is John Harmon and he has taken advantage of his assumed death to test his intended bride and defy his father's will. This disclosure is jarring in terms of both its content—critics of the novel have lambasted the "silly and trivial mystery"¹ of the Harmon murder, "the albatross around Dickens's neck"² which is redundantly and excessively revealed here for "even the dullest reader"³ in a striking moment of aesthetic "breakdown"⁴—and also its form—the Harmon mystery unravels in a lengthy confessional soliloquy, a protracted stream of interior retrospective first-person narration that dissonantly breaks the novel's omniscient mode.

Carol MacKay, however, has described Harmon's soliloquy as an act of rhetorical self-creation that works to psychologically process and resolve a multiply divided and conflicted self. In her study of the nineteenth-century soliloquy form in fiction, MacKay reads this moment in the novel as Harmon-Handford-Rokesmith's "confrontation with his own consciousness" in which "he moves through self-obliteration" into "self-creation," projecting and rejecting "several alternative futures" in order to "reintegrate his identity" and "forge a new social identity that is at bottom true to his original consciousness" (8). Arguing for the artistry of this unexpected monologue and its pivotal placement with respect to the novel's overarching concern with the complexities of personal and social identity, MacKay notes that one of the titles Dickens considered for the novel, in fact, was "Rokesmith's Forge."⁵

In this chapter, I want to consider some of the broader ways in which this idea of narrative self-fashioning—of which MacKay reads Harmon's soliloquy, midway through the book, as a dramatic, formal eruption—is central to the cultural commentary Dickens's last completed novel is undertaking in the Victorian decade of the 1860s—a decade in which traditional notions about the agency of the self were being radically destabilized by the new Darwinian discourse on hereditary and environmental determinism. *Our Mutual Friend*, I argue here, extends and complicates Dickens's work with this subject in *Great Expectations*. Dickens's post-*Origin* fiction, I contend, is animated by Victorian

anxieties about Darwinian determinism. While evolutionary theory and the new engine of natural selection that Darwin introduced in 1859 are taken up, in both these novels, to rearticulate the great Dickensian theme of social interconnectedness and as a new mode of imagining human divisions and conflicts, Darwin's vision of a world determined and regulated by the dictates of the past and incontrovertible forces outside oneself is ultimately incompatible with Dickens's insistence on the self-creating primacy of the individual—a perspective that permeates Dickens's work in a post-Darwinian world.

Dickens's mature fiction, in fact, is marked by a more central thematic emphasis⁶ on the ability of individuals to define their identity and determine their destiny—a downplaying of social and hereditary factors that becomes increasingly anomalous, as Goldie Morgentaler notes, in fiction of the late nineteenth-century, particularly with writers of the Naturalist School who were fascinated by the dark inexorability of Darwinian determinism (157). While Dickens's social imagination is clearly energized by Darwinian themes in his later fiction, he explicitly counterposes the power of the individual will against the social will, the parental will, the environmental will in his work after 1859—a reaction against the implications of Darwinism that defiantly privileges the human creative consciousness and the self-making drive of the individual. It is not incidental, for instance, that Dickens returns to the plot mechanism of the will in his final work. The will or legal instrument that embodies the regulatory

desires of dead or far removed parental figures, structuring and restructuring the lives of the living and the present, appears in Dickens's previous fiction, *Bleak House* most notably. But in Dickens's post-*Origin* work, this narrative device forcefully returns with new Darwinian resonances. As Pip, newly enlightened about the source of his great expectations, attempts to mitigate Magwitch's impact on him and Estella, as John Harmon resists his father's beyond-the-grave control over his life through an elaborate ruse, as Edwin Drood refuses the betrothal that is a prescribed part of his inheritance, Dickens is imaginatively recasting Victorian anxieties about biological predestination—which, prior to the widespread acceptance of Gregor Mendel's work on the laws of heredity, were grasped only very murkily, Morgentaler observes, particularly by Darwin—onto “more malleable” and familiar social terrain (176).

The Victorian legal will assumes a monumental place in *Our Mutual Friend*—a plot centrality equaled only in *Bleak House*—but in the post-Darwinian context of Dickens's final completed novel, this narrative mechanism accumulates added nuances. As Morgentaler notes, Dickens returns to the narrative contrivance of the will because it provides a particularly apt representation of the potentially implacable impositions of heredity, the legal embodiment of dead generations constraining the living forms and viability of their progeny, the past inexorably shadowing the present in the Darwinian pattern of inherited succession: The will, with its proscribed physical transfer of

wealth, is “analogous to physical inheritance,” a “hereditary endowment” that can dictate “the destiny of offspring,” and, most significantly for *Our Mutual Friend*, control the “hereditary make-up” of future generations through specific marriage provisions (176).

Put another way, the will device transfers to a literary register the manner in which the past, in Darwin’s conception of genealogical influence, always emplots the present. Consequently, the characters in Dickens’s later fiction who resist or refuse to conform to the narratives that have been written for them engage in a kind of narrative rebellion that articulates a growing aesthetic preoccupation in Dickens’s work, post the publication of *The Origin of Species*, with how the self-shaping capacity of the individual can be infinitely more powerful than biological, social, and environmental factors in determining our existences.

For Dickens, this possibility of transcendence is firmly rooted in the imaginative capacity of the individual to transmute himself—the human creative consciousness, Dickens insists in his final fiction, is the most potent engine of transmutation. As Pip’s passage from blacksmith’s boy to an authentic gentleman is predicated, more than anything else, on his ability to creatively reprocess and remake himself in the artistic forge of his retrospective narrative, all of the characters in *Our Mutual Friend* who can liberate themselves from hereditary, social, and environmental determinants are marked by their abilities

to reimagine themselves, to figuratively rewrite their reality; those who cannot, on the other hand, are creatively barren. Numerous critics, most notably J. Hillis Miller and Garrett Stewart,⁷ have established that the imagination, that fantasy and fancy, are central issues in *Our Mutual Friend*. Angus P. Collins has described⁸ how fancy often functions rhetorically as a psychological defense mechanism to protect and preserve characters from trauma in their lives. Similarly, Cynthia DeMarcus has examined the fairy-tale motif in the novel and discussed how fairy-tale elements are manipulated for “their therapeutic psychic potential” (17). Additionally, Stanley Friedman has surveyed the dynamic developmental role of reading in the text,⁹ while Robert Kiely—reflecting on the intertwined centrality of creative scheming, storytelling, authorship, and performance in the text—has commented on the metafictional, modernist aspects of the text’s notable “self-consciousness about the nature of . . . imaginative composition” (267).

This textual preoccupation with the role of the imagination and creative process in human life and self-development signifies, I believe, a deepening aesthetic response in Dickens’s work to the discourse of evolutionary science. An increasingly robust current of scholarship on Dickens and science has been pushing back against the prevailing view, famously articulated by G.H. Lewes in the nineteenth century, and entrenched in much twentieth-century criticism, that Dickens “remained completely outside philosophy, science, and the higher

literature” (152)¹⁰ and that his capacious anatomy of the Victorian world, nevertheless neglected, as Gordon Haight asserted in 1955, the “new theories that revolutionized man’s view of himself and his universe in the nineteenth century” (63).¹¹ As Ben Winyard and Holly Furneaux put it in a recent issue of *19*, devoted to the topic of Dickens and science, this stream of revisionist criticism has sought to illuminate, indeed, “Dickens’s myriad engagements with scientific thought,” which were always governed by “his cherished ideal that culture should show ‘the romantic side of familiar things, illuminating the wonder, even magic, of everyday phenomena for people of all classes, and affectively uniting them by quenching a shared thirst for imaginative succor” (1). Dickens, Winyard and Furneaux argue, was “less stimulated by science’s hypothetical ability to explain . . . than in its poetic ability to stimulate and sustain” (14), and this positioning—lost on the rigid scientist Lewes—is at the heart, I think, of Dickens’s complex and contradictory engagement with Darwinian discourse in his final novels, which are animated by Darwinian themes and metaphors yet seek to critique and subvert the key concept of determinacy which is so antithetical to Dickens’s core values and beliefs as an artist and human being.

The revisionist critical current that Winyard and Furneaux describe has found *Our Mutual Friend* to be a particularly rich site of Dickens’s imaginative engagement with Victorian science generally and evolutionary theory specifically. In his foundational assessment of Dickens’s and Darwin’s shared

vision, George Levine, for example, asserts that the novel offers a strong case study for demonstrating how “the mutual interdependencies on which organic life depends in Darwin are dramatized socially in Dickens through his elaborate plotting and through his gradual revelations . . . of the intricacy of relations disguised by sharp demarcations and definitions of class” (149). While Gillian Beer and Kate Flint have richly described¹² the Darwinian resonance in Dickens’s work with respect to other novels, Pam Morris has observed that Dickens’s last completed novel engages the charged evolutionary discourse of the 1860s in its “parodic mockery of rhetoric of national progress evinced in a search for origins in dust and mud” (126) and, significant to the argument I am developing here, has discussed how the text’s discourse of “individualistic transformation” works to project the “ever-present possibility of imaginative opening out from the closure of actuality” (127). Both Howard W. Fulweiler and Ernest Fontana have assiduously tracked the numerous Darwinian references and allusions in *Our Mutual Friend*¹³; in accord with Morgentaler’s assessment that the text displays Dickens’s growing “disenchantment with heredity (xi), Fulweiler specifically argues that the text “is saturated with the motifs of Darwinian biology in order to display, ultimately, their inadequacy” (55) and juxtaposes a “moral community of responsible men and women” (56) against the predations of capitalism and natural selection. Most recently, building on Fulweiler’s insights, Nicola Bown has offered a rereading of the seemingly minor Mr. Venus character, which

asserts that *Our Mutual Friend* is “Dickens’s reply to the *The Origin of Species* in which he counterposes the world as conceived by natural selection with the redeeming power of love” (2).

My argument here seeks to connect the critical conversation on the thematics of imagination and fantasy in *Our Mutual Friend* with this growing commentary on Darwinian influence in Dickens’s final completed novel. I read the text’s affirmation of the powerful role that the human creative consciousness can play in personal and social transformation as a critique of the overly deterministic elements of Darwinian theory. Furthermore, the argument I am making approaches this narrative emphasis not as a vestige but as a full articulation of the indefatigable human optimism Dickens is so celebrated for, which is noted everywhere in his prior work but which is so rarely associated with the traditional critical conversation on his last finished novel—structured as it is around the metaphors of dust and decay, death and degeneration—which presents, in the words of Adrian Poole, a “more somber, more muted and more appalled” vision of the world “than ever before” (ix).

* * *

Since “hereditary issues,” as Morgentaler observes, “lie within the metaphoric domain of cohesion, connection, and integrity,” it is entirely appropriate that

Our Mutual Friend—with its thematics of disintegration, disarticulation, dispersal—“jettisons heredity” as a key factor in the formation of personal identity (175). Indeed, “hereditary relationships hardly exist in this novel” (Morgentaler 175) of dead, disowning, absent, repellent, or perversely infantilized parental figures. While this vision of parent-child relations exists in Dickens’s previous work, it takes a particularly trenchant form in *Our Mutual Friend*, which, I believe, offers a critique of the inexorability of biological forces and pressures in the Darwinian model. This is a novel in which the idea of biological succession is blocked and resisted at every turn, in which children literally flee from their parents’ houses, and in which the best parents—the Boffins, Mr. Riah, Betty Higden—mother and father children they have not mothered and fathered. Consider the vision of parent-child relationships that begins the book: “She watched his face as earnestly as he watched the river. But, in the intensity of the look there was a touch of dread or horror”¹⁴ (13). As Lizzie Hexam rows and steers her father’s boat, she scrutinizes his face for silent cues and directions. This is the first overt act of reading that occurs in a novel that is fixated, as Friedman notes, on the generative potential of the process of reading (39). Lizzie’s deft handling of the boat is dependent on her reading of her father’s face, which is expert: “[a]lways watching his face, the girl instantly answered . . . in her sculling” (14). While Lizzie’s look of “dread or horror” is a reaction to the ghastly work of corpse fishing, which is her father’s dread trade, I think it’s also

sourced in something else. Throughout the scene, Lizzie's gaze is singularly focused on her father's face—the narrative repeatedly calls attention to this: “[t]he girl turned her face towards him” (14)—while she obscures her own face with the hood of her cloak: ““Take that thing of your face,”” (15) her father tells her. Lizzie's fear and revulsion also articulates an irrepressible aversion to her father and her connection to him. In the second sentence of the narrative, we are told that she is “sufficiently like him to be recognizable as his daughter” (13). Why “sufficiently”? The narrative is working, from the outset, to distance and dilute the import of parental connection—Lizzie's resemblance to her father is not being denied outright but the biological link is linguistically resisted in that oddly antagonistic word, “sufficiently.”

Dickens's vivid description of Gaffer Hexam and his boat in this scene, as others have noted,¹⁵ is drawing on the discourse of evolutionary science. Gaffer is “[h]alf savage,” has “a wilderness of beard and whisker,” has bare “brown arms” and an uncovered “matted head,” (13) and bears “a certain likeness to a roused bird of prey” (14). His boat is “[a]llied to the bottom of a river rather than the surface” through its covering of “slime and ooze” and Gaffer is configured as an extension his boat—his clothes are seemingly “made out of the mud that begrimed his boat” (13). Gaffer is a figure of degeneration that signs a kind of backward unraveling fear of devolution, but he also a proto-man, a developmental link in an upward evolutionary trajectory of increasingly complex

life out primal “slime and ooze.” All of these descriptions play on very topical imagery inserted in the Victorian imagination by the intense debate on evolutionary science underway in the 1860s. Consequently, the dread and horror of Lizzie’s look, which is focused on her father, is inflected, I think, by a larger social dread and horror of humankind’s possible origins.

This revulsion toward parental figures—and the kind of sourcing, and connection, and influence they represent—is also articulated in Lizzie’s loathing of the Thames in this scene—“‘It’s my belief that you hate the very sight of the river.’ ‘I—I do not like it father’”—which Gaffer personifies as the second parental figure in Lizzie life in chastising her: “The very fire that warmed you when you were a babby, was picked out of the river alongside the coal barges. The very basket you slept in, the tide washed ashore. The very rockers that I put it upon to make a cradle of it, I cut out of a piece of wood that drifted from some ship or another” (15). This abjuration of the parental taint also extends to Lizzie’s driving desire to liberate her younger brother, Charley, from their father, their home, and their dreadful familial trade, by encouraging and enabling Charley to educate himself in spite of Gaffer’s objections and, ultimately, by forcing Charley to leave their home for good. Given Gaffer’s fierce opposition to his education, Lizzie effectually sets in motion a severance of the parental connection which comes to fruition in this scene from the chapter “Cut Adrift”:

“Now then. What's gone with that boy?”

“Don't be angry, dear. It seems, father, that he has quite a gift of learning.”

“Unnat'ral young beggar!’ said the parent, shaking his knife in the air.

“—And that having this gift, and not being equally good at other things, he has made shift to get some schooling.’

“Unnat'ral young beggar!’ said the parent again, with his former action.

“—And that knowing you have nothing to spare, father, and not wishing to be a burden on you, he gradually made up his mind to go seek his fortune out of learning. He went away this morning, father, and he cried very much at going, and he hoped you would forgive him.”

“Let him never come a nigh me to ask me my forgiveness,” said the father, again emphasizing his words with the knife. “Let him never come within sight of my eyes, nor yet within reach of my arm. His own father ain't good enough for him. He's disowned his own father. His own father therefore, disowns him for ever and ever, as a unnat'ral young beggar.” (80-81)

Like John Harmon, Lizzie, in effect, obstructs her father's will here by creating and instituting a counternarrative; she is playing a part here in a new chain of events she has scripted, an anticipated outcome that belies her words of rapprochement. Gaffer's ferocious antipathy to schooling, which is expressed bodily, biologically here in the fierce physical actions that are his most articulate mode of expression, is rooted not so much in a perverse veneration of ignorance as it is in an acute feeling of biological betrayal, a perceived disavowal of natural processes of succession and influence, a casting off of hereditary connections. And the word that Gaffer keeps invoking—“unnat'ral”—to describe Charley registers this gut sense in Gaffer of what has happened. Gaffer's near biblical proclamation is a speech act that performs what he perceives to be a mutual

gesture, erasing his son from his life—a movement that parallels old Harmon’s treatment of his young son in the Harmon storyline.

In *Our Mutual Friend*, the life and identity determining forces of heredity and environment are recast as a kind of hex that can only be exorcised through acts of the imagination and actions of the creative human consciousness. The “gift of learning” that Lizzie speaks of can ungird but does not itself guarantee that one is capable of either. In line with Dickens’s always explicitly meaningful character naming practices, Charley and Lizzie Hexam’s surname incorporates the curse, the damnation of the parental will (indeed, in this novel, parental wills and curses are interchangeable and indistinguishable) that both are trying to escape. Although his future is suspended outside the narrative, we sense that the selfish, arrogant, thankless young Hexam—whose “coarse” figure and voice and features are stamped with the hex of his heredity, the “curious mixture” of “uncompleted savagery, and uncompleted civilization” that the jaded lawyer Mortimer Lightwood reads in his ambitious young face in the early pages of *Our Mutual Friend* (28)—will never do this. As the best student of the tortured villain Bradley Headstone, the promising progeny of the imaginatively vacuous and sterile Gradgrindian philosophy of learning, Charley’s rise in the world will most likely be as illusory as Headstone’s. Lizzie, on the other hand, literally removes the hex imprinted in her surname through her class-boundary-breaking marriage

to Eugene Wrayburn—a courageous act on both their parts that literally defies and overrides the parental will, the social will, the environmental will.

Although their union and afterlife together also lies suspended outside the narrative, their reported marriage in the novel's last chapter enacts a transcendence of class lines that has no precise analogue in Dickens's previous fiction. This transcendence is founded on an imaginative capacity that both these characters share, an ability to will a world into being other than the one they live in. In Lizzie's case, this capacity is revealed early on in her fertile fire-gazing, the fanciful readings of fire embers that she performs to sustain herself: "Don't disturb it, Charley, or it'll be all in a blaze. It's that dull glow near it, coming and going, that I mean. When I look at it of an evening, it comes like pictures to me, Charley.' 'Show us a picture,' said the boy. 'Tell us where to look.'" (37). Lizzie's creativity is described as a mode of self-preservation but also self-development and self-creation. As Charley notes, his illiterate sister's "library of books is the hollow down by the flare" (39) and the narratives she produces from the flames have powers of divination, envisioning alternate destinies into being: " . . . give us a fortune-telling one, a future one," Charley begs his sister at one point (38). Lizzie's creative consciousness links her to Jenny Wren, another daughter who liberates herself from her father and her miserable reality by dint of her tremendous imagination, who embodies the transformative potential of fancy and fantasy most forcefully in the novel, who fittingly takes Lizzie in after Gaffer

dies and forges a strong friendship with her. Also, not incidentally, Eugene Wrayburn's interest in Lizzie is cemented when he sees her framed in a window in the romantic act of fire-gazing—Lizzie's imaginative outlet literally brings about the attachment and union that will enable her to transform herself and her life:

He could see the light of the fire shining through the window She had no other light other than the light of the fire. The unkindled lamp stood on the table. She sat on the ground, looking at the brazier, with her face leaning on her hand. There was a kind of film or flicker on her face which at first he took to be the fitful firelight; but, on a second look. He saw that she was weeping. A sad and solitary spectacle, as shown him by the rising and falling of the fire. (164-66)

Wrayburn and Lizzie's union, an extreme act of self-definition in the context of Victorian taboos on class mixing, is rooted in this dual-layered frame of romantic imagining. As Wrayburn frames Lizzie—seeking solace in her fire-dreaming—in the mode of romantic spectacle, his act of voyeurism is itself framed as an act of an innately romantic imagination, which lies beneath a built-up, highly theatrical shell of boredom and disengagement. Lizzie, significantly, brings this submerged aspect of Wrayburn abruptly to the surface in this scene. Immediately after he retreats from the window, Wrayburn, feeling guilty about his act of voyeurism and the role he has unwittingly played in bringing more sorrow to Lizzie's life, imagines himself as the Harmon murderer: "If the real man feels as guilty as I do," he tells his friend and accomplice Lightwood, "he is remarkably

uncomfortable” (166). He bombastically compares himself to the great British traitor Guy Fawkes, as well as London’s petty criminals, and a short while later, sitting by and gazing into the fire himself at the Six Jolly Fellowships, he tells Lightwood what he sees: “Invisible insects of diabolical activity swarm this place. I am tickled and twitched all over. Mentally, I have now committed a burglary under the meanest circumstances, and the myrmidons of justice are at my heels” (167). As the night, during which Gaffer is being pursued as a suspect in the Harmon murder, draws on, Wrayburn’s dark flights of fancy increase in pitch: As they assist the detective police in standing watch for Gaffer, who is pulled dead from the river at the end of the night, Wrayburn communicates his state of mind to Lightwood—“Two burglaries now, and a forgery!” (168) and later on, “Three burglaries, two forgeries, and a midnight assassination” (170). The following day, he reports to Lightwood that he has made himself guilty of “every crime in the Newgate Calendar” (179). Although Wrayburn’s dark fantasies clearly carry an erotic charge and can be read as manifestations of improper sexual desire prompted by his act of voyeurism, the reverse reading is more in line with the narrative’s general treatment of the imagination as a moral center. As Angus P. Collins has noted, Wrayburn’s “heightened imaginative activity” in this sequence in the novel is “presented as an unmistakable sign of moral worth” (109). In a narrative in which fertile human creativity and innate human goodness frequently intertwine (Weggery notwithstanding), Wrayburn’s darkly

comic imaginings reveal the dormant potential self that Lizzie will nurse to life, a self that belies his well-practiced character performance of carelessness, which is itself a creative defense mechanism against the intense misery of his own life. Wrayburn's self-transformation in the novel grows from his capacity for compassion, which is revealed here for what it is: the ability to imaginatively empathize with others, projecting oneself into other selves. His momentum toward self-development is generated by a passion for Lizzie that is conflicted and has a dark complexity,¹⁶ but it is rooted as well, I think, in some sense of compassion for her, which vividly stimulates his dark fantasies here and reveals a self-transformative potential.¹⁷

Wrayburn's movement toward self-creation in the novel and his general plight parallels that of the central character: Like John Harmon, Wrayburn is resisting his father's will—the idleness he flaunts functions, in fact, as a dynamic check against the occupation, the wife, and the life chosen for him by his father: “[c]onsidering myself sufficiently incongruous on my legal eminence,” he jokes to Lightwood, “I have until now suppressed by domestic destiny” (149). His subversion of the identity and life his father is forcing on him, and his defiant marriage outside his circle of class, is a sideplot that articulates another rejection of hereditary and environmental determinism. Wrayburn's comic shortening of his references to his father—early on he dubs him “my respected father” (148) and refers to him in the narrative as his “M.R.F.” (149) thereafter—is at once an

act of renaming that inverts the identity-shaping power of the parental figure and a patricidal gesture that linguistically reduces the presence of his father in his life to an acronymic cipher. Likewise, Wrayburn's emphatic boredom and indolence is both the creative performance of an alter persona (his version of Harmon's Rokesmith) and an absence of engagement with life (his version of Harmon's death ruse) that perverts his father's will. Wrayburn's performative idleness, and the imaginative proclivities he shares with his friend Lightwood, underlines the role that his capacity for fantasy will play in his self-recreation.

Like Harmon, Wrayburn too is recalled to life from what should be a watery death that is transformed, instead, into self-generative juncture—it is significant that Wrayburn marries Lizzie on his deathbed. In limbo between life and death, like the dazed Harmon, Wrayburn chooses a new life and identity for himself that runs counter to his heredity. It is also significant that fantasy, in the figure of Jenny Wren, has a key role in his act of self-creation. Jenny, who is not so much a character in the text as she is a nymph that personifies fantasy, is present throughout Wrayburn's recuperative process and translates his death-slurred speech to others. She is specifically asked for by Wrayburn, who identifies her for what she is: “‘Stay and help to nurse me,’ said Eugene quietly. ‘I should like you to have the fancy here, before I die’” (718). Jenny also tells Lightwood “the right word” to whisper into Eugene's ear—“Wife”—that

perfectly divines his dying desire and sets in motion his union with Lizzie and the renewal of his life.

Jenny makes this prophetic connection between death and fantasy and renewal elsewhere in the novel: ““Come up and be dead! Come up and be dead!” she calls down to the minor villain Fascination Fledgby from Riah’s rooftop garden, a romantic haven removed from the world that she and Lizzie retreat to in order to recuperate themselves (280). Jenny—whose “long bright radiant hair” physically represents the glorious, overflowing waves of fantasy that emanate from her mind—offers the novel’s sharpest opposition of self-creative potential against the dark influences of hereditary and environmental determinism. Jenny’s father, the drunken, wretched, perpetually stupified presence that signs a human absence (like old Harmon, he is, in effect, a dead parental figure who imposes on his child’s life from afar, from his state of living death), is perhaps Dickens’s darkest embodiment of the ruinous parent—a recurrent figure in his fiction¹⁸. “Mr. Dolls,” as Wrayburn dubs him (another inversion of the parent-child naming practice which, similar to Wrayburn’s M.R.F., is a patricidal gesture; Jenny Wren has also renamed herself, discarding her birth name, Fanny Cleaver, in a self-creative act, a literal rejection of genealogical identity), is a monstrous manifestation of heredity—he is more a parental haunting than an en fleshed character in the text—a life-directing hereditary force that ghosts his child’s life and invisibly but palpably determines

and devastates it. As Jenny's abundant, beautiful hair is the transfigurative force of her imagination and individual will, her stunted, crippled body is her biological inheritance, the blight of her heredity. Jenny Wren's tremendous imagination—which lifts her, bird-like, as her name connotes, above the level of reality, so much so that she practically exists in a metaphysical plane separate from all the other characters—is the novel's richest articulation of the transcendent potential of narrative fantasy, of transformative self-narration. Through fantasy, Jenny metamorphoses the miserable life that has been plotted for her into a fairy tale, rewriting herself as a princess awaiting the appearance of her prince—"Him." Through fantasy, Jenny transforms the squalor and struggle of her life into fields of flowers and symphonies of birdsong. Through fantasy, Jenny accomplishes, as the omniscient narrator notes, a "dire reversal of the places of parent and child" (241), literally recasting her father as her "prodigal old son" (242), poignantly but nightmarishly rereading his broken, empty figure as that of a child to be scolded, chastised, and punished. Finally, through fantasy, Jenny transfigures her powerless position in the far, desperate margins of society, into one of centrality and omnipotence: The doll's dressmaker stalks the rich and powerful women of London, repossessing them as raw material for her designs. The innocuous little English jenny-wren is, in fact, a bird of prey. As she tells Riah:

"When I see a great lady very suitable for my business, I say 'You'll do, my dear!' and I take particular notice of her, and run home and cut her out and baste her . . . Sometimes she plainly seems

to say, 'How that little creature is staring!' and sometimes likes it and sometimes don't, but much more often yes than no. All the while I am only saying to myself, 'I must hollow out a bit here; I must slope away there'; and I am making a perfect slave of her . . ." (431)

By dint of her imagination, Jenny routinely realigns the reality and power relations of class; the rich ladies of London, she insists, are, in fact, "working for" her dolls (431). Jenny's fantasy is, pointedly, a projection of working-class anger: Beneath the fanciful imaginings of a miserable young girl, there is a violent vision of social revolt—the more fortunate denizens of London, unknowingly, surrounded by downtrodden masses who are actively re-plotting the social hierarchy. (Indeed, as James Roy King notes, "She is a complex, very engaging recreation of Madame Defarge!" [48]). At the same time, Jenny's fantasy conveys a striking image of her as a narrative presence in the text, a creative consciousness crafting and directing the lives of her characters—she is a registration of the writer, Dickens himself, as he reportedly walked the streets of London obsessively, absorbing people and plots for his fiction.

Jenny's dramatic rewriting of reality in elaborate fantasy sequences is a psychological defense mechanism that powerfully metamorphoses her actual social powerlessness into its opposite. It is a capacity she shares with Bella Wilfer, Harmon's apparently impetuous, selfish, mercenary intended bride. Bella, in fact, shares numerous character and plot points with Jenny—the two functioning as character doubles in many ways. Despite her (albeit vulnerable

lower-) middle-class status, Bella, who has been willed away (“like a horse, or a dog, or a bird,” she tells Rokesmith [371]) to a man she has never met, dehumanized to the level of object and currency, intended to function as a kind of parental curse—her supposedly wretched character belying her beauty—is as profoundly powerless as Jenny. Bella frequently invokes tiny bird imagery to describe the flighty and superficial nature that she seemingly flaunts—she compares her character to that of a “canary-bird,” for example (516), and says that she chatters like a “Magpie” (520). This bird imagery, though, also conveys an emotional state of exposure and susceptibility—her, in effect, caged status. Additionally, Bella’s relationship with her father, Reginald “Rumty” Wilfer, exhibits dynamics similar to Jenny’s relationship with hers, and although it’s drawn in a very different vein, is equally perverse. Like Jenny, Bella infantilizes her father, though her “Pa,” in contrast to Jenny’s “bad child” (239), is recast as an adorable, chubby little boy, to be petted, dressed up, and fussed over.

This treatment materializes most absurdly in the chapter entitled “In Which an Innocent Elopement Occurs,” which shows Bella returning home for brief visit and then proceeding on to her father’s office in London to spirit him off for a lunch outing. Bella’s decadent and secret luncheon date with her father—it is paid for with a fifty pound purse that Mr. Boffin has given her, and Bella ridiculously (but also prudently, given her mother and sister’s temperaments) swears her father to secrecy—proceeds in a surreal dream

sequence which, as Murray Baumgarten has pointed out, is informed by fantasies of empire, and elaborates “the connection between personal imaginings (including erotic fantasies) and Victorian institutions, especially marriage, family life, and children . . .” (55). When Bella meets her father to convince him to come out with her, she immediately physically renders him into child-like state of obeisance, taking “him by the chin,” pulling “his hat off,” and sticking “up his hair in her old way” (312).

Perceiving that her father is “more like a boy than ever” and, moreover, the shabbiness of “his boyish figure,” Bella hands over her purse and commands him to buy “the most beautiful suit of clothes, the most beautiful hat, and the most beautiful boots . . . that are to be got for money” (313). This gesture is, at once, maternal, the daughter-mother taking pleasure in lavishly dressing up the father-son, and sexual-erotic. The father-daughter relationship not entirely obliquely, as James Roy King has commented, takes on the cast of “an adult, sexual affair” in which “play-sex buffers the pair from all the complications of the real thing” (47). Rumty, notably, is identified as a “cherub” at the outset of the scene—a word that lends itself to both interpretations as Bella’s father, in effect, morphs into a chubby boy with strong erotic associations. Commanding her father to “take this lovely woman out to dinner” (313), throwing herself into the third person to dilute their father-daughter relationship, Bella’s generally

excessive kissing, fondling, and flirtation with her father reaches uneasy terrain in exchanges like this:

“Don’t you wish, my dear,” said R.W., timidly, “that your mother was here?”

“No, I don’t Pa, for I like to have you all to myself to-day. I was always your little favorite at home, and you were always mine. We have run away together often, before now; haven’t we, Pa?”

“Ah, to be sure we have! Many a Sunday when your mother was—was a little liable to it,” repeating his former expression after pausing to cough. (313-14)

This double current of infantilization and sexualization needs to be read, I think, in the context of the narrative’s general rejection of the authority and status of biological fathers. Though it’s written in a comedic vein, and is but a vivid demonstration of Bella’s playful absurdity, Rumty’s conversion from father figure to an endearing child/potential lover presents a similar subversion of parental identity and power. The assortment of reductive names that Reginald Wilfer is called by different people at various points in the novel (he is never addressed by his given name)—Rumty, R. Wilfer, R.W.—is, at once, an inversion or repossession of parental naming practices (fathers are repeatedly renamed by their children or other people) similar to Jenny’s “bad old boy” and a suppressive gesture with patricidal overtones much like Eugene’s “M.R.F.” The narrative treatment that Rumty is subjected to is different in degree only from that of Mr. Dolls, whose life, as he tells his daughter Jenny, has degenerated into “[c]ircumstances over which had no control” —an addled line that, in its

omission of the personal pronoun, conveys the radical erasure of his subjectivity (241). Bella's father, Reginald Wilfer, whose name, with its "rather a grand sound" only serves to ironize his "commonplace extraction" (40), lies on this same trajectory of reduction to a cipher: "He was shy, and was unwilling to own to the name of Reginald, as being too aspiring and self-assertive a name. In his signature, he used only the initial R., and imparted what it really stood for, to none but chosen friends . . ." (41). Both Mr. Dolls and Rumty, in nightmarish and comic terms respectively, intensely figure the degeneration of paternal vigor in the text—a hereditary decline that can only be halted by individual regeneration. What biological parents have to transmit to their offspring in this narrative is increasingly only their own impotence or their life-shriveling spite.

In *Our Mutual Friend*, biological succession—the concept that Darwinian evolution is crucially dependent on—becomes something to be actively resisted and narratively thwarted. Paternity is not biological in this text—it is, rather, a spiritual, moral, and imaginative process through which parents choose their children and children choose their parents. Phylogeny, in this sense, is founded not on lines of genealogical connection but on lines of human empathy that imaginatively map biologically distant but spiritually kindred people together. Darwin's vision of the descent of man as a consequence of evolutionary processes powered by natural selection¹⁹ is countered here by Dickens's vision of

the descent of man as a consequence of imaginative processes powered by human empathy.

Indeed, the generative and transformative potential of empathy enables an alternative type of natural selection to be imagined in this text.

Transmutation, Dickens's post-*Origin* fiction insists, simply cannot be reducible to the inexorable flows of biological and environmental forces—our natural human capacity for empathetic connection is ultimately a more powerful transfigurative force of selection that can creatively recast our familial ties, rewrite our inheritance, and remake our personal identity. The Veneerings, notably, offer a nightmarish vision of what it is to be devoid of this capacity—the absurd emptiness and mutability of their bonds to other people, the endless rearranging of people in their lives like furniture that befuddles poor Twemlow, is a darkly comic rendering of the self-creative process stripped of empathetic substance, that is wholly self-interested and ultimately bankrupt (the Veneerings's financial bust and social exposure at the end of the novel merely makes this condition literal). The Veneerings are an outsize illustration of a self-evolutionary principle that becomes increasingly clear in the narrative: While human creativity is the precondition for self-transformation in this text, human empathy is the catalyst. The text, pointedly, is strewn with highly imaginative villains whose schemes for creatively transfiguring themselves and their circumstances are narratively derailed precisely because of their exclusively

selfish nature—the Lammles, Fascination Fledgeby, Rogue Riderhood, Bradley Headstone latterly, and Silas Wegg, most infamously, his practice of “Weggery,” as Mr. Venus dubs it, emerging as a byword for insidiously egotistical creative scheming that must be rendered impotent. Creative villainy in *Our Mutual Friend* may reach toward the facile surface, the veneering, of self-renewal and regeneration but it can never penetrate the vital center. Self-creation, accordingly, is only possible by compassionately stepping outside oneself and through powerful acts of self-abnegation—it is the inverse of the Darwinian mantra of survival of the fittest, of “scrunch or be scrunched,” as Boffin puts it to Bella, and the narrative theme of miserliness which metaphorizes the ruinous infertility of purely self-interested creativity (470).

Certainly, this thematic is not new in Dickens’s work: The concept of creative self-sacrifice appears in prior novels and, of course, has its most dramatic exponent in Sydney Carton’s identity-renewing and life-giving death²⁰ in *A Tale of Two Cities*. It accords with, as well, the very traditional religious template of regeneration through Christ-like martyrdom. I would argue, though, that this concept acquires a new energy and urgency in Dickens’s post-*Origin* work as an aesthetic reclamation of human agency in a new age of scientific determinism. If Jenny Wren can be read as the imaginative center of the text, then her queer call ““Come up and be dead!”” is precisely this: an invitation to creative renewal through the sacrificial negation of the self.

As a counterweight to Jenny Wren, the brooding schoolmaster Bradley Headstone—whose last words in the text, fittingly, are the antithesis of Jenny’s: “Come down!” (781)—is the negative center of the text because he is pathologically incapable of stepping outside of himself. Headstone, whose funereal surname signifies a state of spiritual death, of being anchored intractably to himself, is one of Dickens’s most searing psychological portraits of human darkness because he lacks what, in Dickens’s estimation, makes us essentially human: He is imaginative sterile and monomaniacally self-focused, nightmarishly incapable of empathy, of forming authentic human connections. Headstone is a portrait of a man who is his own grave—who cannot escape himself. While repression, self-stifling, can have an altruistic cast in the narrative (for instance, in Harmon’s burial of himself to disperse the taint of his inheritance), Headstone’s characteristic suppression, which is repeatedly referred to by the omniscient narrator and other characters—“[s]uppression of so much to make room for so much, had given him a constrained manner, over and above” (218), “in watching and repressing himself daily” (289), “seating himself in his constrained manner” (335), “the gloomy constraint of her suitor” (399), “the school master replied, in a suppressed voice” (773)—is purely self-torture, the self savagely smothering the self. Indeed, Headstone’s murderous inclinations, from the beginning, are blurred between bloody acting out and self-obliteration. As Headstone’s dark familiar Rogue Riderhood recognizes: “There

was a dark expression on his face . . . It was fierce and full of purpose; but the purpose might have been as much against himself as against another” (623).

Dickens’s physical characterization of Headstone, as Ernest Fontana has pointed out, gestures toward the emergent medical discourse on criminals as specimens of human devolution (40) —which developed in parallel and symbiotically with evolutionary discourse from the mid-nineteenth century on²¹: Headstone’s epileptic fits and bodily trembles, specifically, along with his general condition of mental disturbance and physical emasculation, mark him as a figure of degeneration in the text (he sits by the fire, haggard and white, after Riderhood punctures the refuge of his school, “the very texture and color of his hair degenerating” [779]). For all of Headstone’s education and upward mobility, there is a marked discrepancy between his thoroughly decent dress and his body, “a want of adaptation between him and it” (218). Despite Headstone’s trained suppression of his true nature and origins, the narrator remarks in introducing him: “there was enough of what was animal, and what was fiery (though smoldering), still visible in him . . .” (218). The schoolteacher’s outside and inside, tellingly, harmonize only when he adopts the coarse garb of Rogue Riderhood in plotting Wrayburn’s murder: “. . . whereas, in his own schoolmaster clothes, he usually looked as if they were the clothes of some other man, he now looked, in the clothes of some other man or men, as if they were his own” (619).

While Headstone's physical degeneracy, as Fontana notes, brands him as an unsuitable mate for Lizzie in the novel's Darwinian ethos of male rivalry (40), Lizzie responds most viscerally to, and rejects Headstone most immediately for, the self-destructive fire she sees raging in him: "He looked at Lizzie again and held the look. And his face turned from burning red to white, and from white back to burning red, and so for a time to lasting deadly white Lizzie Hexam had changed colour when those changes came over him, and her face now expressed some anger, more dislike, and even a touch of fear" (339-340). Headstone's passion, Lizzie correctly recognizes, has little to do with her. It is, rather, the eruption of a self-destructive energy that Headstone can no longer reign in. His ungainly and tortured words of courtship are, significantly, accompanied by "a curious tight-screwing movement of his right hand in the clenching pal of his left, like the action of one who was being physically hurt, and was unwilling to cry out" (339).

The lust that Lizzie awakens in Headstone, if one can read it as such, is an erotic attraction rooted in the schoolmaster's psychological need for self-release; Lizzie, pointedly, holds out the promise of an end to his habitual suppression and a terrifying, albeit secretly desired, reversion to a more authentic existence: "It had been an immovable idea since he first set eyes upon her. It seemed to him as if all that he could suppress in himself had been suppressed, as if all that he could restrain in himself had been restrained, and the time had come—in a rush,

in a moment—when the power of self-command had departed from him” (336). Headstone’s life is reduced, in the end, to a narrative of futile flight from an inherited nature he cannot finally countermand: The schoolmaster’s scrupulous “decency” and strained self-command are, ultimately, as creatively empty and rote as the mindless exercises he drills into his charges.

As Morris has observed, Headstone is Dickens’s last, and his darkest, fictional outcome of “a boy reared in the city streets” (133): Sam Weller, Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, Jo, Pip (to some extent), and Dickens—the blacking factory’s new boy—all stand behind him. In the context of the national education reforms of the 1860s, Morris notes, Headstone also offers a striking textual commentary on the fiction of successfully containing and stifling social discontent through a compulsory education system for the working classes (132). As a perfect product of an ideological apparatus to sustain “the existing social order,” Headstone is a terrifying “representation of the totally taught and regimented self” (Morris 132-133). Bereft of “any capacity for playful self-invention,” Headstone demonstrates the desire “for transformation of a pauper identity . . . mediated wholly into the ego-ideal of respectability” (Morris 133).

Headstone’s sadomasochistic self-discipline and self-torturing repression—a more perverse permutation of Uriah Heep’s religion of “umbleness”—reflect a system of hegemonic conditioning, Morris asserts, designed to preserve the fixity of social roles and identities beneath the

misdirecting fiction of moral progress (133). In a novel in which multiple identities, play acting, and performativity connote a capacity for imaginative transformation and social transcendence, the fixed identity that Headstone clings to compulsively—"schoolmaster"—which is more his name than his name—registers his constitutionally stunted human creativity (after expertly unraveling Headstone's one creative enterprise in the text, the artful assassin Rogue Riderhood, ridicules his "clumsy hand" [777]) and foreclosed connectivity to people and things outside himself.

In their initial confrontation in the narrative, Wrayburn—whose "parodic cynicism," Morris notes, functions to skewer the "hypocritical bombast of prevailing social discourse" (130)—adroitly converts Headstone's static identity as "schoolmaster" into a vicious barb to taunt him relentlessly; Wrayburn also whimsically but penetratingly remarks on the unfertile fixity of Headstone's nature, calling him a "curious monomaniac" (291)—a term which, as Diane Mason has discussed recently,²² also conveys a masturbatory obsession in Victorian medical literature, a pathological addiction to self-flagellation, a repressive, inward-directed stamping out of the creative urge. Headstone's language in the narrative, which is always halting and perpetually self-interrupting when it is not self-consciously stilted, linguistically bears the marks of his monomania, as do the epileptic tics of his bodily gestures, which are physical expressions of his self-fixation.

As speech acts, Headstone's characteristic language in the novel is seemingly self-directed and soliloquizing even when it is broadcast at other people: "It seems egotistical to begin by saying so much about myself," he painfully begins his balked proposal to Lizzie, "but whatever I say to you seems, even in my own ears, below what I want to say, and different from what I want to say. I can't help it" (387-388). It can never, however, reach a generative "rhetoric of transcendence," to use MacKay's characterization of the key current of Harmon-Handford-Rokesmith's mid-novel soliloquy (111), because its dynamic is always restrictive and repressive rather than connective and projective.

Truly transcendent and transformative self-creativity in the text is rooted in the ideal of Dickensian benevolence: "No one is useless in this world," Harmon reminds Bella, "who lightens the burden of it for any one else" (511). It stems from the compassionate minding of others—the practice of which Betty Higden, "a mother and a mangler in a million million" (508), exemplifies—and the careful cultivation and stewardship of mutuality. In the wastescape of predation and meaningless dust we are left in, in Dickens's last finished novel, Dickens, as Angus Collins eloquently observes

seeks to seal the narrative compact between himself and his audience by moving through . . . encoded conventionalities towards a narrative gesture of communal aspiration, towards a consciously fictive collaborative celebration of the world as it might be and not as it is. The most resonant Voice of society proclaimed by the book is the one Dickens himself attempts to bring into being. It is composed of all those readers who can

move, in the act of reading, from the “I” of isolated readership to the “we” of fragile regenerative mutuality. (110)

More than any other character, Sloppy, Betty Higden’s spiritual son, to whom she is “more than . . . [a] mother” to, incarnates this communal aspiration for self and social renewal in his poignantly indefatigable “mangling” for others and his much remarked on savant ability to “do the Police in different voices” (198)—a performative prowess that weds him creatively to his fairy-tale kindred spirit— the Her to his Him—Jenny Wren, and that literally helps rewrite the world of the novel through his expert participation in Harmon’s and the Boffins’s re-creative ruse.

Though feminist criticism of *Our Mutual Friend* has astutely mined the many disturbing aspects of the moral test that Bella Wilfer is subjected to by male characters—who manipulate her life in ways, as Syd Thomas puts it, that can be construed as “essentially self serving and ‘murderous’” (8)—in another light, the plan that Harmon and the Boffins put into play is a collaborative counternarrative to the wholly ruinous world Old Harmon has willed into existence, one that is plotted and carried out to sap the power of the past and present to determine the future.

As Fulweiler has pointed out, the text’s theatrical play with multiple wills, miser figures, and avariciousness around this counterplot engages the same questions that are central to Darwinian theory: “What is worthy to be inherited?”

How can the legacy of the past evolve into the present and the future?” (65). The novel’s attempted answers to these questions accumulate additional resonance in the dynamic context of Dickens’s customary mode of composing and publishing his fiction in serial installments—dealing daily with inherited plots and the attendant pressures of what has been prewritten—and also in the context of the ailing, aging great writer working in what he certainly knew was the denouement of his trajectory as an artist.

As many biographers of Dickens have noted, 1864-65 were especially traumatic years for Dickens, and, as many strands of biographical criticism have duly observed, the novel’s treatment of life and death, mortality and creative renewal, had an acutely personal dimension for Dickens in this period of “intense private and creative stress” (Collins 262). The commingling of themes of life and death that would run through his work and his personal life during this time were articulated early on in 1864, when on February 7, Dickens’s birthday, news arrived of the sudden death of Dickens’s twenty-three-year-old son, Walter Landor, in India two months earlier. In a letter to a friend, the author and publisher Charles Knight, dated March 7, Dickens almost too vividly describes the scene of his “poor boy’s” untimely and unfair death, perhaps employing his narrative impulses to buffer personal pain--“He was talking to some brother-officers in the Calcutta hospital about his preparations for home, when he suddenly became excited, had a rush of blood from the mouth, and was dead”

(*Letters X 366*)—and then abruptly mentions his new novel in the context of the youth-renewing effects of hard writing work : “My ‘working life’ is resolving itself at the present into another book, in twenty green leaves. You work like a Trojan at Ventnor, but you do that everywhere; and that's why you are so young” (*Letters X 366*).

The shock of Walter’s death in far-off India was preceded by the death of Dickens’s mother, Elizabeth, close to home, just a few months earlier in September 1863. Though Elizabeth Dickens’s death at the ripe age of seventy-four was long expected—she had been incapacitated by old age and senility for several years—her death was also “quite suddenly at last,” Dickens notes in a one-sentence postscript appended to a September 1863 business letter to G.H. Wills (*Letters X 289*). The repressed, almost cold pithiness of this postscript communicates his complicated relationship with his mother and contrasts, as well, with Dickens’s more elaborate and narratively colored description of the drawn out spectacle of Elizabeth Dickens’s demise at the beginning of the decade: In an August 1860 letter to a friend, Frances Dickinson, Dickens writes drolly, but also clearly painfully, of his mother’s frightful degeneration in terms of hereditary blight and horrific inheritance: “My mother, who was also left to me when my father died (I never had anything left to me but relations), is in the strangest state of mind from senile decay; and the impossibility of getting her to understand what is the matter, combined with the desire to be got up in sables

like a female Hamlet, illumines the dreary scene with a ghastly absurdity that is the chief relief I can find in it" (*Letters IX 287*).

As Michael Slater and other Dickens biographers have noted, Dickens, in fact, was virtually beset by death in the early years of the 1860s: In addition to his mother and son, Dickens's thirty-eight-year-old younger brother, Alfred, died from pleurisy in 1860, leaving behind a wife and five young children for Dickens to care for; Dickens's irreplaceable manager, Arthur Smith, also died prematurely in October 1861; and, as Slater observes, Smith's death was "followed only a year later by that of his ever-helpful brother-in-law Henry AustinLater came the deaths of a number of friends who had been especially dear to him— Cornelius Felton, Angus Fletcher, James White, and Augustus Egg" (499). Slater further notes that Maria Beadnell's father, George, died in 1862, prompting Dickens to write to his old love, recalling their lost life: "all the old Past comes out of its grave when I think of him" (499). Additionally, the death of Dickens's mother-in-law and nemesis, Mrs. Hogarth, in August 1863, as Slater remarks, stimulated old traumas by literally requiring the reopening of Mary Hogarth's grave to bury her mother beside her (499).

The death of Dickens's fellow novelist and chief rival William Makepeace Thackeray in December 1863—"sudden, and yet not sudden" (*Letters X 346*), as Dickens puts it in a January 24 letter to Wilkie Collins—also perhaps framed Dickens's reflections on his own poor health and felt creative exhaustion, which

are recurrent themes in his 1863-65 correspondence, as he struggled to write *Our Mutual Friend*. For example, discussing a substantial drop in number sales of the novel, Dickens anxiously writes in a June 10 letter to John Forster: “This leaves me going round and round like a carrier pigeon before swooping on number seven” (Forster II 293), while in a July 29 letter to Forster he confesses: “this week I have been very unwell, am still out of sorts, and as I know from two days slow experience, have a very mountain to climb before I shall see the open country of my work” (Forster II 293). In a May 15 letter to Forster, he vividly writes of his concerns about the perceived decline of his writing abilities, playing with an emphasis on the word “will” in discussing his writing output and perhaps his legacy as a writer: “I have grown hard to satisfy, and write very slowly, and I have so much bad fiction, that *will* be thought of when I don't want to think of it, that I am forced to take more care than I ever took” (*Letters X 377*).

This juxtaposition and intermixing of death and rebirth as a theme in Dickens’s personal life is poignantly articulated in his 1864 annual end-of-the-year letter to his old friend and correspondent M. De Cerjat, which reflects on the poor health of his son-in-law, Charles Collins, and the approaching widowhood of his daughter Katie; in that same review of Dickens “family intelligence,” however, he writes of “occasional rallyings” at Gads Hill Place and the regeneration of the Dickenses through grandchildren as “another generation begins to peep above the table” (*Letters X 444*). As Dickens many trips back and

forth to France from 1863-65 indicate, as he wrote *Our Mutual Friend* a new life with Ellen Ternan (who was working in France at the time) had sprouted from the very public death of Dickens's marriage to Catherine, immersing him in another, very private narrative of decline and renewal.

Ellen Ternan was also, at least at the time, an unacknowledged character in the famous narrative of Dickens's heroism in the Staplehurst railway disaster on June 9, 1865. Though the story is familiar, it bears repeating in the context of my argument: Dickens was returning to London from France by train with Ellen and her mother on June 9, 1865, when the train they were riding on derailed on a broken line over a bridge before the town of Staplehurst, sending seven carriages plummeting to the river bed below. Dickens, who was riding in the car left dangling over the bridge, led the Ternans to safety across a makeshift bridge he put together of planks and then returned to direct the evacuation of the other passengers and tend to the broken bodies of the injured, the dying, and the dead. Last of all, he rescued the manuscript of the sixteenth number of *Our Mutual Friend*, which he had been carrying in his overcoat pocket—a circumstance he refers to, of course, together with the incident, in the novel's postscript, blurring his fiction into the fantastic ordeal he emerged from:

On Friday the ninth of June in the present year, Mr and Mrs Boffin (in their manuscript dress of receiving Mr and Mrs Lamble at breakfast) were on the South Eastern Railway with me, in a terribly destructive accident. When I had done what I could to help others, I climbed back into my carriage— turned over a

viaduct, and caught aslant upon the turn—to extricate the worthy couple. They were much soiled, but otherwise unhurt. The same happy result attended Miss Bella Wilfer on her wedding day, and Mr Riderhood inspecting Bradley Headstone's red neckerchief as he lay asleep. I remember with devout thankfulness that I can never be much nearer parting company with my readers for ever, than I was then, until there shall be written against my life, the two words with which I have this day closed this book:—THE END. (799-800)

Jill Matus, among others, has vividly discussed the deep psychological impact the Staplehurst railway disaster had on Dickens who, she argues, until his death exhibited classic signs we would associate today with the symptomology of a post-traumatic psychological disturbance (413). He suffered, for instance, from periodic fits of shaking and trembling (Matus 413)—exhibiting essentially the same bodily expression of psychological repression he describes in the Headstone character. His children reported afterward that he would sometimes enter trance-like states when he travelled by train and he frequently irrationally perceived the train compartment falling on the left-hand side (Matus 113-114). Three years after the accident, in an August 1868 letter to M. De Cerjat, Dickens confessed that he still suffered from “sudden vague rushes of terror, even when riding in a Hansom Cab, which are perfectly unreasonable, but quite insurmountable” (*Letters* XII 175).

Most interestingly, in an eerie echo of John Harmon's emergence from a would-be watery grave as another man, Dickens found himself unable to speak in the aftermath of the accident and did not regain his voice until two weeks

later: “I thank God, and have even got my voice back; I most unaccountably brought someone else’s out of the terrible scene,” Dickens remarks in a June 27 letter to a Mrs. F. Lehmann (*Letters XI 65*). In fact, Dickens, who died on the fifth anniversary of the Staplehurst disaster—June 9, 1870—can be said to have never really emerged from that cataclysmic deathscape. The massive trauma that this near-death and mass-death experience inflicted on Dickens inflected his confrontation with mortality and creative blockage in the writing of *Our Mutual Friend*, as his post-Staplehurst correspondence shows, adding a new urgency to his pursuit of creative renewal in this death-obsessed text. In a letter to Arthur Ryland in late June, for instance, Dickens declines being honored at a public ceremony, saying “At the time in question I shall, please God, either have just finished, or be just finishing, my present book. Country rest and reflection will then be invaluable to me, before casting about for Christmas. I am a little shaken in my nervous system by the terrible and affecting incidents of the late railway accident, from which I bodily escaped. I am withdrawing myself from engagements of all kinds, in order that I may pursue my story . . .” (*Letters XI 64*).

The story that Dickens pursues in the last four numbers of *Our Mutual Friend*—in which the future is liberated from the past and present through a large-scale ruse, an elaborate fictional effort that works to dupe, alongside Bella, even the most astute reader—consequently expresses a multivalent imperative to circumvent the directive force of past narratives upon the present and future,

to disengage the narrative promise of the present from the strictures of the prewritten past, to redirect the stories of the future.

In Morgentaler's discussion of how Dickens, in his last novels, engages the regulatory desires of parental figures through the device of marriage stipulations in wills, she argues that in "*Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens surprisingly rewards this form of biological hubris by depicting the successful, fertile union of the two people involved, thus retrospectively turning old John Harmon into a wiser and more prescient man . . ." (176). The fine details of the ruse plot, however, enable an alternative reading: The discovery of the last will in the Dutch bottle—leaving the entire Harmon fortune to the Boffins and completely disavowing the Harmon children—not only effaces the previous wills and all their stipulations but also enables Mr. Boffin's benevolent reappropriation and creative rewriting of the perverse plot projected by John Harmon's "unhappy self-tormenting father" (768). Noddy Boffin, whose artful manipulation of meaningless dust, we are led to suspect, is the real progenitive source of the Harmon's amassed wealth, appropriately rewills John Harmon, his spiritual son, his true inheritance. As Harmon adamantly avers at the end of the novel: "I owe everything I possess, solely to the disinterestedness, uprightness, tenderness, goodness (there are no words to satisfy me) of Mr. and Mrs. Boffin" (768). Harmon's public proclamation is a declaration of truth and thanks, but it is also another speech act in a text heavy with performative utterances, an illocutionary

reconfiguration of his line of parentage—a disavowal of his biological inheritance and destiny.

The vision of personal and social regeneration, in juxtaposition with the determining dictates of inherited plots, that is brought to fruition at the end of the narrative is powerfully presaged in Harmon-Handford-Rokesmith's mid-novel soliloquy, which, as MacKay notes, works to generate a competing narrative voice with the novel's omniscient narrator and larger storyline, setting up a creative tension (9). This fertile juxtaposition of character/soliloquist and narrator/author, MacKay argues, is the distinctive function of soliloquy in the Victorian novel, which she reads as a key progenitor of the character-narrator boundary blurring effects of free indirect discourse in modernist fiction (12). At its rhetorical bottom, MacKay observes, the soliloquy in nineteenth-century fiction works to unpack the struggle of the Victorian "constricted self" and its "process involves a confrontation with boundaries—real, assumed, or self-created—and a reforging of identity" (6). Harmon's central soliloquy in *Our Mutual Friend* stands as an "ur-soliloquy" that must be addressed in "any informed discussion of soliloquy in nineteenth century-fiction," MacKay adds, because, in its breadth and psychological depth, it exemplifies all the key movements of this self-creative struggle (117).

Harmon-Handford-Rokesmith's mid-novel soliloquy, which literally bisects the omniscient narrator's text, breaking it in two, performs a narrative

intervention, dramatically disjointing the narrative flow the central character is ensconced in and endowing him with an oppositional narrative agency in relation to the third-person narrator. Harmon-Handford-Rokesmith (all of these possibilities of identity are present) suspends time, actively stepping into the liminal space of omniscient narration, holding in suspension who he is and who he will become:

“So John Harmon died, and Julius Handford disappeared,
and John Rokesmith was born.

“. . . Now, is it all thought out? All to this time? Nothing omitted? No, nothing. But beyond this time? To think it out through the future, is a harder though a much shorter task than to think it out through the past. John Harmon is dead. Should John Harmon come to life?

“If yes, why? If no, why?” (366)

The compressed, clipped, gestational voice that Harmon-Handford-Rokesmith acquires here, and wields throughout his soliloquy, performs the plot memoranda of the text’s authorial consciousness. Among the novel’s metafictional aspects, the monumental soliloquy at its center presents a striking arrest and seizure of narrative power by the work’s own protagonist, who throws himself into the third person, dynamically contemplating the possibilities and potential of his own character and life plot—what we get here is a slightly more elaborate version of the narrator/Dickens’s own dynamic decision-making process, as multiple turns of character and plot are quickly enumerated,

dismissed, and resolved.²³ For the modern reader, with easy access to Dickens's tightly compressed, self-interrogative working notes for his serial fiction, the comparison is particularly striking.

Although Dickens was circumspect about his creative process, as Harry Stone among others²⁴ has observed, from *Dombey and Son* forward Dickens seems to have increasingly relied upon and elaborated a very specific notation format to scaffold his writing (which became increasingly important, given the deadline pressure of the serial publication method of most of his fiction) and grapple with narrative problems of his progressively more complex novels (xiv). This practice typically involved the grouping of general points or queries for a particular number on the left-hand side of a folded sheet of paper with simple “Yes” or “No” resolutions and other narrative decisions aligned on the right (Stone xiv-xv).

As Stone has specifically noted, while it is difficult to gauge exactly how far in advance of composition Dickens planned his novels, and though the extent of his planning differs according to the perceived complexity of the work, there is evidence, particularly in the fragmentary notes to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, that suggests sometimes at least—perhaps frequently—Dickens made his working notes while simultaneously composing the number they concerned or did so shortly afterwards. The notes, in these circumstances, functioned as a space for dynamically confronting and deliberately thinking out—“Don't evade

it, John Harmon,” Dickens’s protagonist tells himself in his soliloquy, “don’t evade it; think it out!” (360)—the exact nature of the characters and plot being developed.

For instance, the notes to the sixth number show Dickens struggling to balance the narrative strands in motion and vividly trace Dickens’s conception of the character Fascination Fledgeby:

The orphan and Sloppy? No.—Next No.
Lizzie? Very slightly, Carry through.
Mr. and Mrs. Lamble and Miss Podsnap? Yes
--And a new man? Yes.
Young Fledgeby
Rumty Conversation Fledgeby
Fascination Fledgeby
Mortimer Lightwood and Eugene together? No.
Yes
Elaborately²⁵

In addition to the increasingly defined tracing of the Fledgeby character, note the seesaw process of deliberation in Dickens’s decision to incorporate a Lightwood-Wrayburn scene in the number. As Stone puts it, Dickens’s working notes are “incredibly compact, often cryptic, sometimes enigmatic” (xvii). They also have a soliloquizing aspect—as Stone notes, they “were intended for no one’s eyes but Dickens” (xvii)—and illustrate a movement from self-questioning and searching and toward reasoned but abrupt decision-taking, as shown in this extract from Dickens’s plan for the fourth number:

The Orphan? Yes
The Hexams. Lizzie? No | Hold over for
and the boy? No the|new book

Wind up the book as skillfully and completely as I can.²⁶

Dickens's working notes from the Harmon monologue to the conclusion of the second book of the novel are increasingly resolute, conveying a gathered sense of plot and character clarity at the book's fulcrum that nicely parallels the sense of self-resolution that is the narrative subject of the ninth number's unusual soliloquy:

CHAPTER XIII
A SOLO AND A DUETT

John Harmon as he goes, recalls the whole story
All but proposed then—opportunities fitting when
He gets back—to Bella
Bella impatient and resentful
Bury John Harmon under mounds and mounds! Crush
Him! Cover him! Keep him down!

Mrs. Higden goes to the country— Yes

Declaration scene between Bradley |
And Yes |
Lizzie |

Mrs. Lamble and Twemlow. Yes—To conclude
the book II
Veneering, Tippins, Boots and Brewer²⁷

Dickens's number plans here, notably memorandize a key jotted phrase—"Bury John Harmon under mounds and mounds! Crush/Him! Cover him! Keep him down!"—that is incorporated, almost verbatim, at the conclusion of "A Solo and

a Duett”: “John Harmon . . . heaped mounds upon mounds of earth over John Harmon’s graveSexton Rokesmith accumulated mountains over him, lightening his labor with the dirge, ‘Cover him, crush him, keep him down!’” (372). This transference and interpolation occurs through the novel’s omniscient narrator, who resurfaces after the chapter’s soliloquy to narrate the protagonist’s unsuccessful interview with Bella Wilfer—the duet to his solo, as Masao Miyoshi has pointed out.²⁸ The quotations that circumscribe the dark dirge—“Cover him, crush him, keep him down!”—mark it typographically as a vividly articulated part of Harmon-Handford-Rokesmith’s thought process, as represented by the omniscient narrator. But they also invoke the recently concluded quoted soliloquy, which is re-erupting here, layering itself upon the text’s omniscient narration. The interpolation that is happening is thus trifold, occurring on a fluid bandwidth among character, narrator, and Dickens’s own creative consciousness.

The blur that is created here is emblematic of what is occurring, generally, throughout the central soliloquy of the secretary Rokesmith, as he moves through his multiplicity of identity and destiny alternatives, actively breaks his self down and re-forges himself through a transcendent rhetoric, and self-creates “an active, on-going character” that almost coexists, as MacKay notes, “with the author as a problem-solver and a predictor of future action” (9).

The improvisational yet highly deliberative flow of Harmon-Handford-Rokesmith's consciousness, as it narrates itself, with its careful consideration and rationalization of diverse character and plot directions ("Take yes, first Now, take no . . ." [366]), leading to the negation of some and the affirmation of others ("What course for me then? This." [367]), mimics and counterpoints the distilled cognition of Dickens's number plans. It is a dramatic individual hijacking, as well, of omniscience and narrative control that is, I believe, structurally and thematically expressive of the novel's work with cultural anxieties about one's capacity to define and develop oneself in the context of inexorable laws governing the development of life and a greater guiding design—anxieties central to the Darwinian ferment of the Victorian decade of the 1860s.

As a forceful, visceral, dramatic hammer and anvil enunciation of self-remaking, the monumental soliloquy at the center of *Our Mutual Friend*, Rokesmith's forge as it were, intensely speaks the self-creative and transmutative power of the benevolently directed individual imagination. Like Pip's transmutation of himself and his life story in *Great Expectations's* first-person narrative, but to a more emphatic and developed degree, Harmon-Handford-Rokesmith's "self-authoring autodiction," as Mackay terms it, grapples with issues of origin and predestination and asserts the self-germinating potential of the individual over hereditary and environmental determinants. Their difference in narrative format and structure—one, a full retrospective first-

person narrative in the traditional mode, the other, a lengthy soliloquy that dramatically and innovatively erupts into the omniscient narration of its text—signifies, I believe, an intensification of Dickens’s interest in these issues but it is, as well, a transcendently experimental enactment of creative renewal by the Victorian Age’s most celebrated novelist, confronting the confines and self-delimiting contours of his own legacy and self-authoring himself to the last.

¹ Philip Collins, *Dickens and Crime* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968): 284.

² Stephen Gill, Introduction, *Our Mutual Friend* (New York: Penguin, 1971): 22.

³ Andrew Sanders, "'Come Back and Be Alive': Living and Dying in *Our Mutual Friend*," *The Dickensian* 74 (September 1978): 140.

⁴ Gill, 22.

⁵ See footnote 8 in the online excerpt from chapter four of MacKay's *Soliloquy in Nineteenth Century Fiction* (1987), available at <http://omf.ucsc.edu/scholarship/article-archive/narrating-self-creation.html>

⁶ This theme runs throughout Dickens's work but it is my contention that self-creation through imaginative renewal becomes a more trenchant aspect of Dickens's thinking in his creative work post-1859.

⁷ See Hillis Miller's "Afterword," *Our Mutual Friend* (New York: New American Library, 1964) and Stewart's study *Dickens and the Trials of the Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974).

⁸ See Collins's essays "A Rhetorical Use of the 'Fancy' in *Our Mutual Friend*," *Dickens Studies Newsletter* 12.4 (1981): 108-110, and "Dickens and *Our Mutual Friend*: Fancy as Self-Preservation," *Études Anglaises* 38.3 (July-September 1985): 257-265.

⁹ See Friedman's "The Motif of Reading in *Our Mutual Friend*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 34.1 (June 1979): 41-58.

-
- ¹⁰ George Henry Lewes, "Dickens in Relation to Criticism," *Fortnightly Review* 62 (February 1872): 141-154. Qtd. in Winyard and Furneaux's "Dickens, Science and the Victorian Literary Imagination," *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 10 (2010), available at <http://19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/article/view/572>
- ¹¹ Gordon Haight, "Dickens and Lewes on Spontaneous Combustion," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 10 (1955): 53-63. Qtd. in Winyard and Furneaux's "Dickens, Science and the Victorian Literary Imagination," *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 10 (2010), available at <http://19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/article/view/572>
- ¹² See Beer's commentary on Dickens work in *Darwin's Plots* (London: ARK, 1985) and Flint's "Origins, Species, and Great Expectations," *Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, David Amigone and Jeff Wallace, eds., Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.
- ¹³ See Howard Fulweiler's "A Dismal Swamp: Darwin, Design, and Evolution in *Our Mutual Friend*," *Nineteenth Century Literature* 49 (1994): 50-74, and Fontana's "Darwinian Sexual Selection and Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*," *Dickens Quarterly* 22 (2005): 153-71.
- ¹⁴ Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (London and New York: Penguin, 1997). All subsequent references are to this edition of the novel.
- ¹⁵ See, for example, Morris 126 and Fulweiler 57.
- ¹⁶ The dark intentions Wrayburn contemplates and puts into play in his seduction of Lizzie are addressed most richly in the following interchange with Jenny Wren—the term "setting up a doll" being Victorian street slang for turning a woman to prostitution:

". . . he fell to talking playfully with Jenny Wren. "I think of setting up a doll, Miss Jenny," he said.

“You had better not,” replied the dressmaker.

“Why not?”

“You are sure to break it. All you children do.

“But that makes for good trade, you know, Miss Wren,” returned Eugene. “Much as people’s breaking promises and contracts and bargains of all sorts, makes good for *my* trade.” (237)

Eugene and Jenny’s banter has quite serious overtones, invoking the commonplace Victorian template of sexual dalliances between upper- and middle-class men and working-class women leading, inexorably, to abandonment, frequently after pregnancy, and almost certainly the one-sided ruination of reputation and social prospects, and perhaps an eventually literal life of prostitution for the woman. This interchange also, interestingly, invites another interpretation of Jenny’s occupation as a “doll’s dressmaker.”

¹⁷ My reading of Eugene and Lizzie’s relationship here differs from Nicola Bown’s rich reading of narrative ambiguity and ambivalence in Dickens’s crafting of the Eugene-Lizzie love plot. For Bown, there is never any love on Eugene’s part, only careless erotic interest, and thus no authentic redemption exists for him through love: The Eugene-Lizzie union, which is projected outside the narrative as the novel cannot concretely imagine an idyllic domestic space stemming from their pairing, shows that “the world that is shaped by natural selection is one in which life is sometimes wasted and love is not enough” (15)

¹⁸ The character of Mr. Dolls in *Our Mutual Friend* also perhaps draws on Dickens’s own complex and conflicted feelings about his parents, John and Elizabeth Dickens, in their old age: Mr. Dolls mercenary tendencies invoke John Dickens’s embarrassing practice of borrowing money from Dickens’s publishers and friends, behind his famous son’s back, while Mr. Doll’s perpetually addled mind and nightmarish non-presence invokes the specter of Elizabeth Dickens’s drawn out senility and deterioration from the late 1850s to the early 1860s, which terrified and haunted Dickens until her death in 1863. I discuss this in the context of my argument later in this chapter.

¹⁹ As noted in the previous chapter, while the specific subject of human evolution is not addressed explicitly in *The Origin of Species*—the full exposition of Darwin’s theories of human evolution would occur only with the 1871 publication of Darwin’s *The Descent of Man*—human evolution was the clear subtext of Darwin’s initial articulation evolutionary processes in the natural world, as evidenced by the public reaction to and critical reception of *Origin*.

²⁰ In a sense, Headstone’s attempted murder of Wrayburn, which is also an act of self-destruction, is a macabre perversion of Sydney Carton’s act of self-sacrifice: Though it is driven single-mindedly by a murderous rage and has nothing to do with transcendent love, it is also an act, perhaps, that will putatively work, outside the dark scope of Headstone’s intensions, to “save” Lizzie’s life from the social ruin and devastation of a projected and inevitable sexual dalliance with Wrayburn—see note 16.

²¹ See Daniel Pick’s study *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 6.

²² See Mason’s *The Secret Vice: Masturbation in Victorian Fiction and Medical Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

²³ The manuscript copy of *Our Mutual Friend*, interestingly, also physically bears the marks of this process, more so apparently than Dickens’s other manuscript copies: As Kate Field observed in the nineteenth century: “. . . erasure after erasure, such as, I am told, cannot be found in his earlier manuscripts, marking either greater care or less fluency of thought. Descriptions undergo most correction, and so deftly does Dickens cancel himself, that I defy the greatest expert to decipher what the author does not wish to have read...The erasures at the beginning of 'Podsnappery' are absolutely appalling" (472).

²⁴ See also John Butt’s and Kathleen Tillotson’s *Dickens at Work* (London: Methuen, 1957).

²⁵ Reproduced from the number plans in Appendix 2, p. 858, in the Penguin edition of the novel cited, which itself transcribes the typographic transcription in Harry Stone's *Dickens' Working Notes for His Novels*.

²⁶ Reproduced from the number plans in Appendix 2, p. 854, in the Penguin edition of the novel cited. See note 25.

²⁷ Reproduced from the number plans in Appendix 2, p. 863-864, in the Penguin edition of the novel cited. See note 25.

²⁸ Miyoshi, Masao. *The Divided Self: A Perspective on the Literature of the Victorians*. New York: New York University Press, 1969.

CONCLUSION: DROOD'S DEATH

“His gaze wandered from the windows to the stars, as if he would have read in them something that was hidden from him. Many of us would, if we could; but none of us so much as know our letters in the stars yet—or seem likely to do it, in this state of existence—and few languages can be read until their alphabets are mastered.”¹—Charles Dickens, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*

My general argument here has been that Darwinism prompted Dickens to reconsider and radically revise his understanding of personal identity and self-determination. Building on and extending a growing vein of scholarship on Darwin and Dickens,² I assert that Darwinian theory accelerated Dickens's growing dissatisfaction with deterministic views of self-formation. Whereas Dickens's early and middle novels largely deploy motifs of origin, heredity, and inheritance to demonstrate the continuity and cohesion of identity, as it is transmitted across generations, Dickens's mature work emphatically celebrates the self-creative capacity of the individual. In Dickens's last two completed novels, for instance, self-narration and self-performance become central sites for the articulation of the self. The human will and imagination, Dickens's final fiction insists, can always override the deterministic dictates of the past.

While this project began as an attempt to narrowly assess the impact of Darwinian theory on the novels of Charles Dickens, I am aware that its trajectory has carried me to a much broader place. The “Darwin” in Dickens and Darwin has met up with and merged into many other themes and issues relevant to

Dickens's treatment of the "imagination" in his oeuvre. This is a more vast subject, the contemplation of which conjures in me the feeling of Mr. Grewgious looking at the night sky in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*—a scene that, to me, articulates the fertile tension between the individual imagination and predetermined plots in Dickens's work, what the subject of this study has evolved into. This scene, for Droodians,³ speaks as well to the fertile dilemma of understanding a marvelous textual fragment, the unwritten half of which invites us as readers to step into the suspended imaginative space that is Dickens's final legacy . . . where we can forever contemplate the endless possibilities of character and plot.

¹ Charles Dickens, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (London and New York: Penguin, 1993).

² For a survey of recent work on Dickens and Darwin, see note 2 in my introduction, "Dickens's Darwin."

³ See especially Richard M. Baker's series of Drood articles in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, particularly "What Might Have Been: A Study for Droodians, Part One" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 4.4 (March 1950), 275-97.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baker, Richard M. "What Might Have Been: A Study for Doodians (Part One)." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 4.4 (March 1950), 275-97.
- Baldick, Chris. *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.
- Baumgarten, Murray. "The Imperial Child: Bella, *Our Mutual Friend*, and the Victorian Picturesque." *Dickens and the Children of Empire*. Ed. Wendy Jacobsen. New York, Palgrave 2000: 54-66.
- Beer, Gillian. *Darwin's Plots*. London and Boston: ARK Paperbacks, 1985.
- Bohls, Elizabeth. "Standards of Taste, Discourses of 'Race,' and the Aesthetic Education of a Monster: Critique of Empire in *Frankenstein*." *Eighteenth-Century Life* 18.3 (1994), 23-36
- Bourke, Joanna. *What it Means to be Human*. Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2011.
- Bown, Nicola. "What the Alligator Didn't Know: Natural Selection and Love in *Our Mutual Friend*," *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 10 (2010). <http://19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/article/view/567/532>
- Brooks, Peter. *Reading for Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.
- Burkhardt, Fredrick. *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Bush, Ronald. "Monstrosity and Representation in the Postcolonial Diaspora" *Borders, Exiles, Diasporas*. Elazar Barkan and Marie-Denise Shelton, eds. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Butt, John, and Kathleen Tillotson. *Dickens at Work*. London: Methuen, 1957.
- Collins, Angus. "Dickens and *Our Mutual Friend*: Fancy as Self-Preservation," *Études Anglaises* 38.3 (July-September 1985): 257-265.
- ."A Rhetorical Use of the 'Fancy' in *Our Mutual Friend*. *Dickens Studies Newsletter* 12.4 (1981): 108-110
- Collins, Philip. *Dickens and Crime*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968.
- Crawford, Iain. "Pip and the Monster: The Joys of Bondage." *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 28: 4 (1988), 625-648.

DeMarcus, Cynthia. "Wolves Within and Without: Dickens's Transformation of 'Little Red Riding Hood' in *Our Mutual Friend*." *Dickens Quarterly* 12.1 (1995): 11-17.

Darwin, Charles. *The Origin of Species: A Facsimile of the First Edition*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Dickens, Charles. "Autobiographical Fragment." In John Forster's *The Life of Charles Dickens*. 2 vols. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, New York: EP Dutton, 1948.

----- . *Bleak House*. London and New York: Penguin, 1996.

----- . *David Copperfield*. London and New York: Penguin, 2004.

----- . *Dombey and Son*. London and New York: Penguin, 2002.

----- . *Great Expectations*. Ed. Margaret Cardwell. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

----- . *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*. 12 vols. Madeline House, Graham Storey, et al., eds. London and New York: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1965-2002.

----- . *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. London and New York: Penguin, 1993.

----- . *The Old Curiosity Shop*. London and New York: Penguin, 2000.

----- . *Oliver Twist*. London and New York: Penguin, 2003.

----- . *Our Mutual Friend*. London and New York: Penguin, 1997.

----- . *The Pickwick Papers*. London: Penguin, 2003.

Dickens, Mamie. *My Father as I Recall Him*. London: The Roxburghe Press, 1896.

Eliot, George. *The Mill on the Floss*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Field, Kate. "Our Mutual Friend in Manuscript." *The Century Magazine* (August 1874): 472-74.

Fielding, K.J., "Dickens and Science." *Dickens Quarterly* (December 1996): 3-19

-----, and Shu Fang Lai. "Dickens's Science, Evolution and 'The Death of the Sun.'" *Dickens, Europe and the New World*, Ed. Anny Sadrin. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Flint, Kate. "Origins, Species, and Great Expectations." *Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species: New Interdisciplinary Essays*. David Amigone and Jeff Wallace, eds. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.

- Fontana, Ernest. "Darwinian Sexual Selection and Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*." *Dickens Quarterly* 22 (2005): 153-71.
- Ford, George H. *Dickens and His Readers*. New York: Norton, 1965.
- Forker, Charles R. "The Language of Hands in *Great Expectations*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 3.2 (Summer 1961): 280-93.
- Forster, John. *The Life of Charles Dickens*. 2 vols. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, New York: EP Dutton, 1948.
- Friedman, Stanley. "The Motif of Reading in *Our Mutual Friend*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 34.1 (June 1979): 41-58.
- Fulweiler, Howard. "A Dismal Swamp: Darwin, Design, and Evolution in *Our Mutual Friend*." *Nineteenth Century Literature* 49 (1994): 50-74.
- Gill, Stephen. Introduction. *Our Mutual Friend*. Charles Dickens. New York: Penguin, 1971
- Gilmour, Robin. *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel*. London and Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1981.
- Haight, Gordon. "Dickens and Lewes on Spontaneous Combustion." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 10 (1955): 53-63.
- Harvey, Robert. "How Comics Came to Be." *A Comic Studies Reader*. Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester, eds. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009.
- James, Henry. "Review of *Our Mutual Friend*." *The Nation* (New York), 21 December 1865.
- Jordan, John O. "The Medium of *Great Expectations*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 11 (1983), 73-88.
- . "The Social Subtext of *David Copperfield*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 14 (1985), 61-92.
- . *Supposing Bleak House*. Charlottesville, VA and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011.
- Kiely, Robert. "Plotting and Scheming: The Design of Design in *Our Mutual Friend*." *Dickens Studies Annual* 12 (1983): 267-283.
- King, James Roy. "Defense Mechanisms in *Our Mutual Friend*." *Dickens Quarterly* 12.2 (1995): 45-59.
- Kreilkamp, Ivan. "Dying Like Dog in *Great Expectations*." *Victorian Animal Dreams*. Deborah Morse and Martin Danahay, eds. Burlington, VT and Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2007.

- Levine, George. *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Lew, Joseph. "The Deceptive Other: Mary Shelley's Critique of Orientalism in *Frankenstein*," *Studies in Romanticism* 30 (1991), 255-283.
- Lewes, George Henry. "Dickens in Relation to Criticism." *Fortnightly Review* 62 (February 1872): 141-54.
- Matus, Jill. "Trauma, Memory, and Railway Disaster: The Dickensian Connection." *Victorian Studies* 43.3 (Spring 2001), 413-36.
- Miller, J. Hillis. "Afterword." *Our Mutual Friend*. Charles Dickens. New York: New American Library, 1964.
- . *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958.
- Mackay, Carol Hanberry. *Soliloquy in Nineteenth Century Fiction*. London: Macmillan, 1987.
- Malchow, Howard. "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain." *Past and Present* 139 (1993), 90-130.
- Marks, Patricia. "Dombey and the Milk of Human Kindness." *Dickens Quarterly* 11.1 (March 1994): 14-25.
- Mason, Diane. *The Secret Vice: Masturbation in Victorian Fiction and Medical Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008.
- McMaster, Juliet. *Dickens the Designer*. Totawa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1987.
- Miyoshi, Masao. *The Divided Self: A Perspective on the Literature of the Victorians*. New York: New York University Press, 1969.
- "Monkeyana." *Punch* 40. 18 May 1861: 206.
- Morgentaler, Goldie. *Dickens and Heredity*. New York: St. Martin's, 2000.
- Morris, Pam. *Dickens's Class Consciousness*. London: Macmillan, 1991.
- Moynahan, Julian. "The Hero's Guilt: The Case of *Great Expectations*." *Essays in Criticism* 10.1 (1960): 60-79.
- Noakes, Richard. "Punch and Comic Journalism in Mid-Victorian Britain." *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical*. G.N. Cantor et al, eds. London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Pick, Daniel. *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

- Poole, Adrian. "Introduction," *Our Mutual Friend*, New York and London: Penguin, 1997.
- Rosenberg, Edgar. "Last Words on *Great Expectations*: A Textual Brief on the Six Endings," *Dickens Studies Annual* 9 (1981), 87-115.
- Sadoff, Dianne. *Monsters of Affection*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.
- Sadrin, Anny. *Parentage and Inheritance in the Novels of Charles Dickens*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge university Press, 1994.
- Sanders, Andrew. "'Come Back and Be Alive': Living and Dying in *Our Mutual Friend*." *The Dickensian* 74 (September 1978)
- Slater, Michael. *Charles Dickens*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985), 243-261.
- Stewart, Garrett. *Dickens and the Trials of the Imagination*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- Thomas, Syd. "'Pretty Woman, Elegantly Framed': The Fate of Bella Wilfer in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*." *Dickens Quarterly* 14.1 (1997): 3-23.
- Stone, Harry. *Dickens' Working Notes for His Novels*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Sullivan, Zohreh T. "Race, Gender, and Imperial Ideology in the Nineteenth Century," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 13 (1989), 19-31.
- Wilson, Edmund. *The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature*. London: University Paperbacks, 1961.
- Winyard, Ben and Holly Furneaux. "Dickens, Science and the Victorian Literary Imagination." *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 10 (2010). <http://19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/article/view/572>