



REWRITING THE BOOK OF NATURE

CHARLES DARWIN *and the* RISE of EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

“From so simple a beginning, endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.”

– Charles Darwin in *The Origin of Species*, 1859

An exhibition developed and produced by the History of Medicine Division, National Library of Medicine, and the National Institutes of Health Office of History

Charles Darwin’s 1859 work, *On the Origin of Species*, was instantly seen as a potent sign of a new science, a new way of conceiving the world. His theory was an immediate threat not just to those who were wedded to an older conception, but to all who relied on a given and settled order for meaning and for power. Emerging just as liberal reforms in western society seemed headed for radical explosion, just as technological change provided a social and economic motor that sped up life beyond all imagining, changes in science portended changes in society: “things fall apart; the center cannot hold.”

That Darwin’s thought could be so fertile should not surprise us. *On the Origin of Species* evoked life in all its intricacy, fecundity, and creativity. This is the world that Darwin explored and surveyed, described and explained—his enduring legacy to science, and to us.

This exhibition, a celebration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin (12 February 1809 - 19 April 1882) and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species* (24 November 1859), uses materials from the National Library of Medicine.

Rewriting the Book of Nature will tour around the U.S. beginning in summer 2010.

Please visit us online at:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/darwin/>

Credit Line:

This exhibition is brought to you by the History of Medicine Division, National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health Office of History.

Curated by:

Paul Theerman and Michael Sappol



“That Troubles Our Monkey Again” in *Fun*, November 16, 1862 - Courtesy Yale University Library