

A SPECULATIVE RESURRECTION: DEATH, MONEY, AND THE VAMPIRIC ECONOMY OF *OUR MUTUAL FRIEND*

By Daniel P. Scoggin

Has a dead man any use for money? Is it possible for a dead man to have money? What world does a dead man belong to? 'Tother world. What world does money belong to? This world. How can money be a corpse's? Can a corpse own it, want it, spend it, claim it, miss it?
— Gaffer Hexam, *Our Mutual Friend*

WHILE FISHING CORPSES out of the fast-flowing Thames, itself a symbol of death,¹ in order to probe their pockets, Gaffer Hexam makes sharp reference to a long-standing distinction regarding the limits of earthly possession. Some of Dickens's readers would have been quite ready to connect Gaffer's remarks to Bunyan's story of Christian's exodus from the commerce and bustle of the earthly city and his crossing of the river of death that flows before the gates of the celestial city. Others might have considered the riverman's musings as somehow referring to St. Paul's saying that "the end of those things [wealth] is death" (qtd. in Welsh 59).² In the presentation of Gaffer's ghastly career, however, Dickens points out a dislocation from these earlier views: the riverman desecrates the "muffled human form" he finds just as he truncates (if not turns inside-out) what was once the afterlife's principal judgment of the use of riches in this lower world (44; bk. 1, ch. 1). According to the text, Gaffer, in sharply dividing spiritual transactions from material ones, and the soul from his or her former possessions, only further mires himself in the "slime and ooze" of the commercial river (43; bk. 1, ch. 1), enabling decay to encroach more aggressively on life.

Throughout *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), Dickens carefully outlines how the demands of mid-Victorian capital have successfully naturalized the most nauseous of economies; according to the logic of equivalent exchange, the refuse of death — body parts, paper, waste, and dust — are never safe from being recycled and made to turn a profit. As such, the novel's two primary symbols — the river and dust — not only figure as ancient tokens of death, but as key metaphors for Victorians in interpreting the seemingly limitless workings of the economy. By using a train of corpses to connect Hexam's strange transactions on the river to the novel's central plot, a plot that a number of critics have

described as manifesting a “dust-money equation” (Sedgwick 246),³ Dickens dramatically reconsiders, I think, the common Victorian assessment of capital’s vigor — gathered perhaps from Adam Smith’s view in *The Wealth of Nations* that a healthy economy possesses a “circular flow” (Introduction 22).⁴ While readers would easily recognize Hexam’s business as a ghastly one, Dickens complicates the issue by plausibly presenting Old Harmon’s accumulated mounds of dust, refuse, and excrement as something to be envied, the source for a middle-class inheritance of one hundred thousand pounds.

Akin to the Christian writers who preceded him, Dickens envisions in *Our Mutual Friend* the widespread pursuit of riches as introducing a struggle between two approaches to death. In contrast to characters such as Gaffer who seek to exploit death to turn a profit, other characters willingly accept the memory of death’s dissolution as a promising sign that all possession exists in a state of passing-away. Dickens often illuminates the conflict between the citizens of the earthly city and their heavenly counterparts by having faithful characters engage in double-speak, as Jenny Wren does here with Fascination Fledgeby concerning her roof-top retreat:

‘Ah!’ said Jenny. ‘But it’s so high. And you see the clouds rushing on above the narrow streets, not minding them, and you see the golden arrows pointing at the mountains in the sky from which the wind comes, and you feel as if you were dead.’ . . .

‘How do you feel when you are dead?’ asked Fledgeby, much perplexed.

‘Oh, so tranquil!’ cried the little creature, smiling. ‘Oh, so peaceful and so thankful! And you hear the people who are alive, crying, and working, and calling to one another down in the close dark streets, and you seem to pity them so! And such a chain has fallen from you, and such a strange good sorrowful happiness comes upon you!’

Her eyes fell on the old man, who, with his hands folded, quietly looked on.

‘Why it was only just now,’ said the little creature, pointing at him, ‘that I fancied I saw him come out of his grave! He toiled out at that low door so bent and worn, and then he took his breath and stood upright, and looked all round him at the sky, and the wind blew upon him, and his life down in the dark was over! — Till he was called back to life,’ she added, looking round at Fledgeby with that lower look of sharpness. ‘Why did you call him back?’

‘He was long enough coming, anyhow,’ grumbled Fledgeby.

‘But you are not dead, you know,’ said Jenny Wren. ‘Get down to life!’ (334; bk. 2, ch. 5)

As Fledgeby retreats down the stairs to his place of business — he is a “kind of outlaw in the bill-broking line” (334; bk. 2, ch. 5) — Jenny’s words hang in the air: “Come back and be dead, Come back and be dead!” Jenny’s perception of Riah, Fledgeby’s Jewish clerk, entering the little roof-top heaven like a man “come out of his grave” reflects Dickens’s own judgment that those who only focus on what they might grasp in the “close dark streets” below are to be pitied for having unknowingly selected a lesser fate: one of active interment. In distinct contrast to Hexam’s ontological truncations while turning corpses, then, Jenny suggests that redemption in this world requires a certain double-vision. Ironically, Jenny’s statements later on the death of her father will recall Hexam’s claims but for an entirely different purpose: “I see the service in the Prayer-book says, that we brought nothing into this world and it is certain that we can take nothing out” (802; bk. 4, ch. 9).

Overall, playing dead, as opposed to trading in death or actually being dead, emerges as the most effective strategy for opting out of an economy that thrives by recycling selves

and things. I argue below that the attempt to respond to death-in-life by a fiction of life-in-death culminates in the Harmon-Rokesmith deception at the heart of the plot of *Our Mutual Friend*.⁵ On returning to England to claim the fabulous inheritance generated by his father's accumulation and recycling of dust, John Harmon is just short of murdered for his rumored wealth. He allows the fiction that he is actually dead to persist for several years while he reenters the "close dark streets" of the business world as a secretary (one Rokesmith) to watch over the fortune he left unclaimed. Importantly, Harmon's living-deadness should not necessarily be thought of as a gesture of economic disinterest; obviously, he still cares for his money. Rather, Harmon overcomes a series of deathly speculations against his inheritance through his own working speculation (in money and identity) for the sake of a justified return. The son not only redeems his fortune by toiling through and then returning from an underworld of dispossession; he unravels his dead father's miserly stipulations regarding the use of the family fortune by serving as a haunting reminder to Bella, his avaricious wife-to-be, of higher, more lasting commitments. On the one hand, the several forms of the "un-dead" father in the novel betoken the denial of that other world by the living and the subsequent broken transmission of wealth (and blood) within a family. On the other hand, the son's investment in playing dead recalls the early Gothic novel's notion of a beneficial haunting; by giving in to an inhuman economy to stress its contradictions, Harmon restores a domestic threshold that its restless speculations cannot cross.

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WE KNOW FROM DICKENS'S MEMORANDA that he imagined the pivotal idea for *Our Mutual Friend* back in 1862. "LEADING INCIDENT FOR A STORY. A man — young and eccentric? — feigns to be dead, and *is* dead to all intents and purposes, and . . . for years retains that singular view of life and character" (Kaplan 467). One possible source for this "leading incident" of a protagonist's living-deadness may be found in a distinct nineteenth-century literary tradition: the vampire story. Although we do not know the extent of Dickens's knowledge of vampire fiction, his life-long love of (and experimentation with) ghost stories suggests that he would have been familiar with works such as John Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819), and the most popular of mid-Victorian British thrillers or penny dreadfuls, Malcolm Rymer's *Varney the Vampire* (1840s).⁶ These narratives, and others like them, added to the identity of the vampire gathered from folklore by suggesting that the monster's consumption of a victim's means of life extends far beyond his taking of blood.⁷ Of course, if Dickens was indeed influenced by vampire fiction in his crafting of the plot of *Our Mutual Friend* an important question arises: why would the novelist choose to employ one of the basic conditions of a monstrous identity (living-deadness) in order to critique the structure of an unhealthy economy?

Polidori has the distinction of being the first to translate an ancient Continental tradition (both oral and literary) of the vampire into English literature.⁸ Furthermore, in contrast to the first English Gothic novelists a generation before, who often set their stories back in the Middle Ages, Polidori selected an ordinary setting more or less of his own era. In his story, the aristocratic Lord Ruthven is described only later as a physical parasite; he is presented from the start, however, as a notorious, upper-class gambler in modern-day London. The villain quickly emerges as a debtor whose "embarrassed" affairs

force him to flee England to seek out the resources of the affluent and fashionable youths of several European cities. Ruthven easily converts others to his disease of bankruptcy and destitution, a death by insolvency that only he seems able to survive (Polidori 238–39).

Roxana Stuart points out that there were a number of vampire plays introduced on the English stage in the 1820s and 30s which loosely followed the model of Polidori's story of Ruthven. By mid-century, some authors sought to extend Polidori's interpretation of the vampire by employing the monster as a social metaphor. In an increasingly unstable market economy in which a slight turn of the imagination could show both profit and consumption to be another's direct loss, the growing list of vampiric conventions could be used to illuminate how the avaricious were best thought of as bloodthirsty parasites.⁹ The immortal Varney, in the unwieldy novel which bears his name, is first and foremost an un-dead gambler and murderer who survives his execution and, in turn, seeks to convert the monetary transgressions of previously noble families to his own benefit. Just as he interprets his inability to die as a magical revision of his previously mortal and uncontrollable compulsion to gamble (Rymer 351), Varney comes to acknowledge that accumulated money and status are to him a new form of "life-blood" circulating within his "shrunken veins" and allowing him to cling to vitality (149).¹⁰

While some Victorian writers hoped to use references to vampires to draw connections to their Gothic predecessors,¹¹ others sought to explore how the image captured some of the pressing horrors of the present. In *Bleak House*, Dickens makes precise use of the vampire to critique the financial and political corruption inherent in the English legal system. Esther Summerson describes the lawyer Vholes, with his "long black figure," greedily consuming both his client's inheritance and health: "So slow, so eager, so bloodless and gaunt, I felt as if Richard were wasting away beneath the eyes of this advisor, and there was something of the Vampire in him" (Dickens, *Bleak House* 720; ch. 60).¹² Likewise, in *Middlemarch*, George Eliot repeatedly refers to the avaricious banker Bulstrode as a kind of vampire, "not because he is openly violent, inhuman, or irrational like the vampire from folklore, but because he is a morally and emotionally incomplete person, a 'dead' man who preys on others" (Senf 123). Of course, non-fiction writers also used the notion of the "un-dead" to characterize the more ruthless subjects of the Victorian economy. As is well known, Karl Marx, in the first volume of *Capital* (1867), employs the figure of the vampire to identify the cold-hearted capitalist's exploitation of his workers: "Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks" (*Capital* 342). Marx perceives a world dominated by exchange as Dickens does throughout *Our Mutual Friend*: a place in which those who aggressively seek to accumulate wealth vampirishly hover over the present and the living.

And of special interest to this study is how the image of the vampire could be used to portray the person who engages in the direst of Victorian economic sins: market speculation. In his *Speculative Notes* (1864), David Moirer Evans, an influential writer on economic issues, devotes an entire chapter to describing the career of one "Count D —," a foreigner who periodically visits England at the first hint of any "fresh current of speculation setting in" (Evans 199). That Evans intended this "Count D —" to be read as a vampire figure is quite clear. In this chapter titled "The Great Enigma," the narrator of the story describes the Count as staying youthful beyond the memory of several generations of men and as possessing "jet hair," an "aquiline nose," and "burning dark eyes" (198). Also, the Count is secretly responsible for infiltrating the highest circles of society

and causing several scandals which have ruined some of London's best families (198-99), an account which recalls Polidori's story of Lord Ruthven. The Count is repeatedly forced to flee the country because of his reputation, but the narrator knows that one temptation in particular will lead him to return:

For years subsequently he never again returned to this country. I ascertained that he was traced as having gone to Germany, and thence to Mexico; but in what pursuit or profession I could not discover. Whenever any little speculative excitement turned up I was always looking for the Count D —. The railway mania came and went, and though it was a period which was not well suited to his tastes, being a foreigner, he might have made money if he had dared to show himself again in his old precincts. But although I sometimes thought he was dead, I had a kind of presentiment he would return, and that when he was least expected. He must be an old man if he did re-appear; and I occasionally, in a dreamy, loose sort of manner, pictured to myself what he would resemble. (205)

Some years later, the narrator again expects the Count to return amidst “the Australia and California gold mining mania.” The author is not mistaken in his presentiments but is astonished to confront around Change Alley the “the Count D — of early days; tall and erect; grey, with full beard and moustache; and still imposing and handsome” (207). Within the context of his *Speculative Notes*, Evans employs his description of the Count's immunity to aging to suggest the resiliency and adaptability cultivated by a new type of capitalist: one who is a risk-taker capable of surviving within an economy plagued by cyclical failures and the haunting permanence of bankruptcy (to many Victorians, the financial equivalent of death).

In the early 1860s, the instability of the market was often blamed on the speculator, who was seen as taking unfair advantage of the new trends in company promotion and formation. From the winter of 1863 to the fall of 1865, while Dickens was writing *Our Mutual Friend*, a number of books and articles were published condemning the popularity of trading on the Share Market, including the three essays in Dickens's *All the Year Round* by Malcolm Ronald Laing Meason on company flotation: “Floating the Bank,” “The Bank of Patagonia,” and “Starting the Rio Grande Railway.”¹³ In the last of these essays Meason describes a “bran-new” type of company promoter who unscrupulously hopes that investors will enlist shares in a railway (“the Rio Grande”) that he never intends to build. The promoter relates the fictitious nature of his scheme: “It may be asked what made us fix upon the Rio Grande as the place where our imaginary railway was to be constructed. All I can say in reply is, that one spot seemed quite as good as another to set up a concern which was really never to have life . . . It is rather a nuisance, indeed, to have a really legitimate undertaking to praise up. It takes away half the zest of speculation” (“Starting the Rio Grande” 368). The prime Director who the promoters land for their Company Board (to give it a wanted credibility) is a new member of parliament, “a kind of half-city man — a German by birth, but who had, after long residence in England, become a naturalized subject of Queen Victoria, changed his family designation and set up for a highly respectable Britain.”

Mr Grass — his name when he came from Leipsic twenty-five years ago, and set up as a toystore-keeper in a very humble way in Whitechapel, was Gröeus — member of parliament

for Inverstone, director of the Universal Financial Association of the Cleveland Banking Corporation, of the Discounting Credit Company, of the South Junction Railway, and Chairman of the Lucknow Bank, was a typical man of a class which ten years ago did not exist in England. He had made a very large fortune entirely by speculation in shares; and, having started without fifty pounds of capital, a stranger and sojourner in the land, was now one of the magnates of fashion (in a certain set, of course), a member of the first assembly of gentleman in the world, and for whose name as a director of an undertaking the business world of financial London was willing to pay any price. (370)

Meason's narrator goes on to describe Mr. Grass (or Gröeus) as aggressively working behind the scenes in his role as a Director to work the speculation of the Rio Grande to his particular advantage. As a cover for his shadowy financial dealings, Grass has set up as a gentleman in a "new part of London." "The house was, of course, new, and everything in it was new . . . the furniture looked, if possible newer . . . and the walls were covered from top to bottom with pictures which smelt of varnish" (370).

We should note, of course, that the methods employed by Mr. Grass in his sudden rise to power correspond to those of Mr. Veneering in *Our Mutual Friend*.¹⁴ Dickens writes at the opening of one of his most cutting satires against the pretension of the nouveaux riches: "Mr and Mrs Veneering were bran-new people in a bran-new house in a bran-new quarter of London. Everything about the Veneerings was spick and span new . . . they themselves were new" (*Our Mutual Friend* 48; bk. 1, ch. 2). Mr. Veneering is a speculator in drugs whose ascension from mere "traveller or commission agent" to "supreme power" in Chicksey and Stobbles is signaled by his "bringing into the business a quantity of plate-glass window . . . and a gleaming and enormous door-plate" (76; bk. 1; ch. 4). Although Dickens does not go so far as to suggest that Veneering is a foreigner (although he will flee to Calais when he is discovered to be an insolvent swindler), he presents his speculator as a pretender capable of infiltrating the highest levels of society through a plan of conspicuous consumption. Veneering's strategy recalls the meteoric rise of Mr. Merdle in *Little Dorrit*; he will successfully use his money from the drug market to run for and win a seat in Parliament. Furthermore, as in Evans's story of "Count D —," the figure of the speculator is employed as shorthand for a number of threats to the legitimate exchange of capital, including this virulent capitalist's wish to spread risk and debt by fostering confidence through a series of gross expenditures.

Veneering, with his powerful ability to reinvent himself and his family's social position, is one of several speculators in *Our Mutual Friend* whose modus operandi corresponds to that of the most terrifying of Victorian figures. For instance, one could say that Veneering's mutability recalls Varney's more explicit status as a monster. The key to the latter's ability to recover from death, financial or otherwise, is the ease with which he establishes his career as a pretender among the living.¹⁵

How frightful an existence is that of Varney the Vampire! . . . considering the strange gift of renewable existence which was his . . . and who shall say that, walking the streets of giant London at this day, there may not be some such existences? Horrible thought that, perhaps seduced by the polished exterior of one who seems a citizen of the world in the most extended signification of the words, we should bring into our domestic circle a vampyre!

But yet it might be so. We have seen, however, that Varney was a man of dignified courtesy and polished manners; that he had the rare and beautiful gift of eloquence; and that,

probably, gathering such vast experience from his long intercourse with society — an intercourse which had extended over so many years, he was able to adapt himself to the tastes and the feelings of all persons, and so exercise over them that charm of mind which caused him to have so dangerous a power. (Rymer 734)

The themes of un-dead permanence, foreignness, and parasitism were projected onto a certain type of capitalist throughout the period (and vice versa) because both figures — the vampire and the speculator — were perceived as threats to the integrity of what many Victorians valued most; as Judith Halberstam puts it, “vampirism somehow interferes with the natural ebb and flow of currency just as it literally interferes in the ebbing and flowing of blood” (102). At odds not only with the representational stability of fixed and landed wealth, but with the private family’s natural desire for immortality expressed in the passage of personal estate from one generation to another (and the corresponding passage of the spirit between this world and next), the speculator explodes the concept of real or absolute value (or blood) by asserting the logic of equivalent exchange. As we shall see, characters from *Our Mutual Friend* such as Old Harmon and Silas Wegg, characters who clarify and extend the underlying project of more public speculators such as Veneering, Lamble, and Fledgeby, help us to bridge that considerable gap between Polidori’s description at the opening of the nineteenth century of a feudal vampire-lord “strangling young ladies for the miserable purpose of surviving” (Moretti 84), and Stoker’s portrayal at the end of a “rational entrepreneur who invests his gold to expand his dominion: to conquer the City of London” (84).

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A FEW WORDS MUST ALSO BE SAID on the general interpretation of death in the period, since several competing notions of the subject are presented in *Our Mutual Friend*. In response to the fear of financial dissolution, and even as a step beyond the aegis of inheritance and real property, some Victorians went so far as to reawaken that ancient notion of death as the “great leveler.” In many of Dickens’s novels, death, while in itself tragic, is imagined as the doorway to that unimaginable place of eternal rest in which all of the class holdings and reckless advancements of the lower world will count for naught. Jenny Wren’s roof-top reveries serve as an excellent example of how a romantic identification with death works to resolve (by dismissal) the horror, dust, and vanity of exchange. “Living amidst such unreality and disorder, Dickens’ decent people inevitably find death attractive, a release from the dunghill earth” (Qualls 108). This view of death as an escape was enhanced by a reappraisal of the notion of the afterlife by both secular and religious movements. Even the terror of Hell and eternal retribution was softened as the century progressed by a new emphasis on the loving God of the gospels, the spread of the purgatorial devotions of the Oxford movement, and Utilitarian views on deterrence and reformation (Rowell 13, 153).

In a little sermon following the ignominious death of Betty Higden, the narrator of *Our Mutual Friend* remarks: “For, we turn up our eyes and say that we are all alike in death, and we might turn them down and work the saying out in this world” (578; bk. 3, ch. 9).¹⁶ Dickens thus employs the recognition of death’s undoing not only as an imaginative escape but as an irreversible judgment of the living and their vain pursuits. This latter

theme is the principal point of many of Dickens's death scenes — Stephen Blackpool's in *Hard Times*, Sydney Carton's in *A Tale of Two Cities*, to name a few. Throughout his work, Dickens makes thematic use of death's passage by recording its aftereffects on its worldly witnesses and survivors. Death become a moral warning to the living, a model especially followed in Dickens's last complete novel in which a dirty fortune is cleansed by touching the talisman of the beyond.¹⁷

Seemingly at odds with Dickens's moral employment of death, however, was his life-long fascination with the cold facts of expiration. As one biographer states, the novelist had a reoccurring interest in "the body without spirit, the flesh without animating life, turned into meat for carrion" (Kaplan 214). A compelling footnote to Dickens's explorations of the modern city concerns the novelist's morbid preoccupation with "*looking at something that could not return a look,*" as he himself put it in one *All the Year Round* entry in 1863 ("The Morgue," *The Uncommercial Traveller* 278).¹⁸ We know that on Dickens's trips to Paris he was especially captivated by the fact that that city had a public morgue. He often visited the morgue, occasionally in the company of Wilkie Collins, to satisfy a compelling curiosity about what he considered to be an absolute enigma. In the same description of viewing a corpse he writes: "And there was a much more general, purposeless, vacant staring at it like looking at waxwork, without a catalogue, and not knowing what to make of it" (278). As he writes elsewhere, also as "The Uncommercial Traveller":

Whenever I am at Paris, I am dragged by invisible force into the Morgue. I never want to go there, but am always pulled there. One Christmas Day, when I would rather have been anywhere else, I was attracted in, to see an old grey man lying all alone on his cold bed, with a tap of water turned on over his grey hair, and running, drip, drip, drip, down his wretched face until it got to the corner of his mouth, where it took a turn, and made him look sly. One New Year's Morning (by the same token, the sun was shining outside, and there was a mountebank balancing a feather on his nose, within a yard of the gate), I was pulled in again to look at a flaxen-haired boy of eighteen, with a heart hanging on his breast — "from his mother," was engraven on it — who had come into the net across the river, with a bullet wound in his fair forehead and his hands cut with a knife, but whence or how was a blank mystery. This time, I was forced into the same dread place, to see a large dark man whose disfigurement by water was in a frightful manner comic, and whose expression was that of a prize-fighter who had closed his eyelids under a heavy blow, but was going immediately to open them, shake his head, and "come up smiling." Oh what this large dark man cost me in that bright city! (*The Uncommercial Traveller* 76)

This terrifying experience of imagining the dead as coming back to life, "smiling" no less, may have been the trauma that kept Dickens away from the morgue for some time. Kaplan tells us that the novelist had gone to the morgue many times during the winter described above (1846–47) "until shocked by something so repulsive that he did not have the courage for a long time to go back" (Forster qtd. in Kaplan 215). Of course, Dickens did summon the courage eventually to return, at least imaginatively, as his last full novel exhibits a deep fascination with cold flesh and lifeless bodies. We can almost sense Dickens again studying the unfortunate subjects of the morgue in this aside by the narrator while describing Rogue Riderhood's near drowning in *Our Mutual Friend*:

If you are not gone for good, Mr Riderhood, it would be something to know where you are hiding at present. This flabby lump of mortality that we work so hard at with such patient perseverance, yields no sign of you. If you are gone for good, Rogue, it is very solemn, and if you are coming back, it is hardly less so. Nay, in the suspense and mystery of the latter question, involving that of where you may be now, there is a solemnity even added to that of death, making us who are in attendance alike afraid to look on you and to look off you, and making those below start at the least sound of a creaking plank in the floor. (504; bk. 3, ch. 3)

Rogue Riderhood's lifeless, flabby lump of flesh is a puzzling contradiction to the narrator because it is both repulsive and commands attention as a passageway of the spirit. This recognition by the narrator of the drama and mystery of Rogue's soul "striving" between two worlds may refer to the novelist's own growing sense during the mid-1860s of the inevitability of death. During this time, Dickens's personal reaction in his letters and correspondence to the passing-away of a number of his closest friends and family members points to a doom that he felt to be closing in; "what a great cemetery one walks through after forty!" the novelist remarked (Kaplan 456). This personal crisis for Dickens culminated in the Staplehurst train accident in June of 1865, another "horrible . . . terrible" reminder of mortality" (Hill qtd. in Kaplan 460). He and Ellen Ternan were nearly killed when their train returning from Dover jumped the tracks on a bridge and fell into the ravine below. Dickens spent several hours helping to pull survivors and corpses from the carnage of the wreck. Interestingly enough, one of the few non-human objects which he clambered back into the passenger carriage to retrieve was the manuscript of a number of his novel-in-progress, *Our Mutual Friend* (459-60).¹⁹

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IN THE SECOND HALF OF THIS ESSAY I would like to explore the relation expressed in *Our Mutual Friend* between Dickens's two primary fascinations with death: death as a cold, material fact, and death as a romantic escape from an unforgiving world. I would suggest that Dickens hopes to reconcile the body and spirit of death, so to speak, through a plot about the redemption of money and personal fortune. On the one hand, the wrongful pursuit of money in *Our Mutual Friend* is marked by the horrific sign of death's degradation — first represented in the novel by Gaffer's project of pulling corpses from the Thames. On the other hand, the success of Harmon's risky plan to transform a worldly fortune by first surrendering to death will serve as a providential guarantee of the integrity of ownership between this world and the next. In short, the plot tries to reverse an economy's ingrained flow by having the spirit of death's proper dispossession sanctify death's putrid body. As a solution, the novel suggests that the faithful way to assuage the fears of one's inevitable demise is to raise a guiltless fortune, a safe investment that can hypothetically (and speculatively) be done without but is possessed nonetheless. I hope to illuminate this most complex of Dickens's plots through a four-part analysis. First, I will examine how the novel presents money and material death as engaged in a symbiotic relationship due to their mutual recyclability. Just as accumulation depends upon extending the horizon of death, characters in the novel who seek to stave off their own demise only further, in the ultimate revenge of providence, their financial and bodily destruction. Secondly, I will explore how faithful characters who maintain a right attitude

towards the possession of wealth are able to defer death properly via gifts and the sacrifice of work. Thirdly, in the last part of this essay, I will return to the issue of how market speculation is portrayed in the novel as a vampiric act of preying upon one's competitors. Market speculation is represented as the tragic culmination of an economy which leads the avaricious, who are struggling (symbolically and actually) to grab more life, to extend the horizon of death. And finally, I want to show how Dickens presents the Harmon-Rokesmith plot of life-in-death as the novel's only justified speculation. The hero designates a sphere of pure, domestic investment by dispersing the "birds of prey" who hover over (and embody) the un-dead father.

The novel presents a number of examples of how the aggressive pursuit of wealth and position is equivalent to the pursuit of blood. The psychopathic Bradley Headstone, his name referring to his grave career, stalks Eugene Wrayburn to the point of attempted murder in the hope of obliterating a traumatic reminder of upper-class privilege. Headstone's feverent attempt to overcome Wrayburn's class and cultural superiority through pure defiance and effort transforms him into a walking corpse who destroys himself in the pursuit of the living: "Looking like the hunted and not the hunter, baffled, worn, with the exhaustion of deferred hope and consuming hate and anger in his face, white-lipped, wild-eyed, draggle-haired . . . he went by them in the dark, like a haggard head suspended in the air: so completely did the force of his expression cancel his figure" (608; bk. 3, ch. 10). In perhaps the novel's most dramatic canceling-out of ambition, the schoolmaster follows his failed attempt to drown Wrayburn by drowning himself, in turn, murdering the blackmailing Rogue Riderhood. Ironically, Headstone goes under at Plashwater Lock with a riverman who appears to be more adept at striking a profit from a series of drownings.²⁰ In response to Riderhood's proclamation that he "can't be drowned," Headstone replies as a demon capable of the most horrific judgments: "I can be! . . . I am resolved to be. I'll hold you living, and I'll hold you dead. Come down!" (874; bk. 4, ch. 15). Later, the two men will be found clasped together in the scum, a symbol of the how the two poles of a dark economy — hate and profit — are wed together in one fruitless fight against death.²¹

Other characters in the novel also perceive worldly advancement to be based in the city's general climate of risk, demise, and decay. The pretentious Mr. Veneering hopes to prosper "exceedingly upon the Harmon Murder" by making several "bran-new bosom-friends," including a Bank Director (180; bk. 1, ch. 11). Mr. Podsnap, an insurance man, takes money from clients who hope to defend themselves against death or loss. And the Lammles and their circle of friends "divide the world into two classes of people; people who [are] making enormous fortunes, and people who [are] being enormously ruined" (313; bk. 2, ch. 4). In particular, the recently wed Lammles hope to oversee a swindle on the marriage market just as they have swindled the best years of life out of each other. In a desperate scheme in which they hope to use Fledgeby as romantic bait to catch Miss Podsnap, the Lammles seek to suffocate "the skeleton . . . in the closet" of impending insolvency long enough to pull off the deception that they possess a model marriage (310; bk. 2, ch. 4). Yet the couple's true nature returns with a vengeance as this project begins to fail and financial execution looms: "And thus the Lammles got home at last, and the lady sat down moody and weary, looking at her dark lord engaged in a deed of violence with a bottle of soda-water as though he were wringing the neck of some unlucky creature and pouring its blood down his throat" (319; bk. 2; ch. 4).

In the central plot of *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens extends the theme of blood-thirsty avarice by suggesting that the more profitable forms of accumulation exploit the already-dead. After a detailed description of the Thames's market in corpses, the novelist introduces the reader to the Harmon dust mounds and an economy that proposes an entirely symbiotic relationship between money and expiration. Dust not only emerges as a symbol of death, but also as the object around which the novel's list of bottom-feeders parasitically gather to construct a fortune out of refuse. After Silas Wegg hears from Venus the taxidermist that the dead miser "likely made a good many wills and codicils" because he was "generally cutting off some near relation, or blocking out some natural affection" (356; bk. 2, ch. 7), he cherishes the notion of finding a stash of papers in the mounds and environs of the decaying house of the deceased. Wegg, in short, tries to bring a Gothic plot into existence by convincing himself that there is a hidden manuscript within the dark house that will reveal an unknown heir. Yet he does not seek such information in the hope of bringing to light a past wrong but to benefit his advancement as another type of Gothic villain: the blackmailer. In a process he repeatedly justifies as a form of work, Wegg hopes to replicate Old Harmon's ability of assessing the value of objects that other people consider only waste. The avaricious cripple listens to Venus's recollection that "'The old gentleman wanted to know the nature and worth of everything that was found in the dust; and many's the bone, and feather, and what not, that he's brought to me'" (129; bk. 1, ch. 7). Quite appropriately, Wegg eventually recruits Venus as a partner in his treasure hunt because the latter has considerable experience in naming the precise value of dead "human flesh and blood" (351; bk. 2, ch. 7). In fact, Wegg had initially sought out Venus in the hope of buying his amputated leg back from the taxidermist. This strange transaction serves as an appropriate starting point for Wegg's quest since it indicates the aggressive spirit of class ascendancy that underwrites his pursuit of the Harmon fortune: "'I tell you openly I should *not* like — under such circumstances, to be what I may call dispersed, a part of me here, and a part of me there, but should wish to collect myself like a genteel person'" (127; bk. 1, ch. 7).

By the end of the novel, Wegg's insatiable desire to root his fortune out of dust only leads him to be haunted by a "Demon of Unrest," leaving him "gaunt and haggard" with his wooden leg "disproportionate" (850; bk. 4, ch. 15); as Venus remarks of his partner: "'So weazen and yellow is the kivering upon your bones, that one might also fancy you had come to give a look-in upon the French gentleman in the corner [one of the taxidermist's figures], instead of me'" (852; bk. 4, ch. 15). Wegg's scheme makes explicit the theme forwarded by the novel's several other narratives of self-advancement: any pursuit of power which ignores the purview of the afterlife and proper possession is equivalent to an assembling of the body parts of death; in a rather Frankensteinian gesture, the miser undertakes a failed, bodily reanimation and accumulation that eventually turns him into the subject of the search.²² Wegg's (and to a lesser extent, Venus's) excited dissections serve as a detailed appraisal of the horrific implications of modern capital's assertion of general equivalence. Dickens's perception of the problem corresponds, I think, to Jean Baudrillard's claim that Western culture reaches an ironic impasse when it avariciously attempts to dissociate the proximity of life and death from a number of spiritual considerations: "as soon as the *ambivalence* of life and death and the symbolic [not literal] reversibility of death comes to an end, we enter into a process of accumulation of life as *value*; but by the same token, we also enter the field of the *equivalent* production of death" (Baudrillard 147).

Wegg and Venus follow the assertion that the possession of life (as a quantifiable value) inherently entitles one to certain rights over the dead. Yet this assertion only leads them to borrow against the grave and engage in the further production of death, including their own. In one of the pair's most brutal moments of monetary assessment, they almost become grave robbers or resurrectionists as they reflect on the location of the remains of Old Harmon: "he's buried quite in this neighborhood, you know. Over yonder," remarks the taxidermist (129; bk. 1, ch. 7).²³ However, Old Harmon seems to have been one of the few persons cognizant of how the aggressive attempt to amass a fortune leaves one eventually open to a number of post-mortem speculations. The dead miser, anticipating various inquiries on the dust he has left behind, has carefully safeguarded against the reanimation of his remains:

It [Harmon's will] leaves the lowest of the range of dust-mountains, with some sort of dwelling-house at its foot, to an old servant who is sole executor, and all the rest of the property — which is very considerable — to the son. He directs himself to be buried with certain eccentric ceremonies and precautions against his coming to life, with which I need not bore you . . . Except that the son's inheriting is made conditional on his marrying a girl, who at the date of the will, was a child of four or five years old, and who is now a marriageable young woman. (58; bk. 1, ch. 2)

Old Harmon not only protects his body from being disturbed, he superstitiously safeguards against any of the objects he has left behind being used against *his will* (in both senses of the word). In addition to directing that he be buried "with certain eccentric ceremonies and precautions," the father seeks to govern selectively the fortune he has left behind at the expense of the basic principle of inheritance and just settlement: the surrendering of possession. In a move of considerable foresight, he tries to exempt himself from an economy that he himself has mastered by attempting to stamp an irrevocable wish on how his legacy may be spent. As such, the miser's will not only seeks to undercut the intentions of the profit-minded un-dead, but is vampiric itself in selfishly trying to command the future actions and well-being of the living from beyond the grave.

Old Harmon's naming of Bella in the will turns out to be the greatest of the dead man's superstitions against the body of his wealth being divorced from his wishes. While still living, the miser had observed a spoiled and precocious girl afflicting her passive father. He inquired from Mr. Wilfer the name of his daughter so that he might employ her as a stipulation and curse by which to afflict his own son on his inheritance of the family fortune. In a very important sense, then, the now mature avarice of the "marriageable young woman" figures as the haunting embodiment of the miser's intentions from beyond the grave. Bella reanimates the miser's beliefs in youthful form by seeing money as the very prerequisite of existence, as a means by which any thought of the finality of death's dissolution seems a foolish concern. As she tells her father at one point: "And yet I have money always in my thoughts and my desires; and the whole life I place before myself is money, money, money, and what money can make of life!" (521; bk. 3, ch. 5). Elsewhere, Bella shocks her father with her mercenary nature at such an early age:

"Have resolved, I say, Pa, that to get money I must marry money. In consequence of which, I am always looking out for money to captivate . . . Talk to me of love! . . . Talk to me of fiery

dragons! But talk to me of poverty and wealth, and then indeed we touch upon realities.” (375-76; bk. 2, ch. 8)

In this passionate commitment to marriage as a mercenary transaction, Bella is living up to the miser’s speculations about her many years before. Yet often in the same breath that Bella asserts money as the only objective criterion in this world, she expresses a hate for the widowhood that has been thrust upon her due to the drowning of John Harmon: “The idea of being a kind of widow, and never having been married!” (81; bk. 1, ch. 4). The passing-away of her future husband forces her unwillingly to wed death in order to obtain money as she must depend on her status as a pseudo-widow to receive her footing in the Boffin household, a footing that categorically prohibits her from “captivating” living rich husbands. In short, Bella’s initial assertion that life is a storing-house for monetary values is transformed into a dependence on (by a rejection of) death.

Yet Bella, unlike many of the other parasites in *Our Mutual Friend*, is provided with an opportunity to reflect on the self-destructive nature of her quest. As an example by contradiction, John Harmon’s willingness to stay dead begins to undermine the father’s vampiric plans for how the expected reanimations of the avaricious are to defend certain post-mortem conditions. Harmon’s strategy for reforming Bella arises from his own estimation that the one who pursues a dead man’s wealth often becomes, by sheer avaricious desire, the decomposed subject of the search. In the novel’s famous chapter 13 of book 2, Harmon considers what pressing doubts have prevented him from coming back to life to claim his position and fortune: “I came back, shrinking from my father’s money, shrinking from my father’s memory, mistrustful of being forced on a mercenary wife, mistrustful of my father’s intention in thrusting that marriage on me, mistrustful that I was already growing avaricious” (423). In the novel’s primary thematic reversal, Harmon short-circuits his father’s will by allowing others to inherit what is rightfully his. In a move which runs against the typical Victorian plot of advancement, he willingly accepts a form of bankruptcy, with its corresponding dissolution of personal identity and foretaste of death. One could say then that Harmon, as a response to his father’s vampiric plans, also leaves behind a material temptation. Yet his position of living-deadness (as opposed to a rigid un-death) allows him to step beyond proleptic stipulations to a detailed assessment of how others come through a fundamental trial:

‘Dead, I have found them [the Boffins] when they might have slighted my name, and passed greedily over my grave to ease and wealth, lingering by the way, like single-hearted children, to recall their love for me when I was a poor frightened child. Dead, I have heard from the woman who would have been my wife if I had lived, the revolting truth that I should have purchased her, caring nothing for me, as a Sultan buys a slave.

‘What would I have? If the dead could know, or do know, how the living use them, who among the hosts of dead has found a more disinterested fidelity on earth than I?’ (429; bk. 2, ch. 13)

Harmon, in effect, looks into the future and knows what many have wanted to know: how others will treat one after one’s death. Unlike his radically paranoid father, he leaves his body and name open to all sorts of violations and desecrations in order to enact a judgment, not a curse. At first, it seems as if Harmon only plans to keep his assessment of this trial on

his side of the grave. “No ghost should trouble Mr and Mrs Boffin’s peace; invisible and voiceless, the ghost should look on for a while at the state of existence out of which it had departed; and then should for ever cease to haunt the scenes in which it had no place” (436; bk. 2, ch. 14). However, with the help of the Boffins’ faithful understanding of themselves as mere stewards in this world, Harmon (as Rokesmith) decides to occupy a haunting role in the Boffin home and reform Bella’s perception of the limits of earthly possession.

In terms of a Gothic tradition, one could say that Harmon’s decision to remain and trouble the living allows him to become both benefactor and source of an unsettling apparition regarding proper, rightful possession. Akin to Little Dorrit’s haunting service for the Clennams, the son silently fosters a sense of debt in Bella by struggling as the secretary Rokesmith “breast-high” through the “Dismal Swamp” of the new Boffin house, a place beset by parasites who seek “to drag the Golden Dustman under” (261-62; bk. 1, ch. 17). More precisely, his atonement for the damaging stipulations of the father is based in his plan to trace a material path between the Boffin home and the impoverished Wilfer residence, the home where he lodges and which Bella seeks to deny. For her, the secretary’s vigilance and work in both comes to stand as a troubling reference point for her growing conscience. In a chapter titled “Minders and Reminders,” Bella reflects just before taking her position in the Boffin home: “she declared it another of the miseries of being poor, that you couldn’t get rid of a haunting Secretary, stump — stump — stumping overhead in the dark, like a Ghost” (257; bk. 1; ch. 16). And later, firmly established in her new life, she considers: “He has no right to any power over me, and how do I come to mind him when I don’t care for him?” (364; bk. 2; ch. 8). In one of the first returns on the son’s scheme, Bella will come to realize that she is trapped in a struggle between two dead men and their lingering obligations: one whose fight against death is preserved by the selfishness and greed of the living, and another who has passed away without a trace but cannot be forgotten: “She wished, now that the deceased old John Harmon had never made a will about her, now that the deceased young John Harmon had lived to marry her. ‘Contradictory things to wish,’ said Bella, ‘but my life and fortunes are so contradictory altogether that what can I expect myself to be!’” (377; bk. 2, ch. 9). Overall, the secretary shows Bella the discrepancies underwriting her place in the Boffin home by acting out the dynamics of gift and free duty (not that the secretary is utterly disinterested in assuming this position). The force of the son’s denial of his fortune serves as a compelling response to the self-defeating reanimations of dust and death. As Baudrillard has suggested, gifts and their lingering obligations may be the only things capable of turning capital’s constant reproduction of “surplus domination” back against itself.

But before I make further reference to Baudrillard’s analysis in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, I must point out that his study addresses the workings of a postmodern economy, not a Victorian one. In fact, Baudrillard asserts that we are now well beyond “the golden age of the dialectic of the sign and the real, which is at the same time the ‘classical’ period of capital and value” (7). As such, Baudrillard’s discussion of the limitless extension of “pure exchange” is beyond the purview of the realist novel. Yet one can respond to this objection by noting how Dickens constructs analogies for capital exchange — dust, recycling, a putrid river — that foreshadow what Baudrillard calls an economy of “total liberty” and “general disenchantment” (7). Furthermore, Baudrillard points out that capital must still unwillingly respond to a number of “archaic obligations,” such as the gift, which it has not yet been able to abolish even in its engagement with limitless speculation:

To defy the system with a gift to which it cannot respond save by its own collapse and death. Nothing, not even the system, can avoid the symbolic obligation, and it is in this trap that the only chance of a catastrophe for capital remains. The system turns on itself, as a scorpion does when encircled by the challenge of death. For it is summoned to answer, if it is not to lose face, to what can only be death. The system must itself commit suicide in response to the multiplied challenge of death and suicide. (37)

As Dickens's imaginary response to a system which he perceived as solidifying its hold over England, the plot of *Our Mutual Friend* examines, in miniature, the exorcism of one part of the horrifying chain of equivalent exchange by the introduction of a symbolic obligation. As gifts, Harmon undertakes his own demise and Mr. Boffin will play a self-destructive miser to force an answer out of an economy that depends on death but cannot face it itself. As the recipient of these gifts, Bella must respond to their obligations or presumably follow the mercenary path of Wegg and Headstone, or more aptly, the Lammlers and the Veneerings. The characters who seek to reform Bella know that the best way to respond to an economy of contradiction, one that defines wealth as a luxurious accumulation against death (Baudrillard 145, 156), involves the personification of luxury, via the character of the deadly miser, until the fissures of such an economy become dramatically apparent. While affirming his plan to stay dead Harmon reflects on its results so far: "Because her [Bella's] faults have been intensified by her place in my father's will, and she is already growing better" (429; bk. 2; ch. 13).

In another of the novel's chain of ironies, the dead miser's plans for his son are defeated by his one moment of unsuspecting gratitude and sacrifice, affirming Baudrillard's claim that "not even the system, can avoid a symbolic obligation, and it is in this trap that the only chance of a catastrophe for capital remains." Unsuspectingly, Old Harmon displayed a small measure of kindness amidst his various stipulations and codicils in leaving his "old servant" Boffin the lowest measure of the dust mounds and assigning him as "sole executor" of the will:

But the hard wrathful and sordid nature that had wrung as much work out of them as could be got in their best days, for as little money as could be paid to hurry on their worst, had never been so warped but that it knew their moral straightness and respected it. In its own despite, in a constant conflict with itself and them, it had done so. And this is the eternal law. For, Evil often stops short at itself and dies with the doer of it; but Good, never. (146; bk. 1, ch. 9)

As the plot of the novel unfolds, this one gift, coupled with the son's desire to play dead, threatens Old Harmon's entire vampiric project. With the supposed murder of his son, the miser's sense of duty to the Boffins is transformed into a fabulous gift. As Boffin says, "By that murder me and Mrs. Boffin mysteriously profit" (137; bk. 1, ch. 9). When their secretary, Rokesmith, is revealed to them as the John Harmon they have not seen for many years, the Boffins immediately follow his directions in attempting to reform Bella. In effect, Mr. Boffin returns the gift to its rightful source by following the son's command in returning it to his father. Transforming himself into the incarnation of Old Harmon by continuously preaching the conditional clause from the will about Bella marrying well, Boffin parrots back at Bella the message of her own mercenary career: "Go in for money, my love. Money's the article. You'll make money of your good looks, and of the money

Mrs. Boffin and me will have the pleasure of settling upon you, and you'll live and die rich. That's the state to live and die in!" (526; bk. 3; ch. 5). Such statements begin to have their desired effect as "Bella [is] not so well pleased with this assurance and this prospect as she might have been" (527; bk. 3, ch. 5). In his reanimation of the worst of misers, the "old servant" clarifies to Bella's horror that the aggressive accumulation of wealth is essentially both a vampiric process and a defense against one. "You are . . . not blaming me for standing on my own defence against a crew of plunderers, who could suck me dry by driblets? Not blaming me for getting a little hoard together?" (536; bk. 3, ch. 5). And, finally, Boffin's collection of miser tales with Bella's assistance, and his fascination with them in her hearing, illuminates that the most virulent forms of hoarding are foolishly enacted at death's expense. From "Merryweather's Lives and Anecdotes of Misers," Boffin learns of the famous Daniel Dancer and his "Idea of Death," which turns out to be the "consolatory incident of his dying naked in a sack" (542-43; bk. 3, ch. 6). The secretary's and Boffin's project of mirroring back to Bella the dead miser's intentions come to fruition when she can no longer bear the miser standing in her presence. The contradictory obligations of this free gift finally undercut Old Harmon's material temptations when Bella proclaims just before her departure from the Boffin home: "'When I came here, I respected you and honoured you, and I soon loved you . . . And now I can't bear the sight of you . . . you're a Monster'" (662; bk. 3; ch. 15).

* * *

IN *OUR MUTUAL FRIEND*, the figure of the speculator seeks to promote himself above the unsettling particulars of equivalent exchange but is mired in the dust and grave nonetheless. Fledgeby (who speculates in "waste paper"), Veneering (drugs), and Lammler (company promotion) all strive to use the anonymity of the share market to legitimate a form of avarice that is as dependent on the demise of others as, say, Wegg's dirty reanimations. In particular, Lammler

goes, in a condescending amateurish way, into the City, attends meetings of Directors, and has to do with traffic in Shares. As is well known to the wise in their generation, traffic in Shares is the one thing to have to do with in this world. Have no antecedents, no established character, no cultivation, no ideas, no manners; have Shares. Have Shares enough to be on Boards of Direction in capital letters, oscillate on mysterious business between London and Paris, and be great. Where does he come from? Shares. Where is he going to? Shares. What are his tastes? Shares. Has he any principles? Shares. What squeezes him into Parliament? Shares. Perhaps he never of himself achieved success in anything, never originated anything, never produced anything? Sufficient answer to all; Shares. O mighty Shares! To set those blaring images so high, and to cause us smaller vermin, as under the influence of henbane or opium, to cry out, night and day, 'Relieve us of our money, scatter it for us, buy us and sell us, ruin us, only we beseech ye take rank among the powers of the earth, and fatten on us!' (159-60; bk. 1, ch. 10)

Lammler's attendance at "meetings of Directors" identifies him quite clearly, according to the economic language of the time, as one of what many perceived to be a new and dangerous breed: the company promoter. Meason's articles in Dickens's *All The Year Round*, running concurrently with the numbers of *Our Mutual Friend*, describe the climate

of risk and avarice forged in the early 1860s by the convergence of limited liability and the enactment of liberal banking laws. As described earlier, unscrupulous financiers were tempted to assemble corporations in a matter of weeks (through the introduction of a prospectus, a reputable board of directors, and advertising) only to abandon the project for a quick profit once shares had been enlisted. For instance, in an article titled “The Bank of Patagonia” (June 1865) a promoter describes his hidden intentions in establishing a new bank:

I knew full well that if I could once set the concern on foot, it would pay me, even if its existence terminated in three months. I was to be the promoter of the bank, and as such would be entitled to my promotion-money the day the shares were allotted to the public. I neither hoped nor wished for any appointment in the establishment. So soon as my fee for the promotion was paid me, the whole affair might collapse immediately for aught my interests were concerned. (“The Bank of Patagonia” 486)

Meason’s outline of the promoter’s two-fold strategy of affected stability and abandonment offers insight into Dickens’s diatribe against Lammle and his type: “no antecedents, no established character, no cultivation, no ideas, no manners.” Furthermore, Dickens condemns the promoter’s utter disregard for the lives and savings ruined by his greedy consumption of Shares with a subtle reference to the modes of the vampire. According to the novelist’s estimation of the horror of equivalent exchange, Lammle, and in a slight remove, *Veneering* and *Fledgeby*, not only consider every aspect of their existence to be propped-up by their ability to accumulate shares (to them, a life-force equivalent to blood) but perceive others as “smaller vermin” to be sold and scattered. These speculators exceed even Wegg, who restricts much of his preying-upon to the already-dead, by understanding their living brethren as only crying out night and day: “buy us and sell us, ruin us, only we beseech ye take rank among the powers of the earth, and fatten on us!”

Of course, Harmon’s original intention of briefly observing Bella after disembarking from abroad is the first example in the novel of how one small foray into the market (in this case, the marriage market) opens one to the most vile of transactions. In the process of trying to obtain a glimpse of his future wife before taking possession of her and his inheritance, Harmon is drugged by George Radfoot (corresponding to the image of the speculator’s use of henbane or opium) and left for dead so that the sailor might usurp his identity and fortune. Radfoot hopes to use the anonymity created by Harmon’s long absence, the riverfront’s labyrinthine alleys, and his close physical resemblance to the inheritor to enact his own promotion by exchange. Yet Harmon’s survival and recognition of Radfoot’s failed plan, a plan by which the sailor himself dies, brings about the son’s sudden education concerning the workings of the economy to which he has just returned. As one provided with the rare opportunity of witnessing himself dead, he learns (and is able to profit from) the hard lesson that one who wishes to advance in this life must be able to anticipate the false promotions of avarice.

As I have already suggested, Old Harmon’s proleptic judgment and will give rise to a whole series of frustrated investments, such as those directed at the miser’s dustmounds (Wegg, Venus) and legacy of one hundred thousand pounds (Bella and others). In turn, John Harmon’s insightful willingness to extend Radfoot’s criminal promotion and stay dead clarifies the extent to which the immediate possession of his father’s fortune carries

with it the curse of speculation. For instance, the Boffins, before they realize that the son is working in their presence, inadvertently create a stock market of human flesh in seeking to replace the lost John Harmon:

For, the instant it became known that anybody wanted the orphan, up started some affectionate relative of the orphan who put a price upon the orphan's head. The suddenness of an orphan's rise in the market was not to be paralleled by the maddest records of the Stock Exchange . . . The market was 'rigged' in various artful ways. Counterfeit stock got into circulation. Parents boldly represented themselves as dead, and brought their orphans with them . . . Likewise, fluctuations of a wild and South-Sea nature were occasioned, by orphan-holders keeping back, and then rushing into the market a dozen together. But, the uniform principle at the root of all these various operations was bargain and sale; and that principle could not be recognized by Mr and Mrs Milvey. (244; bk. 1, ch. 16)

Mary Poovey remarks of this passage: "The target of Dickens's dark humor is obviously the infiltration of economic motives into the domestic sphere" (56). Dickens's analogy goes so far as to ask: when does the market start and the home stop? How can a genealogy-based notion of identity be so easily supplanted by the values implied by the increasingly fluid relations of the stock market? In her study of the early Gothic novel, Andrea Henderson has suggested that the crisis of "measuring human value" brings with it "a cluster of metaphoric associations that play their part in creating the ghostly world of gothic character" (5). As opposed to the Romantic model of interior depth, the Gothic focuses on a "relational model of identity" by presenting character as "a matter of surface, display, and 'consumption' by others" (39). In *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens's description of parents attempting to use their children (like stocks), even to the point of faking their own death, is only one of several extensions of a vampiric, Victorian economy of "consumption," all based in the dead father's quest to use the totemic force of greed against his own flesh and blood. Similar to Evans' use of "Count D —" and Meason's use of the "half-city man" Mr. Grass as representations of the subversive threats made by outsiders to the nation's economic vitality, Dickens employs the figure of the speculator and speculation in *Our Mutual Friend* as shorthand for a number of threats to the legitimate passage of capital within families. To then describe a speculator as possessing certain vampiric traits is to say that older and more stable forms of generation have been supplanted by the horrific logic of equivalent exchange.

By far, the most compelling irony of *Our Mutual Friend* involves the son's desire to counter the crisis of domestic speculation with a more aggressive speculation. In terms of Baudrillard's analysis, Harmon can only hope that the deathly system his father has initiated "must *itself* commit suicide in response to the multiplied challenge of death and suicide." As such, his project of acting as an ever-present figure of atonement and symbolic obligation within the Boffin home is best thought of as a risky and, in relation to his father's plan, equally far-reaching investment. In taking on the identity of Rokesmith, he has no guarantee that his scheme to reform Bella from beyond the grave will ever come to fruition. In fact, Harmon's speculation as Rokesmith emerges as the most anxious form of work:

The Secretary was as far from being inquisitive or intrusive as a Secretary could be, but nothing less than a complete understanding of the whole of the affairs would content him. It

soon became apparent (from the knowledge with which he set out) that he must have been to the office where the Harmon will was registered, and must have read the will. He anticipated Mr Boffin's consideration whether he should be advised with on this or that topic, by showing that he already knew of it and understood it. He did this with no attempt at concealment, seeming to be satisfied that it was part of duty to have prepared himself at all attainable points for its utmost discharge.

This might — let it be repeated — have awakened some little vague mistrust in a man more worldly-wise than the Golden Dustman. On the other hand, the Secretary was discerning, discreet, and silent, though as zealous as if the affairs had been his own. (241; bk. 1; ch. 16)

Harmon walks the tightrope that any aggressive promoter walks between service and profit, between appearing to care dutifully for another's business (in this case, really his own) while also overseeing secret interests and future returns. In short, Harmon must carefully encourage confidence in others while silently monitoring the development of his own investment and plan. Clearly, however, Dickens is suggesting that Harmon's speculation is infinitely more noble due to his indefinite suppression of possession in order first to pursue Bella. If the Secretary resembles his miserly father in closely watching over his fortune and the Boffins, he also seeks to overcome the intentions of the vampiric will by recasting its conditions, by, in effect, out-speculating a speculator. In other words, Harmon's two-fold plan is best thought of as a tentative yet pure investment in which he retraces his father's plan regarding Bella in order to remove his inheritance from the dust. At the domestic level, the son's spectral (and speculative) "counterfeiting" as Rokesmith is simultaneously an attempt to manifest the "hollowed-out forms" of his father's dead methods of capital acquisition and an effort to "reproduce the simulacra of the past to extend the boundaries of the present self's quest for upward mobility."²⁴

While Poovey is correct to say that Harmon hopes to substitute "a woman [Bella] for stocks" in a "literal displacement" that will allow the domestic sphere to act as "an antidote to the demands and deceits of the marketplace" (58),²⁵ we should also note that Harmon never leaves behind the family business (as deceitful as any other) in his project with Bella. Just beginning to recognize her role as the dead miser's stipulation, she remarks:

'At least, sir,' retorted Bella, with her old indignation rising, 'you know the history of my being here at all. I have heard Mr Boffin say that you are master of every line and word of that will, as you are master of all his affairs. And was it not enough that I should have been willed away, like a horse, or a dog, or a bird; but must you too begin to dispose of me in your mind, and speculate in me, as soon as I had ceased to be the talk and the laugh of the town? Am I for ever to be made the property of strangers?' (434; bk. 2, ch. 13)

Rokesmith's haunting scrutiny has thus worked as the overstatement of possession, leading Bella to the desired conclusion that the apparent boon of the will carries with it her curse as portable property. Later, in the novel's ultimate exorcism of equivalent exchange and turn of speculation against itself, Bella will accept the Secretary's proposal without the slightest material guarantee. She tells the role-playing Boffin: "He is worth a Million of you . . . I would rather he thought well of me . . . though he swept the street for bread,

than you did, though you splashed the mud upon him from the wheels of a chariot of pure gold" (664; bk. 3, ch. 15).

Harmon, through his willingness to suffer risk, obtains essentially for free the fortune his father had associated with Bella. "'Mr Wilfer,' said John Rokesmith, excitedly and joyfully, 'Bella takes me, though I have no fortune, even no present occupation; nothing but what I can get in the life before us'" (671; bk. 3, ch. 16). Even after Bella becomes his wife, Harmon extends his deception because of its fabulous returns. "'She is such a cheerful, glorious housewife that I can't afford to be rich yet. I must wait a little longer'" (844; bk. 4, ch. 13). Like other speculators, Harmon know that a rising market is not one to bow out of:

"For a City man, John certainly did appear to care as little as might be for the looking up or looking down of things, as well as for the gold that got taken to the Bank. But he cared, beyond all expression, for his wife, as a most precious and sweet commodity that was always looking up, and that never was worth less than all the gold in the world. (750; bk. 4, ch. 5)

Harmon only gives up on the Rokesmith investment once his recognition by Lightwood begins to unravel his deception. In a very important sense, then, the novel's vampiric plot of the will, blood, and death is resolved only when Harmon cashes in on his true identity and returns to the Boffin home with his reformed wife. In a chapter titled "Showing How The Golden Dustman Helped To Scatter Dust," the now inseparable couple take possession of their newly decorated residence. Mrs. Boffin observes: "'It looks as if the old man's spirit had found rest at last . . . And as if his money had turned bright again, after a long long rust in the dark'" (849; bk. 4, ch. 13).²⁶ By waiting to take ownership of his fortune on his own terms, in a transfer that doubles as a transformation, the son ritually kills off the vampiric will and the essence of his father's un-death.²⁷ Within the walls at least of the new Harmon home, recycling will be replaced by regeneration. John Harmon comes to life again (now with his own son) just as Silas Wegg is ejected from the home into a "scavenger's cart," presumably to be taken away and reused (862; bk. 4, ch. 14).

Along these lines, one could also say that Harmon's acceptance of (and by) Bella in his real name operates as both a marriage and a funeral, as a charm capable of breaking the connection between death and money. His union with her, secured by a strategy of passing-away and implying a sort of extended death,²⁸ releases an earthly and dirty fortune from the mortal coils of capital. Harmon's exorcism of his inheritance by only a symbolic dissolution is rewarded by the "happy-ever-after" of domestic bliss, a "rhetorical afterlife that arises from the ashes of exchange, as a fragment of literary fantasy . . . and as a narrative whose always anticipated conclusion never comes" (Nunokawa 14). In contrast to Jenny Wren's temporary strategy of simply *playing dead*, Harmon is described as having found a way to make his money and family's intervention in the world sparkle again indefinitely. As such, *Our Mutual Friend*, in offering the story of Harmon's ability to remake the claims of the past, is fundamentally different from most of Dickens's novels: "unconcerned with the discovery of a past secret, it instead places great importance on the characters' will and ability to forge their own destinies — to create the plot of their life rather than simply to react and fight back" (Ginsburg 183). However, one cannot forget that Dickens seems to craft Harmon's ingenious plan regarding the possibilities of the future out of the character of the speculator and the period's ongoing conflicts over profit.

For instance, the force of Harmon's revelation and windfall recalls again the considerable foresight of Meason's promoter in "The Bank of Patagonia":

For me the speculation has been a good one. To get five thousand pounds for bringing a company into the world, and a year later netting a cool fifteen hundred for helping to kill off the same concern, is what does not fall to the lot of every man. I am quite contented with what the Bank of Patagonia has done for me, but I often wonder whether the shareholders are equally pleased with the way their money has been spent. ("The Bank of Patagonia" 490)

Harmon's promotional creation (and then killing-off) of Rokesmith allows him to supplant his father, making the latter merely a shareholder in a dead firm.²⁹ While Meason describes the direction of speculation for unworthy gains, Dickens offers the plot of the Harmon deceit to indicate how at least a few of the dirty recesses of capital can be redeemed when engaged by noble commitments and a foresight that is capable of temporarily bridging the gap between this world and the next. Still, the novelist is not suggesting that the workings of this redemption are in any sense communal. By their very nature, the material benefits of Harmon's speculative resurrection are not able to pass beyond the threshold of his new home. Poovey remarks, correctly I think, that the "domestic 'solution'" of the novel "only works in what amounts to a narrative vacuum; by the end of *Our Mutual Friend*, the John Harmon story is almost completely cordoned off from the other plots" (58). As Dickens's final portrayal of an ongoing economy, the novel does not close at the Harmon hearth but with next week's "Books of the Insolvent Fates . . . not yet opened" (*Our Mutual Friend* 887; bk. 4, ch. 17): at the "revolving funeral" of society (185; bk. 1, ch. 11) gathered round the still sparkling Veneerings.

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NOTES

1. Robinson 436; Qualls 93.
2. "Dickens and his contemporaries were steeped in the Christian tradition — Pauline, Augustinian, and Puritan — of two cities: the earthly city of men and the city of God. The first confirmed their view of the contemporary historical city; the second could be no more than a promise" (Welsh 57).
3. See Sedgwick 246; Brown 180–90; Davis 266–71; and Sanders 134.
4. In volume 1, book 2 of *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith employs a number of water images to convey an optimistic sense of burgeoning trade: "the channel of home circulation" (294), the "stream" of "full coffers" (305), the "navigable rivers" of "advantageous industry" (372), and the "natural flow" of capital between home-trade and foreign trade (372).
5. One should note here the general similarity between the plot of *Our Mutual Friend* and Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860). In Collins's novel, the heiress Laura Fairlie also passes through a fictitious death which is then used as a position of judgment against the characters who have attempted to usurp her wealth. Earle Davis suggests that the great success of *The Woman in White* aroused the jealousy of Dickens to the point of fearing that his friend was outdoing him in public popularity. It seems that Dickens's use of suspense in *Our Mutual Friend* was in some ways an attempt to best Collins (189, 195).

6. A word on the now obscure *Varney the Vampyre* would be helpful here. It was printed by Lloyd twice in the 1840s and then reprinted in 1853 in penny parts. Concerning the authorship, “[t]he usual answer is given as Thomas Peckett Prest, but Bleiler’s stylistic analysis suggests that J. M. Rymer is the more likely author” (Senf 170). In any case, Dickens would most likely have been familiar with the work of Salisbury Square novelists such as Rymer and Prest because, as Bleiler notes in his introduction to *Varney*, the latter in particular made a considerable sum plagiarizing Dickens’s plots under the pseudonym Bos (to parallel Dickens’s Boz) (v).
7. I describe the vampire as a male figure here because it was not until 1872 that Joseph Sheridan LeFanu broke with tradition in describing a female predator in his novella “*Carmilla*.”
8. Polidori is actually not the first English Gothic novelist to use the image of the vampire, although he is the first to devote a whole narrative to the monster. In Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1817), Victor describes his destructive creation as follows: “in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me” (Shelley 74). Also see Senf (17–26) for a discussion of some of the plausible historical sources for the vampire myth in Europe and the circumstances surrounding the belated entrance of the myth into English fiction.
9. Porter writes: “in an increasingly commercial society, people were forced to reflect upon the resonances between the active verb ‘consuming’ — an act of incorporation — and the intransitive ‘consuming’ or being ‘consumed’ — the condition of wasting” (Porter 70).
10. Gelder also observes that in *Varney* “vampirism is certainly connected to the accumulation of capital: he [Varney] hoards treasure, like Dracula, hiding it away. Mr Brooks [another character from the novel], however, is another, more mundane example — a moneylender” (21).
11. In *Jane Eyre*, for instance, Charlotte Brontë adds a depth to her realist narrative by having Jane describe Bertha Mason’s face to Rochester as that of “the foul German spectre — the Vampyre” (Ch. 25) in order to clarify the extent of the heroine’s fear (Senf 94).
12. Likewise, Miss Wade from Dickens’s *Little Dorrit* seems to have influenced later vampire fiction. “Parallels between *Carmilla* and sections of *Little Dorrit* seem to suggest that Miss Wade might have been a source for LeFanu’s vampire tale” (Lapinski 82).
13. Also see Poovey (“Speculation and Virtue” 52–55) and Cotsell (128–140) for a discussion of Meason’s essays and their influence on *Our Mutual Friend*.
14. Cotsell suggests that Meason based his character of Grass on the real Albert Gottheimer, “the projector of the Crédit Foncier, described in the *DNB* as ‘a pioneer of modern mammoth company promoting’” (qtd. in Cotsell 133). See Cotsell for another discussion of the connection between Dickens’s *Veneering* and Meason’s Mr. Grass.
15. It is worth noting here that Rymer, Evans, and, at the end of the century, Stoker, all employ what would have been read as anti-Semitic images in their vampire narratives. Rymer’s *Varney* possesses “dark, sombre eyes” and a hook nose (61); Evans’s “Count D —” has an “aquiline nose” and “burning dark eyes” (198); and Count Dracula resembles the Jew of anti-Semitic discourse in his “very marked physiognomy” of massive eyebrows with a very strong aquiline face with “peculiarly arched nostrils” (Stoker 28). In the second half of the nineteenth century, the most detailed characterization of the Jew as shorthand for diseased circulation can be found in Gothic literature, with its ongoing attempt to identify Mammon, among other social threats, as an “actual moving enemy.” Halberstam goes so far as to suggest that modern anti-Semitism is in itself “Gothic” “because, in its various forms — medical, political, psychological — it, too, unites and therefore produces the threats of capital and revolution, criminality and impotence, sexual power and gender ambiguity, money and mind, within an identifiable form, the body of the Jew” (Halberstam 95). For

instance, in the last nineteenth-century vampire narrative, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the monster is the incarnation of Slavic foreignness as well as an aggressive and mysterious investor in England's future; he both hoards ancient estates and "must be restricted precisely because he moves money so easily through many nations" (Gelder 16). Count Dracula, then, resembles the Jew of anti-Semitic discourse not only in his "very marked physiognomy" but in "his relation to money/gold, his parasitism, his degeneracy, his impermanence or lack of allegiance to a fatherland, and his femininity" (Halberstam 92). The Count, as the prototype of the wanderer, the 'stranger in a strange land,' also reflects the way that homelessness or restlessness was seen to undermine a nation" (98). In contrast, however, to this project of Gothic, economic denigration, Dickens portrays Mr. Riah in *Our Mutual Friend*, a Jewish clerk deliberately used as a front in Fledgeby's bill-brokering business, as one of the most selfless and economically disinterested characters in the novel. As a reply to the outpouring of criticism he received from the rather substantial middle-class Jewish community in London following his portrayal of Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, Dickens deliberately offered the rather soft and feminine character of Riah in *Our Mutual Friend* as an atonement (Heller 40).

16. Or as Scrooge's nephew proclaims in "A Christmas Carol": "Christmas . . . the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys" (7).
17. To some extent, Victorian novelists were at the center of the post-Romantic project of reflecting on death to illuminate the transitory nature of human existence. In studying the extensive catalogue of death scenes in Dickens's fiction, Garrett Stewart observes that the novelist "was doubly a man of his epoch: obsessed by death, [and] fascinated by its demands upon articulation." Dickens stretches the temporal obligations of language to address the "intraversable" severance of death and the self working free from time through a full array of rhetorical and stylistic particulars: assonance, alliteration, anaphora, ellipses, and "the subversions of paradox and ironic metaphor" (*Death Sentences* 56–57). Ironically, an entire industry, corresponding to the popularity of Dickens's captivating narratives, grew out of the worship of death's ineffable nature and the sentimentalized respect for what the novelist calls in *Little Dorrit* the "untraversable distance" (715; bk. 2, ch. 19) between this world and the next. If some Victorians were hoping to return to the pre-Enlightenment sense of death as ineffable but not necessarily formidable (in contrast to the modern avoidance and anxiety concerning death which Philippe Ariès describes), they explored this option, ironically, through the rubric of capital by seeking to trade in objects and products that could assist in an imaginative identification with an unknown passage. As Kucich observes: "the Victorians made the etiquette of mourning and burial into an elaborate catechism. They invented cemeteries, mourning stores, and burial clubs; they staged theatrical public funerals, often graced with mutes and glass hearses, that reached an apotheosis in that sublime grotesquerie, the Duke of Wellington's funeral, which brought a million and a half mourners from all over England to London" ("Death Worship" 59). Of course, the Victorian novel continued to be the principal front of this cathexis as writers learned to make instrumental use of the period's concern with death rights, ceremonies, graves, and burial. As we know, the most famous valorization of death in the period involved Nell's death in Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841). Kucich observes that the death of this angelic heroine in a serialized story, the popularity of which could only be approached by the death of Sydney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), sent much of literate England into mourning (59). As the widespread response to Nell's death seems to indicate, Dickens's readers perceived her demise as a "cultural symbol of loss." She became an invitation of "common mourning" to a community

- that recovered its identity as a community by a series of contacts with the “limitlessness of death” (69).
18. Dickens occasionally reprinted segments of *The Uncommerical Traveller* in his *All the Year Round*; the events described actually took place (and were first recorded) in the late 1840s.
 19. In his postscript to the novel, Dickens writes of the Staplehurst accident: “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” (894).
 20. At one point, Riderhood even tries to make a profit from his own near drowning, a transaction which I have referred to above. He exclaims to Headstone: “My private affairs is . . . to have the law of a busted B’low-Bridge steamer which drowned [sic] of me. I ain’t a goin’ to be drowned and not paid for it!” (613; bk. 3, ch. 11).
 21. See Sedgwick 3–14 for a close reading of how this scene of double drowning implies male rape.
 22. Dickens’s description of Wegg’s and Venus’s symbiotic probing/dissection of corpses and dust figures as the novelist’s shorthand symbol for the workings of a much larger economy. As Sedgwick writes: “one thing that goes on when the human body is taken as a capitalist emblem is that the relation of parts to wholes becomes problematic; there is no intelligible form of circulation; the parts swell up with accumulated value, they take on an autonomous life of their own and eventually power comes to be expressed as power over reified doubles fashioned in one’s own image from the waste of one’s own body” (“Homophobia” 253).
 23. Hutter discusses the importance of the figure of the resurrectionist in Dickens’s work. In constructing villains in his later novels, Dickens makes use of the fact that body snatchers, as a group, were “universally despised” in the nineteenth century as “even other criminals considered them of a lower order” (5). Dickens waited until 1859 to introduce explicitly a resurrectionist as a significant character in his fiction. Yet “Jerry Cruncher of *A Tale of Two Cities* has, of course, some Dickensian antecedents. Even Bill Sikes, who resembles Ben Crouch in a number of ways (appearance, strength, brutality, ‘filthy temper’), is apparently not above turning a body to profit” (6).
 24. Hogle points out that from its beginnings in Walpole, Lewis and Radcliffe the Gothic genre is grounded in a process of narrative “counterfeiting,” a historical displacement of the story’s supposed origins (often to a Catholic country in the Middle-Ages) in order to increase the text’s aesthetic appeal. Hogle suggests that “these ‘Gothics’ also show an awareness that such nostalgia is based on inauthentic signs of hollowed-out forms and is connected to motives of capital acquisition that mechanically reproduce the simulacra of the past to extend the boundaries of the present self’s quest for upward mobility” (“Ghosts of the Counterfeit” 25). In *Our Mutual Friend*, the Gothic’s turn to the simulacra of the past works at the domestic level, although the novel also makes reference to the more barbaric past of the father. Harmon will make over his father’s un-deadness to cast it off, to justify his taking possession of his inheritance and proper station.
 25. It is worthwhile to quote Poovey at length regarding the masculine desire to replace stocks with women: “To appreciate this urgency, it is necessary to place the developments of the 1850s and 1860s in the context of the historical relation between woman and figuration. As Catherine Gallagher has demonstrated, the figure of ‘woman’ in the early eighteenth century was conceptually positioned in relation to the construction or redefinition of a number of critical concepts, including ‘politics,’ ‘virtue,’ ‘the public,’ and ‘fiction.’ In a process I can only summarize here, ‘woman’ and the ‘the feminine’ were conceptually linked to the anxieties generated by the new market economy and to the symbolic solutions formulated to resolve these anxieties” (61). Poovey goes on to say: “And if moral difference (or virtue) was not guaranteed by the female body, then it was possible that there was no basis for virtue at all

- apart, that is, from men’s desire that virtue exist. This structure of wishful projection, of course, is exactly the same principle that informs speculation and makes it so volatile and so threatening. For, if nothing but (men’s) desire underwrites value, then there will be nothing outside of (men’s) desire to counteract the desirer’s darker impulses” (65–66).
26. In the description of Old Harmon’s restless spirit, Dickens may be turning back to a critique of avarice he presented much earlier in “A Christmas Carol.” In that short story, the ghost of the dead miser Marley explains why his spirit is doomed to patrol the earth: “‘It is required of every man . . . that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander the world — oh, woe is me! — and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!’” (19).
 27. I cannot resist the temptation of noting the correspondence here between the release of Old Harmon’s spirit and the end of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. When the “Crew of Light” executes the un-dead Count at the end of that novel a “look of peace” comes into his face such as never could have been imagined (Stoker 484). Evidently, the true death of the vampire allows the soul of its victim to escape the purgatorial prison of the un-dead’s body. I would add that the specter of dirty, hoarded money can also be found in Stoker’s story. Jonathan Harker observes in Castle Dracula, great heaps of ancient gold “covered with a film of dust, as though it had lain long in the ground” (66). In turn, the “Crew of Light” will later employ Lord Arthur Godalming’s money, in a process of healthy circulation, to defeat Dracula. As Mina Harker remarks as they are closing in on the Count: “I felt so thankful that Lord Godalming is rich, and that both he and Mr. Morris, who also has plenty of money, are willing to spend it so freely” (457).
 28. As Welsh writes in another context: “Marriage itself is an attempt, of varying success, to impose an ending on life; the institution is designed to withdraw the individual from a large circle to a small, and to make him [the husband] . . . dead to sexual competition. By marriage he moves from the present generation to the past: if he is willing to take this step, he implicitly concedes his eventual death. The marriage ceremony acknowledge as much in the exchange of vows to be true until death” (*The City of Dickens* 221).
 29. Dickens’s reversal of speculation in the novel foreshadows Stoker’s thematic exorcism of the vampire in *Dracula*; as Van Helsing says: “But his [Dracula’s] child-mind only saw so far; and it may be that, as ever in God’s Providence, the very thing that the evil doer most reckoned on for his selfish good, turns out to be his chiefest harm” (Stoker 440–41).

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