

DARKNESS AND DEATH AS REPRESENTED BY POLLUTION IN CHARLES
DICKENS'S *OUR MUTUAL FRIEND*

by

Julia Sloan

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts
with a Major in Literature
May 2018

Committee Members:

Kathryn Ledbetter, Chair

Susan Morrison

Katie Kapurch

FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

Fair Use

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

Duplication Permission

As the copyright holder of the work, I, Julia Sloan, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

COPYRIGHT

by

Julia Sloan

2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my mom for her support and love throughout my academic career.

I would like thank Dr. Kathryn Ledbetter, whose Victorian novels class introduced me to Charles Dickens. Her continued support of my growing love for Dickens and her extreme patience with my growth as a writer has taught me valuable lessons in who I am as a writer and has helped me find my voice as an academic writer and a scholar. Her knowledge of research and Victorian periodicals inspired this thesis.

Thank you to all my wonderful friends for your continued support of me both in my life and through writing this thesis. Thank you for putting up with all the successes and (the many, many) bumps in the road as I completed this thesis. A special thanks to: Thais, Karthika, Ashlinn, Kara and Aaron, Yvonne, Abby, Blake, Joshua, Melanie, Jessi, and Levi.

Thank you to Dr. Susan Morrison. Your study of waste and fecal matter amazed me in undergrad and inspired in graduate school. You showed me that there is truly is no limit to what you can research. I am thankful for the vibrancy you have for your own research, as it inspired me to write this thesis.

Thank you, Dr. Kapurch for agreeing to be on my committee. Your research on girl theory helped me look at Lizzie Hexam through a critical lens.

A special thanks to Yodi Swink for providing cuddles and company on my latest nights and longest days.

And most of all, thank you reader, for your interest in this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. WATER AND FOG.....	6
3. DUST	24
4. REJECTION OF WASTE—LIZZIE HEXAM	41
5. CONCLUSION.....	57
WORKS CITED	60

1. INTRODUCTION

Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) takes place in heavily polluted Victorian London that affected the characters of the novel, as well as the entire population of London. Dickens depicts pollution as a dark force that represents the negative relationship between Victorians and the dirty city. Dust, fog, and water become contaminating forces for his characters, as well as a message to readers about the need for cleanliness in London. As a Londoner, Dickens experienced first-hand the ooze and waste that slicked the streets and dirtied the water. The city's dirt affected all classes, making pollution a universal issue, and the novel draws attention to the city's filth. By depicting characters with sour, negative attitudes, and the dark, ominous weather parallels their dark personalities. This thesis explores the connection in *Our Mutual Friend* between its characters' proximity to London's environmental pollution and their problematically dark personalities, and demonstrates the lack of cleanliness signifies darkness and death.

Viewing *Our Mutual Friend* through an eco-critical lens explains the motif of pollution as darkness. Because pollution played a large role in the late 1860s, death was commonly caused by dirt and filth. Waste, bodies, and sewage were dumped into the Thames River, which contaminated the water, which was then used for drinking, washing, and bathing. The result was a population at risk from diseases such as cholera. The most common way pollution appears in the novel is through death, associated with the river. Articles in Victorian periodicals often indicate that the Victorians were fearful of the dirt that surrounded them because of the frequency of death caused by disease from pollution. Susan Morrison discusses the need for cleanliness and the rejection of dirt in

her study of waste, and Mary Douglas defines dirt as “matter out of place.” (35). Characters in *Our Mutual Friend* who are associated with uncleanness become displaced in the novel and lose control over bodies and become vile and filthy. Viewing pollution as a central theme in *Our Mutual Friend* reveals that characters who interact with filth on a daily basis and come in contact with dirt and waste end up suffering a loss of identity or a disruption of their body’s integrity. Mr. Boffin’s interaction with dust places his body at the center of economics, as discussed in Claire Wood’s *Dickens and the Business of Death*, as well as Catherine Gallagher’s *The Body Economic*. Gallagher’s description of bodies as commodities can be applied to Mr. Boffin’s character. She connects “the toil of the body [as useful] commodities” (89). Mr. Boffin’s body is at the center of economics dealing with dust. Wood uses describes “bodily remains in *Our Mutual Friend* become the key, revivifying commodities” (134). This can be applied to Gaffer because he uses bodily possessions as a commodity. By looking at the ways in which bodies, death, and waste are aligned, the role of pollution as a dark entity becomes significant in the novel *Our Mutual Friend*.

This thesis focuses mainly on *Our Mutual Friend* because the plot is steeped in pollution more than any other Dickens work. A large part of Dickens’s life was dedicated to writing, editing, and reading periodicals, and I will use Victorian periodicals as a tool to integrate perspectives about pollution that validate the relevance of pollution in the novel. Periodicals published during the time of the novel (1860-1865) and its serialization (1864-1865) serve as testimonials about the sewage issues and daily concerns about pollution. Published alongside Dickens’s novels, the periodicals

demonstrate Victorian reader concerns that Dickens engages in his novels, and contributes descriptions of Victorian daily life in the polluted city of Victorian London.

My first chapter focuses on the Thames as an ambiguous entity. The water of the Thames was murky and unclear, allowing characters who are submerged, when unconscious, to take on the same murky quality. For instance, John Harmon's true identity becomes unclear as he appears as three separate identities: John Harmon, Julius Handford, and John Rokesmith. This is due to his near-death experience in the Thames. Rokesmith is haunted by his true self, John Harmon, as he fights to stay undiscovered. By being both alive and dead, John Harmon's lack of identity makes him a living ghost. Other characters who are found unconscious in the Thames are also affected by the polluted water. Eugene Wrayburn, whose attraction to Lizzie draws him to the river, are all affected. Lizzie Hexam's father, Gaffer Hexam, is both in proximity to the Thames and makes a living from the river. His close relationship with the river dirties him physically, through his ragged appearance, and contaminates him mentally, as he finds justification for his making living by exploiting death. Although Gaffer's reason for exploiting the dead is so he can provide for his family, he is ultimately punished through his death for doing so. Gaffer's unforeseen and unexplainable death on the river is this punishment. A part of the first chapter will also focus on fog. The fog of London acts as an extension of the Thames and also operates as an ambiguous space. In the same way that the water lacks clarity, spaces surrounded by fog also lack clarity. With the pollution of London, the fog is darker, making what is visible even less so. Dickens uses the fog as a way to demonstrate not only the lack of cleanliness of the city, but to demonstrate darkness. For example, when Gaffer is first introduced, he appears in fog and is hard to

distinguish. This suggests that Gaffer's character and his actions are lack clarity. With the mention of the fog, the scene becomes creepy.

My second chapter focuses on dust because dust is also a representation of pollution in the novel. Dust refers to the lack of cleanliness, making dust an entity of darkness. In the same way that gold is sought after, the dust mounds in *Our Mutual Friend* are of high value to Mr. Boffin, who is able to capitalize on the relationship between dust and greed to create a diversionary plot to drive Bella and John Harmon toward a romantic conclusion. Here Mr. Boffin becomes the Golden Dustman, whose sole interest is evidently the gain of wealth and status, and his performance so thoroughly disgusts Bella and John that he is successful in his attempt to bring them together. The event demonstrates the power of dirt in Victorian consciousness.

My third chapter will focus on the cleanliness of Lizzie Hexam *Our Mutual Friend*. As a main character in the novel, Lizzie lives close to the polluted river. Despite this, she is a symbol of cleanliness. She has no signs of dark behavior such as greed or wickedness. Her rejection of her father's behavior and her ability to overcome the pollution of the Thames to save Wrayburn demonstrate this cleanliness. Lizzie was also born on the river, which classifies Lizzie as waste. Despite this, Lizzie is a valuable character, whose important identity with the river also defines her labor Her ability to pull the heavy oars shows her strength, as does her ability to fear her father's exploitation of death. This fear shows Lizzie's rejection to death and impurity as she recognizes her father's actions as evil and cheating. Because of these qualities, Lizzie is able to defy the effects of pollution in the Thames. When Lizzie saves the beaten Eugene Wrayburn, he is cleansed and his identity is restored. Lizzie attracts Eugene Wrayburn and through his

feelings for her, he is ultimately uplifted from away from his confusion and greed, in the same way that he is uplifted from the water when Lizzie rescues him.

Drawing attention to the waste that exists in Dickens's novels helps to understand the role of waste in literature and society. Pollution becomes more than a part of London, but instead transforms into a catalyst for defining the way waste society relates to waste and filth. Understanding both the literature and the "litter-ature", as expressed by Morrison, offers a new reading of Dickens's novels (Morrison 151).

2. WATER AND FOG

Pollution was a prevalent issue in Victorian London, especially after the Great Stink in 1858, which made pollution a major topic of discussion as the Thames became a dumping ground for raw sewage in water used for drinking, cleaning, and bathing. Water collected in water-butts for the household would sit out and rot, causing diseases like cholera to spread. In Charles Dickens's novel *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) the polluted river and the permeating London fog create obscurity. The contamination leads characters such as John Harmon and Gaffer Hexam to lose their identities.

Mary Douglas discusses Havik Brahmin's pollution rules as three degrees of religious purity: "the highest necessary for performing an act of worship; a middle degree is the expected normal condition; and finally, there is a state of impurity...contact with anyone in an impure state will make either higher categories impure..." (qtd in Douglas 40). The pollution of the Thames categorizes the Thames as impure. The author of an article published in Dickens's periodical *All the Year Round* (15 April 1865) describes the Thames as having a stench with odors that "might indicate, blindfold, the whole topography of the Surrey bank of the Thames opposite London" ("Through Lambeth to Vauxhall" 272). The author reflects public disgust with the pollution problem and adds to the message about pollution from the periodical's editor, Dickens. Pollution and impurity of the river also have a negative effect on the characters in *Our Mutual Friend*. Dickens uses the lack of cleanliness as a way to demonstrate pollution as darkness through death through John Harmon's ability to change identities with ease after nearly drowning in the Thames, and Gaffer Hexam's exploitation of the dead, which leads to his death. The polluted water of the river make both of these possible.

Pamela Gilbert uses medical mapping to draw conclusions between the polluted Thames, the body, and *Our Mutual Friend*. Gilbert notes: “In *Our Mutual Friend*...people no longer catch illness directly from other infected human bodies, but instead from the sick city itself” (81). Each time pollution is discussed, it carries a negative connotation, demonstrating London to be a sick city; on the first page of the novel, the boat is “allied to the bottom of the river rather than the surface, by reason of the slime and ooze with which it was covered...” (Dickens 13). Lizzie’s “look...of dread or horror” combines with the slime and ooze to signify the river as a bad omen. The tide is described as “running down,” indicating that the Thames banks are now visibly revealing even more slime and ooze as it goes down with the tide (13). According to the author of “The Thames Embankment,” published in *Once a Week* (21 May 1864), the mud transforms the bank “at low-water, into a fetid mudbank of thousands of acres in extent, which under the influence of the summer sun, gives out exhalations of the most unhealthy character” (611). In the first scene of the novel, the pollution and negative connotations of the river water as death are tangible and seemingly inescapable.

Dickens begins *Our Mutual Friend* in shadowy terms to define the river as an ambiguous entity. The first chapter begins with a creepy abnormality as “...a boat of dirty and disreputable appearance with two figures on it, floated on the Thames...as an autumn evening was closing in” (Dickens 13). Starting the novel in such dark terms sets its tone as ominous and foreboding. The lack of names and faces focuses on the undefined. Not only are the actions of the characters themselves shrouded in shadow, but their identities are unclear. Dickens captures the obscurity of the river, defining the river as a dark entity through the use of language.

London's filth and widespread stench meant pollution was inescapable, as described by Michelle Allen:

What the Thames looked like, how it was visually perceived, was a significant social question, not least because of its geographical and symbolic centrality to the city. The river served as a stage on which the identity and aspirations of the metropolis were contested. But the meanings of the river were shaped equally by physical alterations, cultural representations, and human behavior. This last was perhaps the feature of the river most difficult to control. (55)

It proved difficult to regulate the cleanliness of the river because the pollution was city-wide. The people of London used the dirty water of the Thames, contaminated it further, and then dumped it back into the already murky Thames. It was nearly impossible to control how people treated the river. Themes of darkness and death are prevalent in Dickens and reflects the Victorian concerns about impurities, as indicated in an article claiming that water is "dirt, dust, and animalculae...the water is foul and the companies are blamed [and] domestic reservoirs are not only an evil but an unnecessary expense... [that involve] new impurities..." ("The Troubled Water Question" 51). The need for cleanliness is further emphasized in "Something Strong in the Water," published in *All the Year Round* (24 February 1866); here the author proclaims that "water is the mother of the world and the blood of nature" (157). This connection between nature and water and God suggests that water should be pure and associates it with the effects of holy water:

It drives the demon out of water...it also drives him out of fire—his own element! It expels him from the air, from the human body. ‘It prevents plagues and epidemics, destroys noxious insects, and cures the vine-disease. It remits venial sin; It remits the temporal punishments due to sins...it preserves health; it cures fevers; it cures dysentery. (157)

To be impure or filthy is to be away from God, and therefore, unholy. Cohen and Johnson contend that “foreignness must be equally cast as dirty because it brings alien cultures and customs that challenge the myth of a single system of social equality” (54). In a sense, the Thames did become foreign; the river’s polluted water challenged Londoners to find a solution to restore the river to cleanliness. This foreign water was detrimental to society, as it led to the spread of cholera on Kent Street, where cholera was found to be sourced from the water-butts that held the water used for household washing, and drinking. As noted by the author of “A Peep at the Water-Butts of Kent Street,” published in the *Ragged School Union Magazine* in 1866, “bad water and cholera stand related as father and son,” indicating the special relationship of humans with water as a life-giving source (229). However, the water was incredibly polluted because it came from the neglected Thames:

[The buckets] are never cleansed, so that layers of mud, stones, and vegetable matter, are found at the bottom, if that can be seen, which is a rarity almost unknown to the ‘older inhabitant’...A rank green scum—consisting of vegetable germs of the lowest type—floats on the surface, mingled with rainbow-hued gases, the product mainly of animal exhalations. It is common to let the water stand in pails until the foul

sediment falls to the bottom. The smell of the water is hot weather forcibly reminds one of the seventy mal-odours described by Coleridge as palpable to the senses at Cologne...No wonder, then, that the poor become subject to a species of hydrophobia, for they say that the very sight of this disgusting fluid 'turns their stomachs.' (230)

The article emphasizes that water-butts needed to be meticulously clean, for "cleanliness is close to godliness" (230). The impurity of the water aligns it with darkness in the form of disease and death. The water that was collected from the river would simply sit out and rot, which would then gather bacteria and other fetid germs and cause cholera. Just as Dickens describes the boat in the first chapter of *Our Mutual Friend* as being "allied to the bottom" (Dickens 13), the "layers of mud, stone, and vegetable matter are found at the bottom" ("A Peep at the Water-Butts of Kent Street" 230). In both cases, the waste settled in the water and caused the water to be impure. Michelle Allen writes that "the Victorian public [recognized] a dirty environment, especially foul odors of disease. Where there was smell, there was death" (59). Therefore, it was common knowledge that these dirty and smelly environments discussed in *Our Mutual Friend* were seen as a bad omen. The presence of waste and dirt in the water led to death and illness, both which are associated with darkness.

London's pollution infected the air, causing thick fog that was difficult to maneuver. Therefore, the fog is another representation of obscurity in *Our Mutual Friend*. Like the Thames, fog distorts appearance and, depending on the thickness, can obliterate any sight. "London Fogs," published in *The Leisure Hour* (4 November 1865), describes the fog as "always accompanied with an intense gloom, have generally peculiar odour

attaching to them. This odour cannot be satisfactorily explained if we suppose that it arises solely from the intermixture of vapour and smoke” (695). The author indicates that a depressive, emotional response accompanies the fog, as well as the odors accompanying it. “Old Westminster Bridge,” published in *Reynolds’s Miscellany* (12 December 1863), also reports “that the bridge, the river, and the city were steeped in one damp, dense fog. The oil lamps showered red and dim in the thick air” (385). In the article, “Sea-Dust” published in *Chambers’s Journal* (11 June 1864), fog is described as heavy and hard to see through:

...ships at a distance of many hundreds of miles from any land, have been met by heavy showers of fine dry dust; and by thick yellow fogs, not unlike London November fogs, except that they are free from suffocating smell, which turn out to be nothing more than this finely-divided powder, suspended in air, and waiting for a favorable opportunity to descent...Sometimes the fall is so heavy as to cover the sails and decks of vessels, and to give the sea an appearance similar to that presented by a pond adjacent to a dusty road (369).

This article explains how thick and heavy the fog could be, not only from the pollution of London and its smelliness, but from the dust in the air, as well. According to “Fog-Signals” published in *Chambers’s Journal* (24 October 1863), the fog was so thick that boats and ships on the Thames had to use signals to communicate with one another to avoid accidental crashes because they remained invisible in such a heavy fog. Proposed fog signals included a bell, a large gong, and a hydrophone. The author comments that “fog is a powerful damper of sound, because it is a mixture of air and water,” indicating

the density of darkness that fog produces (272). The thickness describes the way Gaffer is concealed at the start of *Our Mutual Friend*. When Riderhood first sees and names Gaffer, he first looks at him with a “squinting leer” because he cannot see through the heavy fog (Dickens 15). The fog because a daunting force that amounts to a separate entity, of not only pollution, but of darkness and obscurity.

The foggy weather plays a role on the night that John Harmon nearly drowns. In the same way that the weather compromises visibility, John Harmon’s own memories of the night are also compromised, as he struggles to recall the events of his accident:

The night was particularly dark and it rained hard. As I think the circumstances back, I hear the rain splashing on the stone pavement of the passage, which was not under cover. The room overlooked the river, or a dock, or a creek, and the tide was out. Being possessed of the time down to that point, I know by the hour that it must have been about low water; but while the coffee was getting ready, I drew back the curtain (a dark-brown curtain), and, looking out, knew by the kind of reflection below of the few neighboring lights, that they were reflected in tidal mud. (Dickens 362)

Playing the main role in John Harmon’s near-death, the Thames operates as a vague entity. In this particular scene, John Harmon is not sure what he is seeing, if it is the “river, or a dock, or a creek” and the shining mud, a clear example of the contaminated water, adds to filth to the scene (362). Even the cabin where John Harmon stays is polluted; the dark brown color of its curtains mimic the color of excrement. The parallels to waste inform the dark events that will follow.

Like the fog, heavy rain compromises visibility, and it leads to mistaken identities with John Harmon. The darkness, the fog and rain, and the polluted water all cloak the scene in shadows, making it impossible to rely on a second-hand account of what happened that night, and complicate any determination of the true events of the night. Even the narrator of the scene, John Harmon, is unsure. The creation of this obscurity is central to the novel, as John Harmon's identity becomes as muddled as the polluted river water. The obscure nature of both the water and weather on the night of his "murder" allows John to appear as "murky," indicating his future dissolution into multiple identities throughout the course of *Our Mutual Friend*.

The pollution of the Thames dirties John Harmon, forcing him to be displaced after exiting the river. Thus John Harmon takes on Mary Douglas's definition of dirt as "matter out of place," as he is assumed dead, yet remains alive (35). This displacement of John Harmon gives him the ability to shift identities; John Harmon becomes both Julius Handford and John Rokesmith. His multiple identities demonstrate the uncertainty indicated in the murky scene of his exiting the Thames. The ambiguity will continue to define his identity until he rightfully claims himself as John Harmon at the end of the novel.

Susan Morrison's *The Literature of Waste* discusses hybrids as "anything that does not cohere completely to its class—if it is mixed or tainted—is perceived as dirt (matter out of place). Like that which cannot be named, hybrids do not belong to a single codifiable and recognizable category" (25). John Harmon's ability to be simultaneously alive and dead makes him a hybrid and therefore "not cohering completely to [his] class" (25). On one hand, John Harmon is John Rokesmith, working for the Boffins and falling

in love with Bella. On the other hand, John Harmon is allegedly dead, while constantly haunting his current identity. John Harmon's struggle within himself further solidifies John Harmon's experience between life and death. His lack of definition, by being neither alive nor dead, and neither John Harmon nor Rokesmith, identifies John Harmon as matter out of place, and impure. His fear of being defined, especially by name, is tangible throughout the novel. When John Harmon's name is mentioned by Mrs. Boffin, Rokesmith "suddenly looked behind him, and around him, and then up at her, with a face so pale..." (Dickens 116). John Harmon's search for the ghost of himself indicates that his true self did not simply die, but continues to follow him around. In other terms, John Harmon is a living ghost, caught between the living and the dead, classifying him as a hybrid. Rokesmith then goes on to tell Mrs. Boffin that "it sounded like an omen, that you should speak of showing the Dead to one so young and blooming" (Dickens 116). This worry about speaking of the dead demonstrates Rokesmith's worry about conjuring up his true identity as John Harmon by the way of speech. By staying an unnamed hybrid, preventing his true name from being uttered, John Harmon is able to control his identity as Rokesmith.

Apart from the Boffins, John Harmon is not recognized by the other characters of the novel. Michal Ginsburg's use of anagnorisis (the recognition of a person, usually of one's kin), provides a context for ways that John Harmon is able to keep his identity hidden. Ginsburg describes anagnorisis as something that happens after "the person's long absence from family and home" (76). He explains:

The returning person has changed so much (because of the passage of time but often also because of the particular experience undergone during that

time) that he or she does no resemble himself or herself, is precisely unrecognizable. This is why the returning person, by the very act of returning, makes a claim, a claim to his or her identity: 'I am so and so.'

(76)

John Rokesmith makes no claim to his identity. When John Harmon returns as John Rokesmith to work for Mr. Boffin as his secretary, he is introduced by Mrs. Boffin and does not name or introduce himself as Mr. Rokesmith. When he appears in front of Wegg in "In Which a Friendly Move is Originated," Wegg asks "Is it Mr. Rokesmith?" and Rokesmith replies "It is Mr. Rokesmith" (Dickens 302). In this case, John Harmon is simply agreeing with Wegg, rather than identifying himself as Mr. Rokesmith. When Rokesmith is alone in the drawing room with Bella, he is referred to as "The Secretary," and he does not name himself as Mr. Rokesmith. Instead, it is Bella who calls him by that name. The lack of John naming himself ties into the theme of anagnorisis; refusing to name himself allows John Harmon's true identity to stay ambiguous and anonymous.

Rokesmith worries that he will be unable to hide his true identity as John Harmon. As John Harmon recounts his time in the Thames, his own identity is unclear to him. In the same way that the river water is murky and unclear, John Harmon's drugged thoughts are unclear. John Harmon loses touch with himself while in the river, only remembering himself through an out-of-body experience. From that point on, John Harmon's struggle with his identity is apparent, appearing both as Julius Handford and John Rokesmith. As Rokesmith, he must keep his identity as John Harmon hidden and controlled. This need for containment is outlined by Pamela Gilbert as she notes that "what goes into the river comes back out and is incorporated into the city's bodies...In London, loss of identity

also means objection, the grotesque loss of the body's integrity" (Gilbert 96). John Harmon remembers that "I cannot possibly express it to myself without using the word I. But it was not I. There was no such thing as I, within my knowledge" (Dickens 363). He goes on to express his loss of self, saying: "I could not have said that my name was John Harmon—I could not have thought it—I didn't know it..." (Dickens 363). It is clear that, at this point in the novel, John Harmon has lost his identity, and therefore his "body's integrity" is lost (Gilbert 96). The same murkiness that contaminates the Thames is now incorporated into John Harmon.

John Harmon's loss of bodily integrity allows for his true identity to slowly seep through as John Rokesmith. His inability to control identity transforms John Harmon into a man who is, quite literally, a leaking identity. Pamela Gilbert discusses the importance of maintaining a clean identity:

The body and its continence, which modeled the boundaries of the middle class independent self, could be preserved through careful policing of abject and the closure of the boundaries of the body through which contaminated or contaminating fluids should neither enter nor escape. (79)

The incontinence of Harmon's own body opens up Harmon to contamination, and the fear of this contamination invites the fear of his true self contaminating his new self. In this new self, Harmon is able to observe life without the burden of his old self; he is able to begin an unpolluted relationship with Bella, remove the dust piles from his life, and pass them on to the Boffins. In every sense, John Harmon is cleansed. However, the inability to control his true identity and keep it from bursting forth keeps Harmon in a state of leakage.

Although he tries to avoid it, John Harmon's true identity seeps into Rokesmith's identity. Although Rokesmith marries Bella and has a son, his true identity of John Harmon continues to seep through. Rokesmith has an uncontrollable desire to be clean and to be free of his leaking self in order to love Bella whole-heartedly. This desire effects Rokesmith towards the end of the novel, as he contemplates revealing his true identity. As Rokesmith sleeps, John Harmon seeps through his dream, and he begins to realize he cannot continue on as Rokesmith. As Bella "[watches his brow], she saw a gathering and deepening anxiety there, which caused her great disquiet. More than once, she awoke him muttering in his sleep; and though he muttered nothing worse than her own name, it was plain to her that his restlessness originated in some load of care" (Dickens 736). In order for him to gain back his true integrity, John Harmon is forced to define himself by his proper identity. Following Michal Ginsburg's description of anagnorisis, it is Mrs. Boffin who names John Harmon:

...if ever John Harmon drew the breath of life on earth, that is certainly John Harmon's arm round your waist now, my pretty. If ever John Harmon had a wife on earth, that wife is certainly you. If ever John Harmon and his wife had a child on earth, that child is certainly this. (750)

This anagnorisis relieves John Harmon from his need for multiple identities, but also restores his one single identity. Through naming John Harmon, Mrs. Boffin cleanses John Harmon from ambiguity and restores his bodily integrity.

The polluted Thames River signifies darkness in *Our Mutual Friend*. The contaminated water caused sickness and disease, both of which were associated with death. Through the character of Gaffer Hexam, the theme of death is criticized as Gaffer

must make a living from the corpses he scavenges. To Gaffer, these corpses are only worth as much as the possessions on their body; the corpse's bodily remains become to key to the Hexam's overall well-being. However, Gaffer will exploit death through his own death, becoming one with the unidentifiable corpses that made his living.

The tie between the obscurity of the river and Gaffer Hexam also demonstrates Dickens's use of pollution as a signifier of the darkness in impurity. At first glance, Gaffer appears as "half savage ...with his brown arms bare...with such dress as he wore seeming to be made out of the mud that begrimed his boat..." (13). Gaffer is covered in dirt, which categorizes him as impure. Gaffer is defined by how he makes his living first, not by his character. The language on the page forces us to guess, as if the narrator is unsure of Gaffer's identity. Gaffer is described as:

[having] no net, hook, or line, and he could not be fisherman; his boat had no cushion for a sitter, no paint, no inscription, no appliance beyond a rusty boathook and a coil of rope, and he could not be a waterman; his boat was too crazy and small to take in cargo for delivery, he could not be a lighter-man or river-carrier, there was no clue to what he looked for... (13).

In this particular scene, how Gaffer makes a living on the river remains unclear, making Gaffer appear more abnormal and creepy. By first describing Gaffer's obscure career instead of his name, his character becomes defined by his living. The description of Gaffer's vague identity and his placement on the polluted water of the Thames indicates his filthy, impure behavior.

The dead contaminate the Thames and contribute to murky appearance. Each body that Gaffer recovers from the river maintains its bodily integrity. As noted by Wood, “none of these deaths, from drowning (four times), infection (once), exposure (once) and alcoholism (once), sever the body. In this text, it is the living who are vulnerable to being parted” (144). When Gaffer refuses to work with his partner, he threatens to “chop you over the fingers with the stretcher, or take a pick at your head with the boathook,” thus threatening to fragment Riderhood’s body (Dickens 16). This exposes Riderhood to the “vulnerability of the living to being parted” (Wood 144). However, the bodies that Gaffer scavenges from the Thames are not fragmented: John Harmon, Eugene Wrayburn, and Rogue Riderhood all emerge in one piece. Even the bodies that are unidentified, the “sailor, with two anchors and a flag and G.F.T. on his arm” and the “young woman in gray boots” both appear to be whole (Dickens 31).

The dead, then, are fragmented materialistically rather than physically, as described by Wood, who observes that “bodily remains in *Our Mutual Friend* become the key, revivifying commodities” (134). The bodies themselves hold value (as seen with Mr. Venus’s taxidermy shop), because Gaffer uses them for material gain. The money that Gaffer finds in the river is a material item as well as an article of death, as explained by Wood: “[a] type of dead property is not dead in the sense of being in stasis...[these articles] become an object of remembrance that also remembers, invisibly marked by traces of the bodies, and memories of the places, it has met with.” (123) According to Wood, these items hold traces of the body, and Gaffer’s theft of these traces is a successful attempt to transform fragments of the dead into payment for his labors.

The money Gaffer steals ominously foretells the articles of death that accompany the last fragments of Gaffer's dead body. When Gaffer dies, his boat is found first, emphasizing the materials he owns, rather than his body. Lightwood and Wrayburn find his boat "empty....adrift...with one scull gone...with t'other scull jammed in the throwels and broke short off" (171). Gaffer's appearance in rags identifies him as filthy; Wood further suggests that "the ragged edges of Gaffer's clothes are used to punish him, mortifying the flesh. His mortality is contrasted with the personified vitality of the wind" (Wood 154). Gaffer is punished through his death; however, the cause of his death is only hypothesized by Lightwood, for there is no clear indication of how he dies. Gaffer is obviously not fragmented when he dies, and he is still recognizable as a male, since Lightwood can "still call[s] it *him*" (Dickens 177). All that is left of the life of Gaffer is found, Lightwood finds silver coins in Gaffer's "tightly clenched right hand," and not in his pocket (Dickens 177).

Dead bodies frequently polluted the Thames, because proper burial was complicated by overcrowding, as Lee Jackson explains: "London's overcrowded churchyards (and the older, small commercial grounds) were not only seen as posing a logistical challenge...Sanitarians, quite mistakenly, believed that the stench from poorly interred decaying bodies was poisoning the metropolis" (106). The overabundance of unburied corpses caused many to dump dead them in the Thames. Allen adds that "the river also provided a more permanent resting place for the suicides who leapt to their deaths from the Waterloo Bridge" (60). Dickens points to this burial problem in *Our Mutual Friend*, as well as *Bleak House*, where Nemo's body is described as being simply dumped in a shallow churchyard grave on top of other bodies in unconsecrated.

Gaffer's interaction with corpses signifies pollution as a dark omen because he is working with unconsecrated (impure) bodies. Cohen and Johnson discuss the "dying, dead, and rotting bodies" and suggest that "a direct encounter with them is almost always polluting" (xii). Douglas also discusses interacting with corpses and concludes that "contact with corpses, blood, or spittle may be held to transmit danger" (13). Gaffer not only pulls out bodies from the river, but he makes a living from them by robbing them. To him, they are profit, as he states: "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?" (Dickens 16). Wood explains that "Gaffer is attempting to formalize the distinction between an individual's mortal 'leaving' and the property that he or she leaves behind. For Hexam, the distinction between the material world of the living and the numinous world of the dead is fixed and inviolable..." (137-8). To Gaffer, once a person leaves this world, he is no longer a part of it and this distinction justifies his treatment of the dead.

The corpse that Gaffer pulls from the water is never described, adding to the obscurity of the dead bodies in the novel. A constant problem of identifying corpses is observed by the author of "A Day with the Coroner" (*Once a Week*, 6 June 1863):

The importance of being able to thoroughly to identify the features of the dead is of the last consequence...It will be remembered that a body was found floating in the Thames, which the police suggested might be the body of the supposed murderer of the poor girl who was stabbed in George's Street...The features, however, from long immersion in the

water, were so swollen and disfigured, as to be absolutely unrecognizable.

(664)

This particular article points to the difficulties of identification of a corpse after long immersion in the water. By stealing from these corpses, Gaffer makes identification even more difficult. He later becomes unidentifiable also, when his dead body is described as “stretched upon the shore, with a new blast storming through it and clotting the wet hair with hailstones” (Dickens 175). Gaffer becomes one of the bodies he used to exploit, and, like Nemo of *Bleak House*, his body is on unconsecrated ground, the filthy river.

Although the money that Gaffer collects from the corpses provides for his family, Gaffer’s interaction with them is dirty and impure and therefore needs to be condemned.

Gaffer’s interaction with the dead defines him as a sort of coroner, but instead of caring for the corpses, he exploits them. The author of “A Day with the Coroner” refers to the coroner as “a modern Charon, whose pass is required ere a company of corpses, some days more, some days less, can find quiet burial” (“A Day with the Coroner” 664). Like Charon, Gaffer sails on the polluted Thames, but instead of ferrying souls, he is in search of corpses to scavenge. Not only is Gaffer dealing with the discarded and therefore unconsecrated dead (the cursed), but he is making a living from it, and The Thames is his underground. According to Cohen and Johnson, we have a certain fascination for what is found underground:

...the underground fascinates not merely because it contains all that is forbidden, but because it contains it as an unimaginably rich, albeit inchoate and intoxicating, brew of other times, places, and modes of being

in the world, and because that brew intimates the fragility of the unity
claimed by the world above. (56)

The corpses found underwater fit this description of the underground. Although the body does hold value and can be used to gain wealth, the interaction with corpses is impure. Gaffer uses the money he scavenges to provide for his family, but the bodies themselves, existing in this underground state, are still forbidden.

Throughout *Our Mutual Friend*, instances where evil and ambiguity are stated, pollution tends to be apparent. Havik Brahmin's pollution rules, as three degrees of religious purity define the Thames's overall character: "contact with anyone in an impure state will make either higher categories impure..." (Qtd in Douglas 40). Contact with the river causes darkness. This effects John Harmon, who both emerges from the Thames with his identity compromised. In Gaffer's sense, he is punished for his exploitation of death. The connection between pollution, evil, and ambiguity not only brings awareness to the negative effect on the characters of the novel, but the negative effect of pollution on Londoners who read the novel. As Charles Dickens's last completed and published work, *Our Mutual Friend* acts as a motivator for a cleaner London Thames. Drawing the conclusion between pollution and its operation as a dark entity offers a new reading of the novel. The characters' interaction with darkness, wickedness, and death help to identify the role pollution has in each of Dickens's novels.

3. DUST

Dust polluted Victorian society, and the negative connotation related with dust defines it as an unwelcome and impure substance. Articles in Victorian periodicals discuss the consequences of dust and ways to rid it from society. According to “Dust Ho!” published in *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* (1 January 1861), “nobody likes dust. It seems to be a powdered Cain, driven by brooms, brushes, and breezes, from cranny to cranny and from corner to corner; resting long nowhere, and leading a nomadic gipsy-like existence” (160). Describing dust as a “powdered Cain” associates dust with darkness and wickedness. Tim Edensor explains that “there is a place for everything and everything in its place” (312). Without a proper place in society, dust fits Mary Douglas’s definition of dirt as “matter out of place” (35). Its existence polluted society and caused disease and death, categorizing dust as a representation of darkness. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Mr. Boffin allows the inheritance of Old Harmon’s dust mounds to seemingly darken his identity. He uses dust as a performance of greed to influence Bella’s opinion of wealth.

At the start of the novel, Mr. Boffin is a “clean” man. He describes his organized house to Wegg as, “Mrs. Boffin...keep[ing] up her part of the room, in her way; I keep up my part of the room in mine” (Dickens 63). It is clear that everything has a place: “A flowery carpet on the floor, but instead of reaching to the fireside, its glowing vegetation stopped short at Mrs. Boffin’s footstool, and gave place to a region of sand and sawdust...there were, in the territory, where the vegetation ceased...” (63). The specific placement of items in Mr. Boffin’s house demonstrates cleanliness. As Mr. Boffin takes

on a new identity to trick Bella, his identity seems to shift and he becomes the dirty item in the house that is out of place.

Describing dust as a “powdered Cain” suggests that dust is as an unholy substance. Susan Morrison discusses holiness as a “means[ing] to adhere perfectly to a particular class or order” (25). This is captured through cleanliness, which is explored in Victorian periodicals. The author of “London Dust” signifies the importance of dust to moral order (*The London Journal*, 24 December 1864): “the proper removal of the dust leads to tidiness; for over the yards, in consequence of the dust-bins not being able to contain them, there is not much encouragement for cleanliness. In wet weather, especially, the dirt is brought again into the house, and so one evil leads to another” (412). The removal of dust from society and the home achieves cleanliness. As a part of society and the home, dirt and dust become an unwelcome “evil” and associated with darkness. Removing dust would prevent “to some extent, the spread of pestilential diseases” (412). This recommendation for a cleaner London for not only helps the health of the city, but it fulfills the theme of cleanliness as holiness. In the novel, once Mr. Boffin inherits the money, he is immediately caught in an onslaught of “cooperate beggars...there are inspired beggars... [and] independent beggars” that suddenly surround his home via letters (210). This sudden influx of letters act as dirt, as these letters are a direct result of the dust he inherits. These letters attack the Boffin household, acting as an unwelcome influence that Rokesmith must mediate and contain. Just as “the dust...of dust-bins not being able to contain them,” the Boffin house cannot contain all of the letters asking for his dust money (412). The onslaught of letters is suffocating, aligning dust with an omen of death. Joseph Amato connects dirt and mortality:

Dust gathers with the rejected; found under beds, it was given the slang names beggar's velvet, house moss, and slut's wool. Dust is associated with death ("to bite the dust"), with insult ("eat my dust") and with dismissal ("to dust off"). Dirt refers to what is morally compromising...Lesser individuals are described as "chicken feed" and "crumb." To be a nobody is to be "a little snot" or "a little shit": to be an ill-bred person is to be a "dreg" or a "grub." (1)

Using dust in terms of insults aligns with this theme of uncleanness; to insult someone, one must use dirty terms. Mr. Boffin's feigned identity as the Golden Dustman, could be classified as magical, as "gold dust [was] considered to be the lightest earthly. In fairy tales, a mere sprinkle of dust could cause wondrous things to occur" (19). Rather, the filthy dust of *Our Mutual Friend* lacks magical qualities and has a seemingly detrimental effect on Mr. Boffin, aligning dust with darkness.

The chapter by Joseph Amato continues to describe the negative premise of dust: "...dust was declared an enemy by public health officials. Sanitarians asserted a relationship between dust and disease. Industrial hygienists demonstrated that dusts caused a range of maladies among miners and other industrial workers" (9). Victorians avoided dust, "contend[ing] that dust and dirt are the detritus of cultural constructions of order. Dust and dirt—leftovers, what the cookie cutter didn't cut—constitute a kind of disorder, an inchoate state of being, and thus a type of moral defilement" (Amato 21). Dust also defiled the city. In *Punch*, the image shows how dust was kicked up by women's skirts and by pedestrians ("Dust Oh! The Long Dress Nuisance" 229). Not only did dust dirty the streets, but "dustbins and rubbish began to feature more prominently in

discussions about overcrowding and slum clearance, particularly amongst the local officials responsible for public health” (Jackson 18). In the Victorian periodicals, dust was “bad for the lungs and pervading odour, if not exactly a ‘very ancient and fish-like smell’...” (“Dust Ho!”103). Dust was also referred to as “Devil’s Dust” and “powdered Cain” (103). Advocating for the cleanliness of London brought awareness to the dangers of dust and dirt. Mr. Boffin becomes diseased through moral defilement because of his association with dust.

Viewing dust as a catalyst for disease, as suggested by Joseph Amato, Mr. Boffin’s choice to allow dust to sicken him aligns with Catherine Gallagher’s theory that discusses the operation of the body in economics. As brought up in her book *The Body Economic*, Gallagher discusses that “the toil of the body is a universal equivalent to determine exchange value, commodities can acquire abstract fungible values independent of their physiological utility” (89). Although it is an act, Mr. Boffin uses his body at the center of his plot to convince and appeal to Bella. This follows Gallagher’s theory, Mr. Boffin’s body toils as he works at this performance. His association with dust transforms Mr. Boffin’s identity into an “abstract fungible value [that is] independent of [its] physiological utility” (89). Mr. Boffin’s own body becomes a commodity because he must sell his performance of this greedy identity to Bella. Gallagher notes that “because the laboring body is the source of all value, commodities that immediately sustain more laboring bodies should be considered more desirable—indeed, more valuable—than those without direct physiological benefits” (90). Mr. Boffin is the only body operating in his performance of this feigned greed, so it should hold little value. This is not the case. Mr.

Boffin's performance is successful and valued because Bella realizes how wealth influences greed.

The displaced nature of dust causes disorder. When Mr. Boffin is inheriting the Harmon estate, he sits “staring at a little bookcase of Law Practice and Law Reports, and at a window, and at an empty blue bag, and at a stick of sealing-wax, and a pen, and a box of wafers, and an apple, and a writing-pad—all very dusty—and at a number of inky smears and blots...” (Dickens 93). Not only are all of these items covered in dust, but their randomness shows a lack of organization. Dickens pairs these random objects with dust to emphasize the displacement of these objects. The dust mounds mimic these objects because they contained dusty, miscellaneous items. Susan Morrison discusses that “we feel the compulsion to separate ourselves from that which we consider filthy in order to reassure ourselves that we are not that filth. To create a self, you must discharge and reject that which is not you” (31). Mr. Boffin's entire identity as the Golden Dustman exists to be rejected because it is “not Mr. Boffin.” The identity of the Golden Dustman must be shunned both by Bella, to influence her own attitude, and by Mr. Boffin himself, to return him to his true nature. Mrs. Boffin encourages Bella to reject his identity, telling her to “believe...that in spite of all the change in him, he is the best of men” (469). Mrs. Boffin's awareness of the change in her husband, but the belief that he is still “the best of men” hints that Mrs. Boffin knows of her husband's performance (469).

In *The Literature of Waste*, Morrison uses Georges Bastille's suggestion that “we attempt to control nature by naming it” (qtd in Morrison 24). Bella's reaction to Mr. Boffin's change in attitude shows the condemnation of Mr. Boffin. She reluctantly admits to Mr. Rokesmith that she “cannot bear to be forced to admit to [herself]” that this change

is happening (Dickens 512). For Bella, her reluctance to admit Mr. Boffin's change suggests that it holds power. She says, "I cannot bear to be forced to admit to myself that Fortune is spoiling Mr. Boffin" (512). Her use of the word "spoiling" also fits in with the discussion of waste. This "spoiling" defines Mr. Boffin's greedy identity as unholy and impure. This impurity Mr. Boffin with dust and Bella is witnessing Mr. Boffin's performance of greed spoil him, as if the greed is slowly clouding Mr. Boffin's identity. Catherine Gallagher discusses R. H. Horne's "Dust; or Ugliness Redeemed," drawing the conclusion that it "not only stresses the identity of regeneration and decay—the decomposed vegetables, the dead animals, and the crushed bones, wool, soot, and fine ashes in the dust piles...will fertilize the next year's crop—but also anticipates the novel's use of apparent death and resurrection as a metaphor for the cycle" (107). In Mr. Boffin's case, his identity as the Golden Dustman is rooted in filth, but is useful, just like the decomposing waste found in the dust piles. His performance as the Golden Dustman serves a purpose: to influence Bella. In the same way the rotting waste in the dust piles "will fertilize the next year's crop," Mr. Boffin's identity as the Golden Dustman will "fertilize" a new heart in Bella (107).

As Mr. Boffin's behavior seemingly changes, it is Bella who first notices and labels Mr. Boffin as unpleasant. Morrison states that "unidentified and unidentifiable, garbage and trash have the power to confound" (24). Labeling is important when discussing Mr. Boffin because his identity as the Golden Dustman is created from the presence of dust. Mr. Boffin is labeled as the Golden Dustman, but because that identity is feigned, Mr. Boffin is mislabeled throughout the novel. This mislabeling gives Mr. Boffin the power to confound both Bella and the reader and appear as if greed has spoiled

him. The need to label is also discussed in *Purity and Danger*. Douglas comments that “we make a greater and greater investment in our system of labels...Uncomfortable facts which refuse to be fitted in, we find ourselves ignoring or distorting so that they do not disturb these established assumptions” (46). Bella’s reluctance to admit she notices a change in Mr. Boffin is Bella’s way of ignoring her observation; she wants to believe Mr. Boffin still a good man. The chapter ends with Bella noticing that “there was a cunning light in his eyes as he said all this, which seemed to cast a disagreeable illumination of the change in him, and make it morally uglier” (Dickens 470). His greed and miserly behavior pollutes the household; Bella’s use of negative words define Mr. Boffin’s feigned greed as unpleasant. Mr. Boffin becomes “unnatural” with a “cunning smile,” both characteristics of a sinister and greedy character (470). This descent into pollution draws an obvious connection between darkness and dust.

As Mr. Boffin becomes more “Golden Dustman” than “Mr. Boffin,” he is described as falling, another action of descending. The rise and fall of the Golden Dustman, (seen as the chapters named “The Golden Dustman Rises a Little” and “The Golden Dustman Sinks Again”) parallels to the rise and fall of the tide polluted Thames. When the tides fall, the low tide reveals the slick, polluted mud of the Thames. This dirty revelation is described in “Thames Embankment” published in *Once a Week* (21 May 1864), “at low-water, into a fetid mudbank of thousands of acres in extent, which under the summer sun, gives out exhalations of the must unhealthy character” (611). As Mr. Boffin descends, his own “unhealthy character” is revealed. Mr. Boffin’s feigned descent into greed pollutes his identity, forcing him to take on a new identity as the Golden

Dustman. This dirty identity is meant to cleanse Bella of her selfishness and restore her as a caring, loving person.

Recycling discarded material back into the economy fits the quintessential nineteenth-century fantasy, and Mr. Boffin's association with dust fits the "metaphors of dirt and disease [that were used] to transform the poor into a grotesque, undifferentiated mass—one that needed to be structurally separated from the distinctive, properly human individuals who constituted the community of respectable Victorians" (Schülting 520). This division is apparent with the transformation of dirty rags to clean paper because poor collected these rags. The paradox of the poor collecting waste that would later be too expensive for them to afford is captured by Leah Price:

The paradox of rags as a despised and ubiquitous, yet valuable and scarce, commodity was seized upon by some commentators as they marveled at the vast trading circuits involved in rag collecting and papermaking: circuits that depended on illiterate people clothed in rags collected rag-litter from the streets to be converted into paper carrying texts they could not read. (37)

Trash from the dust mounds could be created into valuable objects. An article published in *All the Year Round* (1 November 1862) describes a ragman's bag after he has dug through the dust mounds. His bag holds "shreds of cloth rags...they will not make writing-paper but will help to flock papers for walls of rooms..." ("What's the Use of That?" 184). In the same way that rags were collected by the poor in order to make a living, Mr. Boffin is loyal to the inherited dust mounds in order to assure that Bella will be rid of her greed. When Rokesmith asks Mr. Boffin if he has any intention of selling

the dust mounds, Mr. Boffin responds: “Certainly not. In remembrance of our old master, our old master’s children, and our old service, me and Mrs. Boffin mean to keep it up as it stands” (Dickens 186). This refusal to sell the mounds shows Mr. Boffin’s loyalty to the Harmon family, but also demonstrates his strong connection to the mounds themselves. When he inherits the mounds, he becomes aligned with filth and disorder. Mr. Boffin’s goal as he becomes wealthy is to shed his identity as this “undifferentiated mass,” and rather, become an individual (Schülting 520). Mr. Boffin struggles to make sense of the “many disordered papers...before him...he looked at them about as hopefully as an innocent civilian might look at a crowd of troops whom he was required at five minutes’ notice to maneuver and review” (Dickens 179). Mr. Boffin uses Rokesmith to help shift the papers into order to transform them from disordered waste to ordered valuables. Mr. Boffin does not want to appear as “matter out of place,” and commits himself to appearing as a person of wealth convince Bella to change her behavior (Douglas 35). Mr. Boffin also tells his wife that “our old selves wouldn’t do here...Our old selves weren’t people of fortune; our new selves are; it’s a great difference” (Dickens 458). Mr. Boffin’s obsession with books on misers establishes his dedication to becoming a new identity in his wealth. Using misers as his main influence, Mr. Boffin is accurately able to portray miserly behavior in his performance of greed.

Recycling ties to the idea that pollution represents darkness because Mr. Boffin must become rooted in dust to sell his new identity to Bella. Through his performance, Mr. Boffin becomes filthy as greed overtakes him. As Mr. Boffin becomes filthy, in terms of his greed, and “anything designated as filthy cannot be reused, at least until it is renamed or reconceived as waste or trash, which can be recycled” (Cohen and Johnson

x). Mr. Boffin's performance of being obsessed with wealth does not begin to effect Bella until he is named the Golden Dustman. Before he is named, Mr. Boffin is simply a man who understands how dust mounds operate, saying, "I ain't a scholar much...but I'm a pretty fair scholar in Dust. I can price the mounds to a fraction, and I know how they can be best disposed of, and likewise that they take no harm by standing where they do" (Dickens 186). In this statement by Mr. Boffin, there is no greed or obsession with money; in order for Mr. Boffin to sell himself as greedy to both Bella and the reader, he must be renamed. The identity of the Golden Dustman allows Mr. Boffin to sell his greedy identity to Bella and allows him to shed it at the end of the novel.

Items found in the mounds could be recycled and sold for profit. Richard Horne wrote about each part of the dust-heaps in his article "Dust: Ugliness Redeemed," published in *Household Words* (13 July 1850) and describes the dust piles as "a wonderful compound of things" (4). However, the dust mounds were more than mere piles in a vacant yard, but rather, "recycling centres, with not only dust and sundry labourers, but related plant—including a furnace for material that was not recyclable..." (Jackson 21). Victorian periodicals discuss these recycling centres. In *Household Words* (1850), there is a definition for these heaps and what sort of items they included:

...by the word 'dust', is meant the ash, cinders, and unburnt particles of coal... the contents of the dust bin are by no means dust only, which would be harmless enough, they contain also waste portions of food, positively more injurious to health than the undigested food that has passed through our bodies...it is composed of bones of animals, damaged cooked meats, fish, wasted cooked vegetables, cabbage leaves, wasted

bread, and everything that will not float in water or pass down a sink-grating. And when the bones do not go in the dust-bin, they are kept separate for sale in some closed cupboard; they do not therefore fail to give off their noxious odours separately. (“The Gas Poisons of Our Dwelling” 433)

Finding the presence of this definition in *Household Words* (1850) indicates that the Victorians were made aware of exactly what was in the mounds and what could be recycled. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Harmon’s dust is made up of “coal-dust, bone-dust, crockery-dust, rough-dust and sifted dust—all manner of Dust” (Dickens 24). Dickens begins to define the dust, but quickly ties the list off with a generic statement. By leaving the rest of the dust undefined, Dickens adds power to the dust itself, as “undefined trash and garbage have the power to confound” (Morrison 24). Dickens also leaves the named items as possible commodities. Mr. Boffin’s feigned identity as the Golden Dustman transforms him into a commodity. As discussed by Leslie Simon, “characters in *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend* become commodified things, and things, along with the ideologies they contain, erode into the granulated matter of combustion and class” (225). Once Mr. Boffin is able to make a profit from his feigned identity, the identity is recycled back into the dust, “erod[ing] into the granulated matter” it originated from. By aligning Mr. Boffin’s feigned identity as the Golden Dustman with the recycling process of dust ties the Golden Dustman to pollution. With the Golden Dustman’s existence rooted in dust and greed seemingly defiles Mr. Boffin, pollution is seen as a dark entity.

Morrison states that “garbage and nature, both feared owing to their controllable and uncanny powers, need to be put in their place” (25). The dust that the Mr. Boffin

inherits is out of place because it rightfully belongs to John Harmon. At the end of the novel, the mounds put back in place and are returned to John Harmon. “Rags for the Ragged,” published in *Once A Week* (3 May 1862), captures this recycling process: “[materials that were] coveted for the use of Dives, to whom they will, after having undergone a certain transformation, become the ministers of the highest intellectual enjoyment” (Fyfe 528). In the same way that paper was returned to the dust mounds as dirty rags, Mr. Boffin’s identity must also be returned to its proper place. Morrison uses the example of the green light in *The Great Gatsby* to explain how “objects ultimately become meaningless” (69). The theme of recycling fits into Morrison’s description of this meaninglessness. Mr. Boffin’s identity as the Golden Dustman is rooted in dust and follows the same cycle of repurposing as the dust mounds. Mr. Boffin uses his feigned identity to influence Bella, but once her perception of wealth changes, Mr. Boffin ends his performance of greed. This happens with the items in the dust-mounds, as well. Harmon’s mounds contain various things: dead animals, bones, ash, cinder, and even bits of paper. Although these items are recycled into items of value, as seen with the Golden Dustman being valuable to Bella, they ultimately end up back in the dust mound. At the end of *Our Mutual Friend*, Mr. Boffin reverts back to his kind self, rejecting greed and his identity as the Golden Dustman, figuratively throwing it away.

Mr. Boffin follows the recurring theme of drowning in the novel; his greed, although feigned, drowns him. The novel mentions that “through it does the Secretary daily struggle breast-high” (Dickens 211). Here, Mr. Rokesmith drowns under the amount of money and money requests. Each time Mr. Boffin puts on the performance of

a greedy persona, the Golden Dustman seemingly drowns out his true nature as Mr. Boffin. His dual identities appear as two faces:

A kind of illegibility, through a different kind, stole over Mr. Boffin's face. Its old simplicity of expression got masked by a certain craftiness that assimilated even his good-humour to itself. His very smile was cunning, as if he had been studying smiles among the portraits of his misers. Saving an occasional burst of impatience, or coarse assertion of his mastery, his good-humour remained to him, but it had now a sordid alloy of distrust...What with taking heed of these two faces, and what with feeling conscious that the stealthy occupation must set some mark on her own, Bella soon began to think that there was not a candid or a natural face among them all but Mrs. Boffin's. (467)

Mr. Boffin's multiple identities are clear in this passage. Especially with the addition of "these two faces," Mr. Boffin's identity is doubled (567). His true identity is drowned out as the new identity as the Golden Dustman overpowers it, making his performance as the Golden Dustman believable.

Mr. Boffin's inheritance of the dust mounds allows him to become revalued.

Michael Thompson's *Rubbish Theory* discusses how waste objects become revalued:

Most commodities are either transient or durable, some objects can move from the former category to the latter...in order for an object to shift from transient (of decreasing value) to durable (of increasing value), it must first reside in the rubbish zone, where it has no value at all...the process is

unidirection: an object can move from transient to rubbish, and from rubbish to durable, but not in the other direction. (Cohen and Johnson xv)

The rise and fall of Mr. Boffin as the Golden Dustman not only signifies the revelation of Mr. Boffin's performance of a polluted self, but also follows Thompson's Rubbish Theory in terms of how objects can shift between categories. At the start of the novel, Mr. Boffin is not highly valued. He lives comfortably with his wife, and enjoys simplicity, such as having someone to read to him. With the inheritance of John Harmon's money, Mr. Boffin must admit that he is worthless when it comes to managing the money, and the hiring of a secretary makes him shift from transient to durable. He goes from a man with money who cannot handle it, to a man with money who is able to pay someone to handle it for him. As soon as he inherits money, the attraction to his money becomes obvious. The thirst for Boffin's money is described as "tradesmen's books hunger, and tradesmen's mouths water, for the gold dust of the Golden Dustman" (Dickens 208). This demonstrates Mr. Boffin's increase in value. Thompson goes on to discuss that "transient object gradually declining in value and in expected life-span may slide across into rubbish" (9). This is seen in *Our Mutual Friend* as Mr. Boffin's shedding of his feigned filth allows him to reject the dust; the dust is returned to its proper owner. By the end of the novel, the dust mounds have no value to Mr. Boffin.

Mr. Boffin's knowledge of self follows the theme of anagnorisis, which refers to the recognition of a person, usually of one's kin (Ginsburg 76). When Mr. Boffin is first introduced, he introduces himself as "Noddy Boffin. Noddy. That's my name. Noddy—or Nick—Boffin." (Dickens 56). Here, Mr. Boffin defines himself multiple times with his name. When the Golden Dustman is introduced, "Mr. and Mrs. Boffin established in

the eminently aristocratic family mansion, and behold all manner of crawling, creeping, fluttering, and buzzing creatures, attracted by the gold dust of the Golden Dustman” (208). With this introduction from a third person point of view, the name is given by the narrator; Mr. Boffin does not refer to himself as the Golden Dustman and his characteristics are all a performance for Bella. Physically, Mr. Boffin remains the same man, unlike John Harmon, whose new identity makes him unrecognizable.

Bella is only able to notice the shifting nature of Mr. Boffin’s face. This plurality allows Mr. Boffin to fit the inorganic aesthetic, as he is an “organic form consists of the interdependence of parts that are unified but distinct... a ‘unity of the many’ ...which focuses on plurality” (Çelikkol 1). He exists as one man with the appearance of two shifting identities. With the argument of Boffin as an inorganic aesthetic, Alyşe Çelikkol states:

When bodies, on the verge of expiration, turn into husks or shells, they come to exemplify the structure that characterizes such inorganic form. These lifeless figures have no content, no subjectivity or soul to flesh them out. The dust particle, the quintessential embodiment of inorganic form in the novel, similarly divorces form from content...the inorganic alternative conceives of itinerant forms that are attached to none. (2)

With this new and feigned identity, Mr. Boffin acts as if his true identity is a useless husk as he seemingly transforms into the greedy Golden Dustman. As Mr. Boffin’s performance of the Golden Dustman continues, he seemingly becomes a lifeless version of himself. Çelikkol goes on to describe that “the mistaken identity plot cements what repetition implies: bodies are interchangeable and events mirror one another” (5).

Described as constantly rising and falling, Mr. Boffin's two identities fight against one another. Unlike John Harmon and his new identity as Rokesmith and Julius Handford, Mr. Boffin's feigned identity is a direct opposite to his old self. His identities do not mirror one another; rather, both Mr. Boffin and the narrator are able to successfully separate Mr. Boffin and his identity as the Golden Dustman. The lack of attachment and lack of similarity between Mr. Boffin and the Golden Dustman aids in the portrayal that Mr. Boffin's identity as the Golden Dustman is a performance. This separation also makes it easier for Mr. Boffin to throw off the Golden Dustman's identity at the end of the novel.

By using dust as a tool in his ploy against Bella, Mr. Boffin is making the point that wealth has the ability to defile a person, Mr. Boffin's portrayal of wealth carries a negative connotation. He uses the wealth from dust to cause defilement and disorder, not only within himself, but in his household. Bella must force herself to see the change that happens in front of her: "Bella ventured for a moment to look stealthily toward him under her eyelashes, and she saw a dark cloud suspicion, covetousness and conceit, overshadowing the once open face" (Dickens 459). Her first reaction is to act as if Mr. Boffin is not changing in front of her as "if her mind were full of her book, and she had not heard a single word!" (459). It is not until later that night where "Bella went to bed with a weariness upon her spirit which was more than the weariness of want of sleep. And again in the morning, she looked for the cloud, and for the deepening of the cloud, upon the Golden Dustman's face" (461). In terms of Douglas's suggestion that dust causes defilement, Mr. Boffin fits this theory, as he becomes uglier and more defiled as

his obsession with wealth consumes him. The darkening features of Mr. Boffin's face connect this defilement with how pollution is represented by darkness.

Londoners' interaction with dust defines dust as unclean and impure. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens aligns the greed of the Golden Dustman with the inheritance of dust, concluding that pollution is represented by darkness. Mr. Boffin's identity is seemingly defiled by greed, but because of how dust is defined in terms of Michal Thompson's Theory of Rubbish, Mr. Boffin is able to easily shed his identity as the Golden Dustman at the end of the novel. According to Morrison, "undefined trash and garbage have the power to confound" (24). Mr. Boffin exemplifies this through his inheritance of Harmon's dust mounds. These mounds include undefined objects, giving Mr. Boffin the power to use dust in his performance of greed. The application of both Morrison's and Douglas's theories add power and depth to Mr. Boffin's character. There is a power in Mr. Boffin's ability to trick not only Bella, but the reader, as well, but even more so when it is discovered that his behavior is a performance. This means that Mr. Boffin had to have known and understood how to act as if greed had truly polluted him. The dedication to this performance allows a new reading of Mr. Boffin as a man with the best intentions for those he cares about.

4. REJECTION OF WASTE--LIZZIE HEXAM

Pollution is tied to darkness and death in the novel *Our Mutual Friend*. Lizzie Hexam lives on the bank of the Thames and by living in close proximity to filth and dirt, Lizzie exists in an unclean space. Cleanliness is tied to purity, which is discussed in the Victorian periodicals: “cleanliness is next to godliness...cleanliness is godliness. A clean mind and conscience, in a clean body, is the nearest approach to purity we can fancy...” (“The Chemistry of Washing” 248). However, according to Susan Morrison, “though all bodies exude filth, women’s bodies in particular have been identified with what is fluid and excess...filth becomes identified with the female” (38, 21). Lizzie’s proximity to filth and her existence as a woman should classify Lizzie as dirty, but instead, Lizzie rejects both waste and death in the novel and operates as a clean entity. Lizzie’s horror and disgust at her father’s work with corpses and her ability to conquer the polluted Thames to save Eugene Wrayburn demonstrate Lizzie’s cleanliness. Lizzie’s influence over Eugene Wrayburn identity and desire also demonstrate Lizzie’s cleanliness. It is through her influence that he is changed. By rescuing Wrayburn at the end of the novel, Lizzie rejects the possibility of his death and restores his ability to be defined.

Although Lizzie operates as a clean entity, she is defined as waste because of her birth. We find out that as a “babby, [Lizzie] was picked out of the river alongside coal barges. The very basket [she] slept in, the tide washed ashore” (Dickens 15). Claire Wood quotes Bakhtin, describing “how in grotesque imagery, death is not a negation of life, but the ‘condition of its constant renewal and rejuvenation. Death is here always related to birth; the grave is related to the earth’s life-giving womb’” (25). For Lizzie, her birth aligns her with death, as it is the polluted river that operates as her “life-giving

womb” (25). In the first scene of the novel, the Thames contains “filthy water” and with “a tender yellow moonlight on the river,” the entire scene is sickly and diseased (Dickens 14, 15). The scene is diseased and sickly. According to David Holbrook, Lizzie is not a “woman [who] could have been raised in less propitious circumstances; no one could be more tainted by association with a dreadful trade” (148). Lizzie even tells Charley that “I could not be too far from that river...I can’t get away from it, I think...It’s no purpose of mine that I live by it still” (Dickens 228). Lizzie’s inability to separate herself from the river connects her with waste. According to Cohen and Johnson, “the point of view of the one making the judgment, they to serve to establish distinctions—‘That is not me’” (x). Lizzie needs to be close to the river; rather than separating herself from it after her father dies, she associates herself with its filthy waters, staying on the bank where the filth and “shining mud” belong (Dickens 362). Lizzie’s proximity to and birth from the river demonstrates her own connection to death and filth, and much like the pollution of London, both are inescapable.

Despite her filthy birth from the river, Lizzie does not appear as waste. Instead, Lizzie is valued as a mother and as caretaker. When she departs Charley, she “laid her hand upon [Charley’s] shoulder...[as] she had been used to do so, to soothe him when she carried him about, a child as heavy as herself” (228). Lizzie’s appearance as a gentle and soothing mother to Charley also shows Lizzie’s rejection of filth and death. She has value in Charley’s life; it is Lizzie who makes sure Charley is educated after their father dies. Michelle Allen discusses this value and appreciation of this filth:

Dickens exploits the moral implications of pollution he resists
representing the degraded river in strictly moral terms or solely as a stage

for social action. The river may be a source of danger and disease, but it is also a site of emotional and imaginative engagement. These meanings of the river emerge at the thematic level in the form of Dickens's aesthetic appreciation of filth. (95)

Through Lizzie, we are able to experience the river as diseased but also as a "site of emotion and imaginative engagement" (95). The same river that is polluted with corpses is the same river where Lizzie rescues Wrayburn. This contrast is captured through Lizzie; her birth pollutes her, but she operates in cleanliness. Lizzie operates as a part of society as she creates a friendship with Jenny Wren and later, marries a man she loves. Even though Lizzie is educated throughout the course of the novel, "what she seems to offer by way of contrast with Bella's beauty and dimples, is a sense of autonomy through labor" (196). Lizzie's identity becomes defined by her labor, rather than her birth. This is seen when she rescues Wrayburn from the river. Those who witness her rescue of Wrayburn are shocked at her strength and capability of rowing a boat. As Lizzie's identity becomes solidified in her labor, Lizzie becomes a valued character despite her birth from filth.

As a child, Lizzie would have played in the filth by the bank of the river. In "Every Man's Poison" published in *All the Year Round* (11 November 1865), "children of all ages are playing in and with this filth. Some little faces are not yet marred by the pestilential influences, moral and physical, with which they are surrounded" (373). The pollution of the river eventually has a dark effect on those who live in proximity to it; only the little faces of the small children remain unaffected. In the novel, Wrayburn catches Lizzie "with the brown flush of her cheek and the shining luster of her hair"

(Dickens 166). This “brown flush” suggests that Lizzie has been effected by the filth that surrounds her (166). Despite this filth, David Holbrook describes that “around Lizzie Hexam the deepest fears of the unconscious are explored: she grows up in the presence of death and the daily destructiveness of the fatal river...” (155). Neither death nor destruction manifest as wickedness in Lizzie.

Rather, Lizzie appears as a capable woman who is able to articulate her emotions to Wrayburn and others. This is also discussed by Annette Federico that “one characteristic common to these intense and adamant women is their intellectual acuity—a trait Dickens does not often bestow on his female characters” (166). Lizzie is able to speak her mind before she learns to read and write. Lizzie expresses her emotions honestly with Wrayburn, even telling him: “You will drive me away. I live here peacefully and respected, and I am well employed here. You will force me to quit this place as I quitted London, and—by following my again—will force me to quit the next place in which I may find refuge, as I quitted this” (Dickens 676). Lizzie’s ability to clearly express her needs to Wrayburn demonstrates her purity; her words are not vague or wicked.

Lizzie rejects the waste of the river to avoid defilement. Unlike the pollution around the river, Lizzie fears the corpses that are dredged up from the filthy river. Although work with the dead can be seen as merciful, work with corpses is labeled as filthy. Cohen and Johnson describe this as the “dying, dead, and rotting bodies themselves, as they putrefy, are perhaps the filthiest of all...a direct encounter with them is almost always polluting” (xii). Lizzie avoids coming in direct contact with the corpses to avoid being associated with them. According to the article “Looking Out for Father”

published in *Peter Parley's Annual* (5 January 1860), it was normal for the children to stay on the shore while the father, a fisherman, would be out on his boat. However, Lizzie accompanies her father on the river despite finding his job abhorrent. Lizzie affirms her caution of the river to her father when he suggests that she “hates the sight of the very river” (15). The continued description of Lizzie’s hatred and disgust toward the river and what it contains demonstrates Lizzie’s rejection of the river’s contents. Lizzie refuses to associate with the waste of the river prevents her from becoming defiled.

Throughout the novel, Lizzie avoids direct contact with death and filth. She is fearful of the river’s dark waters; she “shiver[s]...and seem[s] to turn a deadly faint” and watches her father with a sense of “dread or horror” (Dickens 15, 13). When she rescues Wrayburn, she is forced to come in direct contact with his filthy body by pulling it from the water. When she hears “a faint groan, and a fall into the river,” her first instinct is to investigate it, as “her old bold life and habit instantly inspired her...[and] ran towards the spot from which the sounds had come” (Dickens 682). When Lizzie comes in contact with Wrayburn’s body, she is able to rescue it rather than be defiled by it. This shows her power and purity:

A sure touch of her old practiced hand, a sure step of her old practiced foot, a sure light balance of her body, and she was in the boat. A quick glance of her practiced eye showed her, even though the deep dark shadow, the skulls in a rack against the red-brick garden wall. Another moment, and she had cast off (taking the line with her), and the boat had shot out into the moonlight, and she was rowing down the stream as never other woman rowed on English water...she rowed hard—rowed

desperately but never wildly—and seldom removed her eyes from him in the bottom of the boat. (Dickens 683)

Not only does Lizzie remember her past life in this scene, but she uses the strength she gained from her past life to save the floating body “as if possessed by supernatural spirit and strength” (684). At the start of the novel, Gaffer trusts Lizzie’s ability to handle and row the boat. He tells her to “pull home, since you won’t let your father pull” (16). She does not waver or tire as she rows, and Lizzie easily continues on as “the banks changed swiftly...” (14). When she saves Wrayburn, Lizzie is shocked that she could row with such strength, admitting that “[she] could not at another time” (685). Holbrook captures this as he writes: “[Lizzie] is nourished on death, and her acquaintance with the management of corpses on the river equips her to save her lover when he is reduced to a corpse in the river” (Holbrook 155). By using her strength from her past life, Lizzie embraces her identity as filth and allows herself to give value to the waste she pulls from the river. Her rejection of filth is seen in her ability to save Wrayburn from becoming a corpse. In this scene, “when Lizzie draws Wrayburn out of the water, she proves to be her father’s daughter who has learnt how to handle a boat and salvage a dead body from the river” (Schülting 33). Here, there is no fear or weakness towards the river and its waste, but rather strength and a willingness to rescue.

The ability for a woman to row and control a boat for a long period of time was uncommon. According to the short fiction piece “The Boatman’s Daughter,” published in *The London Reader* (18 November 1865), women typically lost strength after rowing for a long period of time:

For the first half mile the boatman's daughter held her own and kept it; well until the half the distance was gone over, and then the pursuers began to gain upon the fugitives. The maiden lent every energy to the task, and her companion, with a sinking heart, watched the space as the water grew narrower and narrower between them (79).

The story continues to describe that the woman ends up exhausted and unconscious from the effort of rowing. This story exemplifies that not only rowing at that speed is difficult, but that women who could, could not do it for long. Lizzie's strength to pull the oars demonstrates her dominion over the polluted Thames River. Her dedication to rescuing the body in the river makes it clear that Lizzie rejects death.

Before he is rescued by Lizzie, Wrayburn is tainted. When Jenny invites him in, she says, "You may come in, if you are good" but Wrayburn responds "I am no good, but I'll come in" and tells Lizzie that he is "a poor devil of a gentleman" (234, 236). Near the end of the novel, he admits to Lizzie that "heaven knows I'm not good" (Dickens 675). According to Cohen and Johnson, "from the point of view of the one making the judgment, they to serve to establish distinctions—'That is not me'" (x). Wrayburn's repetition of himself as "not good" distances him from it. It is Wrayburn's interaction with the pollution around Lizzie's house causes his identity to become tainted:

He could see the light of the fire shining through the window. Perhaps it drew him on to look in. Perhaps he had come out with the express intention. That part of the bank having rank grass growing on it, there was no difficulty in getting close, without any noise of footsteps: it was but to scramble up a ragged face of pretty hard mud some three or four feet high

and come upon the grass to the window. He came to the window by that means (Dickens 164).

Not only does an unknown power draw Wrayburn to the window, but he must climb the mud to get to the window. Because of its proximity to the river, it can be assumed that this mud was the same toxic mud that coated the banks of the Thames. His connection to the filthy mud associates him with pollution. When Lightwood offers a Wrayburn a drink later that night, Wrayburn spits it out, describing the taste as “the wash of the river” (166). Lightwood asks how he is familiar with the flavor of the river, and Wrayburn responds that he “feel[s] as if [he] had been half drowned, and swallow[ed] a gallon of it: (166). As Pamela Gilbert states, “matter coming out of the body, or going into it by means other than normal alimentary canal, was itself ‘matter out of place’, as defined by Mary Douglas” (84). Although Wrayburn is drinking in this scene, his familiarity with the taste of the river suggests that he is aware that what he consuming is dirty. After coming in contact with the contaminated mud and river, he is much more aware of the pollution around him, but loses his ability to articulate his identity. This is expressed when he views Lizzie through the window: “perhaps it drew him on to look in. Perhaps he had come out with the express intention” (164). The repetition of “perhaps” suggests that Wrayburn no longer understands his own intentions, and therefore cannot fully control his wants and needs. Alyşe Çelikkol notes “that life is defined by ‘the principle of individuation’; Life...is a tendency to individualise” (512). As Wrayburn loses control of his wants and needs, he loses his identity as an individual and becomes waste. It becomes Lizzie’s duty to restore Wrayburn’s identity as an individual.

Lizzie's ability to restore Wrayburn's identity as a male after rescuing him demonstrates her rejection of filth. Wrayburn's loss of identity is most apparent when he is rescued from the river by Lizzie. When Wrayburn falls into the river, he becomes physically unidentifiable:

It was insensible, if not virtually dead; it was mutilated, and streaked the water about it all about it with dark red streaks. As it could not help itself, it was impossible for her to get it on board. She bent over the stern to secure it with the line, and then the river and its shores rang to the terrible cry she uttered...she ran the boat ashore, went into the water, and released him from the line...(Dickens 684)

Not only is Wrayburn unidentifiable because of his injuries, but he is also an unknown body. In this particular scene, the use of "it" to refer to Wrayburn aligns him with the rest of the waste in the river. The lack of masculine pronouns as discussed by Sabine Shülting:

When Lizzie finds Wrayburn's unconscious body in the river, he has turned into an object, which the narrative refers to by the pronoun "it." Only when Lizzie gets to the shore and releases the body from the line, Wrayburn is again referred to in the masculine pronoun. (34)

By stripping Wrayburn of his pronouns, he becomes more unidentifiable. Not only is it unclear if the body "be it a man's or a woman's" but it has been reduced to an "it," blending it with the rest of the river's waste and filth (Dickens 683). Lizzie's ability to rescue him restores Wrayburn's identity as a man. Not only does Lizzie save Wrayburn from becoming unidentifiable, but "Lizzie saves Wrayburn not only from the refuse in

the river; she actually saves him from becoming waste matter that is plundered by river finders” (Schülting 33). If Wrayburn had drowned in the river, he would have become a corpse and would fit into Douglas’s definition of “matter out of place,” (35). Lizzie’s rescue of Wrayburn also saves him from becoming displaced.

The Thames becomes an important entity for both Lizzie and Wrayburn. David Holbrook describes the importance of Wrayburn’s accident in the river as a means for Wrayburn and Lizzie to become a healthy couple:

Eugene and Lizzie face impossible barriers, yet their mutual attraction generates a profound respect for one another, and they interact as man and woman on equal terms as beings, making choices of integrity, a commitment. To a Victorian consciousness there seemed something terrible about this [equality], and Wrayburn’s near destruction seems almost a baptism or a rite of passion... (155-6)

Viewing Wrayburn’s near-death in the river as a baptism ignores the pollution of the Thames River, and ignores Dickens’s obvious connection between the negative actions of a character and the river’s pollution. Labeling Wrayburn’s accident as a baptism also would portray Wrayburn as cursed or wicked, since the polluted water represents death and darkness. However, Holbrook’s portrayal of his near-death as a rite of passion embraces the pollution of the Thames. This rite of passion allows Wrayburn to accept his love for Lizzie, and helps Lizzie to realize her own love for Wrayburn: “what Eugene Wrayburn undergoes is, by contrast, a death and resurrection. He has to suffer and virtually die to become fit to marry Lizzie. And on her part she has to make an extreme repartition to become ready to commit herself to this man” (156). After being rescued,

Wrayburn is able to express his love for his friend, Mortimer Lightwood and admits his love for Lizzie, as well: "I love you, Mortimer...If my dear brave girl will take me, I feel persuaded that I shall live long enough to be married, dear fellow" (Dickens 723).

Wrayburn's ability to articulate his emotions signify that he is a changed man. According to "The Chemistry of Washing," published in *All the Year Round* (8 April 1865), "a clean mind and conscience, in a clean body, is the nearest approach to purity we can fancy..." (248). With the ability to define his emotions, Wrayburn has a clean mind and conscience, and can take Lizzie as his wife.

The marriage between Lizzie and Wrayburn is not set out to accomplish needs. In "Happy and Unhappy Couples," published in *All the Year Round* (24 November 1860), "[in preparation to marry,] the mother scarcely lets the daughter out of her sight; the girl, consequently, is ignorant of worldly matters" (157). Lizzie lack ignorance; her care for Charley when he was a child demonstrates her capability as a mother, and her capability as a woman is demonstrated by her ability to row and salvage bodies from the river. In Wrayburn's case, he becomes serious about Lizzie after he is rescued. According to the periodicals, the strategy for marriage is this: "a young man...exercising a profession whose seriousness is more suited to a family man than a bachelor, or possessing a competency of which a wife alone can do the honors...he wishes to get married" ("Modern French Marriages" 42). Wrayburn transforms from an immature man with no plan to marry Lizzie, to a man who openly puts aside his hatred for Bradley Headstone to spare him punishment. Wrayburn tells Lightwood that "[Headstone] must never be pursued. If he should be accused, you must keep him silent and save him" (Dickens 719). Wrayburn is finally able to define himself as good, as he chooses to forgive Headstone.

By nearly drowning in the Thames and then becoming unidentifiable himself, he is able to become a man worthy of Lizzie.

In order for Wrayburn to marry Lizzie, he must gain control over his emotions. Before Wrayburn is saved by Lizzie, his love and obsession for Lizzie is uncontrollable, forcing Lizzie must leave the city. Wrayburn admits to Lizzie that “[he] is afraid [she] left London to get rid of [him]. It is not faltering to [his] self-love, but [he] is afraid [she] did” (Dickens 675). His desire for Lizzie overwhelms him. Here, “[Eugene] must substitute for his own aimlessness Lizzie’s confidence in him and must learn from her abandonment of agency how he is to desire” (Schor 197). Lizzie’s rejection of Wrayburn connects to Lizzie’s rejection of waste; she cannot tolerate being in the presence of uncontrolled desire. Wrayburn’s lack of control over his desire aligns with Cohen and Johnson’s argument with the need for the body to maintain continence:

The body and its continence, which modeled the boundaries of the middle class independent self, could only be preserved through a careful policing of the abject and the closure of the boundaries of the body, through which contaminated or contaminating fluids should neither enter nor escape. (79)

Wrayburn’s obsession with Lizzie demonstrates this incontinence. He drowns in his desire for her but cannot articulate his intentions with her. This becomes clear when Lightwood questions Wrayburn about his feelings for Lizzie. Wrayburn responds: “Don’t mistake the situation. There is no better girl in all this London than Lizzie Hexam. There is no better among my people at home; no better among your people” (Dickens 292). Wrayburn’s defense of Lizzie shows his clear feelings for her, but also, he expresses that

he has no plan to capture, marry or pursue Lizzie, making his emotions for Lizzie appear immature and underdeveloped.

After being nearly beaten to death, Wrayburn's feelings for Lizzie leak out of him without control, further defining his incontinence. In the same way that Lizzie faints after rescuing him from the Thames, Wrayburn "stopped, exhausted. His speech had been whispered, broken, and indistinct; but by a great effort he had made it plain enough to be unmistakable" (720). Wrayburn's ability to articulate his wants demonstrates his transformation. He calls out Lizzie's name, and "would roll his head upon the pillow, incessantly repeating the name in a hurried and impatient manner" (720). This is an example of Wrayburn's incontinence. According to Pamela Gilbert, "uncontrolled desire...the leaky body, then, is related in Dickens to incontinence, often to addiction or obsession" (82-3). By muttering Lizzie's name, Wrayburn is not only allowing his emotions for her to be known, but he is also admitting to his obsession to her, as Gilbert mentions. This obsession is the reason he was attacked in the first place: Bradley Headstone also loves Lizzie and beats Wrayburn to keep him from being with Lizzie. Wrayburn's feelings for Lizzie fight to be defined, as when she touches him, it is clear that she has an effect on him:

Her presence and her touch upon his breast or face would often stop this...This frequent rising of a drowning man from the deep, to sink again, was dreadful to the beholders. But gradually the change stole upon him that it became dreadful to himself. His desire to impart something that was on his mind, his unspeakable yearning to have speech with his friend and make communication to him, so troubled him when he recovered

consciousness, that its term was thereby shortened. As the man rising from the deep would disappear the sooner for fighting with the water, so he in his desperate struggle went down again. (721)

In order for Wrayburn to be saved, he is dependent on Lizzie's goodness to restore him. Lizzie is able to reject death and waste by venturing back into the river to pull out a living body, rather than a corpse. By rescuing a living body, Lizzie's rejection of filth and death is reinforced.

Lizzie's rejection of filth can also be seen in her friendship with Jenny Wren. Both women are daughters and each "loves a father who deceives and betrays her" (Holbrook 152). Jenny parents her father when he drinks and refers to her father as her child. Jenny tells Lizzie: "...my child is a troublesome and bad child, and costs me a world of scolding" (Dickens 239). Jenny is clearly annoyed at her father's actions, but she scolds him just as a mother does to a child. Her care for her father demonstrates her love for her father.

Lizzie rejection of filth and death is seen through her companionship with Jenny Wren. David Holbrook notes the importance of female companionship in the novel by describing how "Jenny Wren becomes a necessary companion to Lizzie, and later, of course, a nurse for Wrayburn. She embodies a woman's understanding of the needs of those in difficulty" (152). Jenny's disability should define her as impure, as "cleanliness is godliness. A clean mind and conscience, in a clean body, is the nearest approach to purity we can fancy..." ("The Chemistry of Washing" 248). Jenny's existence as a woman also should define her as impure, as "filth becomes identified with the female" (Morrison 29). Jenny describes this disability as her "back [being] bad, and [her] legs

[being] queer” (Dickens 222). When Jenny is viewed by others, she is described as “a child—a dwarf—a something... [and] it was difficult to guess the age of this strange creature” (222, 224). Jenny cannot be defined, classifying her as “matter out of place,” which defines her as filth (35). Jenny’s disability makes her appear as if she is a child, but she disciplines her father as if she is his parent. The reversal of roles between Jenny and her father are significant and are discussed by Hilary Shor:

The reversal is so violent that the daughter treats the father with singular viciousness; she threatens him, rebukes him, and denies him money...Her maturity sits so uneasily on her that no character can be sure where she is as regards to age to sexual development. In a novel of loving but distrustful daughters, she has the least to gain by being a child. (234)

Jenny’s own scolding of her father can be seen as her rejecting her father’s filth. Jenny’s father dresses in rags and his alcoholism causes him to lose control of himself, defining her father as a contaminated body. Jenny does not welcome such behavior and her viciousness toward him is her rejection of his filth and contamination.

Despite her disability, Jenny is trustworthy and caring, but like Lizzie and her proximity to pollution and death, Jenny is also connected to death. Shor discusses that:

Jenny’s imaginative gifts seem linked to her connections to the death plot...she is linked both to the angry father and the dead man towed behind...she speaks to the dead; at the novel’s end, she comes in to interpret for Eugene, speaking to him as if he were dead and could only whisper to the living. (215)

Jenny becomes a nurse to Wrayburn's battered body, demonstrating her connection to death. He asks her to "stay and help nurse [him as he wants her to] have the fancy here before [he dies]" (718). It is also Jenny who first knows about Wrayburn's hope to marry Lizzie. Like Lizzie, Jenny's trustworthiness and care for others showcases her own value through her existence as filth. Both Jenny and Lizzie exude cleanliness through their care and love for others. The pairing of the two as companions should be portrayed as soiled because both are women and are connected with death and darkness. However, both are capable women and their ability to articulate their wants demonstrate their rejection of filth and death.

In Charles Dickens's novel *Our Mutual Friend*, Lizzie is portrayed as capable women, and it is clear that she defies her own impurity of being surrounded by pollution and born of the river. Lizzie operates through the rejection of filth and death; by not associating with either, she refuses to allow it to define her. This fits in with Cohen and Johnson's rejection saying, "—'That is not me'" (x). Lizzie's birth and womanhood defines her as waste, and yet she is a beacon of cleanliness. Lizzie's character reminds us that waste goes beyond binaries: Lizzie's care for others, her love for Wrayburn, and her friendship with Jenny all define Lizzie. Her labor on the river allows her to save the man she loves. By rejecting both filth and death, Lizzie appears as a powerful woman in the novel. She is not associated by her filth in womanhood, but by her actions. Lizzie's dedication to society through her labor demonstrates her capability of independence. Although she marries at the end of the novel, she does so to a man she loves and a man she chooses. Lizzie defies the parameters of femininity in the novel, not only through her physical strength, but her vulnerability in sharing and articulating her emotions.

5. CONCLUSION

Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* centers on pollution. The dirty water of the Thames, the heavy fog, and the enormous dust piles around London suggested that pollution was inescapable and impacted all classes. The dirty water from the Thames was used in the household, which caused outbreaks in cholera. The fog obstructed views and was nearly impossible to see through. Dust piles were a sign of wealth and status. However, pollution represents darkness in *Our Mutual Friend*. The portrayal of pollution as darkness ties pollution with disease and death. This connection operated as a call to action for a cleaner London and emphasized the detrimental effect of pollution on Victorian society.

The dirty water of the Thames allows for characters such as John Harmon to appear as multiple identities. Although he is able to successfully appear as Rokesmith and fall in love with Bella, his old self (John Harmon) seeps through, polluting Rokesmith. The loss of control Rokesmith has over his own identity showcases the impurity of pollution. His incontinence, discussed by Johnson and Cohen, create John Harmon's body into a leaky identity. As impure, John Harmon exists as "matter out of place" and is unable to fully exist in place with Bella and the Boffins. Although he loves Bella, he is unable to fully be happy with her. Rokesmith is clearly troubled as he fights against his true identity as John Harmon. However, when his true identity is discovered, he becomes in place and is able to love and provide for Bella to the fullest extent. Gaffer's existence portrays the novel's relationship with death. He justifies his exploitation of corpses making the "distinction between the material world of the living and the numinous world of the dead [as] fixed and inviolable" (Wood 137-138). Gaffer is punished for his

exploitation of the dead through his own death. Gaffer uses the material possessions of the bodies to make a living. These possessions are described as “articles of death” (123)

Mr. Boffin uses dust as a tool to perform as polluted. His feigned descent into greed for wealth affects Bella, who is able to reject her own greediness for wealth as she sees how it pollutes Mr. Boffin. Mr. Boffin’s use of dust indicates that dust is evil; as seen with John Harmon, dust qualifies as “matter out of place” (Douglas 35). As Mr. Boffin becomes seemingly more polluted, he also becomes out of place in his house, and therefore, filthy. Just as dust is sold for profit, Mr. Boffin uses his feigned identity as a miser to gain profit, this profit being Bella’s changed behavior. Catherine Gallagher discusses how the body, when put in the center of economics, becomes a commodity. Mr. Boffin’s body “toils” as he puts on the performance of greed for Bella (89). By transforming him into a commodity, Mr. Boffin’s feigned identity as the Golden Dustman becomes an identity he is able to sell to Bella for her profit.

As seen with John Harmon, the proximity to the polluted Thames has a detrimental effect. As outlined by Holbrook, “around Lizzie Hexam, the deepest fears of the unconscious are explored: she grows up in the presence of death and the daily destructiveness of the fatal river” (155). However, in terms of Lizzie Hexam, she remained untainted by the polluted water. Rather, Lizzie is able to use her purity to rescue and restore Wrayburn after his accident in the river. Lizzie’s purity is a rejection to the pollution that surrounds her, as it is only after she saves Wrayburn that he is able to express his true feelings for her. Lizzie’s portrayal as a capable woman allows her identity to be placed in her labor, rather than her birth from the filthy river. Lizzie’s relationship with Jenny also indicates the need for female companionship. Her friendship

with Jenny is another rejection of filth; by having such a solid friendship with Jenny, Lizzie rejects Jenny's disability as defies her as waste, and chooses to see Jenny as a person, rather than a "something" (Dickens 222). Overall, the portrayal of pollution as evil and ambiguous in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* affects the characters. This portrayal of pollution as darkness not only defines pollution as a bad omen, but also brought attention to its detrimental effect on the city of London

WORKS CITED

- Allen, Michelle. "A More Expensive Reach: The Geography of the Thames in *Our Mutual Friend*." *Dickens and the City*, edited by Jeremy Tamblin. Ashgate, 2012, pp. 86-114.
- - - . "Thames Fever." *Cleansing the City: Sanitary Geographies in Victorian London*. Ohio University Press, 2007.
- Amato, Joseph A. *Dust: A History of the Small and the Invisible*. University of California Press, 2000.
- "The Boatman's Daughter." *The London Reader: of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information*, 18 November 1865, pp. 78-79.
- Çelikkol, Ayşe. "The Inorganic Aesthetic in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*." *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, vol. 14, no. 1, January 2016, pp. 1-20.
- "The Chemistry of Washing." *All the Year Round*, 8 April 1865, pp. 248-253.
- Cohen, William A. and Ryan Johnson. *Filth: Dirt, Disgust, and Modern Life*. University of Minnesota Press, 2004.
- "A Day with the Coroner." *Once a Week*, 6 June 1863, pp. 664-667.
- "Devil's Dust." *Chamber's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts*, 16 Feb 1861, pp. 103-105.
- Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. Penguin Books, 1996.
- - - . *Our Mutual Friend*. Penguin Books, 1997.

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*.
Routledge, 2003.

“Dust Oh! The Long Dress Nuisance.” *Punch*, 6 June 1863, p. 229.

“Dust Ho!” *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine*, 1 January 1861, p. 160.

Edensor, Tim. “Waste Matter: The Debris of Industrial Ruins and the Disordering of the
Material World.” *Journal of Material Culture*, November 2005, pp. 311-332.

“Every Man’s Poison.” *All the Year Round*, 11 November 1865, pp. 372-376.

Federico, Annette R. “‘Some wasting fire within her’: Unfolding Feminism in Four
Novels by Dickens,” *Massachusetts Studies in English*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1 March
1986, pp. 161-181.

“Fog-Signals.” *Chambers’s Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts*, 24 October
1863, pp. 269-272.

Fyfe, Hamilton J. “Rags for the Ragged.” *Once a Week*, 3 May 1862, pp. 528-530.

Gallagher, Catherine. *The Body Economic*. Princeton University Press, 2006.

“The Gas Poisons of Our Dwelling.” *Once a Week*, 7 October 1865, p. 433.

Gilbert, Pamela. “Medical Mapping: The Thames, the Body, and *Our Mutual Friend*.”
Filth: Dirt, Disgust, and Modern Life. University of Minnesota Press, 2004, pp.
78-102.

Ginsburg, Michal. “Dickens and the Scene of Recognition.” *Partial Answers: Journal of
Literature and the History of Ideas*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2005, pp. 75-79.

- “Happy and Unhappy Couples.” *All the Year Round*, 24 November 1860, pp. 156-161.
- Holbrook, David. *Charles Dickens and the Image of Women*. NYU Press, 1993.
- Horne, Richard. “Dust, or Ugliness Redeemed.” *Household Words*, 13 July 1850, pp. 103-105.
- Jackson, Lee. *Dirty Old London: The Victorian Fight Against Filth*. Yale University Press, 2014.
- “London Dust.” *The London Journal and Weekly Record of Literature, Science, and Art*, 24 December 1864, p. 412.
- “London Fogs.” *The Leisure Hour: A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation*, 4 November 1865, pp.694-696.
- “Looking Out for Father.” *Peter Parley’s Annual*, 5 January 1860, p. 240.
- “Modern French Marriages.” *All the Year Round*, 5 August 1865, pp. 42-45.
- Morrison, Susan Signe. *The Literature of Waste: Material Ecopoetics and Ethical Matter*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- “Old Westminster Bridge, or the Trail of Sin.” *Reynolds’s Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, Science and Art*, 12 December 1863, pp. 385-388.
- “A Peep at the Water-Butts of Kent Street.” *Ragged School Union Magazine*, October 1866, pp. 229-231.
- Price, Leah. “Getting the Reading Out of It: Paper Recycling in Mayhew’s London.” *Bookish Histories*, edited by Ina Ferris and Paul Keen, 2009, pp. 148-166.

Schor, Hilary Margo. *Dickens and the Daughter of the House*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Schülting, Sabine. *Dirt in Victorian Literature and Culture: Writing Materiality*. Routledge, 2016.

“Sea-Dust.” *Chambers’s Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts*, 11 June 1864, pp. 369-371.

Simon, Leslie. “Bleak House, Our Mutual Friend, and the Aesthetic of Dust.” *Dickens Studies Annual*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1 January 2011, pp. 217-229.

“Something Strong in Water.” *All the Year Round*, 24 February 1866, pp. 157-158.

“The Thames Embankment.” *Once a Week*, 21 May 1864, pp. 611-614.

Thompson, Michael. *Rubbish Theory*. Oxford University Press, 1979.

“Through Lambeth to Vauxhall.” *All the Year Round*, 15 April 1865, p. 272.

“The Troubled Water Question.” *Household Words*, 13 April 1850, p. 49.

“What’s the Use of That?” *All the Year Round*, 1 November 1862, pp. 184-187.

Wood, Claire. *Dickens and the Business of Death*, Cambridge University Press, 2015.