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Deadly Professions: *Dracula*, Undertakers, and the Embalmed Corpse

JANI SCANDURA

For succeeding ages to dream of retaining the spirit along with the forms of the past, is as futile as the embalming of the dead body in the hope that it may one day be resumed by the living soul.

—George Eliot, “The Progress of the Intellect” (29)

Bram Stoker’s working notes for the novel that would be published in 1897 as *Dracula* include several lists of characters scribbled in narrative shorthand (fig. 1). Scratched out, marked up, and revised, the lists lay out a complex economy of identity bound up with occupation; they suggest that Stoker hoped to achieve some sort of occupational balance between characters, to create a “working” portrait of the British middle classes. Most of the characters mentioned in the early lists, such as the “lawyer’s clerk,” the “German professor of history,” or the “mad doctor—loves girl,” evolve through successive revisions into familiar names: Jonathan Harker, Dr. Van Helsing, Dr. Seward.¹ Curiously, however, three central characters in an early list never show up in the published text: an Undertaker, an “Undertaker’s Man,” and a “Maid engaged to [the] Undertaker’s Man” (43). In a novel obsessed both with occupation and the technologies of death, why not include the undertaker and his brood? After all, the undertaker profited most by death and made his living in corpses.

Stoker made a crucial choice in seeming to rid his text of the undertaker and centering it around the Count. For like the vampire *Dracula*, nineteenth-century undertakers were themselves imaginatively slippery subjects, constructed by a complex discourse that critics largely have ignored.² So pronounced was the undertaker’s presence in the nineteenth-century European cultural imagination that in his controversial essay, “Salon de 1846,” Charles Baudelaire likened the gross populace of middle-class men, cloaked in funereal frock coats, to an “immense procession of undertakers.” “We all celebrate some burial,”

AUTUMN 1996

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✓ Lawyer - Adkinson purchases
 do - (Sortes Virgilianae) Convergence
 ✓ do - purchase old house town of body
 ✓ Lawyer's clerk - goes to Styria
 ✓ Mad doctor - loves girl.
 ✓ Mad priest - theory of perpetual life
 Philosophic historian
 Undertaker
 undertaker's man
 girl - dies
 Lawyer's shrewd - sceptical, sister
 Crank
 German professor of history
 Maid engaged undertaker's man
 ✓ Silent man + dumb woman - Count's servants
 } in power of Count ~~is~~ terrible ~~man~~ London
 ✓ Detective inspector who knows secret

Fig. 1. Page 35a from Bram Stoker's manuscript notes and outline for *Dracula*. Reproduced with permission by the Rosenbach Museum & Library (Philadelphia PA).

he wrote.³ For Baudelaire, the essence of the modern middle-class subject could be gleaned through his appearance. What he wore became what he was. And what he was, was in mourning. By the late Victorian era, however, it became clear that neither modern subjectivity—nor undertaking itself—could be collapsed simply into a discourse of mourning.

The years roughly between 1880 and 1910 marked a seminal period in the history of undertaking, a period when undertakers rose to economic prominence and began a beleaguered grasp for social power. Taking advantage of a social order that allowed for upward mobility through occupation, but that increasingly stratified the middle-class, undertakers (or funeral directors as some preferred to be called) hoped to shift their standing from the degraded sphere of commerce to the more elite professions. More than Baudelaire could have anticipated, the late-Victorian undertaker became the uncomfortable product and symbol of a civil order in turmoil. For the very social values that had brought the learned bourgeoisie to power in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries now threatened to topple their authority. This is an essay, then, about undertakers and *Dracula*, about undertaking as vampirism, and vampirism as social aspiration. Ultimately, it considers the nature of Victorian professionalization itself.

I. “Perhaps a body-snatcher”

Undertaking always was a controversial occupation. During the early nineteenth century, undertakers, like body-snatchers, were associated with the trade in corpses. The undertaker could benefit simultaneously from individuals who paid for a burial “secure from anatomists” and from the anatomists to whom the corpse could be sold (Richardson 272). Passage of the 1832 Anatomy Act in Britain, however, minimized the fiscal advantages of the covert corpse trade by legally permitting medical schools to procure the unclaimed bodies of the poor for anatomical dissection.⁴ Undertakers, like physicians, began to distance themselves from the body-snatching trade. In doing so, they needed to find new means of economic compensation.

During the eighteenth century, the emergent middle class had sought elite status through burial by mimicking the heraldic funeral (Fritz 246). But in the nineteenth century, the New Poor Laws, passed two years after the Anatomy Act, gave a more firmly established middle

class new social incentive. Death as well as dissection was at stake in this legislation. The Poor Laws defined stringent “directives concerning the saving of costs of shrouds, coffins and graves, and [banned] the use of palls or bellringers” for pauper burials (Richardson 274–75). Members of the middle class now became anxious to distinguish their own interments from those of the contemptible poor. To this end, the second half of the nineteenth century brought about cemetery reform, the passage of a plethora of Burial Acts, and the construction of public cemeteries in London.⁵

Exploiting middle-class anxieties about burial, undertakers began to sell the rites of death as a marker of middle-class status and superior morality. According to Richardson,

In the undertakers’ hands, the funeral came to possess flexible potential in the assertion of financial status: various levels of expenditure could purchase equally various permutations of coffin strength and durability, grave or vault site, security, commemoration, and funerary display. Manifest in the increasingly commercialized trappings of death, the funeral came to be the rite of passage *par excellence* by which to assert financial and social position—a secular last judgment which had as its goal the exhibition of worldly respectability. (272; see also Farrell 153–55)

Death itself became a performance and the Victorian funeral grand theater. Expensive coffins with silver nails, satin linings, and brass fixtures; horses decorated with ostrich plumes to drive the hearse; hundreds of yards of black crepe, velvet, and silk: these became the tools of the Victorian undertaker. By the 1870s, an expensive middle-class funeral cost well over £1000 (Curl 8). In the undertaker’s hands, not only death, but the appearance of mourning became commodified. The funeral, as theater, became a spectacle in which the audience of mourners paid the undertaker and his assistants to perform their own expected sensations of loss.

Victorian funeral pomp included the hiring of “mutes,” undertaker’s employees who stood in top hats and tails outside of mourners’ houses modeling a melancholy posture and who later led the funeral procession. According to James Steven Curl, mutes “were not only symbolic of the visitation of death, but of the guards of the bier and of the professional mourners of antiquity” (7). Victorian literature is full of references to mutes, both genetically bred over “many centuries” as they were in H. Rider Haggard’s *She* (1887) (130) and “very new,” an example of the latest fashion, as was Oliver in Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*

(1837–38) (59). The literary obsession with the mute indicates, among other things, an obsession with performance that remains outside of language, dependent on appearance alone. Mutes were paid according to how convincingly melancholy they appeared.

In the absurd but enlightening 1859 case, *Field v. Robey*, an undertaker sued a dissatisfied client for £2 (Litten 230–31). The client, who had requested a “simple” funeral, refused to pay the undertaker the balance outstanding because he objected to all the “pomp and foolery” of the funeral provided. Yet, the undertaker won the case, in part as a result of the following testimony which attempted to establish the “reasonable” cost of hiring a mute. The cross-examination went as follows:

Mr. Huddleston [defense attorney]—“What is the usual charge for a mute with a dark, good melancholy physiognomy?” (laughter).

Mr. Springfield [plaintiff witness, an undertaker]—“There are various prices. It depends whether he is a good-looking fellow.” (laughter).

Mr. Baron Channell [plaintiff attorney]—“Then you charge according to their looks?”

Mr. Springfield—“Yes, certainly.” (laughter).

Mr. Baron Channell—“When returning from a funeral they are generally merry-looking fellows?”

Mr. Huddleston—“Then they are off duty; and, as my friend near me, Mr. Hawkins observed, they are no longer mutes, but liquids.” (laughter). (Litten 231)

As the above testimony suggests, for Victorians, the appearance of sentiment was a craft, a skill that could be bought or sold. The parenthetical laughter that interrupts the cross-examination frames it as a theatrical show. But more is at stake than amusement, as the undertaker-plaintiff recognized. The suggestion that “off-duty” mutes, mutes without occupation, become “liquids” alludes to popular stereotypes of drunken grave diggers and funeral workers. More profoundly, it implies that such individuals lose their materiality, their essence, when they lack a role to perform. Performance preserves embodiment in this context. One’s body remains intact, remains solid, as long as one performs a prescribed occupational role.

In volume 5 of his 1895 study, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, Charles Booth points out that physical appearance is more important than competence in undertaking. “It is more important to have a strong, presentable man, with a good suit of black clothes of his own, than a highly skilled workman,” he writes. “And further, respectful and, if possible, sympathetic manners, are especially necessary; for future orders depend much on the satisfaction of present customers and their consequent recommendation” (206). Booth suggests that those “sympathetic manners” are hypocritical because they lack sincerity and are cultivated simply to enhance financial profit.⁶

And profit undertakers did. By the late nineteenth century, undertakers began making enough money to live in the most expensive sections of town (Curl 8–19). Yet, abundant wealth alone could not transform undertakers into gentlemanly professionals. Physicians and undertakers both made money in bodies, both seemed able to pronounce life or death. Historically, however, physicians had been distinguished as gentlemanly “learned” professionals who practiced a vocation removed from the crass sphere of capitalist trade (Larson 3–4).⁷ By contrast, “from its inception, the undertaking trade was solely a profit-driven enterprise” (Fritz 249).

Charles Booth distinguishes undertakers from coffin-builders and “funeral furnishers” in his study because of undertakers’ intimate role in handling the dead and planning the funeral performance. Undertakers made “arrangements with the cemetery authorities, [provided] the carriages and men, and [accompanied] the funeral to the grave” (Booth 205).⁸ However, it is striking that Booth lists undertakers under the commercial sub-category, “cabinet-makers,” and not alongside chemists, dentists, nurses, or other marginal “medical” professionals, whom he charts in another volume of his study (Booth 1902–04).

The undertaking trade was a “seasonal” one, according to Booth, reliant on high death rates particularly “from November until April, though a sudden rush may come at any time on the advent of cold winds or fog” (206). Trading in death, undertakers were most successful during epidemics or when social conditions were worst. Booth remarks with some sarcasm, for instance, that the decreased death rates due to “better sanitation” had all but extinguished the undertaker’s autumnal “Plum Season” (207).⁹ Thus, Booth suggests that undertakers had a vested financial interest in maintaining “unsanitary” conditions, which increased death rates and improved the circulation of corpses as goods.

Even individuals who paid exorbitant sums for funeral services viewed those in the “dismal trade” as an unsavory lot. In 1893, the House of Commons issued a 300 page report inquiring about the sufficiency of the law surrounding the disposal of the dead. One witness’s testimony suggests how underhanded undertaking was supposed to be:

Say I am an undertaker, and I have got the body of a man named William Smith to be buried to-morrow at Finchley, and he is registered all right. A person comes to me at eleven o’clock at night, and says: “I have a body to get rid of, and I will give you £500 to do it.” The undertaker takes the body he has got to get rid of to Finchley, and buries it as William Smith without a certificate; the Burial Board sends notice to the Registrar, who refers to his book, and finds that it is quite right. Then the undertaker will take the real William Smith to Ilford Cemetery, say, and take the body up there with a certificate, which saves any inquiry being made. (Orr 70)¹⁰

Since where and in what manner a body was buried was a potent signifier of class, undertakers could assign social status. They arranged the funeral spectacle and charged clients according to what they presumed to be “the condition in life of the parties who employed them” (Litten 231). Yet with this authority came the power to disrupt social prescription and ignore the class signifiers they sold. An undertaker could bury a corpse where and how he wished. The above witness’s example reveals the skepticism with which one might turn over a corpse to an undertaker, reveals how impossible it was to know that a body was buried where one believed. A criminal, suicide, or victim of wrongdoing might lie in the certified grave of middle-class William Smith, while Smith’s certified body, his middle-class body, disintegrated in a pauper’s plot. The undertaker would profit not simply on making the switch, but through Smith’s estate itself, which had paid for Smith’s mismanaged funeral.

The 1893 Commission, which concluded that much of the problem of body disposal resulted from the devious dealings of so-called “queer” undertakers, reflected larger public sentiment. How could one trust an individual whose occupation profited in perpetuating the depraved, diseased conditions of modern urban life? Or who, like the undertaker Mr. Sowerberry in *Oliver Twist*, seductively performed “professional jocosity” though his sentiments were much more mercurial (48)? Or who, most frightfully, wielded the power to assign social status even though his own social stature, indeed his very body, seemed in flux?

The undertaker seemed to teeter on the boundary between professionalism and mercantilism, embodiment and evanescence, even masculinity and femininity. (Today, undertakers still are portrayed as androgynous and possessing an ambiguous sexuality.)¹¹ Unable to be easily placed, undertakers were coded as “purveyors of falseness . . . men who traded in lies and deception” (Laqueur 113). As early as 1811, Thomas Lamb had remarked in his essay, “On Burial Societies and the Character of an Undertaker,” that the undertakers’ “ministry begins where the physician’s, lawyer’s, and diviner’s end. . . . He is the bed maker to the dead. The pillows which he lays never rumple. The day of interment is the theatre in which he displays the mysteries of this art” (Lamb 143; qtd. in Fritz 250). Worse than lowly craftsmen, undertakers were actors. Their duplicitous doings began where the work of the established professions left off.

II. “The blood is the life!”

Given the theatrical underpinnings of Victorian burials, it is not surprising that Bram Stoker, a lifelong man of the theater, found his best subject in corpses.¹² But the undertaker himself never makes an explicit appearance in *Dracula*. We infer the undertaker’s presence through the products of his labors—and these we see only through Dr. Seward’s skeptical eyes. In his journal, the physician Dr. Seward writes,

I attended to all the ghastly formalities, and the urbane undertaker proved that his staff were afflicted—or blessed—with something of his own obsequious suavity. Even the woman who performed the last offices for the dead remarked to me, in a confidential, brother-professional way, when she had come out from the death-chamber:—

“She makes a very beautiful corpse, sir.” (205)

Dr. Seward’s reference to the “obsequious suavity” of undertakers draws on a deeply embedded cultural suspicion of undertakers, whose attitudes veritably ooze out onto those with whom they associate. Moreover, Seward suggests that the undertaker’s employee, a “woman who performed last offices,” uncomfortably performs a cross-gendered behavior, adopting the mien of a “brother-professional.” When he disassociates the profession of medicine from undertaking, Seward rejects not only the undertaker’s social presumption, but the “queer” occupation’s unstable identity.

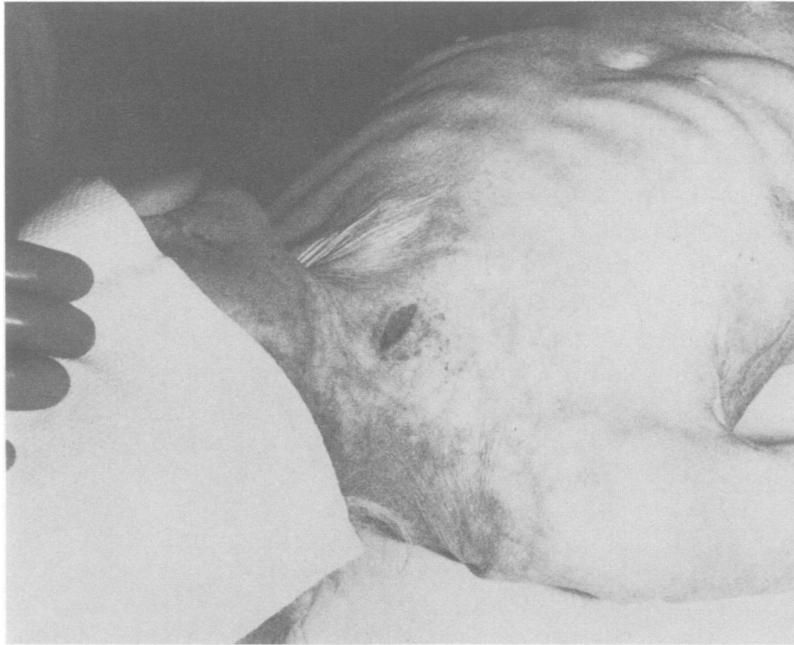


Fig. 2. A primary incision at the carotid artery, shown here in a photograph from a 1961 mortuary science textbook, commonly was used in embalming during the nineteenth century (Springfield IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1961).

Seward instead relegates the undertaker's skills to the adeptness of an artisan or set designer who transforms the sickly Lucy into a beautiful corpse and erects the theatrical death stage of middle-class opulence.

The undertaker had certainly done his work well, for the room was turned into a small *chapelle ardente*. There was a wilderness of beautiful white flowers, and death was made as little repulsive as might be. The end of the winding-sheet was laid over the face; when the Professor bent over and turned it gently back, we both started at the beauty before us, the tall wax candles showing a sufficient light to note it well. All Lucy's loveliness had come back to her in death and the hours that had passed, instead of leaving traces of "decay's effacing fingers," had but restored the beauty of life, till positively I could not believe my eyes that I was looking at a corpse. (206–07)

In Seward's view, the undertaker's job is to make death unrepulsive, unodorous, undecaying, to make "all Lucy's loveliness" return. This, he admits, the undertaker does well. The undertaker even has improved her appearance. Regarding Lucy one week after death, Seward notes the improved beauty and animated appearance of her corpse: "She was, if possible, more radiantly beautiful than ever; and I could not believe

that she was dead. The lips were red, nay redder than before; and on the cheeks was a delicate bloom" (245).

Seward's assessment of the undertaker's artistry is incomplete, however, for Lucy's perverse preservation is not the make-up job of a theatrical craftsman. Her body tissue has been transformed by a death specialist more notorious than any Seward knows. Dracula, the truly consummate undertaker, does not just beautify corpses; he preserves them eternally. Indeed, he seems to embalm them.

Consider the technique of arterial embalming, which became widespread in England during the 1890s, the decade that *Dracula* was written.¹³ A practitioner injected embalming solution into one or several of the main arteries, most commonly the carotid artery at the base of the neck, forcing the blood to drain out of the body through a nearby vein, such as the jugular vein (Strub and Frederick 42; Polson 292–94; Thomas 324). In this view, the neck wound inflicted by Dracula, "just over the external jugular vein," can be seen as the incision of the undertaker made in preparation for embalming (fig. 2). Like the embalmer, Dracula does not simply suck out body fluids—he replaces them with toxins. "There is a poison in my blood, in my soul, which may destroy me; which must destroy me, unless some relief comes to us," laments Mina (390), recalling Seward's earlier assertion that "some of that horrid poison . . . has got into her veins" (381). Later, Mina notes that Dracula's world of the Un-Dead is full of strange chemicals, of "gases that kill or make to vivify," gases that are, like embalming fluids, paradoxically both deadly and revivifying (378).¹⁴

Certainly, Dracula, "a tall old man . . . clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere," a man with a "thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils," a man of "extraordinary pallor," "a tall, thin man, with a beaky nose and black moustache and pointed beard," greatly resembles popular representations of undertakers (22–23, 25, 215).¹⁵ Consider the attenuated physiognomy of Joseph Chamberlain, who is portrayed as an undertaker in F. C. Gould's 1903 political cartoon (fig. 3).¹⁶ Compare it to that of the similarly pale, thin undertaker in an 1806 Newton cartoon. Remember that the aptly named undertaker Mr. Sowerberry, in *Oliver Twist*, is a "tall, large-jointed man, attired in a suit of threadbare black, with darned cotton stockings of the same color, and shoes to answer" (47–48). And keep in mind that Stoker's working notes for the novel figure Dracula as an employer of "mutes" as Victorian undertakers were. Most of Stoker's

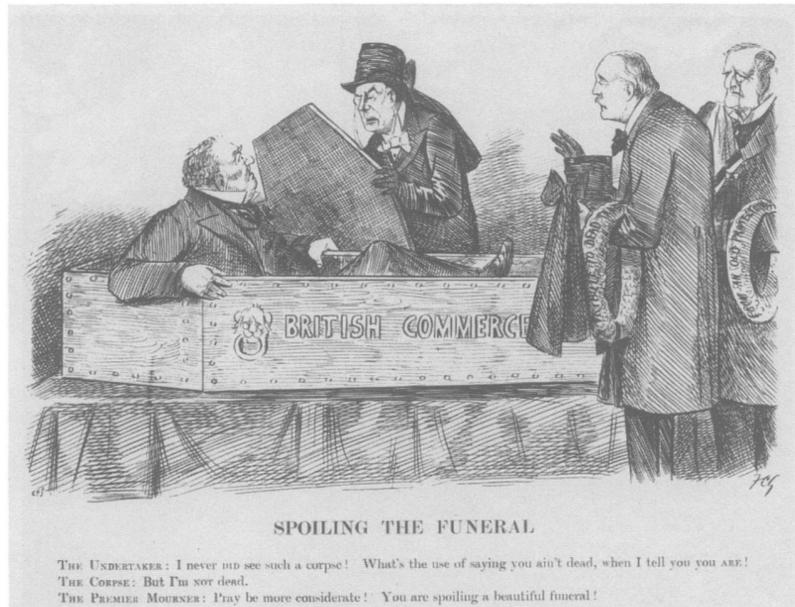


Fig. 3. A 14 October 1903 political cartoon from the *Westminster Gazette* by F. Carruthers Gould. Joe Chamberlain is depicted as the undertaker, Prime Minister Arthur Balfour as the Premier Mourner, and “John Bull” as the Undead corpse.

preliminary lists of characters include “a silent man & dumb woman” who were designated as the “Count’s servants in London.”

The cluster of associations that represent both Dracula and the undertaker are not wholly unique to representations of the occupation. Several socially marginal groups in late-Victorian culture, including Jews and “sexual inverts,”¹⁷ are portrayed in similar ways. Yet the connection between Dracula and the late-Victorian undertaker is particularly intriguing because it needs little metaphoric extrapolation. The undertaker, as embalmer, literally sucks blood from the vessels of corpses, literally creates a corpse resistant to decay, literally obscures distasteful signs of death. And he survives on “blood money,” income garnered by this pursuit. Gothic, androgynous, parasitic, the undertaker is a vampire without metaphoric disguise.

Reading Dracula as an embalmer, and the embalmer as vampiric, foregrounds the resistance of the more established professions to undertakers’ professional aspirations. Before embalming became widespread, undertakers already had begun to professionalize themselves through the usual means: creating training and licensing requirements, publishing professional journals, and setting up schools.¹⁸ By 1905, un-

dertakers had organized the British Undertakers, a London association that provided a detailed handbook of regulations and fee scales and purposed to “raise the status of the profession by getting it recognized by both the central and municipal authorities” (Fritz 250). But it was through embalming that late-nineteenth-century undertakers sought to enhance their social stature, and through embalming that the established professionals tried to squelch it.

If professionalization shifted one’s occupational focus from the acquisition of economic capital to the display of knowledge capital, then embalming offered a particularly productive way for undertakers to make the transition (Larson x-xviii; Perkins 116–70). Embalming demonstrated a technical expertise that was specific to undertakers, yet akin to those of physicians. Its scientific nature made physicians’ refusal to acknowledge undertakers as “brother-professionals” more difficult to uphold. “Embalming enhanced professional status,” according to James J. Farrell in *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830–1920*, “because it allowed undertakers to sell a scientific service in addition to traditional wares of the funeral trade. The similarity of embalming to surgery also suggested the dignified comparison of undertakers to doctors as professional colleagues” (159). By the early twentieth century, most undertakers in Britain offered the service (Litten 54–56).¹⁹

Exploiting Victorian fears of decomposing corpses and unsanitary graveyards, embalmers suggested that they, like doctors, could protect the living from disease. In doing so, embalmers could distinguish themselves from traditional undertakers and thereby distance themselves from claims, such as Booth’s, that they fed on disease-ridden turf. “The undertaking profession, like that of a physician, continually brings him into contact with the elements of disease,” wrote August Renouard in a 1902 textbook, *Disinfection and Chemistry for the Undertaker*, “and as an embalmer he is brought into the closest contact with those conditions that demand a thorough knowledge of disinfection for the welfare of the living as well as the case of the dead” (11).

With these factors in mind, the Dottridge Brothers funeral furnishing firm, which is credited with introducing arterial embalming to England, constructed a new class of clean, modern, scientific, and trustworthy embalmers. In a 1902 advertisement, they explicitly differentiate their “Qualified Operators” from “less enlightened” traditional undertakers, who had “too long neglected the importance of sanitation as applied to their own profession” (Litten 54–55). To underscore their

claims, the Dottridges' advertisements also displayed the "laboratory equipment" kit of their up-to-date "Sanitary Preservation Department." The Dottridges and other advocates of arterial embalming claimed that the new technology more neatly and conveniently preserved bodies for pre-burial viewing than the messy and unreliable ice caskets that had been popular (Farrell 159).

Despite these efforts, critics continued to subsume embalming into a discourse of commercialism that undercut embalmers' self-distancing from the trades. (The Dottridges' entrepreneurial efforts to sell equipment and embalming fluids did not further their case.) Embalming became just another way for ignoble undertakers to raise funeral prices. "What is there to be said for or against embalming?" wrote Bertram S. Puckle as late as 1926. "From the point of view of the trade it has no doubt very much to commend it, for you can sell your richest, most beautiful casket and obtain in addition a liberal fee for embalming" (281).

As embalming became more popular, physicians began to adopt the undertakers' medicinal language surrounding embalming in an attempt to reclaim the "operation" as a surgical procedure that should be rightfully done by "qualified" medical experts. In his 1902 *Lancet* article, the physician Dr. J. G. Garson writes:

It will be seen that embalming is not a matter which should be relegated to the undertaker or someone employed by him to see to, as is too often done with unsatisfactory results. If it is to be practiced successfully it calls for as much knowledge, judgment and skill as does the performance of a surgical operation and therefore it should always receive the direct attention of the qualified medical attendant of the deceased. (1302)

The medical profession's appropriation of the "scientific" province of the undertaker can be read as an attempt to enlarge the gap between the professions—and relegate undertakers back to the non-scientific merchant class. Ultimately, however, these efforts were not enough. The problem was larger than the technology.

III. "If ever a face meant death."

Arterial embalming's greatest asset, its ability to preserve bodies, was precisely the attribute that made it so disturbing to Victorians. Anxieties surrounding the practice largely grew out of the unstable (or perhaps too stable) product it created: an uncanny corpse that seemed

never to die. And the embalmed corpse's Un-Dead appearance hit a deeply embedded cultural nerve. During the nineteenth century, medical professionals and the general public developed a profound interest in the "death-like" states of suspended animation made apparent, or caused, by new scientific technologies. Artificial resuscitation could revive "dead" bodies and anatomical dissection exposed the non-uniform "death" of discrete body parts. Franz Anton Mesmer, the eighteenth-century father of hypnotism, not only believed the hypnotic trance allowed the "soul to leave the body, during which time the body might appear lifeless," but could restore the dead to life (Pernick 24).²⁰ "By the mid-nineteenth century," writes historian Martin Pernick, "researchers identified a long list of traumas and diseases that produced states of suspended animation or the 'unlived life' that counterfeited death: extreme cold, opiates, alcohol, hemorrhage, apoplexy (stroke), suffocation, high fever, and head injury" (23).²¹

Medical journals and the popular press were rife with anecdotes of "true" live burials, burials of bodies that appeared to be dead, but were not. H. Gerald Chapin, who analyzed a proposed New York state law to prevent premature burial in an 1898 edition of the *Medico-Legal Journal* refers to an 8 December 1877 *London Lancet* article that records a "real" live burial case in Naples (2). Edwin Chadwick mentioned several cases of premature burial in his 1843 Report. So prevalent was the fear that an Association for the Prevention of Premature Burial was established in 1896 (Polson 12). Even the popular press capitalized on the phenomenon: Arthur Hallam published a magazine called *The Burial Reformer*, a name he soon changed to *Perils of Premature Burial*. The sensationalist magazine did not cease publication until 1914 (Curl 177). As a result of the confusion surrounding the death state, some scientists proposed burning, poking, or mechanically pinching the body as a way of determining death (Pernick 39). A bill proposed before the New York State Legislature on 4 March 1898 attempted to prevent live burial by enforcing a series of sometimes bizarre tests that included burning the skin, attempting to "bleed" the corpse and placing a mirror in front of the nostrils. It even was forbidden in some places, such as the Frankfurt-am-Main cemetery, to bury a body until it showed definitive signs of decomposition: rigor mortis and bodily putrefaction (Curl 177). While embalming seemed to guarantee one's death before burial, it also made the corpse a confusing signifier of death (Pernick 35). The sign that was prized was the deteriorating body—the body in



Fig. 4. This advertisement for Bigsa embalming fluid shows a well-preserved corpse three months after death and embalming (circa 1902).

VICTORIAN STUDIES

the process of falling apart. The embalmed body became grotesque because it was whole and undisintegrated, because it looked too life-like, because it would not properly disintegrate into dust.²²

A 1902 advertisement for Bigsa embalming fluid finally reveals what is at stake in embalming (fig. 4). The advertisement portrays a perfectly preserved corpse, embalmed three months previously, fully dressed in business attire, seated, and holding a newspaper (Strub and Frederick 46).²³ At first glance, the advertisement seems to suggest that through embalming one can retain one's middle-class appearance, and thereby the status achieved in life in the grave. Certainly, this was a perception that circulated in mass culture. According to Ruth Richardson,

[t]he commercial protection of the identity and integrity of the corpse—like many of the folk observances from which it in part derived—can be understood as a form of insurance. Whether or not physical resurrection would actually take place, it served as a metaphor for the possibility of providing a secure future for the soul. . . . The double metaphor by which even the afterlife figuratively became a marketable commodity was accessible to all but those lacking adequate means. (274)

Signifying economic security, embalming seemed to connote spiritual security, collapsing the appearance of material integrity into its metaphysical counterpart. More obviously, preserving the materiality of the corpse seemed to open up the possibility of preserving the immaterial attributes of life in the body, including moral and social status.

But in appearing to reaffirm middle-class class markings through embalming, the Bigsa advertisement reveals a more ominous truth: because of the laws regulating the use of corpses, the apparent gentleman's body most certainly belonged to an individual who had been destitute. He simply was remade to appear middle class. It was recognized, of course, that creating a corpse's lifelike demeanor required the enhancement of artifice, theatrical makeup, and clothing. Undertakers injected dyes into embalming fluid to create a "healthy" glow to the cheeks. They stuffed cotton into sunken eye sockets and cheeks; sewed jaws shut, false teeth in place; and jerked joints set in rigor mortis into appropriate "natural" poses (Strub and Frederick 343–59). At times, "the after-death appearance may be such as to make it desirable to impart a *more* lifelike aspect to the face than it had assumed," wrote J. G. Garson in his 1902 article in *The Lancet* (1302, emphasis added). But the Bigsa ad suggests that the embalmer also had the authority to play deadly tricks: as the costumer and

makeup artist to the dead, he knew that corpses had no essential class identity beneath their prettified appearance.²⁴ The embalmed corpse became a threatening signifier of deception in a culture where appearance was all.

Can we be surprised, then, that in *Dracula*, the vampire's acumen at preservation becomes his greatest threat? When Arthur sees Lucy's well-preserved corpse, he questions ominously: "Is this really Lucy's body or only a demon in her shape?" "It is her body, and yet not it," Van Helsing replies (260; see also McWhir 34). All corpses are and are not the dead person who embodied them, but the embalmed corpse makes that distinction even more unsettling. That Lucy's body has not begun to deteriorate one week after her death is a sign of the "unnaturalness" of her demise. "I had expected a rush of gas from the week-old corpse," Dr. Seward writes after opening Lucy's coffin. "We doctors, who have had to study our dangers, have to become accustomed to such things, and I drew back towards the door" (242). Lucy's corpse has not prematurely disintegrated or been "buried alive," as Arthur suggests (251). Lucy is dead, but won't stay buried. She has been "body snatched," not by the undertaker's people whom Seward first accuses, but by Dracula who has embalmed her (243).²⁵

Positioning the anatomist's practice of autopsy as less horrific than the undertaker's propensity to embalm, Van Helsing tells Seward that he wants to "cut off [Lucy's] head and take out her heart." The British doctor Seward protests,

But why do it at all? The girl is dead. Why mutilate her poor body without need? And if there is no necessity for a post-mortem and nothing to gain by it—no good to her, to us, to science, to human knowledge—why do it? Without such it is monstrous. (208)

Yet Van Helsing makes it clear that the eternally-preserved body is more monstrous than the mutilated one. Even premature burial becomes preferable to the unstable embalmed grotesque. The "Crew of Light" chooses to "bury" Mina Harker alive rather than to have Dracula preserve her as an "Un-Dead" corpse. Indeed, she requests it: "I want you to read the Burial service" she asks her husband. "I am deeper in death at this moment than if the weight of an earthly grave lay heavy upon me!" (392). And he reads the service from the Burial of the Dead over her still (perhaps) living body (392–93). In mutilating Lucy's corpse, in metaphorically burying Mina, the doctors preserve their imaginative constructions, they preserve the women in memory as they would like

them to be. They preserve a social order where medicine, no matter how perverse, is preferable to embalming a corpse.

IV. "It made me think of the wonderful power of money!"

In asserting the preeminence of medicine in manipulating the corpse, the doctors in *Dracula* attempt to maintain class hierarchies as they are. The novel takes a more ambivalent position. Making direct parallels between Dracula's live embalming of bodies and the scientific tasks of the doctors, Stoker disallows the possibility of any class-bound "essence" even for established professionals.²⁶ If Dracula enlivens the dead, certainly the physicians are experts at deadening the living. Herbert Mayo's 1851 book, which Stoker read, proposed the medically-diagnosed and often medically-induced phenomenon of *scheintod*, or "apparent death," as a scientific explanation for "Vampirism." *Dracula* abounds with the medically-diagnosed (or often-induced) states of apparent death. Jonathan Harker risks hypothermia on the way to Transylvania; Lucy and Mina both take chloral, an opiate (160, 174); the maids pass out after drinking alcohol spiked with chloral after Lucy dies (187); Lucy suffers shortness of breath and sleepwalks (96); Jonathan has a violent attack of "brain fever" (131); Lucy's mother has an apoplectic seizure (183); Mina suffers a head injury when she is seared by the Host (352); Renfield's skull is fractured and he lapses into a coma (96, 142). There is obviously an overabundance of hemorrhage in the text, but Renfield's untempered bleeding is perhaps the most extreme example (331).

Both Dracula and the physicians engage in mind-reading. In this they even compete. Lucy writes in a letter to Mina of Dr. Seward, "I can fancy what a wonderful power he must have over his patients. He has a curious habit of looking one straight in the face, as if trying to read one's thoughts" (73). And, proposing a telepathic battle with Dracula for Mina's mind on the voyage to Transylvania, Van Helsing says, "If it be that she can, by our hypnotic trance, tell what the Count see and hear, is it not more true that he who have hypnotise her first . . . should, if he will, compel her mind to disclose to him that which she know?" (382).

Nor is Dracula alone in injecting poisons. Seward remarks that in visiting the sick Lucy, Van Helsing "took with him a bag in which were many instruments and drugs, 'the ghastly paraphernalia of our beneficial trade'"

(157). The chloral that Van Helsing feeds both Lucy and Mina to “help them sleep” was used not just as a narcotic, but as a base for embalming solutions (along with bichloride of mercury and zinc chloride) before formaldehyde replaced it in the early twentieth century (Garson 1303). In fact, chloral itself was potentially lethal, since “an effective dose [was] perilously close to a lethal dose” (Wolf 134n). Early anesthesia researcher, Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, listed chloral hydrate among the drugs that could produce “death-like states” (Pernick 41).

Moreover, it is worth noting that nineteenth-century technological advances in medicine simultaneously improved undertaking techniques. “Men sneered at vivisection, and yet look at the results to-day!” rejoices Dr. Seward (95). Ironically, modern embalming—the very thing that Seward is fighting against—was a veritable outgrowth of the practice of dissection. Certainly, the doctors are themselves blood-suckers. Van Helsing wrote to Dr. Seward: “Tell your friend that when that time you suck [the gangrenous poison] from my wound so swiftly” (148). Vivisection, bloodletting, transfusion, hypnosis—marginal practices for Victorian physicians—mimic Dracula’s techniques and become the very tools through which the doctors destroy preserved and predatory bodies.²⁷

Finally, if undertakers were believed to manipulate burial laws to preserve their own interests, Van Helsing and Seward are guilty of similar deeds. When Lucy’s mother dies, Seward and Van Helsing decide to sidetrack the coroner. Taking matters into his own hands, Seward says to Van Helsing,

I came to speak about the certificate of death. If we do not act properly and wisely, there may be an inquest, and that paper would have to be produced. I am in hopes that we need have no inquest, for if we had it would surely kill poor Lucy, if nothing else did. I know, and you know, and the other doctor who attended her knows, that Mrs. Westenra had disease of the heart, and we can certify that she died of it. Let us fill up the certificate at once, and I shall take it myself to the registrar and go on to the undertaker. (190)

In this context, the undertaker is merely the recipient of a death certificate that already has been falsified by the physicians. And while the doctors may be working on Lucy’s behalf, Dr. Van Helsing’s motives are unclear: distraught by Lucy’s weakened state, Van Helsing “raised his hands over his head in *a sort of mute despair*, and then beat his palms together in a helpless way” (173, emphasis added). Considering the performative nature of the Victorian mute’s occupational grief, and Van

Helsing's propensity to pun, needn't we be somewhat skeptical of the sincerity of Van Helsing's "mute despair"?²⁸ After all, upon Lucy's death, the doctors again bypass a coroner's inquest and illegally take it upon themselves to browse through Lucy's private legal papers (205).

Given their own similarities to the vampire-undertaker, it is not enough for the doctors to eradicate Lucy's "embalmed" corpse as signifier for the vampire's desire. They must destroy the corpse's creator. For what Dracula, as undertaker, desires is precisely what the doctors will not allow: recognition of the similarity between the two occupations. Dracula's aspiration of attaining professional status (and I mean that in the double-sense of the word: aspiration as drawing or sucking something out, and aspiration as desiring to achieve) plays off of the nineteenth-century trope that allies him, a degraded aristocrat, with the equally degraded lower-class body. Dracula acts as both servant and master in his castle. He is both a grave-digger and a coffin merchant, who imports more than 50 coffins to England.²⁹ And he is, in some respects, a social climber. Dracula requests, for instance, not simply that Jonathan Harker teach him to speak English, but to speak it so that "no man stops if he sees me, or pause in his speaking if he hear my words, to say, 'Ha, ha! a stranger!'" (28). The "stranger" he refers to is not only foreign but, most likely, a member of the wrong social class.

Stephen Arata argues that in *Dracula*, "even foreign blood is better than lower-class blood" (632). Quincey Morris and Van Helsing demonstrate that being a foreigner doesn't necessarily prohibit acceptability if one has appropriate credentials. Certainly, Morris and Van Helsing, though marginal, are more readily brought into the inner circle than any of the lower-class characters who possess heavily-accented speech and awkward attire. The undertaker, even with a king's resources, even with (or perhaps because of) his power to read his clientele's social status, still lacks the cultivated "accent" of the gentlemanly professional.

As the novel progresses, Dracula's aspirations grow more defined as he sucks the transfused blood of the "Crew of Light" from Lucy's body. The middle-class professionals become embodied in Dracula, just as he is already embodied in them. It is not enough for the doctors to put Dracula "back in his place" (Transylvania): they kill him off in his coffin to ensure that his perversely preserved body appropriately "crumble[s] into dust" (443). It is too late. Ironically,



Fig. 5. This famous 1884 photograph of Sarah Bernhardt playing dead was sold on postcards. Courtesy of the Corbis-Bettmann Archive (New York).

Dracula and his antagonists are already one. When Jonathan Harker looks in the shaving glass and sees no reflection of Dracula who is standing “close” behind him, he remarks, “The whole room behind me was displayed; but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself” (34). Dracula and Jonathan Harker merge into an image of one man, himself. And despite the fact that Dracula seizes the mirror and flings it out the window, the damage has been done: Jonathan Harker’s dark side has been revealed—embedded in his own reflection. Dracula becomes Harker who, as a clerk, is another marginal figure, teetering on the first rung of the aspiring professions.

VICTORIAN STUDIES

Burton Bledstein argues that in contrast to individuals in profit-driven pursuits, the professional was constructed as a “free person . . . usually accountable only to himself” (92). The undertaker, parasitically dependent upon market trends, seemed antithetical to such a construction. The professional was supposed to be immune to the transience of fashion endemic to modernity. He protected “tradition” in the midst of constant change. And yet, as a product of modernity, the professional was himself parasitic, cultivating what Bledstein calls “an atmosphere of constant crisis—emergency—in which practitioners both created work for themselves and reinforced their authority by intimidating clients” (100). The oft-remarked obsession with newfangled technology of the professionals in *Dracula* only begins to allude to the engagement of established professions with the transience of modernity. For the maelstrom of gothic drama, the “emergency” of the vampire’s intrusion, becomes itself the doctors’ self-interested doing.

The novel becomes a meditation on the collapse between appearance and essence. In modern life, it suggests, what one sees is all that there is, and all that there is is performed. In her famous 1884 coffin photo, the actress Sarah Bernhardt anticipates *Dracula*’s message (fig. 5). Lying in a coffin with her eyes closed and arms crossed, the actress appears to be dead, but is not. The photo allegorizes Bernhardt’s occupation. As a performer, the actress continually kills off and animates multiple selves. What one sees, the portrait suggests, is real only if one chooses to believe it. More likely than not, what is real is not what one sees. Conscious of the necessity of performance in modern life, Bernhardt revels in the power to construct her own image. In playing dead, she becomes her own undertaker, and embalms herself.

Baudelaire’s mid-century suggestion that the streets are cluttered with “an immense procession of undertakers” now makes a great deal more sense. The modern middle class is full of undertakers, not because they mourn, but because they perform. By adopting the role of the professional, by appearing to be professionals, undertakers were little different from physicians, from lawyers, from clerics, who were performers themselves. And if the distinctions were slight, then the boundary between the professions and commerce, the middle class and the crafts, might be an illusion, kept intact by the complicity of those who perform and those who must watch. Jonathan Harker’s search for *Dracula* in his reflection becomes a search for substance, essence, be-

hind what appears to be. But Dracula, in smashing the mirror, suggests that for the modern subject there is only appearance. The “thing” is appearance itself.

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NOTES

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¹This is not true for the women characters in the novel, who are generally defined through their relationships to men. For instance, the “mad doctor—loves girl” and the same “girl—dies.” The figure who undoubtedly becomes Mina in the novel is mentioned only as “lawyer’s shrewd-skeptical sister.” Stoker’s working notes for the novel are housed at the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia. It is with their permission that I refer to them. The list mentioned here is on page 35 of the notes.

²Paul S. Fry’s recent essay traces the origins of modern undertaking in England until the early nineteenth century. He gestures toward the late-nineteenth-century consolidation of the trade into a profession in the last paragraph of his essay. This essay begins where his leaves off and also considers the metaphoric significance of the undertaker within the larger theater of Victorian culture. See also E. Bronfen, A. Douglas, T. Laqueur, and R. Richardson. Ruth Richardson traces the iconography of the corpse in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British popular culture and folklore in the first chapter of her book (“The Corpse and Popular Culture,” 3–29). See also Julian Litten’s book on English funeral customs and Steven J. Curl’s work on the Victorian cult of mourning. To their credit, Laqueur, Richardson, and Douglas address the marginal and culturally significant position of the undertaker. And, in the last chapter of her book, Richardson offers a striking analysis of undertakers as an increasingly consolidated “profession which ‘sold’ death to a market below the aristocracy” (271–81). While I am particularly indebted to Richardson’s work, the larger focus of her project on the Anatomy Act allows her only to begin to theorize undertaking as a theoretically significant cultural category.

³The complete passage reads: “N’est-il pas l’habit nécessaire de notre époque, souffrante et portant jusque sur ses épaules noires et maigres le symbole d’un deuil perpétuel? Remarquez bien que l’habit noir et la redingote ont non-seulement leur beauté poétique, qui est l’expression de l’âme publique leur beauté politique, qui est l’expression de l’égalité universelle, mais encore;—une immense défilade de croque-morts, croque-morts politiques, croque-morts amoureux, croque-morts bourgeois. Nous célébrons tous quelque enterrment” (198). (“Observe that the black frock-coat and tailcoat not only have their political beauty, which is the expression of universal equality. But also their poetic beauty, which is the expression of the public soul;—an immense procession of undertakers, political undertakers, undertakers in love, bourgeois

VICTORIAN STUDIES

undertakers. We all celebrate some burial.”) “Croque-mort” is sometimes translated as funeral employee or “mute” in the nineteenth-century sense since these individuals were considered “harbingers of death itself” (Litten 170–71). The term also may be translated as undertaker and simultaneously means anyone with a sinister or funereal countenance, suggesting a collapse between these traits and the occupation. The translation of “croque-mort” as either undertaker or mute has similar connotations, and “undertaker” seems a more appropriate definition given the context.

⁴While the Anatomy Act legitimized the medical profession’s use of corpses for dissection and, Ruth Richardson argues, helped consolidate doctors’ professional status, the admission of dissection made doctors the subject of cultural apprehension. In an attempt to improve their marginal position, many nineteenth-century physicians de-emphasized the surgical aspects of medicine, which might necessitate their handling of corpses, and instead emphasized the less tactile, interpretive realm of diagnostics. Indeed, diagnostic medicine and surgery were considered distinct professions. Practitioners were certified by different professional groups, the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Surgeons. The latter was considered of higher order. The 1858 Medical Act established a single national register of physicians, and by the end of the century, physicians and surgeons were increasingly seen as members of one profession (Larson 21). Though, by this time, the perception of their association with grave robbers had diminished significantly.

⁵Cemetery reform became a prominent issue in the wake of the cholera epidemics of the 1830s. Edwin Chadwick’s famous 1843 report on interment in towns, which proposed banning public burial within London, was followed by a series of Burial Acts, beginning in 1850 with the Metropolitan Interments Act, which, according to Hugh Meller, “legislated that the Board of Health should have powers to lay out new cemeteries, advise on the closure of old churchyards . . . and even to purchase compulsorily the private cemeteries.” This Act was repealed by the 1852 Burial Act which “empowered London vestries to form Burial Boards and provide new burial grounds of their own” (11). Every few years, throughout the nineteenth century, new Burial Acts were legislated which modified the powers of these Burial Boards. For an overview of the changes in burial laws in London, see Meller 6–12.

⁶Hypocrisy comes from the Greek *hypocritus*, which means actor. Judging funeral performers to be hypocrites critiques the pomp of the Victorian funeral as theater, but also appeals to an ideal of authenticity in which appearance derives from essence and sentiment precedes performance.

⁷Larson argues that until the nineteenth century the craft guilds of “common” practitioners—scriveners, apothecaries, barber-surgeons, master-masons, etc.—occupied a wholly different social sphere than did the elite “learned” professionals. The guilds were commercially-oriented. The status of learned professionals supposedly relied on knowledge capital (2–8).

⁸Habenstein and Lamers read this passage as evidence that Booth “makes it clear that the trade of undertaker was shaping itself into definite form, with subdivisions appearing as a consequence of the need for specialization and division of labor” (186). Booth regards this “definite form” as primarily crafts-oriented and not related to professionalization.

⁹There was much concern in Victorian England over the disrepair of graveyards and the unsanitary gases generated by decomposing bodies. More thorough knowledge of infectious diseases made it clear that the dead actually could endanger the health of

the living. An 1886 American Medical Association report could well hold true for Britain: “The fatal illusion that the earth renders harmless and innocuous the corpse must be dispelled. Incontrovertible proof of the fact that the vicinity of graveyards is unhealthy is superabundant” (Orr 65–66).

¹⁰The witness probably refers to St. Pancras and Islington cemetery on Finchley Common. This was the largest and first publicly owned cemetery in London, established two years after the 1852 Burial Act was passed (Meller 261–64). “Little Ilford” was the common name for the City of London cemetery, founded in 1856. Second in size to St. Pancras and Islington cemetery, the cemetery was considered of a model design, “efflorescence,” and was the burial site of many illustrious Londoners (Meller 106–14).

This example was mentioned in a 1904 Medico-Legal report to support an argument that espoused the benefits of cremation. Cremation became increasingly popular during the early twentieth century and there is interesting theoretical work to be done on discourse surrounding this phenomenon beginning in the mid nineteenth century. (Consider, for instance, the cremations prevalent in H. Rider Haggard’s *She*. This phenomenon also lends a different perspective to readings of the famous sublimation in Dickens’s *Bleak House*.) For more information on cremation practices in Britain, see Joanna Bourke 221–28.

¹¹Consider, for instance, Joe Orton’s 1968 play, *Loot*, which focuses on a bisexual undertaker and his gay lover who remove a woman’s corpse from her coffin in order to stuff it with stolen money. The feminized portrayal of undertakers may be related to the fact that before the practice of laying out the dead became a commercial occupation, it was generally performed by women relatives and neighbors (Habenstein 235–38; see also Douglas 240–72). However, recent research on embalming opens up the possibility that the undertaker’s androgyny has a biological link. A 1988 article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* attempted to explain the cause of a phenomenon of impotence, low sex drive, decreased beard growth, and the development of breasts found among male morticians. The researchers surmised that embalming cream mimicked the “effects of oestrogen,” a female sexual hormone, and concluded that “morticians should be made aware of this potential hazard and should wear gloves when using embalming cream, to avoid this ‘embalmer’s curse’” (Finkelstein 964). The embalmer’s “curse,” like the archaic euphemism for menstruation, becomes a distasteful sign of femininity.

¹²Stoker managed actor Henry Irving’s theater for 28 years.

¹³Until the 1890s, arterial embalming was much more widespread in the United States than in England. Largely as a result of the Dottridges’ efforts, the practice became almost ubiquitous in England by the 1920s (Litten 54–56). For a brief history of embalming, see Strub and Frederick 27–48; see also Polson. In short, Dutch doctor Frederick Ruysch (1666–1717) is credited with discovering the first successful system of arterial embalming, and the Scottish anatomist William Hunter (1718–1783) with popularizing the injection method as a means of preservation (Strub and Frederick 39–40). The American Dr. Thomas Holmes (1817–1900) popularized embalming to transport dead soldiers home during the Civil War; after the war, he experimented with embalming fluids and turned embalming into a commercial practice (Strub and Frederick 42). Formaldehyde was discovered in 1859, but it was not used as an embalming solution until the early twentieth century. Two *Lancet* articles (31 July 1897 and 9 Nov. 1901) discuss the advantages of using

Formic Aldehyde (or formaldehyde) in the preservation of dead bodies, but the procedure clearly was still experimental.

¹⁴Stoker's language of poison resonates with late-Victorian social narratives of contagion and degeneration, but the allusion to poison in *Dracula* has material connotations as well. An 1890 article by Harrison Mettler that attempts to distinguish between "real" and "apparent" death implicitly connects the process of embalming to poisoning and both to medicinal substances, such as anesthetics, that could cause a live body to "appear" to be dead. Arsenic and other toxic substances were commonly used as preservatives in embalming, making it impossible to tell whether the poison had been injected after death or had caused it (Mettler 172–79).

¹⁵Judith Halberstam argues that these traits make *Dracula* resemble fictional Jews in Victorian literature (341). She specifically links parasitism to Jewishness, but the collapse also holds true for undertakers. Indeed, what is curious and warrants more attention is how similar representations of Jews and undertakers are. It does seem significant that *Oliver Twist* joins up with Fagin, "the Jew" whom Halberstam likens to *Dracula*, after apprenticing for an undertaker. See also Jules Zanger's essay, "A Sympathetic Vibration: *Dracula* and the Jews."

¹⁶This is one of a series of cartoons published by Gould in the *Westminster Gazette* in 1903 and reprinted in a collection. Gould's cartoons from that year are staunchly critical of Joe Chamberlain's economic policies which he saw as a reversion to early-nineteenth-century Protectionism. Chamberlain's twentieth-century approach sought to consolidate the British Empire and British imperial power by instituting protectionist policies that gave preference to agricultural imports from British colonies (Reid 102–06). Gould is almost as critical of Prime Minister Arthur Balfour whom he inevitably portrays as Chamberlain's lackey. The cartoon depicts Chamberlain as undertaker, Balfour as "Chief Mourner," and "John Bull" as the corpse who attempts to rise from a coffin marked "British Commerce." F. C. Gould's 1903 cartoon of a robust corpse, which sits up and pronounces itself "not dead" despite the on-looking undertaker's insistence of that fact, satirized Joe Chamberlain's dismantling of Free Trade. The cartoon's humor presumes a reading public familiar not only with the contemporary policy battle, but with the intricate fin-de-siècle ménage between undertaker, mourner, and corpse. Significantly, the cartoon portrays Joe Chamberlain as undertaker and the enfeebled Prime Minister Arthur Balfour as chief mourner to imply that, though Balfour paid for the spectacle, Chamberlain, like the undertaker at a funeral, ran the political show. The cartoon also suggests, however, that undertakers were like Chamberlain: they likewise grasped for social power at the expense of the British populace—the living corpse of John Bull. "What's the use of saying you ain't dead, when I tell you ARE!" the undertaker asks the insolent corpse as he closes it into the coffin, a coffin labeled "British Commerce." The undertaker thereby pulls a linguistic trump card that presupposes his expert ability to read a body dead even in the face of material evidence to the contrary. Gould's cartoon exposes the uncertainty with which the undertaker might make such a claim of death and implies how deeply embedded commerce was in such suppositions. Undertakers ensured their own livelihood in reading bodies dead—whether or not those bodies appeared alive.

¹⁷Chris Craft has convincingly shown how *Dracula*'s vampiric sexuality draws on late-Victorian anxieties about the potential fluidity of gender roles and sexual desire. He writes that "sexual inversion" is a "classificatory term involving a complex negotiation

between socially encoded gender norms and a sexual mobility that would seem at first unconstrained by these norms" (221). He writes that "sexual inversion and Stoker's account of vampirism . . . are symmetrical metaphors sharing a fundamental ambivalence" (224). Noting this, Judith Halberstam has argued that Dracula represents "otherness itself" (349). Yet the connection between Dracula, undertakers, Jews, and sexual inverts seems to suggest something more specific: the vampire does not represent some universalized Other. He represents a socially and economically aspiring Other who scales the slippery facade of free enterprise, an Other whom members of the established bourgeoisie cannot readily distinguish from themselves.

¹⁸In England, of the "thirteen contemporary professions listed by Harold Wilensky as 'established' or 'in process,' ten acquired an association of national scope between 1825 and 1880" (Larson 5). In addition to physicians and surgeons, pharmacists, veterinarians, dentists, nurses, and opticians are among the professions listed. Undertakers are not (Larson 246). While British undertakers did not organize a professional society until 1905, their exclusion from the ranks of professionals in this period is significant and perhaps has to do with the fact that "certification" was granted by authorities who had a vested commercial interest in training large numbers of individuals. In England and the United States, embalming fluid manufacturers had much to do with the institutionalization and regulation of undertakers. Strub and Frederick write, "Representatives of the fluid manufacturers traveled about the country holding one or two day schools of instruction on the use of their products. Attendance at one of these meetings, and the purchase of a quantity of embalming fluid entitled an individual to a diploma for the right to practice as an embalmer" (46).

¹⁹Embalming is a different manifestation of the apparently banal modern technologies that, Jennifer Wicke argues, underpin vampirism. For Wicke, the "social force most analogous to Count Dracula's . . . is none other than mass culture, the developing technologies of the media in its many forms," a quotidian omnipresence secreted by the novel's foregrounded exoticism (469).

²⁰Although this suggestion was by no means universally accepted, it continued to circulate in mass culture. And, as Mary Russo has pointed out, in George DuMaurier's *Trilby*, the singer's life is prolonged through hypnotism, which allows her to finish her aria long after her soul has left her apparently dead body (155–57).

²¹Queen Victoria's own claim that her dead Prince Albert was still "living, only invisible," her insistence that his private rooms be retained as he had left them, that fresh clothes be laid out daily, that hot water and clean towels be brought nightly to his dressing room underscored this boundary confusion (Fulford 47). See also Darby and Smith.

²²I draw on Peter Stallybrass's and Allon White's definition of the grotesque as "a *process of hybridization* . . . that which tends to operate as a critique of the dominant ideology which has already set the terms, designating what is high and low" (43). The grotesque as process engages in hierarchizing and equalizing, perpetually moving between the transgressive and the expected, the idealized and the extraneous. The grotesque negotiates between binaries. It is the moment of slippage, the open space between oppositions, where bodies die in living and corpses live in death.

²³The advertisement mimics memorial portraits, which arguably made up the largest group of nineteenth-century domestic photographs in the United States and England. Early in the century, corpses had made ideal photographic subjects since they would sit without

flinching for the requisite 30 seconds to one minute that it took to form a daguerreotype. (The irony was that when photographed, the living could look unnaturally dead. Cathy Davidson remarks that subjects who moved during the taking of photographs made ghostly images that appeared to dematerialize [679].) The tradition of photographing the dead continued long after improved technology significantly increased the camera's shutter speed. Stanley Burns's collection of nineteenth-century mortuary photographs, *Sleeping Beauty: Memorial Photography in America*, displays pictures of corpses with their eyes open and mouths posed as if to speak, dead infants cradled sleepily in their mothers' arms, women and men sitting up in armchairs.

²⁴Although it is outside the scope of this essay to consider the specific gender dynamics of the erotic corpse, Elisabeth Bronfen's work suggests that women are constructed in a state that lies between life and death and therefore particularly vulnerable to being aestheticized in the discourse of spiritualism, hypnosis, and death. See particularly Bronfen's chapter 15, "Risky Resemblances: On Repetitions, Mourning, and Representation," 324–48. For an analysis of the erotic corpse read in psychoanalytic terms, see Judith Eloise Pike. More work also needs to be done on configuring the specific gender dynamics of the corpse as actress, "dolloed up" or as Ann Douglas suggests, "made to resemble dolls" (209). The corpse as performer is always already at center stage of the middle-class funeral performance. The competition between doctors and undertakers over who has rights to control the body becomes one of pecking order. I also suspect that the young female corpse becomes erotic, precisely because it can no longer reproduce, thereby becoming simply produce.

²⁵The prevalence of body-snatching already was alluded to in the novel by Mr. Swales, who remarks on the presence of empty graves, "Why, there be scores of these lay-beds that be toom as old Dun's 'bacca-box on Friday night" (89). While Swales refers to bodies that have been lost at sea, the ironic suggestion of tombstones marking empty graves would resonate with body-snatching tales for most of the reading audience.

²⁶Focusing particularly on the Victorian anxieties about gender, Craft argues that Van Helsing and the other doctors attempt to reestablish the "sanctified dualism" of the living and the dead, and thus, the masculine and feminine, between which Dracula slips (225–26). But Craft acknowledges that the novel is more complex in its separation between Dracula and the doctors. He points out that "*Dracula* certainly problematizes, if it does not quite erase, the line of separation signifying a meaningful difference between Van Helsing and the Count" (235). I would take his point one step farther to suggest that the novel's overarching project is precisely to collapse such distinctions.

²⁷The contemporary technique of transfusion, developed in 1818 by British physician James Blundell, became prevalent in the 1870s. However, transfusion remained a risky procedure until the discovery of blood groups and anticoagulants in the early twentieth century.

²⁸In his annotations to the novel, Leonard Wolf remarks on Van Helsing's tendency to make "macabre puns." See, for instance, 249n15.

²⁹During the 1890s, domestic coffin makers (undertakers) had a monopoly on the trade. Booth remarks that "there seems to be no importation of coffins ready made from abroad. Sometimes those who die in foreign lands are sent over to be buried in England, but the superstition of sailors prevents their being shipped in anything possessing the outward

shape of a coffin" (Booth 5: 209). Certainly, Stoker was playing on this superstition by making Dracula a coffin-importer. At the same time, Dracula ironically seems an advocate of Free Trade as Stoker was likely to have been. For more on Stoker's liberalism, see Glover.

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