



Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*: A Publishing History (Ashgate Studies in Publishing History: Manuscript, Print, Digital)

Sean Grass

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Even within the context of Charles Dickens's history as a publishing innovator, *Our Mutual Friend* is notable for what it reveals about Dickens as an author and about Victorian publishing. Marking Dickens's return to the monthly number format after nearly a decade of writing fiction designed for weekly publication in *All the Year Round*, *Our Mutual Friend* emerged against the backdrop of his failing health, troubled relationship with Ellen Ternan, and declining reputation among contemporary critics. In his subtly argued publishing history, Sean Grass shows how these difficulties combined to make *Our Mutual Friend* an extraordinarily odd novel, no less in its contents and unusually heavy revisions than in its marketing by Chapman and Hall, its transformation from a serial into British and U.S. book editions, its contemporary reception by readers and reviewers, and its delightfully uneven reputation among critics in the 150 years since Dickens's death. Enhanced by four appendices that offer contemporary accounts of the Staplehurst railway accident, information on archival materials, transcripts of all of the contemporary reviews, and a select bibliography of editions, Grass's book shows why this last of Dickens's finished novels continues to intrigue its readers and critics.

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