

## (Other)Worldly Goods: Gender, Money and Property in the Ghost Stories of Charlotte Riddell

“...money, which is the root of all evil” (“and all good” Jack’s eyes suggested to me)...’<sup>1</sup>

‘Oh! how much trouble and misery and destitution might have been saved had wives but interested themselves in and understood their husbands’ business matters a little more than they have done.’<sup>2</sup>

The ghost stories of Charlotte Riddell evince a fascination with questions of wealth and property. Where many of her realist novels are based in the business heart of London, the supernatural fiction transfers her interest in inheritance, debt, ownership, and tenancy, to the suburbs and the countryside, where the ghost story becomes a way of posing questions about the *spiritual* dimensions of property ownership. Perhaps because it is itself a figure of mediation between the material and the spiritual, the ghost as trope proves particularly enabling as a means of exploring the ethical responsibilities of wealth. Her haunted house narratives interrogate the manifold ways in which a property may be possessed – legally or supernaturally, with moral legitimacy or without it - finally suggesting that it is only the ethically transferred property that can be made a home.

While for a long time Riddell, a prolific and successful author in her day, has been critically neglected, her work is now beginning to receive the critical discussion it deserves.<sup>3</sup> In particular, and following the republication in 2009 of her *Weird Stories* collection, her supernatural fiction has attracted attention from scholars including Andrew Smith, Melissa Edmundson and Lara Baker Whelan, who have explored her output in terms of its economic themes, as women’s and as suburban ghost fiction.<sup>4</sup> In what follows

I aim to develop existing analyses of Riddell as a writer who employs the ghost story for the purposes of social critique, by examining her representational strategies regarding gender and money. Riddell wrote for a living in the discriminatory arena of a male-dominated publishing industry, and she did so in part to support a husband whose fiscal maladroitness often threatened them with ruin. She compares interestingly with other working women writers from the period; women such as Edith Nesbit, who often functioned as primary breadwinner in her marriage, but especially Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Margaret Oliphant, who, like Riddell, experienced particularly acutely a conflict between literary aspiration and the responsibilities of financially supporting a family.<sup>5</sup> Riddell, however, encountered the additional difficulties of writing about commerce and finance in the context of a literary culture that considered these unsuitable topics for fiction, and especially coming from the pen of a female author. And yet, as Patricia Thomas Srebrnik tells us, in her ‘City’ novels Riddell explored the commercial activities of the ‘middling classes’ specifically from the perspectives of women – wives of businessmen, and women who worked for their livings - seeking to explode the ideological myth of separate spheres by demonstrating the multiple lines of mutual effect between so-called ‘public’ and ‘private’ domains.<sup>6</sup> In the light, then, of Riddell’s acute awareness of women as economic agents (actual and potential), it might seem surprising that in her ghost fiction it is exclusively *male* protagonists whose actions unlock money’s potential for good, while women in possession of wealth acquire monstrous dimensions. Through close-reading of stories drawn not only from *Weird Stories* but also from her wider oeuvre, this essay shall argue for these aspects of her Gothic fiction as strategies through which Riddell, conscious of the socially-proscribed nature of female knowledge about finance, seeks covertly to install at the heart of economic practice a *feminine* wisdom originating in domestic relations.

The Gothic aspects of these stories obtain largely in their vision of human relationships deformed through the workings of capital. Riddell usually (there are exceptions) eschews using the supernatural elements to frighten or disturb, instead presenting paranormal mysteries whose solutions yield readerly comfort. Her monsters are often drawn along the lines of Sheridan Le Fanu's Silas Ruthyn; they are living persons made demonic by a financial avarice which perverts all human feeling.<sup>7</sup> The stories expose financially-motivated forms of exploitation and abuse as a hidden underside to respectable middle-class society. In so doing they operate, like the sensation novels of the 1860s, to *gothicise* the middle-class home, pointing to its frequent reality as a space of entrapment, bondage and tyranny.

That many of these stories have, however, an ultimately reassuring character, must I think be understood in the context of their overall ideological project. Riddell was certainly conscious of the evils produced by a capitalist economy which amplified extremes of wealth and poverty; but as a member of the emergent middle class, she might reasonably have hoped to benefit from its workings. Forms of economic activity that became more widely available in this period, such as stock and share ownership, offered women such as herself unprecedented economic and social freedoms.<sup>8</sup> I suggest that it is this contradiction which it is the purpose of her ghost-fiction-as-financial-writing to resolve. Riddell's ghost stories may evince a remarkably Gothic vision of the possible consequences of capital, but they must ultimately be read, I think, as attempts to reassure readers that with the adoption of a judicious, *feminised*, financial ethic, one may be spiritually at ease with ones wealth.

## I.

*Weird Stories* appeared in 1882, a year in which also occurred two events of great significance for its themes: the establishment of the Society for Psychical Research, and

the passing of a new instalment of The Married Women's Property Act. The stories would have been written, then, in a context of intense debate about the nature and capacities of women in relation to possession, both spiritual and material. The scientific men of the SPR sought to free investigation into a possibly supernatural realm from its association with a spiritualist movement in which women held positions of unusual prestige.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, and in the context of increasingly vociferous campaigning for women's rights, feminist reformers struggled to gain legal acceptance of the need for married women to control their own property.

In Riddell's own life issues around finance and gender were posed particularly acutely. Born Charlotte Elizabeth Lawson Cowan, in Ireland in 1832, she enjoyed early years of considerable prosperity, until a financial catastrophe suffered by her father reduced the family to 'near poverty' and with significant debts.<sup>10</sup> Following her father's death she migrated with her mother to England in her early 20s, intent on regenerating the family finances by writing for a living. As E. F. Bleiler surmises, these must have been difficult times, with Charlotte combining the stuttering career of a fledgling writer with nursing her ailing mother, who died within a couple of years.<sup>11</sup> Charlotte married Joseph Hadley Riddell, a civil engineer and inventor, in 1857. Bleiler tells us that Riddell wrote of her husband after his death as 'a charming and intelligent man, but completely unsuited to a life of business.'<sup>12</sup> Her husband suffering several business failures and bankruptcies, Riddell became responsible for the family income, writing fiction and editing literary magazines in order to support them both. It seems, however, that despite the relative success of Riddell's career it was always characterised by a degree of precariousness. In part, this was because of the continued threat presented by her husband's business dealings. Linda Peterson highlights an occasion on which Joseph Riddell had accepted 'a loan of £285 in exchange for "the copyright, stereotype plates and moulds" of a dozen novels by his wife': in effect, as she suggests, 'mortgag[ing] Riddell's 'entire professional

achievement [...] to save her husband's failing business.'<sup>13</sup> Joseph Riddell's death in 1880 revealed further debts and plunged Riddell once again into 'near poverty'.<sup>14</sup> In the 1890s, changes in literary fashion, together with growing illness, made supporting herself with writing increasingly difficult, and Riddell was at one time forced to accept the charitable support of the Royal Literary Fund.<sup>15</sup> She died in 1906.

As this brief biography attests, Riddell experienced both prosperity and pennilessness; she knew what it was to be vulnerable to a fiscally imprudent male relative, and she knew both the good that money could bring and the disaster that might ensue from its reckless pursuit. These financial experiences foreshadow the preoccupations of her fictions - from her sensation to her City novels and to the ghost stories - across which flit the spectres of bank failures, bankruptcies, failed speculations and debt. And yet Riddell remained an enthusiast for the Victorian capitalist system that, in its various manifestations, had both threatened her with personal ruin and provided her the means of salvation. Her many novels concerned with the life of the financial City of London are remarkable both for their technical knowledge of its arrangements (gleaned from her husband and from her own work as a clerk) and for their passionate advocacy of the world of trade and business. In her first successful novel, *George Geith of Fen Court* (1864), Riddell has her narrator hold forth on the scandal of the literary neglect of trade, which is: "the back-bone of England, [...] which furnishes heiresses for younger sons; [...] which sends forth fleets of merchantmen, and brings home the products of all countries; [...] which feeds the poor, and educates the middle classes, and keeps the nobility of the land from sinking to the same low level as the nobility of all other lands has done".<sup>16</sup> According to Srebrnik, the publishing industry was at this time dominated by an upper-middle class that was wilfully ignorant of the realities of commerce, and hostile to its inclusion as subject matter within literature. For Srebrnik, Riddell filled 'the ideological space left vacant' by that disdain, writing both from and for an emerging

middle class that was conscious of its 'anomalous' social position (economically powerful yet without social prestige) and desirous of seeing its activities and values given representation in fiction.<sup>17</sup> It seems that for Riddell, business was the very lifeblood of modern Britain, and her anxiety to defend it in the face of its genteel condemnation animates her supernatural fictions as well as her realist ones. Yet, as both Srebrnik and Nancy Henry make clear, Riddell's literary proselytising for business and trade brought with it certain risks, and ones which were exacerbated by her gender. The separate spheres ideology of the mid-century designated as a male preserve knowledge of such 'public-sphere' matters as business, trade and finance, and the woman displaying possession of it would appear in the eyes of many as a contradictory and rather troubling figure. Indeed, Riddell 'exposed herself to criticism in displaying her financial knowledge', particularly once she began to publish under her own name and not in androgynous pseudonyms.<sup>18</sup> It seems that contemporary critical responses to Riddell often couched albeit grudging admiration of this knowledge with a disapproving sense that finance was not only a rather ungentlemanly subject, but a particularly unfeminine one at that.<sup>19</sup>

I want to suggest the possible relevance of this to Riddell's choice of male protagonists and narrators. Diana Wallace, in a discussion of the ghost story as female Gothic in the hands of Elizabeth Gaskell, Elizabeth Bowen and May Sinclair, has argued that use of the heroine's point of view for narrative purposes is one of the elements distinguishing female from male Gothic.<sup>20</sup> Riddell, however, eschews the use of a female protagonist or narrative perspective entirely. This might be partly conditioned by the central place within her supernatural fiction of the haunted house narrative, it being, of course, men much more than women who, in this period, acted as house purchasers, lease-holders and accountant clerks - as well as who possessed the freedom to reside alone in disreputable houses at night. But I would like to conjecture that perhaps the male

protagonist also afforded a certain protection from the aggression or incredulity that Riddell knew was likely to be attracted by a female protagonist wielding economic power. In any case, I shall be arguing that Riddell skilfully manipulates her male narrative perspectives to achieve subtly subversive effects. Lara Baker Whelan has taken a somewhat different view, arguing for Riddell as a writer of ‘disciplinary fable[s]’ in which middle-class men bring order to unruly, feminised, domestic space.<sup>21</sup> I am in agreement with Baker Whelan’s insistence that we read the stories as reflecting a specifically middle-class consciousness: their themes of dispossession, concern with falling property values, and the settings of several in declining suburbs, suggest specifically middle-class fears about downward mobility, as well as distinctly middle-class solutions in the financial prudence they espouse. I contend, however, that her emphasis upon the regulatory function performed by Riddell’s male protagonists risks neglecting the operation of a more transgressive element in her fictions, evidenced in the extent to which the men are transformed by, quite as much as they are transforming of, this feminised space. In order to fathom the mysteries of their uninhabitable houses, Riddell’s middle-class men must undergo a haunting which often amounts to a kind of dispossession of self, the eventual outcome of which will be the reformulation of their identities. That this happens in many cases through entering into significant relationships with women and children, through the cultivation of culturally ‘feminine’ qualities, or through the adoption of epistemological positions associated with women and the uneducated lower-classes, suggests that Riddell is doing something other than simply affirming the norms and values of a masculine and bourgeois subject-position.

## II.

Four of the six tales collected in *Weird Stories* partake of a formula: a house, rumoured to be haunted, has been deemed uninhabitable by its owners or tenants; a young man,

dismissive of the rumours of haunting, takes up occupation of the house (as owner, tenant, or temporarily as investigator) determined to uncover the mystery; greatly to his surprise, his investigations confirm the reality of supernatural possession; the ghost is found to be seeking exposure of a crime, and when once this is achieved the house becomes habitable again. The ghosts in these stories are therefore the *purposive* ones of an older tradition of belief in the supernatural.<sup>22</sup> In a variation of the ghost story that Melissa Edmundson suggests is particularly associated with women's use of the form, the hauntings are not random, nor evil, but motivated and benign.<sup>23</sup> Riddell's ghosts are animated by a sense of justice: they seek to reveal murder or criminal neglect, to make up for past misdeeds, or to protect the vulnerable living. While there is considerable malevolence in these tales, this is provided by human rather than supernatural agents, and is significantly related to money.

The maleness of the narrative perspective is given either by use of a male first-person narrator or by a third-person narration focalised through the male protagonist. 'The Open Door' is an example of the former, and in this, the story is narrated at a significant passage of time from the events being related, allowing the narrator to highlight the difference between his younger and older self, and conveying the sense of a definitive turning point in his life. Phil Edlyd, happily married and the owner of a small farm from which he makes a comfortable living, tells the story of how his successful investigation of the haunting of Ladlow Hall gave him the financial means to escape his unhappy existence as a City clerk, while proving his worth to his elders and to the girl of his dreams. The structuring perspective here is one of comfort and security and although narrative excitement attaches to Phil's adventures, its character as a story of a young man's maturation provides the emotional tone of this tale. This is also so with 'The Old House in Vauxhall Walk', a story narrated in the third person, in which a young gentleman, Graham Coulton, solves the mystery of a grand house which has 'come down

in the world.’ (102). Although this narrative lacks the retrospective viewpoint of the former one, it is clear that here too events have proved transformative, enabling a somewhat immature if decent young man to benefit from the negative example of a ghostly female miser, and in so doing to understand and reconcile with the father he has fallen out with.

These stories then, and the two I am shortly to discuss in more detail, are stories of the emotional development of men. In them, men learn to understand the value of money as well as the dangers attached to pecuniary greed; they learn too their responsibilities, both economic and emotional, to others, and in so doing become capable of being husbands and fathers, as well as better brothers and sons. The combination here of benign (or at least not actively malevolent) ghosts often matter-of-factly described, prosaic narrative voice and happy endings, gives these tales an overall tonal register that is quite far from a more typically Gothic register associated with anxious, uncertain and fragmentary narrations. Their Gothic elements obtain, however, in the visions each offers of persons dehumanised and made slaves by cupidity.

Before continuing, I want to acknowledge a variation in Riddell’s oeuvre that has not been sufficiently reckoned with. Two of the six tales within *Weird Stories* possess much more pronouncedly Gothic characteristics than the others. ‘Sandy the Tinker’ is not a haunted house story at all but the tale of a clergyman tempted by the devil to substitute the soul of another to suffer his punishment of eternal damnation. It is not a story in which a protagonist progresses through some test of his character, nor one structured through a secure narrative perspective, and considerable epistemological uncertainty obtains.<sup>24</sup> Its atypical character is perhaps reflected in its absence from recent critical analyses of the *Weird Stories* collection. ‘Old Mrs Jones’ on the other hand has been discussed in relation to the other haunted house narratives, but I will go on later to argue that in fact it falls outside of their pattern in significant ways, and is a far more troubled

and troubling story. Not all of Riddell's supernatural tales are stories of emotional development; they do not all feature happy endings; and their hauntings are sometimes neither benevolent nor comprehensible. Taking stock of such variations allows us to glimpse a less homogenous and sometimes darker Riddell than has been previously recognised.

Two stories in which the reformulations of the protagonists' identities are particularly significant in gender terms are 'Walnut Tree House' and 'Nut Bush Farm'. 'Walnut Tree House' has been discussed by Melissa Edmundson as exemplary of Riddell's moral and economic concerns. It is the story of a haunting by the ghost of a young boy, a victim both of disinheritance (through a lost will) and material and emotional neglect (at the hands of his miserly guardians). It is at once an indictment of the hoarding of wealth, as an activity that represses money's potential for good and that spiritually impoverishes the miser, and an injunction to those possessed of social rank and fortune to circulate money through judicious spending (the protagonist, Edgar Stainton, learns with shame that his family are 'only recollected [in the neighbourhood] as leaving everything undone which it befitted their station to do' (17)). It also advances considerable critique of an English society seen as governed by snobbery about birth and rank, while being willing hypocritically to pursue money from any quarter. A self-made man who has built up his fortune in the goldmines of Africa, Stainton, as Edmundson points out, 'rejects much of British society', <sup>25</sup> refusing to observe its class-bound proprieties and treating his solicitor's clerk on terms of equality; for which he is rewarded by being looked down upon as a 'boor' and a 'digger' (5-6), even while the firm gladly receives his custom.

Edmundson's article explores these and other issues admirably, and I do not wish to duplicate that discussion. Instead I'd like to consider the emotional transformation that the protagonist is taken through in the course of his acquiring of these moral and financial

lessons. While this transformation is not as pronounced as in the case of two examples I shall be considering shortly – Edgar Stainton is from the first a sympathetically drawn character – it is clear nonetheless that his encounter with the ghostly child changes him significantly. Early descriptions establish him as a figure for whom English domesticity is something of an anathema, and who has become ‘accustomed to solitude’ (10) by his ‘wild sort of life’ in the bush and the goldfields (4). At first he looks forward to having ‘a big house all to myself, to do as I liked in’ (4), but the spectral child comes to awaken him to the pleasures and responsibilities of family and fatherhood, paving the way for his eventual marriage to the ghost child’s adult sister.<sup>26</sup> Edgar is depicted as combining both conventionally masculine and feminine traits: he is brave, frank and direct, but ‘in spite of his hard life and rough exterior [is] impressionable and imaginative.’ (6) These latter terms are significant, being descriptions that are frequently applied to women, and with the negative implication of a weakness of mind and a susceptibility to giving credence to falsehoods. In Edgar, however, it is his very capacity to receive impressions and to imagine that awakens his empathy for the mournful and beggarly child, allowing him to respond with compassion rather than fear, and thus to fathom the mystery that has defeated others. By the end of the narrative his initial dreams of solitary freedom and possession have given way to a desire to share property with others, and particularly in the context of family life. The house - and the people associated with it (particularly women and children) - has domesticated Stainton as much as he has domesticated it, and his domestication occurs in parallel with his coming to credit what he previously dismissed as ‘old women’s tales’. (8)

The male protagonist’s initial scoffing dismissal of the supernatural is a feature of all of Riddell’s haunted house narratives. Indeed, to the extent that this is something of a generic convention, the form has about it an intrinsic tendency to affirm an epistemological perspective associated with women over that of men, and this perhaps

helps in part to account for the popularity of the ghost story with Victorian women writers (see, for example, fictions by Edith Nesbit, Amelia Edwards, or Rhoda Broughton). This theme is particularly in evidence, however, in 'Nut Bush Farm'. The first-person narrator and protagonist of this is Jack, a young family man seeking to rent a farm following his injury in an accident at work. Jack's reaction upon discovering rumours that the farm he has leased is haunted is one of profound annoyance. He reports that 'it is unnecessary to say I did not believe in ghosts or anything of that kind', but he is fearful that the rumours will affect his 'nervous, *impressionable*' wife and the 'delicate weakling' (60) of a son whom he wishes would 'grow stronger' and 'get more like other lads' (64) (my italics). Leaving his family in London, Jack moves to the farm to prepare it, taking with him his sister Lolly, whom he trusts to allow 'no old woman's story' to affect her (74). Lolly, however, disappoints, revealing one day that she believes she has seen the ghost on the farm's land in broad daylight. Jack treats her with considerable condescension, urging her to 'put the matter away, child', calling her a 'silly little woman', and saying of his own explanation for her experience – that someone is playing tricks in the hope of scaring him away from the farm – that 'we have reduced your great mountain to a molehill'. (76)

Riddell's delineation of Jack as a man confident in his beliefs and willing to consider women irrational and frail is important, partly because of what the narrative will do to this confidence, and partly in relation to its depiction of one of its female characters. Miss Gostock is the owner of Nut Bush farm, a woman abrupt in manner, and masculine in both dress and behaviour. These characteristics are exploited to comic effect in the scene of Jack's first meeting with her (she bolts a brandy in celebration of their business deal, despite the early hour, and after wiping her mouth with her hand, expresses her regret that he is married). But she is also significant as a prime example of women in Riddell's ghost fiction who are depicted in terms of monstrosity for their possession of, or desire for, money. Other examples include the witch-like figure of the female miser in

‘The Old House in Vauxhall Walk’, and the murderous dowager of ‘The Open Door’, who comes to resemble a ‘wild-cat’, a devil and a ‘snake’ (56-57). It is in relation to these figures of female monstrosity that some of Riddell’s most overtly Gothic images apply, and they require careful consideration since they might be taken to suggest that Riddell sees female economic power as monstrous itself. Particularly troubling is that the form of monstrosity taken by two of these figures is that of masculinisation: we have seen that this is so for the mannish Miss Gostock, but it is also the case for the dowager in ‘The Open Door’, as she wrestles with appalling masculine strength to lay her hands upon the will that would disinherit her. Are these traces of an internalisation on Riddell’s part, of dominant discourses which sought to establish the naturalness of male economic power, and the concomitant unnaturalness of a woman in control of her finances?

Riddell was breadwinner in her own family not through choice but from necessity, and it is not impossible that she sometimes felt this to be an ‘unnatural’ state of affairs. I would suggest, however, that this is not ultimately the meaning of her images of female monstrosity. Firstly, it is important that it is not control of money *per se* that renders these women monstrous, but their adoption of the ‘wrong’ kind of attitude to it. All Riddell’s characters, male and female, in whom love of money replaces human feeling, assume varying forms of monstrosity. Furthermore, we can see in her treatment of her male protagonists that Riddell associates adoption of the ‘right’ kind of attitude with the assumption of conventionally feminine characteristics, such as imagination, empathy, and a desire to nurture. It is consistent with this that she should depict as masculinised, female characters in whom rapaciousness has voided these characteristics.

Secondly, her images of female monstrosity are usually employed to subtly subversive effect. Andrew Smith has argued convincingly that the female miser in ‘The Old House in Vauxhall Walk’ is a riposte to Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*; a comment on the exclusive maleness of a public sphere that accommodates Scrooge’s rehabilitation and

allows young Coulton to learn his lesson, but grants the penitent woman no way back.<sup>27</sup> In relation to 'Nut Bush Farm', I concur with Vanessa Dickerson, who suggests that we are meant to read the 'monstrosity' of Miss Gostock as she conducts the business deal as reflecting much more upon the perceptions of the beholder.<sup>28</sup> In a key passage, Jack reports the following:

Like one in a dream I sat and watched Miss Gostock while she wrote. Nothing about the transaction seemed to me real. The farm itself resembled nothing I had ever before seen with my waking eyes, and Miss Gostock appeared to me but as some monstrous figure in a story of giants and hobgoblins. The man's coat, the woman's skirt, the hobnailed shoes, the grisly hair, the old straw hat, the bare, unfurnished room, the bright sunshine outside, all struck me as mere accessories in a play – as nothing which had any hold on the outside, everyday world. (68-69)

As Dickerson contends, Jack here 'tries to contain the economic power of the propertied female by insisting on the spectralness of the business deal.'<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the passage suggests that so unconventional a woman as Miss Gostock breaches Jack's sense of normality, and that his construction of the scene as 'dream' and 'play' is an attempt to insulate his sense of wider reality from this. That we should not consider Jack an entirely reliable narrator, that his values are not those of the implied author, is also suggested when he later suspects Miss Gostock of the murder of the man whose ghost haunts the farm; a suspicion that turns out to be wholly false and that seems partially conditioned by her unreadability to him as a woman engaged in business. Miss Gostock may possess a hard-nosed, narrowly self-interested attitude toward her finances, which Riddell suggests falls short of the ideal and which perhaps contributes to her lack of feminine qualities; but she is an aberration of nature only in the eyes of the unreliable Jack.

A similar sense of unreality pertains in the scene in which Jack himself finally encounters the ghost. This occurs when, unable to sleep, he takes a moonlit walk around the land surrounding his farm. Across several pages of detailed description of Jack's perceptions, a discourse of business mixes with one of the supernatural. He at first responds to the beauty of his surroundings with a mixture of aesthetic pleasure and pleasure in ownership: 'All this loveliness was mine – the moonlit lawn – the stream murmuring through the fir plantation, singing soft melodies as it pursued its glittering way – the trees with a silvery gleam tinting their foliage – the roses giving out their sweetest, tenderest perfumes ...' (79). In the face of this 'miracle of grace and beauty' Jack experiences 'a sense of amazement and unreality', and immediately begins to conceive of his surroundings in mystical terms. The light from the moon is a 'fairy light' and it makes of field and stream 'a fairy scene' in which 'it would scarcely have astonished me to see fantastic elves issue from the foxglove's flowers' (79). As he wanders farther from the house 'the same unreal light' illuminates field and copse with the 'same witching glamour', and Jack has 'still the same secret feeling' as before (80). As in the other scene in which a supernatural frame comes to organise Jack's perceptions, the sense of unreality is conditioned by a blurring of conceptual categories. Where in the scene with Miss Gostock this was to do with a confusion of the signifiers of gender, here it proceeds from the moonlight, which renders night light as day (79). As he continues, this man who abhors foolish fancy becomes himself (and like Edgar Stainton) increasingly *impressionable* and *imaginative*. Surveying the hollow in which the nut bushes grow that give the farm its name, his thoughts conjure up the past in which boys 'must have gone nutting', birds had built nests, 'summers' suns [...] had shone full and strong', and 'winters' snows [...] had lain heavy on twig and stem.' (81) In the next moment Jack imagines his predecessor on the farm, Mr Hascot, being dealt a fatal blow in this spot by 'False friend, or secret enemy' (81). Jack has hit upon the truth, although he

immediately dismisses his intuition as ‘fancy’, ‘folly’ and ‘insane [...] speculation’ (82). It is at this point that the ghost appears and Jack can no longer doubt the stories he had dismissed as the foolishness of women and villagers. Interestingly, as the reality of which he has been so sure dematerialises, so too does his sense of possession of the land, the ghost’s ‘easy indifference’ (85) making a mockery of his thoughts of ‘rights’, ‘property’ (84) and ‘premises’ (85) in the face of what he at first takes to be a human intruder. Jack’s narration emphasises that he has walked this route many times in the hope of discovering the trespasser, but that the ghost has never previously appeared to him. It has required his exposure to beauty and a sense of the miraculous, and the opening of his aesthetic and imaginative faculties. Jack’s bewitchment has taken place under the light of ‘the queen of night’ (82) (the feminine moon) and it ends with him falling into a womanly faint.

The episode suggests that Jack must lose his sense of what is real in order to gain access to realities previously hidden to him: the existence of the supernatural, but also human realities existing just beneath the surface of everyday appearances. He turns detective, and discovers that Hascot had not, as had been rumoured, run off with a local girl, Sally, but had given her money to enable her escape from an abusive family, and that he has in fact been murdered by a friend to whom he had reluctantly lent money. What Jack discovers then are hidden realities of familial abuse, and the morally corrupting effects of avarice, but also of unexpected goodness. The ‘hard’ (77) and ‘stand-aloof’ (87) Hascot has acted disinterestedly in helping the young woman, and in this sense the narrative reverses the polarity of the sensation fiction on which it draws, revealing virtue hidden behind the surface appearance of scandal. And yet, knowledge of these realities has existed already within the community. The villagers who refuse to walk Nut Bush farm after dark have understood that really Hascot is dead. The labourer whom Jack consults knows that Sally is a respectable girl whose grandparents ‘treated [her] shameful’ and might know more about her disappearance than they are letting on (77).

And it is known by the villagers that Hascot had sometimes given money to relieve the suffering of the old and the poor. Jack's detective work consists in talking with the local people to acquaint himself with this communal knowledge (while learning to distinguish it from rumour).

'Nut Bush Farm' contains themes characteristic of Riddell's economic and moral concerns: the dangers of female economic dependency, the suffering that might be relieved by well-judged charity, the corrupting influence of debt. These things initially exist beyond Jack's field of perception; Riddell's skilful manipulation of his narrative perspective operating to suggest that in order for what is invisible (to him) to be made visible, he must undergo a transition both emotional and epistemological, and one that will bring him closer to the perspectives of women and the lower classes, perspectives that his class and gender privilege have distanced him from. Jack's repositioning through his discoveries is emphasised at the end of the story, where it is now he who must suffer masculine scoffing (from his brother) at his 'too credulous disposition' (97). Here, as in other of her stories, it is human arrangements around money that generate that which is oppressive, malevolent and opaque. It is money that makes ghosts of people in her fictions, and it does so even while they are alive. The miser and the adventurer forfeit their humanity in their pursuit of wealth, becoming mere spectres of themselves. Others still are rendered as abstractions, determined non-persons in the pecuniary calculations of those who stand to profit from their deaths.<sup>30</sup> This Gothic potential of money is particularly highlighted in her treatment of debt, which everywhere in her fiction appears as a condition of tyranny and bondage, in which creditors assume the character of despots, or debtors turn upon their creditors in desperation or through greed.<sup>31</sup> Confronted by this diabolic power of money, Riddell offers her readers exemplars of the judicious financial management which she entrusts to counteract this tendency, and to liberate its

potential for good - even if her middle-class male protagonists must travel a considerable distance before this can be so.

### III.

In several tales, Riddell highlights how the economic arrangements of her time produce a particular vulnerability for women. Two stories concern the practise of marrying for money, and the dangers posed to women therein. These dangers are recognised by Riddell as being emotional, economic and physical in character. In the first story I shall consider, she foregrounds the problem of marital violence, a phenomenon that was increasingly being linked to economic factors in the urgent feminist campaigning around this issue at the time. Francis Power Cobbe, for example, argued that ‘wife-abuse’ resulted not only from the ‘degrading pressure of poverty’, but also (and across all socio-economic groups) from the legal principle that established the husband in a position of effective ownership of his wife: ‘The notion that a man’s wife is his PROPERTY, in the sense in which a horse is his property ... is the fatal root of incalculable evil and misery.’”<sup>32</sup> In linking the bondage and abuse that some women suffered within the home, to legal arrangements around property in marriage, Riddell was, like these feminist campaigners, revealing how relationships in the so-called ‘private’ sphere were shaped by decisions made in the ‘public’.

In ‘Old Mrs Jones’, the Tippens family move into a dilapidated mansion house with the intention of renting rooms to lodgers. This plan is undermined, however, when tenant after tenant leaves, insisting that the house is haunted by the dead wife of the previous owner. Dr Jones, we learn, was a man of libertine tastes and savage inclinations, whose debauchery incurred debts that his medical practice could not support, and who therefore married his plain, older, and foreign wife for her money. When eventually a cousin of the Tippenses is led sleepwalking to the location of some human remains, it

seems that Dr Jones, who is rumoured to have physically mistreated his wife, has indeed killed her following a dispute over money. While this story might therefore seem to fit with the pattern of the other haunted house stories, in fact it contains significant differences. Alone among the tales of *Weird Stories* it does not have a narrative perspective provided by a male protagonist, but is told by a third-person narrator with significant focalisation through Mrs Tippens - a technique which places the reader's identification not with the hopes and fears of men but with the unspoken worries of women.<sup>33</sup> It is not a narrative of the emotional development of a male character: Mr Tippens has disputed the ghost's existence throughout and we learn nothing of his reaction to the discovery of the body. And there is no happy ending: the cousin whom Mrs Jones has chosen as her means of communication is so traumatised that she is unable to return to her work as a house-maid, while the narrator hints darkly throughout at some future financial catastrophe to be suffered by the Tippenses (who are regularly castigated in narratorial interventions for their imprudent spending and misplaced generosity). Most importantly, the discovery of Mrs Jones' remains, and the arrest and death of her husband, neither propitiates the ghost nor renders the house habitable. On the day that the Tippenses are forced to move out, a 'woman, with streaming grey hair' appears on the parapet and is seen 'wringing her hands in [...] an apparent agony of distress' as the house burns to the ground (173). As with 'Sandy the Tinker', this is a narrative whose solution does not give us full epistemological closure. That Mrs Jones is a motivated ghost seems clear, but the character of that motivation is not, and she therefore provides an exception to Edmundson's account of ghosts whose traumas lead to reconciliation with the living and become fully understood by readers.<sup>34</sup> Mrs Jones' continued haunting and her *anguish* (so different from the beatific peacefulness of the ghost-child at the denouement of 'Walnut Tree House') suggest a trouble or an injustice that it is beyond

the framework of the discovery of her murder to address, and that the text itself can only hint at.

Mrs Jones in fact appears to be another example of a woman made monstrous by money. A wealthy foreign woman, she is described by Mr Tippens as ‘if all accounts may be trusted [...] a bit of a shrew [who] held a tight grip on the money’ (137) and by others as refusing to ‘give [her husband] a shilling of her money’ (149). Other accounts describe her in diabolical terms: she is ‘witch’-like (137, and 173), with ‘shrivelled’ arms and ‘claw’-like hands (141), and ‘the wickedest face I ever did see!’ (141). Also emphasised is her racial otherness: she has ‘a face the colour of mahogany’ (137), exceedingly black eyes, and is described by one man as ‘a blackamoor’ (149). Such descriptions construct Mrs Jones as a figure of feminine malignity in which miserliness combines with foreignness to make even the living woman horrific.

At issue, however, is precisely whether such accounts, which occur in the context of an increasingly sensationalising rumour mill, can indeed be trusted. I contend that Mrs Jones’ motivations and character are, in fact, fundamentally ambiguous. The omniscient narrator does describe the living woman, depicting her as jealous of her husband and parsimonious with her wealth. While this might seem to establish her as another miser figure, these might also be understandable reactions to her husband’s spendthrift and womanising ways. Her ghost, however, is glimpsed only through the eyes of subjective witnesses, and the absence of any authoritative account thereby makes her true intent impossible to divine. And yet, there is sufficient material to suggest an alternative to the fiendish view of her. I therefore cannot agree with Jennifer Bann, who reads Mrs Jones as an unequivocally ‘malicious’ and ‘threatening’ ghost.<sup>35</sup> Bann bases this interpretation on a description she ascribes to the Tippens children, suggesting that, since the children are ignorant of ghostly convention, theirs is the unmediated and hence the more reliable account. Bann seems, however, to have misattributed to the children a description that is

actually given by an adult lodger, a Mrs Pendell. It is she and not they who reports Mrs Jones to be ‘dark’, with ‘fierce’ eyes, and ‘hands so like claws going to make a clutch at me’ (141). The children’s actual description of the ghost runs as follows:

“a little woman with hair hanging about her like yours, only grey and not so long, and with eyes as black as Lucy’s new doll’s, the one Mr. Pendell gave her, and as dark as that man with the white turban we saw in the Strand and - ” (142-3)

In fact, the children’s description is the least sensationalising and dehumanising of all the accounts we are given. It naturalises rather than supernaturalises Mrs Jones, by identifying her through comparisons with the familiar elements of their everyday lives (her hair is like their mother’s, her eyes like Lucy’s doll). Although they emphasise the darkness of her eyes and complexion, the reference to the man in the turban suggests curiosity at something uncommon within their experience, rather than anxiety or fear. And she has not ‘claws’ that ‘clutch’, but ‘hand[s]’ that ‘touched me’ (142-3). If it is indeed the case that the childrens’ perceptions of Mrs Jones are the more trustworthy ones, then this suggests a figure who is by no means necessarily malevolent, and whose monstrosity – like Miss Gostock’s – is perhaps projected onto her according to the prejudices of others.

At one point, the narrator reports with considerable satiric edge, the process by which fade, on meeting the new Mrs Jones and finding her old, ugly and jealous, the local matrons’ dreams of integrating her into polite society: ‘it was felt it would be most undesirable to introduce foreigners of no respectable colour into the bosom of British families who had made their money in the City [...] and who piqued themselves upon the strictness of their morals, the length of their purses, and the strength of their prejudices.’ (148-9) As in ‘Walnut Tree House’ and, as we shall see, ‘Hertford O’Donnell’s

Warning', English society is taken to task for its willingness to benefit from the money and skills of those deemed outsiders while refusing them treatment on terms of equality. A pronounced characteristic of Mrs Jones' appearance as a ghost is her frustrated attempt to communicate, particularly with women. These attempts are, however, without exception rebuffed ('she was just going to speak when I screamed out with horror' (141)). All this makes possible a reading in which it is not just her undiscovered murder that motivates Mrs Jones' unrest, but a history of social exclusion in which the prejudices of the community have silenced an 'outsider' woman, placing an abused wife beyond reach of help.

'Hertford O'Donnell's Warning' presents us with a different variant of Riddell's development of a male protagonist, the redemption narrative.<sup>36</sup> First published in 1867 (as 'The Banshee's Warning'), it is not from *Weird Stories* and is not a haunted house narrative, but draws instead upon Riddell's Irish heritage in its use of the banshee legend. It shares with 'Old Mrs Jones' the story elements of a handsome doctor embarked upon a path of debauchery, resolving to marry an older woman for pecuniary reasons and not for love, and here too the supernatural figure is an older woman possessed of flowing grey hair. Hertford O'Donnell is an Irish surgeon working at Guy's Hospital in London. He contemplates the prospect of ageing in the knowledge that infirmity or accident could render him incapable of his profession. More than this, he has lived a 'disreputable existence' (132) in London and is 'over head and ears in debt' (133). It seems to him that the solution lies in marriage with an heiress of his acquaintance, the appropriately named Miss Ingot, which union he imagines will acquire him access to wealthy patients as well as to her considerable fortune. Just as he is about to propose, however, he is disconcerted by a cry that only he appears able to hear. Later that evening he resolves again to propose the following day, and the same 'low, sobbing, wailing cry echo[es] mournfully through the room' (137). O'Donnell comes from gentleman stock in Ireland and his family have

an unusual retainer – a banshee who warns of the coming death of a member of the family. Attempting to dismiss the legend as ‘old women’s tales’ (137), he goes to bed, but is disturbed by a dream in which he is unable to save from drowning a boy whom somehow he knows. Sent to the hospital by the urgings of a supernormal voice, O’Donnell doesn’t hear but sees the banshee, ‘an old woman with streaming grey hair’ who is ‘shaking her head and wringing her hand in an extremity of grief’ (143-4). He is asked to operate on a young boy seriously injured in an accident, but on discovering that the boy too sees the banshee he collapses in a faint. O’Donnell regains consciousness to learn that the boy has died, and astonishes his colleague by accurately describing the child’s mother. She is the young woman with whom he fell in love in Ireland, but was prevented from marrying by his parents, and the boy was his son. A letter arrives from his parents, stating that they too have heard the banshee and begging him to return and make peace. Before embarking on his journey, O’Donnell visits Miss Ingot and tells her his story. She asks him to bring the young woman to live in her home until he can return for her, and blesses them both.

Like ‘Old Mrs Jones’, this tale underscores the vulnerability of women to mercenary men, who prior to 1882 stood to gain the legal possession of all property a woman brought into marriage, unless it were put into trust. Indeed, for many feminists, the very principle of legal coverture was itself a Gothic condition, which rendered the woman civilly dead, or at least ghostly, with her legal being dissolved into that of her husband.<sup>37</sup> Riddell implies something very similar. While O’Donnell covets Miss Ingot’s ‘money bags’, her ‘desirable house in town’, her ‘seat in the country’, he is repulsed at the thought of ‘the lady’s age’, ‘her snobbishness – her folly’ (136-7). That this assessment of her is a fantasy, conditioned by his perception of her in pecuniary terms - and with a dash of old-world contempt for her ‘*parvenu* blood’ (137) - is made clear when he speaks with her honestly for the first time, and discovers her to be neither

‘vulgar [n]or foolish’, but possessed of dignity and compassion. O’Donnell is no Dr Jones, and nothing in this tale hints at the spectre of marital violence that provides the dark heart of that story, but that Miss Ingot is threatened by economic disempowerment in a loveless marriage with a man who fails to see her for whom she really is, suggests an emotional and legal bondage that is Gothic in its aspect.<sup>38</sup> That this might also be so for O’Donnell himself is clearly implied, and the action of the banshee in interrupting his proposal is one that saves them both. The appearance of the banshee’s low, melancholic wail at precisely this moment suggests that at a more figurative level it functions as a cry of protest against the intended exploitation of the older woman. While the banshee’s tidings are of tragedy, she is at the same time a benevolent force, returning O’Donnell to his loved ones and to his better self, thereby reversing the destructive direction of his life. The story is the narrative of a redemption facilitated by two older, female, spirits. It is notable too for its sympathetic treatment of two problematic figures for the Victorians: the socially ‘superfluous’ unmarried older woman, and the ‘fallen’ mother of a child born outside of wedlock.

Another outsider figure, O’Donnell knows that in England his Irishness counts against him more than his good qualities count in his favour (131-2). He knows too that most ‘great and wealthy’ men owe ‘their elevation more to the accidents of birth, patronage, connection, or marriage than to personal ability’ (136). Here sounds once again Riddell’s objection to a society she perceives as being stultified by its attachment to a social hierarchy based upon birth and connections and which inhibits the rise of the industrious middle-classes. But here she also suggests that this is partly responsible for the evils of ‘marrying money’, the obsession with rank over ability leading professional men to marry for status and the profession-less gentry to marry for fortune.<sup>39</sup> In this earlier story, her critique of an England seen as blinded by its prejudices from perceiving true worth is perhaps stronger even than in the tales in *Weird Stories*. It is tempting to

read all of these stories' focus upon foreign/outsider figures as expressing Riddell's own experiences of England, and perhaps especially of the London literary scene, where her gender and her own Irish origins rendered her doubly marginal. Of some interest however, is her differential treatment of her outsider characters. In 'Hertford O'Donnell's Warning' and 'Walnut Tree House', her white, male, outsider figures overcome their alienation by building ties with others. In 'Old Mrs Jones', her 'brown' (149), female, character does not. The equivocal nature of that story (whether Mrs Jones is a sympathetic figure or not) make the politics of this hard to read. Mrs Jones' fate may be a comment on how social exclusion is particularly unremitting for women, and for those whose 'foreignness' is visibly marked; or it may reflect Riddell's own prejudices in relation to racial difference, and to the spectre of what Emma Liggins points out is 'foreign' money that may be considered 'contaminated'.<sup>40</sup>

#### IV.

In Riddell's ghost stories it is rarely the supernatural that is productive of Gothic effect, but instead in economic relationships a potential for monstrosity is seen to reside. Her fictions are attempts to diagnose and to correct the diabolical tendency of money to turn friends into betrayers and lovers into destroyers. Wary perhaps of the condemnation likely to befall a woman writing on finance, she eschews a female narrative perspective while manipulating her male protagonists to subversive effect. To come to an appreciation both of the value of money, and of what is valuable besides money, they must undergo a transformation in which they will cultivate conventionally feminine qualities, move closer to a 'feminine' epistemological position, or develop significant relationships with women. In this respect, the fictions suggest that the transactions of the 'public sphere' – purchasing, leasing, lending, giving, bequeathing – are best performed when 'private sphere' knowledge is brought to bear upon them: knowledge, that is, of the

secret hearts of people in which burn avarice, ambition and rebellion; but also sometimes loyalty, generosity and love.

The financial ethic that the tales develop is marked not only by Riddell's consciousness of gender, but also by her commitment to the values of an emergent middle class. We have seen that her fictions often advance criticism of aspects of her society. Yet, unlike Karl Marx, who was also drawn to a Gothic idiom as a 'vehicle for his critique',<sup>41</sup> in Riddell's case social critique possesses an economically conservative function. Cognisant of the precarity of the lives of many, Riddell urges not structural change, but instead exhorts prudence, condemns extravagance, and cautions that charitable giving must distinguish the deserving from the undeserving poor. It is not, for her, that the capitalist system itself is immoral; it is rather, that money is haunted by a potential for monstrosity, which it is the responsibility of individual economic actors to resist. In articulating the principles of a feminised financial ethics charged with keeping money's action benign, Riddell defends the capitalist system which she hails as being the best prospect for delivering material and spiritual goods.

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#### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Riddell, 'Sandy the Tinker', in Emma Liggins, (ed.), *Weird Stories* (Brighton, Victorian Secrets, 2009), p. 120. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page numbers will follow in parentheses in the text.

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<sup>2</sup> Riddell, quoted in Melissa Edmundson, 'The 'Uncomfortable Houses' of Charlotte Riddell and Margaret Oliphant', *Gothic Studies*, 12:1 (2010), 64.

<sup>3</sup> For a brief account of some of the scholarship preceding the recent criticism that focuses upon her supernatural fiction, see Andrew Maunder, 'Charlotte Eliza Lawson Riddell', in (ed.), Abigail Burnham Bloom, *Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, (Westport, Greenwood Press, 2000), pp. 323-7.

<sup>4</sup> Edmundson, 'Uncomfortable Houses', 51-67; Andrew Smith, *The Ghost Story 1840-1920: a Cultural History* (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 69-96; Lara Baker Whelan, *Class, Culture and Suburban Anxieties in the Victorian Era* (New York and Abingdon, Routledge, 2010), pp. 75-98.

<sup>5</sup> See Linda H. Peterson, 'Charlotte Riddell's *A Struggle for Fame*: Myths of Authorship, Facts of the Market', *Women's Writing*, 11:1 (2004), 110. Peterson tells us that Braddon's prodigious output was necessitated by her husband John Maxwell's debts, while Margaret Oliphant, writing to support insolvent relatives, felt prevented from producing her best work.

<sup>6</sup> Patricia Thomas Srebrnik, 'Mrs. Riddell and the Reviewers: a Case Study in Victorian Popular Fiction', *Women's Studies*, 23:1 (1994), 69-84.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas: A Tale of Bartram-Haugh* (London, Penguin, 2000 [1864]).

<sup>8</sup> For example, Nancy Henry notes the irony that, long before they could vote in Parliamentary elections, women could exercise voting rights as shareholders – a power both financial and, sometimes, political (for instance in the case of the East India Company, whose shareholders were indirectly participating in the government of an Empire). Nancy Henry, 'Ladies do it?': Victorian Women Investors in Fact and Fiction', in (ed.), Francis O'Gorman, *Victorian Literature and Finance*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 117.

<sup>9</sup> See Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (London, Virago, 1989). See also Jennifer Bann, 'Ghostly Hands and Ghostly Agency: The Changing Figure of the Nineteenth-Century Specter', *Victorian Studies*, 51:4 (2009) on the influence of spiritualism on the ghost story genre.

<sup>10</sup> E. F. Bleiler, 'Introduction', to *The Collected Ghost Stories of Mrs J. H. Riddell*, (New York, Dover Publications, 1977), p. vi.

<sup>11</sup> Bleiler, 'Introduction', p. vii.

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- <sup>12</sup> Bleiler, 'Introduction', p. viii.
- <sup>13</sup> Peterson, '*Struggle*', 110.
- <sup>14</sup> Bleiler, 'Introduction', p. x.
- <sup>15</sup> James H. Murphy, *Irish Novelists and the Victorian Age* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 253-4.
- <sup>16</sup> Quoted by Henry, 'Ladies do it?', p. 127.
- <sup>17</sup> Srebrnik, 'Mrs Riddell', p. 70.
- <sup>18</sup> Henry, 'Ladies do it?', p. 127-8.
- <sup>19</sup> Henry, 'Ladies do it?', p. 127-9. See also Srebrnik, 'Mrs Riddell'.
- <sup>20</sup> Diana Wallace, 'Uncanny Stories: The Ghost Story as Female Gothic', *Gothic Studies*, 6:1 (2004), 61.
- <sup>21</sup> Baker Whelan, *Class, Culture and Suburban Anxieties*, p.91.
- <sup>22</sup> Discussed by Bleiler, who also refers to Riddell's ghosts as 'didactic' and 'revelatory'. 'Introduction', pp. xxii-iii. See also Smith, *The Ghost Story*, p. 3, on this issue.
- <sup>23</sup> Edmundson, 'Uncomfortable Houses', 51-2.
- <sup>24</sup> The story is related by a witness who stresses how it has confounded and haunted him for years. Come the narrative's end it is not quite clear what has happened (while it is strongly implied that the clergyman has indeed saved himself by damning another, a naturalistic explanation of events is possible) nor why (the narrative hints, but only obliquely, at the apparently innocent clergyman's commission of unnamed sins).
- <sup>25</sup> Edmundson, 'Uncomfortable Houses', 55.
- <sup>26</sup> Emma Liggins also identifies the ghostly child as 'a reminder of the responsibilities of fatherhood'. 'Introduction' to *Weird Stories*, p. iv.
- <sup>27</sup> Smith, *The Ghost Story*, p. 75. Smith notes how Riddell's male protagonists' impoverished status places them in conventionally feminine positions (p. 93).
- <sup>28</sup> Vanessa D. Dickerson, *Victorian Ghosts in the Noontide: Women Writers and the Supernatural* (Columbia and London, University of Missouri Press, 1996), p. 139-40.
- <sup>29</sup> Dickerson, *Victorian Ghosts*, p. 140.
- <sup>30</sup> For more on the relationship between economics and spectrality see Smith, *The Ghost Story*, esp. pp. 10-31.

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<sup>31</sup> For example, in her supernatural novella from 1875, *The Uninhabited House* (Hardpress Publishing, 2010), a sadistic money lender is shot dead by his debtor; while in ‘Diarmid Chittock’s Story’ (1894), included in Bleiler (ed.) *Collected Ghost Stories*, a man attempts to ‘purchase’ a young woman through extravagant loans to her father, but murders him when he is refused.

<sup>32</sup> Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900*, (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 143-4. Cobbe quoted by Levine.

<sup>33</sup> Margree and Randall have argued that the theme of female dependency established in relation to the Jones’ marriage is echoed in that of the Tippens’: while the latter is characterized by tenderness and affection it remains the case that Mrs Tippens, who perceives the reality of the haunting and its threat, is powerless to act when material power resides with her husband. Victoria Margree and Bryony Randal, ‘Fin de Siècle Gothic’ in *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, (eds.) Andrew Smith and William Hughes (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 229.

<sup>34</sup> Edmundson, ‘Uncomfortable Houses’, 52.

<sup>35</sup> Bann, ‘Ghostly Hands’, 674, 676.

<sup>36</sup> Riddell, ‘Hertford O’Donnell’s Warning’ in Bleiler (ed.) *Collected Ghost Stories*. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page numbers will follow in parentheses in the text.

<sup>37</sup> Dickerson, *Victorian Ghosts*, p. 137.

<sup>38</sup> As well as being perhaps another example of the ‘figurative live burials’ which Fisher sees as populating her non-supernatural fictions. Benjamin F. Fisher, ‘Mrs. J. H. Riddell and Late Victorian Literary Gothicism’, in (ed.), Felice A. Coles, *In Memory of Richard B. Klein: Essays in Contemporary Philology* (Oxford, University of Mississippi Press, 2005), p. 176.

<sup>39</sup> See also Riddell’s ‘A Terrible Revenge’ (1889), collected in Bleiler (ed.) *Collected Ghost Stories*, on this theme.

<sup>40</sup> Liggins, ‘Introduction’, p. v.

<sup>41</sup> Smith, *The Ghost Story*, p.12.