

The Cultural Anxieties in Victorian Women's Ghost Stories, 1847-1920

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I dedicate this project to my family for all their love and support

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**Introduction:
 “The Inheritance of a Ghost-Story”:
 Brontëan Supernaturalism**

It bears on this that as nothing is more salient in English life to-day, to fresh eyes, than the revolution taking place in the position and outlook of women—and taking place much more deeply in the quiet than even the noise on the surface demonstrates—so we may very well yet see the female elbow itself, kept in increasing activity by the play of the pen, smash with final resonance the window all this time most superstitiously closed. The particular draught that has been most deprecated will in that case take care of the question of freshness. It is the opinion of some observers that when women do obtain a free hand they will not repay their long debt to the precautionary attitude of men by unlimited consideration for the natural delicacy of the latter.

- Henry James, “The Future of the Novel” (1899)

In the epigraph, James discusses how the Victorian realist novel will evolve through the unique perspective that female authors could contribute to the form during the *fin de siècle*. Earlier in his essay, he notes that “the revolution” was currently taking place, as women shifted from being obedient Victorian Angels in the House to independent New Women. He recognizes that this change has been so subtle that women have been gaining these privileges “in the quiet” through their expanding educational opportunities, career options, and alternatives to marriage. While they have been invisible so far in the literary world, those with “fresh eyes” will envision female authors liberating themselves through writing industriously. The image of women writers shattering the window that keeps them confined is violent, which reflects their suppressed frustration at the social restrictions that limit them finally exploding. The broken window allowing a breeze inside that will convey “freshness” to this literary form shows women writers were gaining more leverage as their professional status improved. Although James specifically examines the novel, the window being “superstitiously closed” evokes a different genre dominated by female authors: the ghost story. The image of a character looking through a window and seeing a ghost is ubiquitous in Victorian women’s ghost stories. Throughout this project, I find that Victorian and Edwardian female authors use this image to convey the desire for human communication, the opening of the

world of possibilities, and an escape from a room of one's own. The most famous instance of supernatural window-gazing occurs when Lockwood tries to prevent Catherine's ghost from entering a smashed window in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Before this encounter, Lockwood reads different forms of her name that she has penned and thinks "a glare of white letters started from the dark, as vivid as spectres—the air swarmed with Catherines" (13). The haunting quality of women's writing arises from the fact that they composed ghost stories to challenge various aspects of Victorian society. By writing these ghost stories, female authors opened various windows for themselves to obtain financial security, creative self-expression, and literary canonicity. In addition, their works use the supernatural to represent the various oppressions that women suffered as well as the reforms they desired in order to help empower their female readers. James's ironical observation that men will express feminine "natural delicacy" at female emancipation while women forge ahead anyway perfectly describes the "free hand" these authors exerted in writing their supernatural fiction.

This project expands on recent scholarly work by Vanessa Dickerson, Hilary Grimes, and Melissa Edmundson Makala to analyze the social concerns that British women writers explored in their supernatural fiction. I examine a diverse range of ghost stories by canonical and less familiar British women writers from the mid-Victorian period to World War I that scholars have long overlooked. My research was inspired by my desire to illuminate hitherto unnoticed aspects of women's writing and to reveal the complexity of supernatural fiction by Victorian and Edwardian women. These women's ghost stories are located in their cultural moment through an interdisciplinary framework that combines historicism, feminist criticism, and Gothic studies. As I argue, Emily, Charlotte, and Anne Brontë challenged conventional practices in this literary tradition during the late 1840s by incorporating the realist mode, feminist narratives, and complex

female psychology within the ghost story. Their innovations deeply influenced later generations of female authors, who used ghosts to elucidate the darker aspects of certain subjects, which public discourse and contemporary realist novels were unwilling to address directly. My project complements and contests the current scholarly account that the Victorian English ghost story was a masculine genre. Instead, I draw attention to the Victorian and Edwardian recognition that women writers had invented a female literary tradition deserving serious critical consideration and they could achieve lasting fame through their ghost stories. These female authors employ literary ghosts to probe the darker realities underlying a variety of social concerns: family life, professional science, domestic service, and female artistry. Most importantly, these supernatural elements convey many women's fight to free themselves from the domestic sphere, the marriage plot, and the role of the submissive Victorian Angel. My dissertation illustrates that Victorian and Edwardian women writers were committed to building a female ghost story tradition that would secure their place in the literary canon and inspire the liberation of other women.

Section One

In the first half of my Introduction, I will investigate how Charlotte, Emily, and Anne reinvented early Gothic conventions to create pioneering representations of the supernatural that had a major impact on later women's ghost stories. In 1847-1848, the Brontë sisters published their mature novels at the moment when the English ghost story was becoming "anti-Gothic" (Cox and Gilbert ix-x). This transition involved Victorian authors turning away from the early Gothic tropes created by Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, and Matthew Lewis, including medieval settings, stereotypical characters, and lurid supernaturalism. Robert Heilman finds that Charlotte applies this anti-Gothic aesthetic in her novels by undercutting early Gothic conventions through humor or symbolism. He goes even further in arguing that she created a "New Gothic" that

revitalized early Gothic techniques. In her novels *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* (1849), and *Villette* (1853), Charlotte surrounds the familiar with the strange through portraying “unpatterned feeling” as well as subtly conveying romantic passion between lovers. Heilman particularly focuses on how she exposes the complex psychological depths of her female characters, which are missing from traditional Gothic heroines:

From Angria on, Charlotte’s women vibrate with passions that the fictional conventions only partly constrict or gloss over—in the center an almost violent devotedness that has at once a fire of independence, a spiritual energy, a vivid sexual responsiveness, and, along with this, self-righteousness, a sense of power, sometimes self-pity and envious competitiveness. (119)

I want to expand on Heilman’s observation by attributing this “New Gothic” mode to all three Brontë sisters and investigating their female characters in their juvenilia and poetry. Their New Gothic style blended realism and the supernatural through their focus on contemporary settings, complex characters, and ordinary events. In their ghost stories, women’s encounters with the supernatural provide us with stray glimpses into a wide range of female experiences. The Brontës use the supernatural to illuminate the dark corners of women’s psychology and to portray their female characters as individuals with unrecognized depths. Their association with ghosts can release the female characters from the social, economic, and class oppressions that restricted Victorian women so they can express different facets of their subjectivity. These encounters can encompass negative experiences as well, such as rivalry between women, grief over lost loved ones, or the tragedy of romantic abandonment. The portrayals of psychological darkness are valuable because they reflect key realities for women that would otherwise go unnoticed, in a society that required Victorian Angels to efface themselves. This introduction will explore these ideas in Charlotte’s “Napoleon and the Spectre” and “Albion and Marina,” Emily’s “Written in Aspin Castle,” and Anne’s “Night.”

The Brontës' use of ghosts to shed light on female psychology appears in their earliest writings, the juvenilia, which chronicle the exploits of the imaginary kingdoms of Glass Town, Angria, and Gondal. While Charlotte's juvenilia is filled with supernatural elements, we cannot definitively say she found them more appealing than her sisters did because their joint pieces on Gondal have been lost.¹ Christine Alexander expands on Heilman's concept of the New Gothic by looking at the young Charlotte's parodic treatment of the Gothic. She comments that Heilman "sees Brontë as something of a pacesetter in the move from 'old' to 'new' Gothic fiction. Yet hers is not an isolated revision of so-called Gothic but one that sprang naturally from a variety of contemporary source material in the period" (410). Alexander establishes that Charlotte was influenced by short Gothic tales she read in the periodicals and gift books published during the first half of the nineteenth century. Diana Long Hoeveler takes exception to Heilman's thesis by arguing that down-market early Gothic novels inspired the Brontës in writing their juvenilia and mature works ("Not-So-New Gothic" 86). Scholars have focused on Charlotte's representations of male characters' encounters with the supernatural in her ghost stories.² For instance, "The Spell: An Extravaganza" (1834) deepens the psychology of her Byronic hero Zamorna by introducing a double in the form of a twin brother to explain his complexity. In "Napoleon and the Spectre" (1833), an inset tale found in the Gothic novella *The Green Dwarf*, Napoleon is forced to sleepwalk by the ghost of the rebel Pichegru, who he is widely believed to have had murdered through strangulation. At a ghostly masquerade, Napoleon sees "[a] row of fine female figures, richly

¹ On a related note, critics have viewed the juvenilia as a haunted body of work or connected it to Spiritualist writing practices. Kate E. Brown asserts "this collaboration specifically responds to the deaths of Maria and Elizabeth Brontë, and it functions as a form of mourning that at once perpetuates and disavows the felt absence of the lost one by producing beloved objects, the tiny books of the Angrian legend" (399). Bette London remarks "Like Yeats' *A Vision*, the juvenilia shares features with other alternative writing practices, often of a collaborative nature, that begin to appear with some frequency toward the end of the nineteenth century—most pointedly, automatic writing" (*Writing Double* 59).

² For Charlotte's portrayal of masculinity in the juvenilia, see Alexander 429-436, Pike 263-272, Butcher, and Beer.

attired, [who] stood before this screen. They wore on their heads garlands of the most beautiful flowers, but their faces were concealed by ghastly masks representing death's-heads" (2). Along with these women, Napoleon meets his wife Marie Louise and expresses shock that she is present at this party. As she explains, they are "[i]n my private drawing-room, surrounded by a few particular persons of the Court whom I had invited this evening to a ball. You entered a few minutes since in your nightdress with your eyes fixed and wide open" (3). Pichegru may appear to be a revenge ghost who seeks retribution by taking his murderer to a party where the guests remind Napoleon of those he has seduced or killed (Hoeveler 93-95; Butcher 476). In my view, Charlotte's story resembles Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), in which the titular character ambiguously dreams that his meek wife might be a convert to Satan. Like Goodman Brown, Napoleon realizes that he may have overlooked Marie Louise and her ladies' secret involvement in the supernatural, but this event leaves him feeling ashamed rather than enlightened about women's experiences. In *The Green Dwarf*, the storyteller is arrested by Napoleon for embarrassing him with this ghost story, just like he forces Maria Louise and Pichegru to remain silent.

Charlotte's ghost story "Albion and Marina" (October 12, 1830) prefigures Rochester's telepathic call to Jane as well as empowers Zamorna's second wife, Marion Hume, who dies yearning for her unfaithful husband in other tales. Marion appears in two anti-Gothic novellas in which the ghost turns out to be alive, namely "Brushwood Hall" (1833) and "The Secret" (1833). Together, all three of these tales use false or real supernatural elements to reveal psychological depths in Marion that her neglectful husband does not suspect. In "Albion and Marina," Zamorna's brother Charles Wellesley relates that the young Marquis of Tagus, Albion (Zamorna), falls in love with a physician's daughter, Marina Angus. His father sends him to Glass Town in the belief he

thinks they are too young to marry, where Albion foreshadows Marina's death by writing a tragedy called "Necropolis, or the City of the Dead." He draws on Marina as a muse to inspire the central character of what is essentially a ghost story infused with "a feeling of tender melancholy, for the image of Marina haunted his thoughts, & Amalthea, his heroine, is but an impersonation of her" (60). At a party, Albion admires Lady Zelzia Elrington because she seems more intelligent, accomplished, and mature than Marina and he appears in danger of forgetting his lover until he encounters her ghost:

While he was thus employed he heard a soft but mournful voice whisper, 'Albion!' He turned hastily round & saw the form of the identical Marina at a little distance, distinctly visible by moonlight.

'Marina! My dearest Marina!' he exclaimed, springing towards her, while joy unutterable filled his heart. 'How did you come here? Have the angels of Heaven brought you?'

So saying, he stretched out his hand, but she eluded his grasp & slowly gliding away said, 'Do not forget me. I shall be happy when you return.'

Then the apparition vanished. It seemed to have appeared merely to assert her superiority over her rival, & indeed, the moment Albion beheld her beauty, he felt that it was peerless. (62)

In a reversal of Rochester calling for Jane when she is about to surrender to St. John, Marina "asserts her superiority over her rival" when she uses the supernatural to manifest and reclaim her straying fiancé. Charlotte juxtaposes a scene of Lady Zelzia enchanting Albion with her music and Marina's ghost singing a love song to him; both characters prefigure the ghost-seeing female artists in the Brontës' later novels. Marina proves that she matches her competitor in talent and is also a female artist in her own right, not just a muse for Albion. As a ghost, Marina asserts herself by causing Albion to feel guilty for thinking about another woman through her devotion, which makes her a more resilient version of this character than Marion in Charlotte's other Angrian tales. His final meeting with Marina at her grave reinforces the tragedy of Albion taking her for granted, since it forces him to notice how his absence makes a female character suffer.

Emily's poems also display a spectral female psychology because, as others have noted, her speakers often experience mystical visions in which their spirits leave their confining bodies and envision a spiritual realm she calls the Unseen. For example, in "A Day Dream" (1844), the speaker sees a host of spirits, who tell her, "And could we lift the veil and give / One brief glimpse to thine eye / Thou wouldst rejoice for those that live / *Because* they live to die" (lines 65-68). Although Emily's verses often feature phantom images, grieving mourners, and grassy cemeteries, "Written in Aspin Castle" (1843) is one of her only ghost poems. In this Gondal poem, the unnamed speaker relates the legend behind Lord Alfred Sidonia's haunting of Aspin Castle. Like Emily's other visionary characters, the speaker experiences a dreamy mood in this haunted location that inspires her literary activity, as the title poem's indicates: "But still I love to linger here / And form my mood to nature's mood—" (lines 15-16). This formulation captures a twist that both Emily and Charlotte bring to the Gothic: instead of using nature to mirror the psyche, they allow the self to find its form in (and as) nature. In contrast to the local community staying away from Lord Alfred, the speaker often watches as he manifests every day during twilight:

But brooding on that angel brow
Rests such a shade of deep despair [*sic*]
As nought devine could ever know.

How oft in twilight lingering lone
I've stood to whach that phantom rise,
And seen in mist and moonlit stone
Its gleaming hair and solemn eyes.

The ancient men, in secret, say
Tis the first chief of Aspin grey
That haunts his feudal home (lines 37-46)

Although the speaker may reinforce Lord Alfred's authority over Aspin Castle as the "first chief," she undercuts his power by questioning why he haunts his home, rather than the location of his remains. She engages in the common Gothic trope of looking at portraits of the dead when she

peruses paintings of him, his daughter Angelica, and his wife, the Queen of Gondal, A.G.A. While the speaker is haunted by the vision of Lord Alfred's spirit, the ghost himself is haunted by his memories of Angelica and A.G.A. The speaker describes the portrait of the young Angelica and questions whether he could "feel no other earthly bliss / Was equal to that parent's kiss?" (lines 73-74). This image of Angelica that Lord Alfred coldly regarded is juxtaposed with a portrait of the wife "for whom he died! / For whom his spirit unforgiven, / Wanders unsheltered shut from heaven / An outcast for eternity—" (lines 78-83). In life, A.G.A. was so irresistible that Lord Alfred emotionally abandoned Angelica for his wife, even though A.G.A. would later leave him to die and send his daughter into exile. A.G.A.'s supernatural influence is so persistent that Lord Alfred remains powerless as a ghost, since he is punished to wander earthbound "for eternity" due to his love for her. Monica Germanà observes that "some of the vengeful deeds performed in Gondal by its dangerous women bear associations with such tales of deliberate revenge through supernatural agency" (106). She includes the feud between A.G.A. and Angelica in this category, seeing that Angelica later convinces her suitor Douglas to murder the queen. Lord Alfred remains dominated by the two major female presences of his life even after death; hence, his ghost is overshadowed by the turbulent relationship between Emily's female characters that he set in motion.

My examination of Anne's poem "Night" (1845) counteracts the prevalent scholarly assumption that she diverged from her sisters and only practiced realism in her extant works by highlighting the speaker's supernatural insight. Anne's speakers often desire to or achieve spiritual insight through faith, memory, or dreams. Her religious verses present speakers who meditate on their Christian beliefs and invoke visions of the afterlife, Judgment Day, and spiritual reality.³ The

³ "In Memory of a Happy Day in February" (1842) features a speaker who envisions "a glimpse of truths divine / Unto my spirit given / Illumined by a ray of light / That showing direct from Heaven!" (lines 21-24) and ends by wishing "to view that bliss divine / Which eye hath never seen, / To see the glories of his face / Without the veil between" (lines 45-48). In "A Word to the 'Elect'" (1843), the speaker asks, "And when looking on your fellow men / Behold

poems on memory and dreams imagine speakers mourning over lost loved ones and summoning them through the power of remembrance.⁴ In the latter works, the speakers experience altered mental states that blur the line between the real and supernatural, which allows Anne to apply ghostly effects in a subtle way. For example, the speaker in “Severed and Gone” (1847) falls into despair when her prayer that her loved one’s ghost will appear is frustrated: “False hope! vain prayer! it might not be / that thou shouldst visit earth again. / I called on Heaven—I called on thee, / And watched, and waited—all in vain” (lines 37-40). While “Night” might seem to be a simple elegy, the speaker can be read as a ghost-seer whose supernatural vision allows her to reunite with the deceased beloved:

I love the silent hour of night,
For blissful dreams may then arise,
Revealing to my charmed sight
What may not bless my waking eyes!

And then a voice may meet my ear
That death has silenced long ago;
And hope and rapture may appear
Instead of solitude and woe.

Cold in the grave for years has lain
The form it was my bliss to see,
And only dreams can bring again
The darling of my heart to me.

The speaker seeing the loved one in “blissful dreams” recalls the Victorian debate over whether dreams are supernatural, since the speaker could be reviving the dead through memory, sleep, or

them doomed to endless misery, / How can you talk of joy and rapture then? / May God withhold such cruel joy from me!” when Anne challenges the Calvinist emphasis on eternal damnation (lines 21-24).

⁴ In “Oh They have Robbed Me of the Hope” (1847), the speaker concludes, “Well, let them seize on all they can; – / One treasure still is mine, – / A heart that loves to think on thee, / And feels the worth of thine” (lines 9-12). In “Severed and Gone,” the disappointed speaker realizes “Thou breathest in my bosom yet / And dwellest in my beating heart; / And, while I cannot quite forget, / Thou, darling, canst not quite depart” (lines 53-56). The speaker of “Farewell to Thee! But Not Farewell” (1848) bids “Farewell to Thee! but not farewell / To all my fondest thoughts of thee; / Within my heart they still shall dwell; / And they shall cheer and comfort me” (lines 1-4). Elizabeth Langland notes that Ann’s poems contain recurring motifs, such as emphasizing the power of human love to transcend death and dreams to give hope despite being illusory (*Ann Brontë* 73-74, 77-78).

second sight. If we read her as a medium communing with ghosts, she values her “charmed sight” above her “waking eyes” because the former reunites her with the loved one. Underneath its gentle tone, the speaker may be defensive over her preference for her second sight, considering that female mediums were commonly viewed as mentally unstable. The speaker justifies her choices by pointing out that her second sight cures her “solitude and woe” and satisfies her loneliness. Anne’s poem not only captures the grief that would soon drive many Victorians to turn to Spiritualism, but also the perspective of female mediums who mediated between the living and the dead.⁵ From 1847-1848, Catherine Crowe published her parapsychological study *The Night-Side of Nature* and the Fox sisters began the Spiritualist movement in America. The speaker’s focus on her loved one’s “silenced” voice breaking the quiet and addressing her illustrates how women could use the supernatural to speak up about their desires. Maria Frawley highlights the value of silence, secrecy, and solitude in Anne’s poetry as she “sought in a variety of ways to explore how silence itself empowered her female characters to exert control over their worlds” (57). In 1853, a year after the first female medium arrived in England to introduce Spiritualism there, the friendless Lucy Snowe would invoke this longing: “Amidst the horrors of that dream I think the worst lay here. Methought the well-loved dead, who had loved *me* well in life, met me elsewhere, alienated: galled was my inmost spirit with an unutterable sense of despair about the future” (160). In this light, Anne’s sympathetic depiction of a female ghost-seer whose second sight offers her “rapture,” “bliss,” and “hope” is more subversive than a surface reading may imply.

Brontëan supernaturalism (specifically Charlotte’s contributions) suffused Victorian and Edwardian culture; between 1847 and 1920, women writers shaped the female ghost story using similar patterns, techniques and images. Patsy Stoneman, Lucasta Miller, and John Seeley

⁵ The “darling” may refer to Patrick Brontë’s curate, William Weightman. It is speculated that Anne cared for him and grieved for Weightman after he died in 1842 in poems like “Night” (Chitham 15-19).

document how the Brontës affected succeeding generations of women writers in America and England. Charlotte's influence begins in her own lifetime, when her friend, Elizabeth Gaskell, composed "The Old Nurse's Story" (1852) based on elements in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. Vanessa Dickerson gestures at this literary heritage without fully exploring it, writing "[t]he remainder of Gaskell's supernatural stories appeared while she was preoccupied with her 1857 biography of Charlotte Brontë" (113). Gaskell characterizes the Brontës as tragic artist heroines dying young; this image of them as spectral presences would haunt the female literary imagination, including her own. She writes to a friend in 1848, "I saw a ghost! Yes I did; though in such a matter-of-fact place as Charlotte Street I should not wonder if you are skeptical and had my fortune told by a gypsy; curiously true as to the past, at any rate" (133). Even when she tells a true ghost story, Gaskell still constructs it according to Brontëan narratives by seeing the spirit at the mundane *Charlotte Street* and reenacting a major episode from *Jane Eyre*. George Eliot and Harriet Beecher Stowe corresponded about the latter speaking with Charlotte's ghost during a séance in 1855. The skeptical Eliot insists that "[y]our experience with the *planchette* is amazing; but that the words which you found it to have written were dictated by the spirit of Charlotte Brontë is to me (whether rightly or not) so enormously improbable, that I could only accept it if every condition were laid bare, and every other explanation demonstrated to be impossible" (qtd. in Dickerson 92). Eliot objects on the grounds that the ghost does not share Charlotte's authorial voice and her emphasis on "your experience" suggests that Stowe is using the supernatural to explore her own concerns as a woman writer. Many of the authors under analysis, such as Gaskell, Oliphant, Woolf, and Sinclair, molded the critical reception of the Brontës by writing biographies or academic studies on them. These anecdotes reveal that female authors used the Brontës'

depictions of women's encounters with the supernatural to express important aspects of their personal and professional identities.

The Brontë sisters' works deploy their supernatural elements to challenge the view that men represent a superior universal standard to which everyone else should conform by conveying aspects of female psychology that cannot be fully articulated. My analysis has illuminated how the Brontës brought hidden aspects of female psychology to light in their ghost stories through the supernatural phenomena linked to the heroines. Their focus on female subjectivity emerged in their earliest juvenilia and became increasingly sophisticated over time as their literary talents matured in their poetry and novels. Their representation of Marina Angus, Angelica, A. G. A., and Anne's speaker illustrates the hidden depths of female love, strength, and grief that male characters like Albion and Lord Alfred may fail to appreciate. In this context, the female characters do not express psychological depth in the sense of gaining a fully imagined personhood because this notion conforms to a definition of humanity bestowed on men during the nineteenth century. Instead, these ghost stories give us brief flashes of the female characters' submerged experiences, which are too difficult to see or convey in a society that limits women's voices. While the supernatural can cast light on female subjectivity, its complexity can never be fully expressed because the ghost story is defined by narrative blanks, silences, and ambiguities. In her study *The Tale of Terror* (1921), Edith Birkhead precedes Heilman by fifty years in noting that the Brontë sisters created New Gothic, but she does not explore this valuable observation:

In *Villette*, Lucy Snowe, whose nerves Ginevra describes as "real iron and bend leather," gazes steadily for the space of five minutes at the spectral "nun." This episode indicates a change of fashion; for the lady of Gothic romance could not have submitted to the ordeal for five seconds without fainting. A more robust heroine, who thinks clearly and yet feels strongly, has come into her own. In *Jane Eyre* many of the situations are fraught with terror, but it is the power of human passion, transcending the hideous scenes, that grips our imagination. Terror is used as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. In *Wuthering Heights* the windswept

Yorkshire moors are the background for elemental feelings. We no longer “tremble with delicious dread” or “snatch a fearful joy.” The gloom never lightens. We live ourselves beneath the shadow of Heathcliff’s awe-inspiring personality, and there is no escape from a terror, which passes almost beyond the bounds of speech. The Brontës do not trifle with emotion or use supernatural elements to increase the tension. Theirs are the terrors of actual life. (224-225)

Birkhead’s references to the Brontës’ imagining of “robust heroines,” “human passion,” and supernatural incidents pinpoint elements of their novels that generations of female authors have found appealing. Amber Pouliot examines how Victorian and interwar depictions of the Brontë sisters as ghosts use “the trope of haunting as a metaphor to describe their continued personal and cultural significance after death” (99). The Brontës and their works became an enchanted literary mirror in which women saw themselves as they adapted, rejected, or added onto features of their works and lives in their ghost stories. Hence, my project also inspects how the expansion of real women’s opportunities coincided with the appearance of female characters who often experience the painful transition from the Victorian Angel to the New Woman in these ghost stories.

During the Victorian era, the growing demand for ghost stories in periodicals at Christmastime created a ready market for women writers’ ghost stories, which facilitated their creation of this female literary tradition.⁶ Charles Dickens popularized the link between supernatural fiction and the holiday season when he published his highly influential *A Christmas Carol* in 1843. He further consolidated this tradition through his unique model of editorship, publishing ghost stories by both male and female authors in holiday issues of his magazines *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. Dickens provided a venue for the best ghost stories by a number of female authors early in their careers, including Elizabeth Gaskell, Amelia Edwards, and Rosa Mulholland. The rapidly expanding periodical industry generated a widespread demand for ghost stories in magazines aimed at middle-class readers and families, especially women. The

⁶ For more on the Victorian association of ghost stories with Christmas, see Cox and Gilbert and Johnston 19-50.

female authors under review often compiled ghost stories that they had released in disparate periodicals into short story collections of weird and uncanny tales, which represent the high-water mark of this genre. Margaret Oliphant's long-standing relationship with *Blackwood's* magazine allowed her to create the supernatural series *Stories of the Seen and Unseen*. As the editors of *Belgravia*, *The Mistletoe Bough*, and the *Argosy*, Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Ellen Wood used their positions to market their professional brands. An important part of cultivating their image as serious authors was publishing ghost stories under recognizable formats, specifically Braddon's familiar taglines and Wood's Johnny Ludlow series.⁷ Similar to Dickens, Braddon nurtured this tradition through publishing multiple ghost stories by Ada Buisson, Isabella Banks, and Florence Marryat. It is highly likely that Victorian and Edwardian female authors influenced, adapted, or responded to each other's works. Women were aware of ghost stories by other female authors through their positions as editors, book reviewers, and writers, but their lack of commentary on this genre makes the extent of their knowledge hard to determine. For instance, Isabella Banks remarks on the pervasive fascination with ghost stories in the preface to her volume of supernatural tales, *Through the Night* (1882): "Is it not, therefore, an anomaly that the era of hard science and scoffing unbelief should have given so many mystic and ghost-stories to our literature?" (ii). In my project, I argue for a cohesive female ghost story tradition by drawing links between their works, independently of whether or not this was their intention. We can definitively say that women writers penned ghost stories in the belief that they were works of high literary quality that could immortalize them. Their appreciation for this literary tradition acted as a spur to their creativity and professional careers and encouraged them to address cultural anxieties of particular

⁷ Braddon's taglines include "By the Editor," "By M. E. Braddon," and "By the Author of 'Lady Audley's Secret,' etc."

interest to women. Hence, their ghost stories constantly emphasize the importance of female creativity, compassion, community, and solidarity in the face of patriarchal restraint.

Section Two

In this section, I will situate my project within the critical conversation on Victorian women's ghost stories and explain its various theoretical aspects, such as its scope, my definition of the ghost story, and the literary ghost's significance. Vanessa Dickerson finds that women authors wrote distinctly from men due to their social position as Victorian Angels: for them "ghost stories were a fitting medium for eruptions of female libidinal energy, of thwarted ambitions, of cramped egos" (8). I do not want to completely separate male and female supernatural traditions, since there was much overlap between the two. While critics emphasize their differences, I recognize that both groups wrote about similar cultural anxieties, including love, marriage, and domesticity, and men could be sympathetic to women's hardships or feminist in outlook. Despite this, women wrote in markedly different ways about these anxieties than men did because their inferior social position gave them a unique perspective on these topics. They were trying to create a female ghost story canon that reflected special concerns for their gender; hence, they address these cultural anxieties through their feminine viewpoint in the form of the ghost. I define the ghost story more broadly than a short piece of prose fiction featuring the disembodied spirit of a deceased person. Instead, I argue that the ghost story presents supernatural events, powers, or entities related to Victorian investigations into ghosts, the occult, and psychical research. This limited but elastic definition corresponds with the fact that the Victorians did not rigidly distinguish genres the way we do today and classified ghost stories much more loosely. While most of these women's stories feature ghosts, they also have related supernatural powers like mesmerism, telepathy, and clairvoyance, which many people assumed were connected, not separate. Various national

mythologies also produced supernatural forms specific to colonized territories. For instance, the Irish banshee and Scottish second sight allow authors like Charlotte Riddell, Rhoda Broughton, and Margaret Oliphant to emphasize the dignity of their cultures and regional beliefs.

The ghost was an especially attractive literary figure for women because they could use it to overcome their limited self-expression in a society that expected them to remain silent on these matters. These female authors recognize that the ghost is a fitting metaphor for marginalized people from diverse social, economic, and national backgrounds; therefore, they drew on its metaphorical richness and unique qualities to discuss issues that hovered below the surface of Victorian society. In their hands, the ghost becomes a multivalent presence that allows women to address various cultural anxieties through their gendered perspective. They could fashion the supernatural to indicate multiple aspects of women's lives, such as family life, economic realities, professional ambitions, and artistic creation. The ghost charts women's desire to achieve equality with men by entering the professions, owning property, being educated, and expressing their sexuality. For instance, this figure exhibits the expansion of their professional opportunities from being governesses or schoolteachers during the mid-Victorian era to being writers and doctors during the *fin de siècle*. These ghosts further reflect transitions in women's relationship with men, as male characters transform from being privileged Englishmen who cruelly oppress their dependents to supportive figures who inspire women to fulfill their dreams. The changing form of the ghost throughout this era also shows the impact of major events in English history, such as the founding of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) (1882) and the mass trauma of World War I. My chapters explore how the ghost allowed female authors to trace shifts in different aspects of society, including major cultural changes in England, women's widening position, and the evolution of the social order. Many critics assume that the disregarded ghost story enabled women

writers to stealthily criticize Victorian society, among them Claire Stewart: “Not only did the genre allow for the expression of subversively feminist ideas, but it also made possible the exploration of dangerous territory which would have been closed off completely in any other context” (111-112). While I agree these ghost stories often call for reform, the proposed improvements are not always fair or progressive; in fact, women may not even have faith that they can bring about beneficial remedies. It is essential that we acknowledge women’s ghost stories could be conservative toward reform at times, which is a perspective worthy of notice that scholars would otherwise miss. For instance, the liberal outlook could not accommodate the Ghost of the Old-Fashioned Girl, who denounces the New Woman to the narrator in Marie Corelli’s “The Ghost in the Sedan-Chair” (1901).

While M. R. James, S. M. Ellis, and Montague Summers praised Victorian women’s ghost stories during the interwar years, relevant scholarship grew practically nonexistent until anthologists reignited critical interest in the 1990s. Peter Penzoldt, Julia Briggs, and Jack Sullivan sustained the critical narrative that the Victorian ghost story was dominated by male authors in their studies. Anthologists such as Peter Haining and Richard Dalby made them accessible by releasing “gentlewoman’s” ghost story anthologies. Jessica Amanda Salmonson compiled the first anthology of feminist supernatural fiction by British, American, and Latin American women from the nineteenth century onwards (1989). In the preface, she notes that this critical neglect is surprising; after all, women published up to seventy percent of nineteenth-century supernatural fiction in American and British magazines (x). In 1991, Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert assert that “the reasons why women took to the ghost story so successfully is one of the great unasked critical questions” (xiv). Their answer—that women wrote ghost stories due to economic necessity and the limits on their career options—appears insufficient to explain the high literary quality of women’s

supernatural tales. That same year, Diana Basham offered the first extensive commentary on Victorian women's ghost stories in *The Trial of Woman: Feminism and the Occult Sciences in Victorian Literature and Society*. Basham insists that Oliphant and Edwards's ghost stories often feature male narrators in order to show "the feminist potential of the ghost story mysteriously to reflect the exclusion of women and their inadequate representation" (171). The problem with Basham's reading is that she privileges the role of men and reinscribes the marginality of female characters within women's own ghost stories. While the feminist potential of female absence is a valid reading of some works, my project explores how these ghost stories represent a wide range of female desires, frustrations, and emotions. The first full-length monograph on this topic was Vanessa Dickerson's *Victorian Ghosts in the Noontide: Women Writers and the Supernatural* (1996). Dickerson broadens the critical conversation beyond male writers by finding that authors such as the Brontë sisters, Gaskell, and Eliot created a female literary tradition. She argues that in their works "the ghost corresponded more particularly to Victorian women's visibility and invisibility, her power and powerlessness, the contradictions and extremes that shaped female culture" (36). The major oversight of Dickerson's study is that she focuses too much attention on canonical authors and analyzes Riddell, Oliphant, and Marryat in one chapter. Her scholarly account of women's ghost stories unwittingly legitimizes the notion that only certain canonical female authors are "worthy" of attention. In my project, I expand on her study to investigate a blend of famous and less well-known women writers who are increasingly becoming recognized in Victorian studies.

Dickerson's study created a standard that later critics have expanded as they build on her interpretation that the ghost represents the bourgeois Victorian Angel and her exclusive focus on gender. Eve Lynch adds class differences to this discussion by arguing that the ghost's link to

female servants calls attention to their subordinate position through a review of Braddon's works. Lowell T. Frye combines Dickerson and Lynch's readings when he argues that Edwards, Nesbit, and Braddon show that scientific "reason itself—or at least a single-minded devotion to a redacted, even mechanical version of it—figures as a weapon by which men dismiss and often destroy women" such as their wives and female servants (175). Susan Schaper reverses Lynch and Frye's focus on female helplessness by examining how men and women become empowered through their competing approaches to investigating haunted houses. Diana Wallace looks at how uncanny stories by Elizabeth Gaskell, May Sinclair, and Marjorie Bowen adapt the Bluebeard plot to convey women's fear of male power and sexuality. Jarlath Killeen issues a major challenge to Dickerson's interpretation, finding that her "analysis, while certainly suggestive and appropriate for some stories, does not work as a general argument" (96). He follows Wallace's lead in arguing that the ghost also shadows forth men's authority over women and male power struggles. His essay forms a long response to Dickerson in which he takes her argument and applies it to various ghost stories by women, only to undercut it in support of his own. Killeen rightfully points out that applying Dickerson's reading of apparitions to all Victorian women's ghost stories can be reductive and close off other possible interpretations. However, he risks offering a view that can be equally as reductive by seeing the ghosts as privileged men and reinforcing women's status as victims within the stories. Jennifer Bann and Roxanne Harde additionally inspect the portrayal of abused women and child ghosts in transatlantic supernatural fiction by women. Finally, Hilary Grimes argues that *fin de siècle* women represent uncanny scenes of writing to convey their anxieties about female authorship. In keeping with these earlier studies, my project assesses how the ghosts in women's works embody a range of cultural anxieties from this period, not just gender.

The next major monograph on this subject, Melissa Edmundson Makala's *Women's Ghost Literature in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2013), shares crucial similarities and differences with my project. Makala argues that nineteenth-century women writers' works occupy the genre of the "social supernatural" because they "recognize the social and political power behind the genre of the ghost story and used it to shed light on cultural problems and inequalities" (8). Rosemary Jackson, Lynette Carpenter, Wendy Kolmar, and Nikkianne Moody illustrate the range of female authors' concerns in their histories of this literary tradition. I agree with Makala that these writers use the supernatural to examine a diverse spectrum of cultural anxieties. Furthermore, we both acknowledge the need to consider a wide assortment of female authors in order to capture the full scope of this tradition and women's concerns. There are major differences in the way that we conceptualize the classification and development of this literary tradition. Makala remarks that "[e]xpanding the parameters of Female Gothic and moving it into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries allows us to recognize women's ghost literature as a specific strain of the Female Gothic that began not with Anne Radcliffe, but with the romantic Gothic ballads of women writers such as Ann Bannerman and Charlotte Dacre in the first decade of the nineteenth century" (17). In keeping with Wallace, Makala locates the origins of this genre in the Female Gothic, which serves as a continuation of early Gothic.⁸ I have previously mentioned that I find the beginning of this tradition lies in the Brontë sisters' fashioning of New Gothic during the mid-Victorian era. Makala also looks at the supernatural in a variety of literary forms and reaches beyond England to elaborate on ghost stories by Anglo-Indian female authors that critique colonialism. In contrast, my project confines itself to short stories in the belief that the unique features of these prose works impact women's portrayal of the supernatural. I also limit myself to ghost stories set in Britain since this

⁸ For the limits on the female Gothic to capture the diversity of women's early Gothic writing, see Ledoux.

range allows for a culturally cohesive literary tradition, while still covering the colonial territories of Ireland and Scotland.

In recent years, there have been new online and media engagements with Victorian women's ghost stories consisting of popular articles, online blogs, and adaptations of neo-Victorian supernatural fiction. Anthologies like Mike Ashley's *Unforgettable Ghost Stories by Women Writers* (2008) and S. T. Joshi's *The Cold Embrace: Weird Stories by Women* (2016) are removing the barriers to accessibility. The flurry of online newspaper articles and blog posts by Amanda DeWees, Hephzibah Anderson, Michael Dirda, and David Barnett show the increasing interest in these tales among general readers. Not only do these authors offer suggestions of female writers and their works, but they also explicate the history, themes, and conventions of Victorian women's ghost stories for a popular audience. In an especially lucid discussion, Anderson asserts, "[i]n writing ghost stories, the authors were exercising thoughts and concerns deemed unspeakable at the time. It's these women writers themselves who are the real restless spirits" (n. p.). Currently, critics such as Victoria Margree and Emma Liggins are bringing attention to *fin de siècle* and Modernist women's ghost stories. Furthermore, neo-Victorian ghost stories by female authors and their TV and movie adaptations highlight the hardships of fallen women, female servants, and closeted lesbians through a modern lens. These works include Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* (1984; 1989, 2012), Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (1996; 2017), and Sarah Waters's *Affinity* (1999; 2008). In the future, critics seek to enlarge the canon of Victorian and Edwardian women's ghost stories through Johnny Main's anthology *An Obscurity of Ghosts: Further Tales of the Supernatural by Women, 1876-1901* (2018) and Makala's *Women's Colonial Gothic Writing, 1850-1930: Haunted Empire* (2018). My research brings much-needed attention to these women authors and their fight to obtain equality in Victorian and Edwardian England

through their ghost stories. Despite being as prominent and prolific as male authors in their day, these women and their works have been unjustly forgotten in our own time. I hope that my project will inspire others to recover these female authors from their invisibility and to place them at the forefront of the literary canon so they can get the recognition they so richly deserve.

Chapter One:
“The Mystic Heart of Suffering”:
The Intercessor and the Revenge Ghost

Introduction

“Her senses never returned—she recognised nobody from the time you left her,” I said. “She lies with a sweet smile on her face; and her latest ideas wandered back to pleasant early days. Her life closed in a gentle dream—may she wake as kindly in the other world!”

“May she wake in torment!” he cried, with frightful vehemence, stamping his foot, and groaning in a sudden paroxysm of ungovernable passion. ‘Why, she’s a liar to the end! Where is she? Not there—not in heaven—not perished—where? Oh! you said you cared nothing for my sufferings! And I pray one prayer—I repeat it till my tongue stiffens—Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living. You said I killed you—haunt me, then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers, I believe—I know that ghosts *have* wandered on earth. Be with me always—take any form—drive me mad! only *do* not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!”

-Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847)

The first critics who reviewed Emily’s novel were both repulsed and fascinated by her grisly portrayal of spousal and child abuse perpetrated across multiple generations of the Earnshaw and Linton families. For instance, one reviewer insists “the reader is shocked, disgusted, almost sickened by details of cruelty, inhumanity, and the most diabolical hate and vengeance” in her work (*Douglas Jerrold’s* 43). G.W. Peck praises the novel for “lift[ing] the veil and show[ing] boldly the dark side of our depraved nature...the rapid hold it has taken of the public shows how much truth there is hidden under its coarse extravagance” (50). This reaction was not confined to male critics: Emily’s sister Charlotte and Harriet Martineau had to account for a novel that only readers with “iron nerves” could withstand (“Preface” 68). Similar to Peck, Peter Bayne praises Emily’s talent while insisting that readers should avoid the novel because it “belongs to the horror school of fiction, and is involved in its unequivocal and unexcepting condemnation” (106). Rather than being close-minded, the Victorian critics’ reading of *Wuthering Heights* as a “horror” novel that disturbed readers with brutal scenes of family violence is a legitimate interpretation. In this

chapter, I agree with the original reviewers that Emily meant to use violence to force her upper-class audience to confront the “truth”—that wife battering and child abuse were endemic in Victorian society. Her depiction of family violence shattered the bourgeois notion of a peaceful home by exposing how men such as Hindley and Heathcliff eschew the role of the protective father or guardian. Instead of caring for their wives, children, and wards, these male characters abuse their control over defenseless victims who lack the social, economic, and legal means to defend themselves.

While it is often assumed that Cathy haunts Heathcliff due to their spiritual connection as tragic lovers, in the epigraph, he actually evokes the figure of the ghostly revenger who haunts her male abuser to punish him.⁹ Critics have examined the various forms of abuse that Emily’s characters suffer, and yet they overlook Cathy’s mistreatment at the hands of her father, brother, servants, husband, and Heathcliff.¹⁰ When Heathcliff returns after three years’ absence, he terrorizes Cathy for marrying his rival Edgar Linton; for example, he threatens to murder her husband, brutally attacks her brother, and mistreats Edgar’s sister Isabella as his wife. From Cathy’s perspective, Heathcliff “murders” her because his actions directly lead to her death of heartbreak. As a ghost, Cathy takes revenge on Heathcliff by refusing to appear to her lover for

⁹ Besides Catherine’s spirit, Emily’s characters frequently invoke the revenge ghost. Cathy tells Heathcliff that she hopes Lockwood’s ghost will haunt him if Lockwood dies walking back to the Grange in the snow (14). Heathcliff informs Nelly that Hareton would fight against Hindley’s ghost if the latter came back to protest the abuse of his son, a typical reaction victims develop to their oppressors (169). When Linton helps Catherine to escape her confinement at the Heights, Heathcliff punishes him so severely that he boasts about appearing to his terrified son as a revenge ghost (218-219). He also threatens to haunt Nelly if she does not bury him alongside Catherine after he dies, a threat that may be effective on the superstitious servant (255). The fact that all the invocations of revenge ghosts in the novel are connected to Heathcliff and his mistreatment of others supports my argument that he is portrayed as a domestic abuser haunted for his crimes.

¹⁰ For readings of different characters as victims of domestic violence or suffering, see Morris 162-165 for Heathcliff, Pike for Isabella, Morrison 284-287 for Linton, and Baldys for Hareton. Throughout the novel, Catherine suffers physical and emotional abuse from Joseph (16-17), corporal punishment from Mr. Earnshaw (30), and being told “I cannot love thee” by her dying father (34). In addition, she witnesses Hindley and Frances’s mistreatment of Heathcliff and Hindley’s threats of physical violence when she becomes sick after losing Heathcliff (69). As an adult, she continues to face mistreatment: Heathcliff threatens to murder her husband and beat her sister-in-law, Edgar neglects her when she starves herself for three days while pregnant, and Heathcliff leaves physical marks in touching her (124).

nearly twenty years when he desperately wants to encounter her. Heathcliff complains about Cathy's punishment to Nelly, saying, "I looked round impatiently—I felt her by me—I could *almost* see her, and yet I *could not!* I ought to have sweat blood then, from the anguish of my yearning—from the fervour of my supplications to have but one glimpse! I had not one. She showed herself, as she often was in life, a devil to me!" (221).

Today, critics argue that Cathy is a destructive force who hurts those around her or a rebel who subverts female gender roles, but they have overlooked her identity as a traumatized victim of domestic abuse.¹¹ The male characters use their wealth, violence, and advantages to harm those they feel have wronged them, with Hindley punishing Heathcliff for usurping his place in the Earnshaw family and Heathcliff targeting everyone connected to his unhappy childhood. Robert F. Gluckner emphasizes that Heathcliff commits revenge through the privileges of the "gentleman's world from which he was excluded—arranged marriages, legal maneuvers, the acquiring of property, the manipulation of wills and inheritances" (333). In contrast, Cathy's status as a woman makes her vulnerable because she cannot escape her abusive childhood home through obtaining money, education, or employment—only through her marriage to Edgar. Isabella infuriates Heathcliff when she suggests that his love for Cathy would not have prevented him from mentally and emotionally abusing her, just like he hurts his wife: "[I]f poor Catherine had trusted you, and assumed the ridiculous, contemptible, degrading title of Mrs. Heathcliff, she would soon have presented a similar picture [as Isabella]! *She* wouldn't have borne your abominable behaviour quietly; her detestation and disgust must have found voice" (141). We should take seriously Isabella's recognition of Cathy as a fellow victim whom Heathcliff "murdered," especially since Cathy's anger at him "finds voice" when she refuses to return to him as a revenge ghost. In

¹¹ See Cory and Przybylowicz for readings that view Catherine as a villain and a rebel, respectively.

supernatural tales, ghosts who seek revenge after their mistreatment or death goes unpunished are typically the disenfranchised members of an unfair social order. Cathy's revenge on Heathcliff must take the form of haunting after her death, given that she lacks the male characters' benefits and access to legal protection as a woman living in late eighteenth-century England. Her supernatural torment of the man she considers her murderer and her appearance to Lockwood as a potential ally establishes a pattern that reoccurs in later female-authored ghost stories portraying family violence. In this chapter, I argue that *Wuthering Heights* is an urtext for Victorian and early-twentieth century ghost stories by women that dramatize ghostly female and child victims' revenge against their male oppressors.

In fashioning Cathy as a revenge ghost, Emily draws on a literary and folkloric figure that can be traced back to ancient times and that underwent significant evolution both onstage and in true ghost stories. The ghosts of victims who return to expose their murderers' identities to third parties or to take revenge on their killers appear in classical accounts (Finucane 22-24). The bloodthirsty ghosts of Senecan plays who urge the living to avenge their deaths and watch the revenge plot unfold were frequently adapted in Renaissance drama (Finucane 111; Owen 217-218; Wetmore).¹² As Maurizio Ascari notes, “[in] Renaissance tragedies the choice of the revenger is often presented as inevitable because the homicide is close to the top of the pyramid of power and consequently it is not possible to rely on the authorities to ensure justice is carried out” (22). In contrast, real life ghost stories from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries feature powerless female spirits exposing family violence or pursuing justice for their murder by haunting a woman ally. Sasha Handley analyzes how Mary Veal's ghostly appearance to her friend Margaret Bargrave publicized the latter's abuse by her depraved husband (most famously through Daniel

¹² For more on the Renaissance revenge ghost, see Hallett and Braund.

Defoe's account). Handley finds that "these preternatural tales were effective in securing the condemnation of abusive men among friends and neighbors who intervened to express disapproval" (91). Similarly, the Cock Lane Ghost captured the public's attention in 1762 when witnesses falsely claimed that Fanny Lynses's apparition was haunting the teenage Elizabeth Parsons to expose her murder at the hands of her fiancé, William Kent. The similar actions of Mrs. Veale and Fanny's ghosts—revealing domestic violence, allying with a sympathetic third party, and eliciting communal involvement—are also characteristic of Victorian women's revenge ghosts.

During the *fin de siècle*, when readers often proclaimed the fictional ghost story was on the decline, Victorian and Edwardian critics explained that revenge ghosts remained imposing to contemporary readers due to their evocation of complex questions about crime, justice, and forgiveness. Some critics thought the depiction of purposeless ghosts in psychological case studies was eroding the traditional motives behind spirits' return to earth. Andrew Lang complains the modern ghost "appears nobody knows why; he has no message to deliver, no secret crime to reveal, no appointment to keep, no treasure to disclose, no commissions to be executed..." (*Cock Lane* 95). Although Olivia Howard Dunbar approvingly quotes this passage, she qualifies her stance on the genre's decay by noting that literary revenge ghosts remain attractive to English readers:

In short, the only ghost-motive that retained its strength, plausibility, and appeal to the Anglo-Saxon mind was the retribution-motive,—the idea that the ghost's function was to recall, expiate, or avenge a crime. This was impressive; it was terrifying; it had moral and religious significance; it was not subtle; it was susceptible of indefinitely repeated adjustment to time and place. It was the perfect, perhaps the only perfect, ghost-motive for English literature. So valorous is the Anglo-Saxon temper that it scorns or is ashamed to tremble at mere empty shadow-tales. It demands not only to be impressed; there must be an adequate basis for the impression. The clue to the whole matter is that the ghost must not be a wanton and irresponsible power. It must be a moral agent. (334)

As Dunbar points out, the revenge ghost is a popular figure in Victorian supernatural tales because it comes with an easily adapted plot, thematic significance, and dramatic weight. Its popularity

may also reflect the influence of Shakespeare's revenge tragedy *Hamlet* (c. 1601), one of the most commonly referenced works in Victorian ghost stories. The revenge ghost's nature as a "moral agent" seeking justice for his or her victimization or murder allows writers to attack the system for failing to protect the spirit. Hence, women writers were drawn to using to a figure that easily allowed them to criticize the patriarchal social order of Victorian Britain and North America for its unfair treatment of women, children, slaves, the lower classes, and colonial subjects.

Emily M. Lawson's true account of Captain Bound's ghost recognizes the strong association between domestic violence and child abuse, which is also characteristic of Victorian women's fictional ghost stories.¹³ In her history of the town Upton-on-Severn (1884), she observes that "[a] great many people take delight in telling and hearing ghost stories, but very few have any idea how valuable these tales may be from a historical point of view" (181). Rather than dismissing these "old folks' tales" like many Victorians did, Lawson affirms the need to research, document, and analyze supernatural legends as historical artifacts containing significant truths. She recounts the ghostly lore she has researched in parish registers and papers about a Puritan soldier and landowner suggestively named Captain Bound because his ghost still terrorizes the town.¹⁴ He was "a man of little conscience and indomitable will, hard, unscrupulous, and obstinate" (188) due to his intolerance, fraud, and tyranny. While Captain Bound commits many wrongs, Lawson's repeated mentions of his abusive treatment (and possible murder) of his wives and children

¹³ See Gilbert 137-139 for her analysis of the novel Lawson wrote on a cholera epidemic, *Through Tumult and Pestilence* (1886), for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) In this novel, Lawson presents a subplot involving domestic violence when "scolding Clara becomes a caring and submissive wife to a 'drunken brute of a husband' (thus managing to save his soul before his death) and concludes to Fred and Annie, 'I'd never have learnt how good you were, or tried to be good myself, if it hadn't been for all the bitter troubles of the cholera time' (159)" (Gilbert 139). Here, Lawson's conciliatory portrayal of the victimized wife being redeemed through nursing her male oppressor is somewhat offset by the fact that his death liberates her (similar to Helen caring for the dying Huntington) and this novel was aimed at the supposedly violence-ridden lower classes.

¹⁴ Lawson's ghost story is based on a real historical figure named Captain Thomas Bound (1615-1667). In a recent blog post called "The Misogynistic Ghost of Captain Bound," Carolyn Saunders claims that this legend is still well-known in Upton-upon-Severn, since she heard it when she filmed her supernatural movie *The Wasting* (2017) there.

indicates that his worst behavior lies in his domestic failings. Her list of his marriages chronicles that each wife died around the same time as her infant children; the repeated coincidence of mother and child's deaths signals that Captain Bound killed both through his abuse. One witness reports that the locals used to see "the spectral forms of the two Marys and one Margaret, whose lives have been shortened or embittered by his cruelty" (187). Lawson wonders if an old tree could come to life and verify whether "the two Mary Bounds died by murder or mischance, and whether Margaret was ill-used or oppressed, or lived as a contented wife and mother; we should know whether her little children crept around the garden in terror of the father's step and voice, or ran merrily to meet him when he came home" (187). Lawson's portrayal of Captain Bound as the representative man of privilege who misuses his power to brutalize his wife and children reflects her critique of patriarchal authority for allowing violence against *both* groups. Lawson does not just blame a single man for committing violence, since her analysis of this ghost story reveals the broader historical patterns and cultural values that foster men's abusiveness. Captain Bound's continued haunting of late Victorian society illustrates that family violence would (and will) remain a problem as long as men of all classes controlled their families.

Critics such as Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, Melissa Edmundson Makala, Vanessa Dickerson, and Roxanne Harde find that Victorian women on both sides of the Atlantic criticize social inequalities by constructing female and child revenge ghosts that punish their male abusers.¹⁵ Weinstock writes that "the unhappy ghosts in these stories all mutely testify to the tyranny of patriarchy and the need for a reordered social structure that affords autonomous personhood to women and, in [Anna] Hoyt's case, children as well" (26). Makala argues that early

¹⁵ There are a number of more general scholarly works on love, sex, and marriage in Victorian women's ghost stories. See Dickerson 132-147, A. Smith 69-96, Krueger 58-100, Wallace, Killeen "Gendering," Makala, Kolentsis, and Tromp *Altered States* 21-72.

nineteenth-century ballads by British women present the first “female revenants,” spirits liberated from social restrictions who take revenge on their male tormentors and warn potential female victims: “All three poets [Makala examines] see the female ghost as a way of transforming helpless women into empowered figures who, only in death, are able to speak and act for themselves” (25). Similar to Makala, Dickerson comments that in late Victorian women’s ghost stories “the specters of the dead (female as well as male) are given powers of revenge that clearly mirror their creators’ own desires to avenge a keenly felt deprivation, especially when that deprivation is financial” (146). Harde discusses the ways in which women’s transatlantic ghost stories present the gender, class, and economic disparities that made children vulnerable in capitalist England and America. She offers a nuanced perspective on this topic by identifying a range of mistreated child ghosts, including violent revengers and redeemed spirits (189-190). These interpretations foreground that the supernatural allows helpless victims to reclaim authority as ghosts who seek revenge by violently punishing their abusers, namely fathers, husbands, and male guardians. While these academics acknowledge the larger power structures that perpetuate women and children’s victimization, their focus on how revenge stories vilify a single person makes these abusive situations seem like isolated incidents. In other words, the scholarly reading that these ghost stories supernaturally empower victims to punish a single oppressor actually *conceals* the pervasiveness of family violence in the Victorian era. The single instances also do not offer the possibility of systemic change that might improve the situation for others at the time or in the future, especially domestic violence victims.

Researchers have found that the modern conception of trauma developed during the nineteenth century based on collective incidents such as train crashes and wars as well as

individualized events like surgical shock and sexual abuse.¹⁶ These accounts focus on doctors and psychoanalysts such as Jean-Martin Charcot, Sigmund Freud, and W. H. R. Rivers treating traumatized subjects using sophisticated theories. Scholars have noted the similarity between ghost stories and traumatic narratives because both involve literal or metaphoric hauntings from the past that intrude in the present (Matus 98; Blanco and Pereen 11). Jill Matus writes that “ghost tales and gothic fiction provide Victorian authors with a ready conceptual, linguistic, and formal arsenal for the representation of psychic distress” (16). Matus, Kate Lawson, and Lynn Shakinovsky find representations of trauma in ghost stories such as Gaskell’s “The Poor Clare” (1857), Eliot’s “The Lifted Veil” (1859), Dickens’s “The Signal-Man,” (1866), and Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). During the twentieth century, Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok used the “transgenerational phantom” to embody trauma being transmitted across generations of the same family due to the silence surrounding an unspeakable “secret.” As Abraham writes, “it is the children’s or descendant’s lot to objectify these buried tombs through diverse species of ghosts. What comes back to haunt are the tombs of others” (172). Despite his insistence that the phantom is a “metapsychological fact” (171) rather than a real ghost, Abraham and Torok’s concept is often applied to nineteenth-century Gothic and supernatural fiction in which a revenge ghost or curse haunts a family and reveals a shameful secret. This scholarly trend fits with Abraham’s observation that “entire libraries of enigmas in literature would yield up their key, were we but to consider the ‘supernatural element’ responsible for them to be precise, the manifestation of a Specter” (“The Intermission of ‘Truth’” 188). He even composed a sequel to *Hamlet* that uncovers the real secret haunting Hamlet’s family, which cements the connection between the transgenerational phantom and the revenge ghost. Similar to Abraham and Torok’s transgenerational haunting, recent theories

¹⁶ For more of the development of trauma theory throughout the nineteenth century, see Young 13-85, Ley, Matus, and Luckhurst 1-59 *Trauma Question*.

like Susan Fraiberg's ghosts in the nursery and Marianne Hirsh's notion of "postmemory" address trauma passed down in the family.¹⁷

The problem with Young, Ley, Luckhurst, Abraham, and Torok's accounts of Victorian and early twentieth-century understandings of trauma is that they focus on a psychoanalyst or doctor solving the problem through individualized treatment. In Victorian women's supernatural fiction, the revenge ghost and other abuse victims develop ways of coping with their trauma by drawing on the community, rather than ineffective doctors, detectives, and lawyers. Given that these middle-class professionals are men, they are usually unconcerned with finding a solution to help the victimized women and children. Despite being from a pre-Freudian age, these supernatural tales use the language of spectrality to convey a sophisticated understanding of the psychology of trauma on abuse victims. They present an iteration of the classic revenge ghost in which the spirit transforms from an individual seeking personalized retribution to a community member situated in a web of other people. These ghosts' motives are more complex than a simple desire to take revenge on their abusers, since they advocate for a strong relationship with a sympathetic onlooker as well as a communal airing of these wrongs. In May Sinclair's "The Intercessor," the main character, Garvin, realizes that he is the "intercessor" who must negotiate between the child ghost and her abusive parents because her "suffering had endured with her indestructible, unappeasable passion. It was through him, Garvin, that her passion clamoured for satisfaction and her suffering for rest" (185).

In this passage, Sinclair clearly articulates the role of the "intercessor" who must mediate between the community and the ghost desiring justice, care for the survivors, or recognition of its sufferings. Instead of a relative inheriting the family's trauma, the ghost's ally is a living outsider

¹⁷ For an excellent overview of the overlap between spectrality studies and trauma theory, see Gruss 123-126. For readings of the intergenerational phantom in nineteenth-century Gothic and ghost stories, see Rashkin.

who conjures the apparition through his or her vulnerability. The symptoms of haunting, such as tormented feelings, recurring memories, and disturbing dreams, are the victim's psychic distress being experienced by other people. The fact that this contagion easily spreads from one character to another highlights the infectious nature of traumatic haunting, which evinces its negative impact on the entire community. Writing about large-scale catastrophes, Kai Erikson points out that the community can support individuals and at the same time divests them of the necessary emotional resources to handle trauma individually (4). In these ghost stories, the community becomes responsible for the abuse by supporting the very patriarchal authority that makes women and children vulnerable. While collective action is important, the stories also represent the ways in which the community can fail the victims by not stepping in, looking the other way, or remaining indifferent. This intercessor must be an outsider who can offer a different perspective from the locals and thus force a change in the repetitive nature of the haunting.

In this chapter, I challenge the problematic scholarly view that the only way these revenge ghosts can find resolution to their traumatic experiences is through enacting the same masculinized violence on their oppressors. Instead, I argue that these ghosts appeal to sympathetic human onlookers and try to forge ties with the larger community in order to disrupt the potentially endless cycle of retribution. I build on Handley, Makala, and Harde's recognition of the importance of forging alliances between the victimized ghosts and living intercessors in order to expose the systemic nature of family violence. These ghost stories connect wife battering and child abuse in recognition of the fact that these groups are both vulnerable populations prone to experiencing different varieties of abuse (neglect, violence, and deprivation) at the hands of fathers, husbands, and male guardians. While the stories explore the abuser's motives for committing violence, such as economic control, male pride, and social privilege, he is not typically the narrative focus. I agree

with Roxanne Harde that these tales highlight the victims' suffering and "[t]hat the family members who cause their deaths are punished seems incidental" (197). Instead, they portray the ghost and intercessor as vulnerable parties who trust each other enough to expose their weaknesses and gain power *through* their vulnerability. The vulnerabilities that bring the intercessor and the ghost together as well as make them similar include loneliness, trauma, and sickness.

The intercessor can be anyone (women, children, servants, or even men) who conjures the ghost through his or her vulnerability, while the ghost is a victim who desires to obtain justice, reconcile with the abusers, or expose their mistreatment. As Avery Gordon writes, "[f]ollowing the ghosts is about making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located. It is about putting life back in where only a vague memory or a bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look" (45). The intercessor's most important strategy for "putting life back" into Victorian society is to give hope to living victims so they can move on, escape their abusers, or obtain justice as *survivors*. In the end, rather than leaving once the situation is resolved to signify closure, the ghosts can always return to haunt the family in case the violence reoccurs, which makes them accessible even if they are not present. In Section One, I consider ghost stories by Wood, Nesbit, and Reynolds in which the alliance between the ghosts and the intercessors fails to enact positive change. In Section Two, my analysis centers on supernatural tales by Riddell, Sinclair, and Everett in which the alliance succeeds by obtaining justice for the ghost as well as happiness for the survivors. These ghost stories' strong association between women and children does not reflect the laws of the time because legislation for the two developed differently, with reforms to protect battered wives emerging earlier in the century. There was a general trend of both groups' rights advancing from 1868 to 1920 as they came under increasing legal protection and the state apparatus expanded to protect them. The stories also advocate for the state to

intervene to protect these groups through laws against family violence and burgeoning institutions such as The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) (1883). Hence, I am finding that the revenge ghost persists as as the social problem of family violence and lack of legal protection generates the need for these tales.

Section One: “Curious Experiences that Cannot Be Solved”

This time, I remembered I was lying in the oak closet, and I heard distinctly the gusty wind, and the driving of the snow; I heard, also, the fir-bough repeat its teasing sound, and ascribed it to the right cause; but it annoyed me so much, that I resolved to silence it, if possible; and, I thought, I rose and endeavoured to unhasp the casement. The hook was soldered into the staple, a circumstance observed by me when awake, but forgotten.

“I must stop it, nevertheless!” I muttered, knocking my knuckles through the glass, and stretching an arm out to seize the importunate branch: instead of which, my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand!

The intense horror of nightmare came over me; I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed-

“Let me in—let me in!”

“Who are you?” I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself.

“Catherine Linton,” it replied, shiveringly (why did I think of *Linton*? I had read *Earnshaw* twenty times for Linton). “I’ve come home, I’d lost my way on the moor!”

As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child’s face looking through the window. Terror made me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bed-clothes: still it wailed, “Let me in!” and maintained its tenacious gripe, almost maddening me with fear.

“How can I!” I said at length. “Let *me* go, if you want me to let you in!”

The fingers relaxed, I snatched mine through the hole, hurriedly piled the books up in a pyramid against it, and stopped my ears to exclude the lamentable prayer.

I seemed to keep them closed above a quarter of an hour, yet, the instant I listened again, there was the doleful cry moaning on!

“Begone!” I shouted, “I’ll never let you in, not if you beg for twenty years.”

“It is twenty years,” mourned the voice, “twenty years. I’ve been a waif for twenty years!”

Thereat began a feeble scratching outside, and the pile of books moved as if thrust forward. I tried to jump up; but could not stir a limb; and so yelled aloud, in a frenzy of fright.

- *Wuthering Heights*

Many critics tend to regard Catherine as liberated from the social, emotional, and financial restrictions on women after she dies because her supernatural form allows her to experience the freedom she enjoyed with Heathcliff as a child. For instance, Vanessa Dickerson writes that Catherine’s “ghostly translation will result in the reclamation of a transcendental space and thereby

self” (78). Catherine herself encourages this reading in the famous passage when she relays her dream of entering heaven to Nelly, saying, “I broke my heart weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy” (63). However, the image in the epigraph of Catherine’s ghost sadly crying and begging Lockwood to admit her suggests that ghosthood is a miserable state in which her supernatural powers are limited. Her attachment to the Heights prevents Catherine from escaping the place where she suffered abuse, and her claim that she has “lost my way on the moors” and inhabited the form of a “waif for twenty years” marks her as a traumatized child victim. Jarlath Killeen notes that Lockwood’s “violence upon the orphaned child is partly representative of the Victorian violence against children in all their forms” (*History* 73). Catherine’s desire for her home as a site of her traumatic experiences during her childhood fits Freud’s notion of the repetition compulsion in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Writing about shell-shocked soldiers who fought in World War I, Freud speculates that traumatized subjects feel compelled to repeat the same conditions that led to their original psychic distress. Catherine appears to have repetition compulsion, since she fits several of his criteria for a traumatized person: “shock dreams,” child’s play, and “destiny compulsion.”¹⁸ In her child ghost form, Catherine returns to her abusive childhood home in Lockwood’s dream and he repeats the mistreatment she suffered by attacking her. As a ghost, Catherine appears fated to remain earthbound as long as her original trauma remains unresolved.

Rather than transcending patriarchal society in her ghostly form, Catherine reexperiences the same mistreatment inflicted by various men through Lockwood’s violence because he acts like an abusive male, rather than the concerned intercessor. In my reading, Catherine manifests to

¹⁸ The destiny compulsion refers to the belief that one is fated to repeat the traumatic event.

Lockwood as a helpless child ghost in order to form an alliance with an outsider who may be sympathetic to her plight. Her “tenacious gripe” on Lockwood and cry of “Let me in!” indicate that she appears hoping that he will assist her, but Lockwood reacts like a man violently trying to control a helpless victim. His response of “pull[ing] its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubb[ing] it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bedclothes” constitutes a shocking act of violence against a child (20-21). His attack on a defenseless child ghost who goes by her married name (hence, Lockwood wonders “why did I think of *Linton*?”) blurs the distinction between child abuse and domestic violence. Catherine’s ambiguous form further implies that she is Freud’s traumatized subject for whom past and present blur together and all acts of violence are the same. If she could ally with an intercessor, it is possible Catherine could stop her repetitive visits to the Heights, help Lockwood overcome his emotional isolation, and rescue her daughter from Heathcliff’s control. Dorothy Van Ghent writes that the “windowpane is the medium, treacherously transparent, separating the ‘inside’ from the ‘outside,’ the ‘human’ from the alien and terrible ‘other’” (161) in *Wuthering Heights*. Lockwood opening the window to Catherine would create a beneficial alliance between the living and the dead in which hopeful possibilities would become accessible for both. Ironically, his lack of compassion for the powerless child ghost also makes Lockwood misjudge Catherine as a violent earthbound spirit guilty of wrongdoing, based on his “terror” and “fright”: “If the little fiend had got in at the window, she probably would have strangled me!...she must have been a changeling—wicked little soul! She told me she had been walking the earth these twenty years: a just punishment for her mortal transgressions, I’ve no doubt!” (22).

Isabella Linton’s question “Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?” (106) insinuates that he is the supernatural male who oppresses or kills women, an

established figure in British literature and folklore. Diana Wallace, Lowell T. Frye, and Jarlath Killeen have examined the destructive male spirits who threaten the women they haunt in Victorian women's supernatural tales. Wallace asserts that ghost stories by Gaskell, Sinclair, and Bowen fall within the Female Gothic tradition because they rewrite the Bluebeard plot of a man who murders or imprisons his wives (59). Frye discusses how "demon lover" stories such as Edith Nesbit's "John Charrington's Wedding" (1893) portray a woman's union with a supernatural lover in order to show that marriage is the death of female identity (189). Killeen argues that "the ghost also acts as a spectral manifestation of the physical and financial threats that men posed to women" (85) through the victimization of female characters. In their studies of Victorian domestic violence, James Hammerton, Lisa SurrIDGE, and Martin J. Wiener point out that male violence was increasingly condemned during the nineteenth century. However, these studies on the psychology of the abuser redirect attention away from the victims, such as when SurrIDGE reads Nancy's revenge ghost as a manifestation of Sykes's guilt for killing her in *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839) (97). The focus of these women's ghost stories is not the male abusers so much as the ghostly victims, intercessors, and the living survivors. The abuser will often be dispatched in a few lines or remain unpunished by the ghost; if his character is explored in depth (such as when he is the narrator), he is vilified for his greed, cowardice, and ruthlessness. These ghost stories' general lack of interest in the abuser indicates that while vengeance/punishment is one motive for the ghost to appear, the expression/acknowledgement of its trauma is a different impetus.

In her ghost story "The Black Veil" (1886), Emilia Dilke depicts the ways in which the community fails to protect the victim from her ghostly male abuser. Scholars have inspected Dilke's inspection of the negative effects of marriage on women in her collections of supernatural tales, *The Shrine of Death* (1886) and *The Shrine of Love* (1891). Hilary Grimes writes "[w]omen

for Dilke are thus haunted not simply by their own ambitions but by the very fact that they are women” in limited positions (105). Kali Israel comments that “Dilke’s stories embody the unexceptional institutions of marriage and gender in demonic male forms. Female desire is both meritorious and violently punished, and there are no happy endings” (105).¹⁹ “The Black Veil” features a nameless wife from an isolated Norwegian village who is so desperate to stop her abusive husband that she kills him. According to the narrator, “[h]e was the stronger of the two, so she suffered the most, and the more she suffered, the more her will to repay evil with evil grew within her till at last one night she slew him” (79). After committing her secret crime, the wife feels so ashamed that she keeps it hidden because nobody will sympathize with her as a murderer, which distances her even further from the community. The mourning veil’s supernatural qualities—including its increasing weight and opacity—represent society’s expectations for wives, her husband’s continued power over her, and her guilty conscience.²⁰ The community’s ignorance of her crime leads it to advise her to visit a “wise woman,” but the woman’s title proves to be ironic when she wrongly counsels the wife to supplicate her husband’s vengeful ghost by praying at his

¹⁹ Israel further documents how Dilke drew from her unhappy first marriage to Mark Pattison, which many contemporaries believe served as the model for Dorothea and Casaubon’s union in Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (76, 97-99, 157). She comments that “[t]he Gothic childhood of Mark Pattison and his sisters—where horror resides within the domestic and familial sphere, and madness and violence emerge from corrupt power—seems to expose both monstrous deviations from, and the normative prison of, family life” (77). However, Pattison emulated his abusive father’s behavior by mistreating Dilke to the point that her suffering manifested in physical complaints that left her unable to work. In her Preface to *The Shrine of Death*, Dilke explains, “Life, I think, has nothing more tragic than life’s ruin through mistakes dictated by a noble purpose. Yet, possibly, those martyrs who have faithfully sought the ideal, otherwise than in the fulfillment of accepted law, whether through a Vision of Learning, or at the Shrine of Death, are not accurst” (vi). In her view, the wife is a “martyr” whose murder of her husband is an admirable but ultimately flawed act because it separates her from the community and silences her as a victim. We can also see the victimized wife as Dilke’s alter ego, who kills her oppressor in a wish-fulfillment fantasy and resents trying to please him on the advice of her friend, the feminist Eleanor Smith (the “wise woman”) (Israel 114-120).

²⁰ Dilke’s use of the black veil—a symbol of mourning, death, and concealment—to hide a terrifying secret is common in Gothic literature. The most famous example appears in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) when the heroine Emily collapses after lifting a black veil, which presents a terrifying enigma until a mundane answer is given at the end. In addition, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “The Minister’s Black Veil” (1832) features a reverend named Mr. Hooper who starts wearing a black veil with no explanation. The “mystery” of the veil inspires multiple interpretations about its significance by the community that shuns him, including the belief that Mr. Hooper is hiding a secret sin, similar to Dilke’s wife.

grave one night. Dilke criticizes how women are complicit in domestic abuse by encouraging the wife to appease her husband, whose revived corpse murders her to assert his power even beyond death and to gain revenge on his killer: “And they outside shook the gate, but within she made it too fast for all their strength, and she said, ‘I cannot pray. He drags me down; he holds [the veil], and draws me to him!’” (83). The fact that the community watches as she is being murdered and intervenes too late due to the locked cemetery gate symbolizes how the wife’s abuse isolates her from the very people who could rescue her. The community’s failure to shield the wife when her husband was alive forces her to commit violence, feel shame, and remain silent, which perpetuates the cycle of domestic abuse until the entire family is destroyed.

In this section, I consider Ellen Wood’s David Garth stories and “A Curious Experience,” Edith Nesbit’s “From the Dead,” and Baillie Reynolds’s “The House that Was Rent Free.” In these ghost stories, the alliance fails because the intercessor does not benefit from the ghost’s intervention or resolve the haunting satisfactorily. The alliance also founders when the survivors are not enabled to move on, escape the abuser, or have happy endings, which goes against the scholarly view of these ghost stories. Critics often assume that women’s ghost stories subversively criticize Victorian and Edwardian society in order to encourage feminist reforms. Alyssa Kolentsis and Susan Schaper oppose the progressive narrative when they argue that women’s ghost stories regard the home as a male-controlled domain in which female characters who try to seize power are overshadowed or destroyed. The horror of the ghost stories I will examine is that nobody does anything to change the conditions that foster family violence and the status quo remains, for a variety of reasons. For instance, the characters may feel that domestic violence is a private family matter that should be addressed within the home, rather than a social issue. Also, the community could discount responsibility for the abuse or lack awareness about how to help the victims beyond

ostracizing the oppressors. Finally, they might have no faith in the legal institutions to stop abusers or protect victims except to hope that men will reform out of a sense of guilt and amend their behavior toward the mistreated.

Ultimately, the ghosts and intercessors do not work together to inspire the community and change family violence, reflecting the female authors' fear that their ghost stories cannot improve social conditions or help survivors. The problem may lie with the intercessors being too frightened of the ghost to help them or skeptical of their existence to respond. Late Victorian critics worried that the purposeless ghosts of psychical case studies who lacked any motive for appearing or message for the living would harm fictional supernatural tales. The ghostly victims have nothing to convey to the intercessors beyond their trauma, which can make the intercessors too sick or distressed to help. These ghost stories are not artistic failures so much as they end on a note of incompleteness that leaves the abusive situations unresolved; this frustrating lack of narrative closure is supposed to give readers a haunting sense of unease. At the stories' end, nothing substantial changes because the cycle of abuse cannot stop through communal help alone. The reason the status quo persists is that everyone in these isolated communities learns about the ghostly victims' trauma, but they are unsure what to do with their knowledge. The locals' lack of action leaves the threat of abuse lingering and suggests that family violence could continue into the next generation of victims. In Emily Brontë's words, these ghost stories reveal the fear that "mercy reigns a little while / But Hate eternaly [*sic*]" ("Shed No Tears" lines 31-32).

In her Johnny Ludlow ghost stories, Ellen Wood's representation of Christian suffering and sentimental child deaths indicates that the only way to implement change in a violent patriarchal society is to move people's hearts through emotional appeals, rather than systemic reforms. Wood used her position as the editor of the *Argosy* from 1867 to 1887 to strengthen her

authorial brand, promote her controversial works, and publish her writings. Jennifer Phegley criticizes how Charles Wood's *Memorials of Mrs. Henry Wood* (1894) "all but ignores Wood's twenty years of editing, focusing instead on her popular Johnny Ludlow stories written for the magazine" (183). I would argue that the Johnny Ludlow stories were a crucial part of Wood's editorial role, since they earned critical respect as her best works (Flowers).²¹ These stories are related by an orphaned teenager living with Squire Todhetley's family and consist of a series of interconnected narratives, a recurring cast of characters, and multiple ongoing plot lines. According to Andrew Mangham, a parody of her style reveals that "[s]o commonplace was the supernatural in Wood's fiction that ghost sightings were considered nothing out of the ordinary" (245). My analysis will examine several of the Johnny Ludlow stories in which the ghosts of women or children killed by their male relatives appear to the local community.²² Woods's characters do not change the conditions that promote family violence because they counsel Christian resignation to suffering and the "good death" that befalls young boys such as David Garth and John Whitney. In addition, the ghosts of Daniel Ferrars, David Garth, and Mrs. Calson have no message to communicate beyond their fear, trauma, and anger toward those they hold responsible for their deaths. Although various community members intervene in these abusive situations, they ultimately cannot ally with the ghosts as intercessors and help the spirits or victims of family violence. The characters do not know how to act on their knowledge of the trauma these ghostly victims suffered beyond offering Christian patience, repentance, and death.

²¹ See Phegley, Palmer, and Montgomery for more on Wood's role as the editor of the *Argosy*. Her son Charles Wood devotes a whole chapter of his *Memorials* to the Johnny Ludlow stories (281-298). For more on the Johnny Ludlow stories, see Ross, Flowers, Palmer 192-193, and Jaquet "Formal Investigations."

²² Wood's other Johnny Ludlow ghost stories that feature wife or child abuse include "The Final End to It" (1872), "Sandstone Torr" (1874), "Charlotte and Charlotte" (1878), "The Last of the Caromels" (1878), and "Featherstone's Story" (1889). In addition, her supernatural novel *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* (1863) portrays a family haunted by the ghostly bier of an ancestress murdered by her husband. See Mangham 87-92, Maunder, and Jaquet "Disturbed Domestic" for more on *The Shadow of Ashlydyat*.

Although Wood's ghost story "Reality or Delusion?" (1868) eschews portrayals of family violence, it sets a pattern observable in other Johnny Ludlow tales with revenge ghosts and constitutes the prequel to her David Garth ghost stories. In all three David Garth stories, the female characters pursue unhappy relationships with men who act unfaithful, commit serious crimes or wrongs, and mistreat them and their loved ones. The fact that all these men are connected with law enforcement—Daniel Ferrars is the previous bailiff's son, James Hill is the current bailiff, and Louis Roe is Hill's tenant—signals that the justice system is led by ineffective and corrupt men. In "Reality or Delusion?" Maria Lease searches for her fiancé Daniel Ferrars to complain about his flirtation with the Frenchwoman Harriet Roe and witnesses him stealing corn from Squire Todhetley:²³ "The man's aspect had so changed; there was something so grievously subdued and sad about him altogether, that I felt as sorry for him as if he had not been guilty. Maria Lease went on in her fiery passion" (302). It is implied that Johnny models the correct response by sympathizing with Daniel, while Maria lacks compassion by threatening to turn him in to the police. Despite Daniel's theft, lying, and infidelity, Johnny sides with him rather than Maria when he keeps his crime a secret in the hope that "he would only take the lesson to heart and go on straight for the future" (303). The next day, Maria says, "Master Johnny, [Daniel] is just the man to go and do something desperate. He would never face shame; and I was a mad, hard-hearted, wicked girl to do what I did last night" (304). Maria's actions set off a chain of events that lead Daniel to commit suicide, which exemplifies that women only cause trouble by blaming men for their misbehavior in Wood's ghost stories. After Daniel kills himself, his ghost angrily appears to Maria as a punishment for her wrong and she insists that *she* must repent for her actions in later David Garth stories, not her fiancé. The problem with Johnny and Maria refusing to report Daniel's

²³ For more on Wood's negative view of the French in her fiction, see Pires.

crime and giving him a chance to reform is that this reasoning relies on individuals *choosing* to improve their behavior.

The fact that male abusers serve as law enforcement as well as the expectation that criminals can be rehabilitated through guilt alone prevents the community from making systemic changes to protect vulnerable women and children in “David Garth’s Night-Watch” (1869). James Hill displays his controlling behavior when he cruelly forbids Mrs. Hill and his stepson David Garth from seeing Mrs. Hill’s sick mother because he wants their help moving into their new home, Willow Brook Cottage. On a visit to the Hills, Johnny reports, “Davy was washing up the breakfast-things; his mother sat near, sorting the contents of a chest: a neat little woman in a green stuff gown, with the same sweet eyes as David and the same shrinking look in them” (310). Claudia Nelson argues that mid-Victorian fiction aimed at boys presents an alternative to aggressive masculinity in the form of young male characters who resemble the Victorian Angel (4-5). David fits Nelson’s description of the angelic boy due to his feminine looks, gentle personality, talent for housework, and likeness to his mother. Hill complains to his wife “[t]hee’ll keep that boy a baby for his life. Davy would as soon sleep in the house alone, as not, but for the folly put into his head by you. And why not? He’s fourteen” (311). Rather than allowing his stepson to engage in the feminine activity of nursing by visiting his grandmother’s sickbed, Hill wants David to follow his example as a bailiff and sleep in Willow Brooke overnight to ward off thieves. Wood’s negative rendition of Hill articulates a persistent critique among these ghost stories of the way society forces young boys to grow up too quickly and adopt an aggressive adult masculinity. In abusive households, boys are caught between being children vulnerable to oppression and adult men who must protect their female relatives. Alison Jaquet claims that Johnny Ludlow excels in “domestic detection” by investigating crimes that threaten the home from within and without (“Formal

Investigations” 205; Flowers). Hill uses his concern with outside threats, such as thieves stealing from Willow Brook, to become the threat within the home by locking David there alone overnight.

The sentimental expectation that heaven will be an ideal society distracts the community from making systemic improvements to protect abuse victims like David and Mrs. Hill in Wood’s ghost stories. Before David goes to stay at Willow Brook, he and Mrs. Hill read Psalm 91 together, which ironically claims God “will command his angels concerning you / to guard you in all your ways” (Psalms 91 11). When the two discuss guardian angels, David remarks, “[w]hen life’s over it will be so pleasant for them to carry us away to heaven! I wish you and I could go together, mother” (312). As the editor of the *Argosy*, Wood had to negotiate between evangelical piety and sensationalism; hence, she adopts a religious tone in her Johnny Ludlow stories (Palmer 187). An important religious element in Victorian fiction is child deathbeds, a trope Wood adopts when she depicts William Carlyle’s death in *East Lynne* (1861). During this period, evangelical writings dramatize young characters dying a “good” death in which they share religious truths and inspire Christian behavior in their onlookers. However, scholars have read morbid undertones in these death scenes: children remain perfect dying young (Auerbach *Private Theatricals*), Victorian adults may want children dead (Killeen), and children may want to die (Reynolds).²⁴ Laurence Lerner asserts that by “separating out spiritual equality and regarding it as untouched by earthly hierarchy” the egalitarianism promised in heaven “also protects the status quo, leaving worldly hierarchy safely untouched by spiritual equality” (140). His observation applies to Wood’s ghost stories, since David and Mrs. Hill must patiently wait to die before they can escape Hill’s control. Hill blames the mother-son relationship for fostering David’s sensitivity and cruelly tries to harden him by locking David in Willow Brooke and threatening to beat the crying boy: “Drat the boy!

²⁴ For more on child deathbed scenes in Victorian fiction, see Georgieva, Lerner, Auerbach, Cockshut, Jay, Killeen, and Reynolds.

This comes of his mother's coddling. Hold your row, Davvy....you'd not like me to come back and give you a basting" (314). The mother-son relationship is so strong that Mrs. Hill hears David's ghost call her and opens the windows to allow him inside, in a reworking of Lockwood and Catherine's encounter:

Mrs. Hill was in a sound sleep, when a loud, agonized cry of "Mother" aroused her from it. She started up, wide awake instantly, and in terror so great that the perspiration began to pour off her face. In that moment the call was repeated. The voice was David's voice; it had appeared to be in the room, close to her, and she peered into every corner in vain.

Opening the casement window, she called to him by name; softly at first, then louder. There was no answer. Mrs. Hill stretched out her head as far as the narrow casement allowed, but neither David nor anyone else could she see; nothing but the shadows cast by the moonlight. (315)

The supernatural call Mrs. Hill hears reflects David's trauma as he dies of fright or hypothermia and desperately begs her for help, but her act of opening the window does not produce any further interaction between the ghost and the abuse victim. Despite her love for her son, Mrs. Hill's "terror" of the supernatural makes her reluctant to encounter David's ghost, which creates a missed opportunity for them to forge an alliance against Hill.

While both the police and the entire community learn of Hill's mistreatment of David, his lack of punishment in the face of local indignation exposes the inadequacy of child protection laws at the time Wood was writing. Hill lies to his wife about her son's death by claiming that David went to visit his grandmother in order to hide the fact that his abusive behavior killed his stepson, especially from law enforcement. He admits to Squire Todhetley that he "could cut my hands off now for having done it; but I never thought he'd be really frightened. It's just as if his ghost had been haunting me ever since; I see him a-following of me everywhere" (326). Although Hill faces pursuit by a revenge ghost, David does not punish him beyond making his stepfather feel guilty, since his primary desire is to communicate with Mrs. Hill and the community. When David's aunt

Miss Timmons badgers the police into investigating, Hill finally confesses that he hid David's body and planned to bury it to conceal the evidence against him. In "David Garth's Ghost" (1871), Wood reveals that though the community holds Hill responsible for killing David, he goes unpunished because the law has not caught up to recognizing his abusive actions as criminal:

You see, he had feared the law might come down upon him. The coroner's inquest had brought in a safe verdict: all Hill received was a censure for having locked the boy in alone: but he could not yet feel sure that the affair would not be taken up by the magistrates: and the parish said in his hearing that his punishment ought to be transportation at the very least. Altogether, it subdued him. (333)

The fact that Hill fears legal punishment to the point that he acts like a guilty criminal and yet only earns a light sentence infuriates the locals, who are frustrated with the shortcomings of the laws concerning child abuse to secure justice for David. The community thinks he should receive a harsh sentence, but no one takes any action to reform the laws or to pressure the magistrates besides complaining. The Johnny Ludlow stories are set during the mid-Victorian era and were published between 1868 to 1871, years before the state began to intervene seriously to protect children in abusive homes. Harriet Roe unhappily marries a forger named Louis Roe and they take advantage of the rumors that David's ghost haunts Willow Brook to hide from the authorities. When David's "ghost" appears in the window, the entire community watches in the belief that he haunts Willow Brook out of revenge. These ghost stories show that child abuse was increasingly becoming a public concern, which appears when characters such as Mrs. Timmons and Squire Todhetly interfere to assist David. However, the rational explanations Harriet gives for the ghost's appearance undermine David's credibility and reveal his limited ability to promote change as an apparition or to ally with the skeptical Johnny. Johnny remarks "[s]mall parties made shivering pilgrimages up there on a moonlight night, to watch for it, and sometimes declared that it appeared. Fancy goes a long way in this world" (347). David's inability to communicate with the locals and

their lack of action to reform the law or protect his mother from Hill leaves readers feeling dissatisfied at the end of this series of ghost stories.

Wood's portrayal of the futility in the community acting to prevent family violence or to help mistreated wives in the David Garth ghost stories extends to her representation of domestic murder in "A Curious Experience" (1883). Although Mrs. Hill temporarily abandons Hill, she must return to her husband and stay with the man responsible for killing her son and subjugating her: "Hill's wife was also there, in her mourning gown with crape on it, sitting right back in the chimney corner. She had gone back to Hill then, but made no scruple of leaving him alone often: and Hill, who had had his lesson, put up with it" ("David Garth's Ghost" 335). Wood's stories also expose the insufficiency of recent wife protection laws such as the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1870, which encouraged magistrates to reconcile abusers and victims to avoid the division of assets through a separation. The legal focus on reconciliation and punishment would only shift with Frances Power Cobbe advocating for the protection and independence of abused wives in her famous essay "Wife-Torture in England" in 1878 (Hammerton 39, 63). In a similar miserable position to Mrs. Hill, Maria and Harriet change from being rivals over Daniel Ferrars to victims who bond over their shared suffering from becoming involved with criminals. Harriet asks Maria, "[w]hich is the worse fate—yours or mine...You have your lonely life, and your never-ending repentance for what you call your harsh sin: I have my sickness and my trouble—and I have enough of that, Maria" ("David Garth's Ghost" 347). While Miss Timmons uncovers David's death and Harriet's sickness through her appeals to the police, she cannot help her female relatives leave their unhappy marriages by becoming an intercessor. The female characters in Wood's ghost stories can only help each other to a limited degree and must ultimately resign themselves to suffering. In Woods' ghost stories, the solace that mistreated characters such as Maria and Harriet

provide each other stands in the way of a more active rebellion against the social order that renders them powerless. Significantly, Wood wrote her David Garth ghost stories around the same time that feminists such as John Stuart Mill were campaigning to protect married women from domestic violence. In *The Subjection of Women* (1869), Mill asserts that Victorian marriage must be reformed because men's privileged position encourages them to misuse their power over their wives: "The vilest malefactor has some wretched woman tied to him, against whom he can commit any atrocity except killing her, and, if tolerably cautious, can do that without much danger of the legal penalty" (34). "A Curious Experience" plays out his observation while reflecting the latest legal advances with the passage of the Married Women's Property Act of 1882. Mrs. Calson's ownership of her wealth after marriage still makes her vulnerable to being murdered by her greedy husband in her bed, which is important portable property for women in Wood's fiction (Wynne 103-104).

Ironically, "A Curious Experience" opens with Dr. Featherstone recommending that the Whitney family visit the resort town of Pumpwater for John Whitney's health, only for him to be frightened by staying at Mrs. Gay's hotel. Like David, John Whitney is an angelic teenage boy associated with the supernatural whose weak health feminizes him; too virtuous for this world, he dies. After John sings the hymn "Brief Life is our Portion" at church, Johnny insists that he has "often thought since that we might have seen by these very moods of John—his thoughts bent upon heaven more than upon earth—that his life was swiftly passing" (301). The fact that the dying John parallels Mrs. Calson by sleeping in the bed where she slowly expired reinforces the association between victimized women and delicate boys in Wood's fiction. As in the David Garth stories, so here the Christian notion of the "good" death surrounding John's sickness prevents Wood from pushing for reforms to prevent family violence. Johnny, John, Lady Whitney, and Dr. Featherstone

take turns sleeping in the bed and all of them experience the wife's trauma at being murdered.

Johnny describes how

Dead sleepy though I was, I could not get to sleep. It would be simply useless to try to describe my sensations. Each succeeding night they had been more marked. A strange, discomfoting restlessness pervaded me; a feeling of uneasiness, I could not tell why or wherefore. I saw nothing uncanny, I heard nothing; nevertheless, I felt just as though some uncanny presence was in the room, imparting a sense of semi-terror. (305)

David and Mrs. Calson's ghosts are incapable of conveying anything except for their trauma and the community cannot respond with concrete action to resolve their lingering pain. The living are partly motivated by a feeling that it is not their place to interfere in the private domain of the home. Johnny relates that he heard an inset ghost story Wood later related as "Featherstone's Story" (1889), which strongly resembles "A Curious Experience" in terms of its plot. When Lavinia Preen is poisoned by her brother-in-law for her wealth, her friend tells his wife, "[a]ll the same, and whether or no, it is not your affair, Marie. Neither must you make it so. Believe me, my wife, the only way to live peaceably ourselves in the world is to let our neighbours' sins alone" (173).

While Mrs. Calson's passing may resemble the "good death" of female characters often found in Wood's fiction (Beller 220), this confined victim of domestic murder closely resembles the caged women on display in Mona Caird's searing feminist critique in "Marriage" (1888). Alison Jaquet claims that Wood's "use of this mode [the ghost story] is inextricably linked to a desire to locate a discourse through which to represent the complexity of female experience" ("Disturbed Domestic" 245). Andrew Mangham argues that Wood draws on female incarceration found in the Female Gothic to negotiate nineteenth-century images of femininity (83). These scholarly findings fit with her imagining of the room as a place of confinement still haunted by Mrs. Calson's trauma at being trapped in her bed by a murderous husband as he slowly poisons her. Dr. Featherstone warns that the room could be covered with arsenic wallpaper, but Mrs. Gay

insists that she redecorated the walls due to the sinister feeling in there. She tells him “[t]he paper is pale pink, sir...I fancy it is the green papers that have arsenic in them” and also “[w]hen I came into the house six months ago, that room was re-papered, and I saw that the walls were thoroughly scraped” (306). The suggestion of arsenic poisoning matches Mrs. Calson’s gradual loss of health and the fact that this poison was ascribed supernatural qualities due to its potency. Green wallpaper laced with arsenic became popular during the 1850s, but the discovery that it was toxic led to the start of its decline at the time Wood was writing during the *fin de siècle* (Hawksley).

Middle-class characters like Dr. Parafin and his wife dismiss the possibility of getting justice for the dead Mrs. Calson, but Mrs. Gay’s maid Susannah recognizes this is due to their refusal to advocate for her. As she tells the guests, “Whispers got afloat when she was underground—not before—that there had been something wrong about her death, that she had not come by it fairly, or by the illness either....But they were not spoken openly; under the rose, as may be said; and they died away” (310-311). Since nobody obtained justice for Mrs. Calson, Susannah’s report suggests that her ghost punished her husband because he died from sickness about a year later. The fact that Mrs. Calson’s ghost keeps disturbing people years after her husband’s death indicates that she wants more than revenge, but the ending conveys an overwhelming sense of futility. Most of the characters experience the female trauma at domestic murder firsthand, but none of them know how to act on this information. The final image of a perfectly good house remaining empty after Mrs. Gay vacates it symbolizes the meaninglessness of the conclusion—Mrs. Calson’s trauma remains unresolved. The death of the potential intercessor—John Whitney—further signals the hopelessness of preventing domestic violence, since he cannot help Mrs. Calson: “Sir John Whitney found his son looking all the better for his visit to Pumpwater. Temporarily he was so. Temporarily only; not materially: for John died before the year was out” (312). As Johnny

notes, “I’m sure I never shall [understand the haunting]. It remains one of those curious experiences that cannot be solved in this world. But it is none the less true” (312). In turn, the ghost of Mrs. Calson cannot receive assistance if she has no message for the community beyond her terror or an intercessor to mediate between her and the living.

While Edith Nesbit appears to give her abused wife more agency than Wood’s Mrs. Calson in “From the Dead” (1893), ultimately both female characters lack the power to stand up for themselves in their supernatural forms. Critics, noting that Nesbit’s ghost stories explore the horrors of male sexuality and marriage for Victorian women, typically focus on her tale “Man-Size in Marble” (1893). Nesbit’s seeming agreement with her first husband Hubert Bland’s conservative views on gender and her refusal to support female suffrage makes her a problematic figure for feminist critics (Briggs 333-336; Rutledge 227). At the same time, her resentment at being forced to tolerate Bland’s extramarital affairs and to live with his secret mistress was likely responsible for her pessimistic depiction of marriage in her supernatural tales. Nesbit highlights the destructive consequences of the social prohibition on women expressing their romantic or sexual longings because it prevents the characters from being honest with each other. She represents a love square in which two women cannot reveal their feelings for the men they desire without resorting to lies. In order to confess her passion for Arthur Marsh, Ida Belmont must write him a love letter under the guise that his fiancée Elvira is addressing Ida’s brother Oscar.²⁵ When Arthur expresses his sadness at this revelation, Ida defensively says, “Pardon me...I have done nothing but show you the truth” (100). Although Ida forged the letter, she tells Arthur the “truth”

²⁵ It is striking that Ida and Arthur share the same names as the royal main characters in Alfred Tennyson’s epic poems *The Princess* (1847) and *Idylls of the King* (1859-1885). Both of Tennyson’s characters establish romanticized domains (the women’s university and Camelot) that they end up abandoning or that fall apart because of their marriage choices. Similarly, Ida and Arthur’s relationship is built on an idealized foundation that falls apart after marriage due to conflict between them, just as fighting at the women’s university and Camelot forces out Tennyson’s protagonists.

in a larger sense, since Elvira and Oscar really do want to be together.²⁶ Arthur suspects that Ida is deceiving him so she can have him for herself, but his belief that Elvira will be candid is ironic, considering that she has also hidden her love for Oscar: “I determined to see Elvira, to know from her own lips whether by happy fortune this blow came, not from her, but from a woman in whom love might have killed honesty” (101). When he sees Oscar and Elvira’s attraction in person, Arthur feels guilty for doubting Ida; he even suggests that he fell in love with her due to “remorse for having, even for half a day, dreamed that she could be so base as to forego a lie to gain a lover” (102). Arthur’s dichotomous thinking that Ida is either telling the truth or lying prevents him from understanding the moral complexity of her actions.

The fact that Arthur and Ida’s marriage falls apart after only three weeks reveals their union is bound to fail not for being built on a lie, but because there is no room for honesty or forgiveness between them. Three weeks into their honeymoon, Ida says, “I must tell you...I cannot hide anything now from you, because I am yours—body, soul, and spirit. The phrase was an echo that stung” (103) for Arthur since it comes from the forged letter. Despite his claims of love for Ida, Arthur treats her worse than Elvira when she reveals the truth, even though his former fiancée concealed her feelings for Oscar. Victoria Margree rightfully points out that Ida and Arthur become estranged owing to his acceptance of the Victorian gender scripts surrounding masculinity, which call for his pride to be hurt (431). He admits, “I know now it was only wounded vanity that smarted in me. That I should have been tricked, that I should have been deceived, that I should have been led on to make a fool of myself. That I should have married the woman who had befooled me”

²⁶ The name of Arthur’s fiancé Elvira appears as the ghostly character in a popular play by one of Nesbit’s literary mentees, namely Noël Coward’s *Blithe Spirit* (1941). In the play, Elvira is a ghost summoned by the medium Madame Arcati and spends the entire play humorously foiling her husband’s marriage to his second wife, Ruth. Julia Briggs records that Coward was a huge fan of that Nesbit’s work as a child and became her friend late in her career after he visited to express his appreciation of her work (*A Woman of Passion* 388).

(104). Arthur is so blinded by his male ego that he rejects his wife out of embarrassment she outwitted him with her ruse and forgets her actions helped four people enter happy marriages. His further claim “[y]ou have ruined my life” (104) is ironic considering it is *his* act of denouncing the pregnant Ida that ends up killing her.²⁷ When Arthur returns after a long walk, he assumes Ida will perform the expected feminine behavior of appeasing him; instead, she surprises him by leaving out of her unwillingness to tolerate his unfair treatment: “Perhaps she would have cried herself to sleep, and I would lean over her and waken her with my kisses, and beg her to forgive me. Yes, it had come to that now. I went into the room—I went towards the bed. She was not there” (104). While Ida is culpable for lying to Arthur, her punishment is disproportionate to her crime: she spends months pining for the husband who rejected her and dies in childbirth. Her fate exhibits that Arthur may be unconsciously resentful toward Ida for revealing that Elvira never loved him and thus wants her to disappear and later die as punishment.²⁸

While Mrs. Hill stays with her cruel husband due to the focus on reconciliation during the 1870s, Ida fleeing from Arthur to take refuge with a working-class woman reflects legal changes in marriage during the 1890s. Arthur reports that “[t]he police and detectives and the Press failed me utterly. Her friends could not help me, and were, moreover, wildly indignant with me, especially her brother, now living very happily with my first love” (104). Similar to Helen Huntington, Ida acts like an abuse victim by leaving her husband, hiding her location, and taking refuge with strangers. Ida’s flight reflects the increased protection of abused married women after the 1891 case *Jackson v. Regina* ruled that husbands did not have the right to confine or beat their

²⁷ This scenario is reminiscent of Tess Durbyfield being abandoned by her newlywed husband Angel after confessing that she is not a virgin in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891). The fact that both works are about husbands spurning their wives for transgressing the limits on female sexuality or desire fits with the larger protest against Victorian social mores during the *fin de siècle*, especially by feminists.

²⁸ My reading fits with Lowell Frye’s observation in his analysis of “Man-Size in Marble” that “from what Jack does, as opposed to what Jack says, we sense that subconsciously Jack desires his wife’s death” (196) and thus allows her to be killed by two supernaturally animated statues of dead men.

wives. When the dying Ida sends for Arthur, he meets the lower-class nurse who has taken care of her and she accuses him of killing his wife with his callous treatment:

“Can’t you feel nothin? Are you mader stone? Come an’ look at ’er lyin’ there so quiet. She don’t fret arter the likes o’ you no more now. She won’t sit no more a-lookin’ outer winder an’ sayin’ nothin’—only droppin’ ’er tears one by one, slow, slow on ’er lap. Come an’ see ’er; come an’ see what you done to my pretty—an’ then you can go. Nobody wants you ’ere. She don’t want you now. But p’raps you’d like to see ’er safe under ground afore yer go? I’ll be bound you’ll put a big stone slab on ’er—to make sure she don’t rise again.”

I turned on her. Her thin face was white with grief and rage. Her claw-like hands were clenched.

“Woman,’ I said, “have mercy.”

She paused and looked at me.

“Eh?” she said.

“Have mercy!” I said again.

“Mercy! You should ’a thought o’ that before. You ’adn’t no mercy on ’er. She loved you—she died loving you. An’ if I wasn’t a Christian woman, I’d kill you for it—like the rat you are! That I would, though I ’ad to swing for it afterwards.”
(106)

In contrast to Arthur, the nurse overlooks Ida’s wrongs out of love: hence, she watches over someone she assumes is a fallen woman and using her resources as a respectable wife to shield Ida from social condemnation. She accuses Arthur of being an abusive husband who desired his wife’s death, while describing Ida as an abused wife who still loves her oppressor, despite his cruelty toward her. Her willingness to kill Arthur for slaying Ida through heartbreak shows the power of female solidarity, since the nurse sympathizes with Ida as a fellow woman and understands her sufferings as an abuse victim. This scene of female rapport contrasts with the earlier point I made about solidarity between women in Woods’ David Garth stories bringing about solace, which hinders women’s desire to revolt. Despite being a caring ally to Ida, the nurse’s murderous anger makes her advocate for the revenge ghost to “rise again” against her oppressor; therefore, she cannot be an intercessor who seeks reconciliation between them. The nurse’s claims against Arthur may appear exaggerated, but Arthur reveals himself to be egotistical and petulant. His requests for

the nurse to “have mercy” on him as a grieving husband deflect attention away from Ida’s sufferings and illustrate how Arthur always casts himself as the victim. However, the nurse’s lack of identity (as symbolized by her namelessness) and limited role in the story fits with Nesbit’s stereotypical characterization of lower-class characters (Briggs 291; Freeman 459).

While Arthur alludes to *Sleeping Beauty* when he kisses Ida’s corpse in the hope she is reanimated, he recoils in horror at meeting her out of fear of her supernatural agency, only for her to be rendered ineffective. Julia Briggs explains that in Nesbit’s children’s fiction, be careful what you wish for “is particularly relevant to young children who intensely desire the gratification of all their wishes, and yet would be terrified by the consequences of wish-fulfillment, their passions being such that each would kill the thing he loved” (*A Woman of Passion* 224). Arthur regrets when his wish comes true and Ida returns from the dead because he is too afraid of her agency as a supernatural entity: “It came straight towards the bed, and stood at the bed foot in its white grave-clothes, with the white bandage under its chin. There was a scent of lavender and camphor and white narcissus. Its eyes were wide open, and looked at me with love unspeakable” (109). The image of “love unspeakable” in Ida’s eyes recalls her inability to admit her feelings for Arthur and suggests that he still cannot grasp the nature of her affection for him:

“Say you forgive me,” the thin, monotonous voice went on, “say you love me again.”

I had to speak. Coward as I was, I did manage to stammer:

“Yes; I love you. I have always loved you, God help me.”

The sound of my own voice reassured me, and I ended more firmly than I began.

The figure by the bed swayed a little, unsteadily.

“I suppose,” she said wearily, “you would be afraid, now I am dead, if I came round to you and kissed you?” She made a movement as though she would have come to me.

Then I did shriek aloud, again and again, and covered my face with all my force. There was a moment’s silence. Then I heard my door close, and then a sound of feet and of voices, and I heard something heavy fall. I disentangled my

head from the sheet. My room was empty. Then reason came back to me. I leaped from the bed.

“Ida, my darling, come back! I am not afraid! I love you. Come back! Come back!” (110)

When Ida asks for Arthur’s pardon, he reacts similarly to the moment when he becomes upset at her for admitting that she had outwitted him by writing the love letter under Elvira’s name. This resemblance signals that Arthur rejects Ida twice out of anger that a woman outsmarts him, which is why he “kills” her for the second time through rejection. His horror at Ida’s supernatural condition empowering her suggests he is terrified that she has come back to take revenge on him for abusing her or to claim him as a demon lover. However, Arthur explains that afterwards “[o]n the floor, outside the door of the death chamber, was a huddled heap—the corpse, in its grave-clothes. Dead, dead, dead” (110). The fact that Ida falls down in a “huddled heap” and Arthur’s forceful repetition of “dead” attest that she is ultimately *powerless* in her supernatural form, which goes against critical readings that see the female apparitions as liberated in women’s ghost stories.

The resemblance between Arthur and Ida’s encounter and Jane Eyre and Mr. Reed’s meeting in the red room highlights how fear can prevent an alliance between the intercessor and the revenge ghost. Similar to Lockwood and Cathy’s encounter except with the aggressor and victim reversed, Jane and Mr. Reed cannot form an alliance because the former is too frightened to accept his help. In *Jane Eyre* (1847), Jane’s punishment for attacking her cruel cousin John Reed is being locked alone in the red room where her sympathetic uncle Mr. Reed passed away. Jane worries that the ghost of her Uncle will reappear to avenge the wrong his family has done her, or to comfort her for that injustice:

A singular notion dawned upon me. I doubted not—never doubted—that if Mr. Reed had been alive he would have treated me kindly...I began to recall what I had heard of dead men, troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes, revisiting the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed; and I thought Mr. Reed’s spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister’s child, might quit its abode—

whether in the church vault, or in the unknown world of the departed—and rise before me in this chamber. I wiped my tears and hushed my sobs, fearful lest any sign of violent grief might waken a preternatural voice to comfort me, or elicit from the gloom some haloed face, bending over me with strange pity. This idea, consolatory in theory, I felt would be terrible if realised: with all my might I endeavoured to stifle it—I endeavoured to be firm. (13)

The young Jane's belief that her uncle's apparition would be "consolatory in theory" but "terrible if realised" emphasizes the limits on the revenge ghost's agency: he inspires fear in the very person he wants to help. The source of Jane's trauma in the famous red room episode is not her abuse by John Reed, but the prospect of seeing the revenge ghost. The fact that the ghost appears in the aftermath of her abuse rather than during her cousin's bullying suggests that Jane "summons" it due to her anger and desire for pity. At the same time, she stifles her "violent grief" and faints out of her inability to handle her anger at being mistreated as a young girl who is just beginning to realize her victimization. This scene exemplifies how the ghost can produce fright that hinders his or her mission to assist or reconcile with the living, which is why an intercessor is necessary to mediate between both parties.

Although several critics have written about the comparable scene in Nesbit's story, they neglect to observe that Nesbit chooses to emphasize Arthur's terror of the resurrected Ida, while the nurse is completely overlooked at this point. However, the futility of Ida and Arthur's meeting confirms that it would have been better for the nurse to reconcile them as an intercessor than for Ida to confront her cowardly husband. "From the Dead" employs the *Frankenstein* and Sleeping Beauty motifs of the female corpse being reanimated that appear in Nesbit's other works (Rutledge 233; Thompson 94).²⁹ Lowell T. Frye writes that Nesbit's supernatural tales portray marriage as the end of life for women in a rational male world (189). Emma Liggins asserts that "[n]ecrophilia

²⁹ Nesbit depicts ghostly women coming back from the dead to haunt their male lovers in several of her ghost stories: "The Ebony Frame" (1891), "From the Dead" (1893), "Hurst of Hurstcote" (1893), "Uncle Abraham's Romance" (1893), and "The Detective" (1920).

may be a step too far for Nesbit's readers, but the shrieking of the husband, his 'unreasoning terror' (44) at the sexual forwardness of a wife...comments on male anxieties about the female sexual appetite" (47). Victoria Margree claims that Arthur fails Ida "even after receiving the second chance for which he had longed, through a horror of death that the tale pessimistically suggests may be a stronger force in human nature than is love" (432). In some women's revenge ghost tales, the male abuser remains unpunished beyond feeling guilty or even shares his account of the situation. Like Hill, Arthur is left to feel guilty over his abuse of Ida and begs readers to pity him, which resembles his appeals to the nurse for mercy. Frye, Liggins, and Margree are correct that the husband's perspective is being privileged here, given that we are invited to sympathize with his fear of the corpse. However, they ignore the fact that Nesbit focuses on Arthur rather than the nurse, who disappears from the narrative and thus cannot act as an intercessor. During their confrontation, Ida tells Arthur, "I heard all you said to me when you came, but I couldn't answer. But now I've come back from the dead to tell you" (109). Ida's decision to appear before Arthur seems misguided because he has already rejected her once and remains unwilling to listen when she breaks her silence, whereas the nurse would have welcomed her. The nurse even implies that she would accept Ida if she were to rise from the dead when she says that Arthur wants to block her grave with "a big slab stone." Nesbit abandons this narrative of female solidarity in favor of the horrifying reunion between Ida and Arthur that highlights his fear of her power over him. The ending leaves it ambiguous whether Ida is living when she encounters her husband—if Ida is alive, he misses his chance of reconciling with her, and if she is dead, he breaks his promise to love her.

While the story's final image of Arthur and Ida's child is often considered a symbol of hope for the future, its mute condition foreshadows its desolate fate of being raised by a father who will most likely mistreat it. The nurse tells Arthur, "She allus said she'd send for you when she'd

got over 'er trouble...I'd like him to see his little baby, nurse,' she says; 'our little baby. It'll be all right when the baby's born'" (106). Despite his cruelty, Ida hopes that they will reconcile for the sake of their child, but her expectation that Arthur will magically reform discounts the cyclical nature of family abuse. His habit of blaming other people for his mistakes will most likely continue with his child; for instance, he holds the baby responsible for killing Ida in childbirth: "They had brought the child to me, and I had held it in my arms, and bowed my head over its tiny face and frail fingers. I did not love it then. I told myself it had cost me her life. But my heart told me it was I who had done that" (107). Nesbit represents the railway children transforming an abusive father as well as their entire community through acts of love (Noimann 378).³⁰ In contrast, the disabled child in "From the Dead" fails to inspire Arthur's redemption, despite his remark "[w]hy do I go on living? You see, there is the child. It is four years old now, and it has never spoken and never smiled" (112). Ultimately, the ending is bleak because the dead Ida remains powerless, Arthur's defensive tone reveals he has not changed, and the child is being raised by an oppressive father. There is no indication that anything will be different for the next generation—Arthur's poor performance as a husband anticipates his poor performance as a father. Liggins and Margree respectively assert that Arthur and Ida's child is a symbol of male sexual recklessness and "symptomatic of a trauma that cannot be worked through" (47; 433). I agree with Margree that the child's muteness signifies not only Ida's unresolvable trauma, but also its silence as a future abuse victim.

While the spirit-intercessor alliance fails in Wood and Nesbit's ghost stories, this relationship advances toward success in the transitional supernatural tale by Baillie Reynolds, "The House that Was Rent Free" (1902). Jane Platt explains that Baillie Reynolds (c. 1875-1939) was a

³⁰ Kathleen A. Miller argues that Nesbit's ghost stories reform negative portrayals of disabled characters in Victorian fiction by legitimizing their romantic desires.

successful writer of inset fiction whose works were translated into film during the early twentieth century (108-109). Her novel *The Relations and What They Related* (1902-1903) is about a group of ten strangers invited to meet their wealthy relative, Noah Titherleigh Hobson.³¹ When Hobson falsely claims that a travel mishap has delayed him, they spend the next nine days telling each other inset ghost stories at Titherleigh Manor. Except for the Radical Sir George Halkett, everyone remains unaware that Hobson has disguised himself as the Elderly Cousin so they will grow to care for him, not just his money. In Reynolds's novel, the intercessor Mrs. Locke is defined by her maternity without being a Victorian Angel, as a kind, practical, and resourceful woman. The narrator describes her as "a pretty pale woman, still young, whose face bore the look of one who has suffered, and who was undoubtedly the young matron" (434). With Hobson supposedly away, she becomes the unofficial hostess and the younger women look up to her as an authority figure (they "gravitated naturally to her" (438)). Disliking Sir George due to his rudeness toward everyone, she says "[d]o not oblige us to remember that [the world] also contains—Members of Parliament" (436). Mrs. Locke also invents the ghost story scheme with the other women and insists "something must be devised—some way of passing our evenings that would keep that odious Sir George quiet" (438). It is significant that Mrs. Locke alludes to the title when she approvingly remarks "[i]t is fitting that relations should relate..." (438). The title's pun on relation/related and the novel's premise signal that a central theme is building community and family ties through storytelling, specifically ghost stories. Mrs. Locke's ghost story indirectly warns Hobson not to

³¹ Reynolds serialized *The Relations and What They Related* between 1902 to 1903 in *The Lady's Realm* (1896-c. 1914), a monthly magazine aimed at upper- and aspiring middle-class women. The magazine presented the works of women writers such as Reynolds and heavily featured fiction that often addressed topical social and political themes. Strikingly, illustrations of Victorian women's ghost stories in periodicals and short story collections were surprisingly uncommon despite their dramatic potential. However, this lavishly embellished magazine presents Arthur David McCormick's (1860-1943) renderings of Mrs. Locke's dream of the crying boy ghost, her sighting of Mr. Haggard's wraith/ghost, and her vision of the boy's corpse in the pond. These illustrations reinforce the special connection between Mrs. Locke and the boy ghost and the reader's sympathy for the child as a victim of abuse. For more on *The Lady's Realm*, see Versteeg, et al.

misuse his power as the wealthy head of their “family” in testing their affection because she reveals the problems male privilege causes for herself and the Haggard family.

In the second chapter, Mrs. Locke shares “The House Which Was Rent Free,” in which her refusal to speak about her marriage actually conveys the abuse she suffered at the hands of her first husband, Charles Preston. Despite being a poor widow, Mrs. Locke looks forward to supporting her daughters, Ruth and Lettice, after the treatment for her husband’s sickness leaves them financially crippled: “Yet somehow, now that the house in Belgrave Square, and the shooting-box, and the yacht, were all things of the past, I breathed more freely: my widow’s weeds were to me the outward signs of a freedom I had scarcely dared to hope for” (563). While she naively married Mr. Preston during a whirlwind romance, Mrs. Locke prefers to sacrifice the trappings of wealth for “freedom” after enduring abuse over the last ten years. Her situation fits with Lisa Surrridge’s observation that abused wives in Victorian fiction (and real life) could often only be liberated by their husbands’ deaths (563-564). Mrs. Locke further hopes that with her dead husband “I could bury all the bitter thoughts of what he had made me suffer. Thank God, only I had known it. There is no need to speak of it to anyone now; the anguish and the struggles are over, and the deadly nightmare lest others beside myself should have to know. Peace to the dead!” (563-564). She gestures toward her abuse in elliptical language that points to the truth through its cryptic nature without openly admitting that Mr. Preston mistreated her. Mrs. Locke feels intense anxiety over reaching out for help out of her terror of causing a scandal as a rich woman. The fact that she fears a potential “deadly nightmare” from admitting her abuse more than the abuse itself betrays the shame that surrounded domestic violence victims during the Edwardian era. Her admirer Sidney Locke offers to let her stay at Dennismore Hall for free, since “a foolish tale of its being haunted has got about in the neighbourhood, and, ridiculous as it may seem in these days, I cannot let it”

(564). In contrast to Mr. Preston, Sidney offers her freedom by providing Mrs. Locke with a house where she can live independently with her children.³² He cannot be an intercessor for the ghost of the young boy because he ignores the wisdom of the community and instead asks Mrs. Locke to move there and debunk the apparition.

Mrs. Locke's experience with family violence and her maternal instincts make her a fitting intercessor to help the ghost, which also fulfills her need to publicize her abuse in a culture that renders her silent. She confirms that she first used her supernatural powers during her unhappy marriage and her nurse Darley suspects that she has inherited second sight from her Scottish mother: "I sometimes felt as if I had a curious inner eye which I could keep shut; and I determined not to open it while I was at Dennismore" (565). Mrs. Locke wants to use the "freedom" she gains from living in poverty to raise her children and work as a woodcarver; her increasing second sight coincides with her developing her talents as a female artist. She dreams of seeing the boy crying at the mill pond where his body has been hidden and later mistakes his cries at being abused by his uncle as her daughters' distress. As Mrs. Locke relates, "[The cry] still went on: there is no sounds so torturing to the ears of a mother as that of a child's hopeless misery. To no one did I speak of it; I was more than willing to think it a delusion. It seemed natural that I should be nervous and unstrung just now—feeling the reaction after years of strain" (568). Mrs. Locke's mistaking the ghost's crying for her own daughters' makes it clear that she sympathetically responds to him due to her maternal position. She also relates to the sounds of his trauma and mistakes it for her own "reaction" from her experience as an abused wife. Mrs. Locke's experience attests that that one

³² When Mrs. Locke realizes that Sidney used to love her and speculates whether he still does, she expresses her disbelief with the line "Ten layers of birthdays on a woman's head!" (570; Book IX, line 532). Here, she alludes to a scene from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's epic novel-poem *Aurora Leigh* (1857) when Aurora reunites with her cousin and love interest Romney after a decade apart. Mrs. Locke and Sidney's romance is similar to Aurora and Romney's in several ways: she is a female artist, he has loved her for ten years, and they marry in the end.

unique quality of the ghost story is that it can become a repository for a generalized sense of trauma and loss. The individual ghosts of David Garth, Mrs. Carlson, Ida, and Newman's son each represent one particular instance of a broader problem. Despite her fear of public shame, Mrs. Locke's belief that she can bury her trauma with her dead abuser proves to be false because the boy ghost's misery evokes her feelings. Her confusion between her and the boy's trauma gestures at the ways in which their vulnerability binds them together. The ghost's presence helps Mrs. Locke by forcing her to speak about her traumatic marriage to others, including her new "family" at Titherleigh Manor. Mrs. Locke sets up a "room of her own" in the haunted attic where she often sees the boy ghost, just as in women's ghost stories, it is often the female artist with second sight who sees the deceased victim.

While Mrs. Locke and the boy ghost's abuse binds them together, the communication between them breaks down because they both cannot speak about their trauma to others, even though there are now institutions to protect abused women and children. As she is working in her studio, she witnesses the boy ghost silently open the door and notices signs of the various types of abuse he has suffered, including malnutrition, skin disease, and bruises:

As I looked I saw the latch rise, the door slowly open, and a little boy peer round into the room. He looked about ten or eleven years old; his face was white, his dark eyes big and hollow. He was so thin that my heart ached to behold him and his poor little hand, which grasped the woodwork of the door, was covered with sores, such as disfigure the ill-nourished children of the very poor. There was a purple bruise upon his left cheekbone. Here, doubtless, was the creature who had sobbed in the night—and I, superstitious fool, because of a foolish ghost-story, had believed his pitiful crying a delusion! I sprang up.

"Oh, poor little man!" I cried, 'what do you want?' (568)

Mrs. Locke's compassion for the abused boy causes her to lock him into the attic rooms and to search for him along with the servants, only to realize he is a ghost when they cannot locate him. In addition, she is incapable of helping him beyond treating him like a living victim of child abuse,

since the boy ghost fails to articulate his needs to the intercessor when she inquires beyond evoking her pity. Her description of her “shock” at realizing the child is a ghost indicates her knowledge of the symptoms of mental trauma, including its long-lasting effects and delayed onset: “The rest of the day was not comfortable; shaken nerves will not quiet down in a moment, such a shock leaves the victim shaky and queer” (569). Mrs. Locke’s turmoil at seeing a fellow victim of abuse who stirs up her own trauma may inhibit her ability to help him; after all, her resolution to bury her past makes her afraid of facing these emotions.

When Mrs. Locke and Darley later hear the boy ghost crying, the skeptical nurse assumes that the child is alive; therefore, she insists that they should call the authorities to care for the boy and to punish the abuser. Darley says, “But somebody’s been ill-treating a child and turned his brain, and we ought to have the law of ‘em. Come, ma’am, let us lock the children in here, and you come up with me to the garrets. We must find him” (570). From the 1880s onward, the public outcry against child abuse grew so strong that the state became increasingly involved in shielding victims. Reynolds’s ghost story reflects the influence of child protection measures such as the Society of Waifs and Strays (1881), the NSPCC (1883), and the “Children’s Charter” of 1889. Monica Flegel argues that the NSPCC was especially important for defining, publicizing, and punishing child endangerment as well as creating a precursor to modern child-protection agencies (9). Darley and Mrs. Locke’s actions show how effective the NSPCC was at involving the community in protecting child victims by urging bystanders to report any cases to the authorities.

In contrast to the community not knowing how to help the victims in Wood’s Johnny Ludlow ghost stories, Darley and Mrs. Locke evoking the law shows how far child protection has progressed from the 1870s to the 1900s. As Darley and Mrs. Locke search for the boy ghost, the latter sees a wraith or spirit of the boy ghost’s uncle, Mr. Haggard, holding a cane as though to

beat his nephew. Likely recognizing him an abuser from personal experience, Mrs. Locke describes his face as “the worst, the most degraded, the vilest, I have ever encountered” (570) due to the severity of his actions in hurting a child. Her supernatural vision of Mr. Haggard confirms the existence of her second sight and leads her to write to Sidney asking for help:

“The house is indeed haunted—haunted, as I believe, by a murderer and his victim. Fortunately I am the one who is most disturbed, but I dare not think for how long I could stand the strain; and there is, besides, to be considered the possibility that, in spite of all my care, the children may get a shock which would impair their nervous system for all the future. I am at my wits’ end. Do you think the Society for Psychological Research could do anything?” (570)

Her visions place immense “strain” on Mrs. Locke because they coincide with the emergence of her trauma as well as force her to help another abuse victim, even though this experience is difficult for her as a survivor. Her knowledge of traumatic symptoms makes her further worried that her children may suffer a traumatizing “shock” from witnessing the abused ghost that could cause them lasting damage. Even though she investigates the haunting and correctly identifies the boy as an abuse victim, she downplays her authority as an intercessor by asking for the SPR’s assistance. Sidney explains that the former owner of Dennismore Hall was a naval captain named Newman, who left his house and son in the care of his abusive brother-in-law and sister during his absences. He relates how “Haggard seems to have thought that as the captain’s life was precarious, it would be a good thing to rid himself of the boy and get the house left to him, and the money too. His wife must have been pretty nearly as bad as he, or else completely terrorised” (572). Mr. Haggard must invent stories about the boy misbehaving in order to justify abusing him, given that the NSPCC would not intervene if adults used corporal punishment on a naughty child (Flegel 69). While most abusers in these ghost stories are male, the cooperation of women like Mrs. Haggard highlights how a battered wife can be forced to be complicit or turn out to be abusive herself.

The mid-Victorian narratives about male child ghosts that likely influenced Wood, Reynolds, and other female authors reveal the ways in which male privilege failed to protect Victorian *boys*, not just girls and women. The plot of the greedy uncle who kills his nephew in order to receive the family inheritance is a common trope in Victorian ghost stories. Catherine Crowe's popular *The Night of Nature: or, Ghosts and Ghost-Seers* (1848) details examples of true ghost stories in order to prove the supernatural's existence. One letter from an upper-class Englishwoman recounts how the narrator heard rumors that her family's rental home in Lille, France was haunted by a child ghost:

...there seemed to be a strange story attached to the place, which was said, together with some other property, to have belonged to a young man, whose guardian, who was also his uncle, had treated him cruelly, and confined him in an iron cage; and as he had subsequently disappeared, it was conjectured he had been murdered. This uncle, after inheriting the property, had suddenly quitted the house, and sold it to the father of the man of whom we had hired it. (292)

While this child abuse narrative is fairly typical, the sensational detail of the boy being imprisoned in an "iron cage" intensifies the horror of the greedy uncle's actions in treating his nephew like a wild animal. Nonetheless, the foreign setting and bizarre instrument of torture distance English readers from this instance of child abuse by making it an exceptional incident that can only happen on the Continent. The iron cage provides the narrator and her family with evidence of the boy's mistreatment, but they leave the house in fear of the harmless child ghost. In fact, neither the narrator's privileged family nor the local "inhabitants of Lille" (296) do anything to help the ghostly child beyond reporting his story to Crowe and T. M. Jarvis.³³ Although Dickens negatively

³³ T. M. Jarvis is the compiler of the various true supernatural incidents in *Accredited Ghost Stories* (1823). In his work, this story appears as "Apparition Seen by Lady Pennyman and Mrs. Atkins" (115-129). The narrator of the account in Crowe's book published her recollection of these events after another woman sent her copy of Jarvis's book and asked her if they were true. Notably, Jarvis and Crowe's accounts are distinct owing to their varied narrative perspectives, which emphasize the different roles of the outsiders experiencing the haunting and the local community. The former is told through the third-person point of view of the local French, whereas the latter employs the first-person perspective of the tenant's daughter. The constant retelling of the narrative about a boy ghost who haunts his

reviewed Crowe's book, he reworks this account when describing clichéd ghost stories in "A Christmas Tree" (1850):

There was a story that this place had once been held in trust by the guardian of a young boy; who was himself the next heir, and who killed the young boy by harsh and cruel treatment. [The female tenant] knew nothing of that. It has been said that there was a Cage in her bed-room in which the guardian used to put the boy. There was no such thing. There was only a closet. (294-295)

At the same time that Dickens keeps the child abuse narrative, he makes it relatable to English readers by relocating the haunted house to Kent and turning the female tenant into a "connexion of our family" (294).³⁴ The replacement of the lurid iron cage in which the greedy uncle confines his nephew with a mundane "closet" transforms the disregard of children into an everyday occurrence in Victorian society. The old woman's characterization of the child ghost as a "forlorn-looking boy" (295) deserving pity is tempered by his deathly effect on her three nephews as a ghostly playmate.

In Reynolds's ghost story, we start seeing multiple characters take action to help young victims, especially since there are now effective legal and social prohibitions against child abuse and murder. Captain Newman "turned them both out, sold the place, and made a will leaving his money to the Society for Befriending Waifs and Strays. He is still alive, and so are the Haggards, for aught I know to the contrary" (572). In an ironic twist, the wealth that should have benefited the abuser instead funds abused children through the Waifs and Strays' Society (1881). This organization was founded in 1881 by Edward Rudolph to offer homes for poor and abused children funded by the Church of England. Sidney's ignorance over the Haggards' fate reveals that the

home after being killed by a greedy male guardian through neglect suggests that this was a popular vehicle for discussing the issue of child abuse throughout the nineteenth century.

³⁴ Scholars have recognized Dickens's crucial role in drawing attention to domestic violence and child abuse in his fictional works. See Tromp *Private Rod* 23-68, Surridge 22-62, L. Berry 28-92, Benziman 142-185, Walsh 65-92, and Rintoul 41-57.

narrative focus is not on punishing the abusers—instead, it is on resolving the boy ghost’s suffering. The symbolic naming portrays the Haggards as outworn oppressors who use traditional Victorian discipline to brutalize children, while Newman uses his wealth to fund new social institutions to protect them. Sidney and Mrs. Locke doubt the Haggards’ story that the boy ran away to sea and she convinces the skeptical landlord to investigate the situation. Mrs. Locke’s later gruesome vision of the boy’s body floating in the water presents a dark juxtaposition to the happy family scene of her skating on the pond with Sidney and her children. She becomes so traumatized that she grows sick with “nausea,” “fever,” and “delirium” that render her silent about her vision until after her recovery (573). During her delirium, the boy ghost “stood by my bed, he tapped at my door, he crouched on my hearth as if for warmth. To such a phantom I attached, of course, no importance whatever; it was the direct result of temperature” (573). While she dismisses the boy ghost as a symptom, he helps her through a major traumatic episode that the doctor diagnoses as a mere fever. In return, Mrs. Locke explains, “[w]hen the thaw came the mill-pond was dragged, and the bones of a child were found in the slime just beneath the scene of my vision” (573) as proof that the boy was murdered. The ending affirms that she helped him as an intercessor by confirming his death, giving the grieving Newman closure, and raising the possibility that Mr. Haggard could be punished. Though she benefits from facing her trauma as an intercessor, the social stigma against domestic violence victims speaking out prevents her from fully coming to terms with her past abuse.

The bond between the intercessor and the boy ghost enacts positive changes for both parties, but the lack of resolution at the end points to Reynolds’s uncertainty over whether these protective measures will be effective.³⁵ Mrs. Locke’s last name is the only indication that she

³⁵ In keeping with this observation, most of the inset stories contain romances that convey ambivalent messages about whether women should strive for independence or embrace a traditional role in heterosexual relationships. For

happily married Sidney, but the traces of suffering on her face and her choice to tell this ghost story evince her lingering trauma over Mr. Preston's abuse. Her name suggests that she is still "locked" into the domestic space because her independence is hindered by the trauma she cannot acknowledge without being publicly shamed. "The House that Was Rent Free" offers a change from Wood and Nesbit's ghost stories, since the ending offers the possibility that the abuser could be brought to justice and Captain Newman will help other abused children. As previously noted, Reynolds's work is a transitional ghost story between this section and the next one that provides indicators of what makes the alliance between the intercessor and the ghost successful. The story also shows the influence of the NSPCC and The Waifs and Strays Society in spreading awareness about family violence as well as the state's growing involvement in protecting children through charitable institutions. The hostility between Sir George and Mrs. Locke represents her suspicion of the socialist politician who deliberately acts rude to taunt the disguised Hobson. Sir George's skepticism of Mrs. Locke's ghost story illustrates that Parliamentary members will not do anything to help the victims of family violence out of disbelief in their stories. Instead, Hobson will solve everyone's problems with his wealth like a fairy godmother, a resolution that conveys a distrust in the state and legal system to handle abuse. Mrs. Locke's new relations are men and women from all social classes of Edwardian England and their ghost storytelling forges emotional bonds between them and brings the community together. By telling her ghost story to the wider community, Mrs. Locke can disseminate her message about the evils of child abuse to all of those present, along with Reynolds's readers.

instance, the competent Mary March is working to support a convict who took part in a robbery that nearly left her dead because he saves her life. The heroine, a high school teacher named Agatha Hobson, falls in love with a sexist minor poet, Stainley Rivers, and it is heavily implied that the two will marry with Hobson's blessing at the end. At one point, Stainley complains that female college students who attend Girton cannot attract men because they are not pretty enough. He tells Agatha, "[n]ot one man in a hundred will enter a shop which has no attractive wares in the window" (39) to chastise women who cultivate their intellect at the expense of their looks.

In Wood, Nesbit, and Reynolds's ghost stories, there are a number of reoccurring phrases about the victim's psychic distress that offer revealing glimpses into the psychology of trauma and family violence during the nineteenth century. Johnny describes Mrs. Calson's haunting "as one of those curious experiences that cannot be solved" discussed in local rumors and "not spoken openly; under the rose, as may be said" ("A Curious Experience" 312, 310-311). The nurse recalls how Ida gazed out the window "sayin' nothin'—only droppin' 'er tears one by one" and during her postmortem visit to Arthur she "looked at me with love unspeakable" (107, 109). Mrs. Locke's encounters with the boy ghost result in "shaken nerves [that] will not quiet down," but she insists "[t]here is no need to speak of it" (569, 568) to anyone until the haunting escalates. In all three scenarios, the victims of family violence suffer mental or physical pain from their trauma and yet they remain silent. Although the lingering trauma refuses to "quiet down" for the victims, they cannot "speak of it" to others and are inhibited from openly talking about their agonizing experiences. The struggle of victimized women and children to discuss their traumas parallels the hardships of real victims during the Victorian era, who suffered from enforced silence due to social stigma and a lack of options. Victims such as David, Mrs. Calson, Ida, and Newman's son find it hard to voice their anguish because they attempt to reach out to the wrong people or cannot express their ideas clearly. However, they are rendered inarticulate by a society that dissuades them from speaking about their unhappy home lives; instead, they are forced to feel as if *they* are the wrongdoers and stay silent out of shame. Wood, Nesbit, and Reynolds challenge the pervasive belief that family violence was mostly confined to the working classes by representing middle- and upper-class men who terrorize their dependents. While female servants such as Susannah, Ida's nurse, and Darley identify with or intervene to shield the victims, they are too socially invisible to take effective action.

This culture of silence surrounding family violence encourages the locals to act complicit with the male abusers: they are often aware of it but refuse to do anything to help the victims or enact protection measures. The community's failure to act necessitates that the intercessors ally with the ghostly victims to help resolve their trauma, but the potential intercessors react to the ghosts with fear, lack of understanding, or skepticism at their existence. Ultimately, the alliance between the intercessors and the ghosts miscarries because the former are unaware that they have the authority to act and the latter replay their trauma without conveying their needs. The unspeakable nature of trauma creates unmet expectations for the intercessors and ghosts as well as Victorian readers, which expose the limits of this genre. Melissa Edmundson Makala perceptively notes that in women's haunted house stories the ghosts' "presence in these houses and the traumas that led to their unhappy afterlives are usually never fully understood by readers" (52). This futility is a central element of these ghost stories and imparts their fear that nothing will be done to prevent family violence—at least, nothing effective. Wood, Nesbit, and Reynolds fear that their ghost stories will be incapable of producing social reform: the greatest horror is that nothing will change for the victims as long as the community, law, and police remain unconcerned. The readers are left in suspension just like the abuse victims whose trauma remains unsettled as long as they stay quiet. Despite her suspicion of state institutions, Reynolds offers hope for a successful alliance between the intercessor and the ghost as well as acknowledges that there are protective measures for wives and children. From the 1880s onward, Catherine's situation as a helpless "waif" without any prospective ally beside Lockwood could transform into her taking refuge with the Waifs and Strays Society and Hindley being imprisoned by the NSPCC. In Section Two, I will look at ghost stories by Riddell, Sinclair, and Everett in which the ghost-intercessor alliance allows victims to attain survivor status.

Section Two: Living Well is the Best Revenge

They lifted their eyes together, to encounter Mr. Heathcliff: perhaps you have never remarked that their eyes are precisely similar, and they are those of Catherine Earnshaw. The present Catherine has no other likeness to her, except a breadth of forehead, and a certain arch of the nostril that makes her appear rather haughty, whether she will or not. With Hareton the resemblance is carried farther: it is singular at all times, then it was particularly striking; because his senses were alert, and his mental faculties wakened to unwonted activity. I suppose this resemblance disarmed Mr. Heathcliff: he walked to the hearth in evident agitation; but it quickly subsided as he looked at the young man: or, I should say, altered its character; for it was there yet.

— *Wuthering Heights*

Introduction

In the epigraph, Nelly describes to Lockwood the moment Heathcliff stops abusing Hareton and Cathy when the tenant returns to the Heights to discover the two have fallen in love and gotten engaged. Max Stirner's spectral *The Ego and Its Own* (1844), published just a few years before *Wuthering Heights*, illumines Emily's juxtaposition of the two generations of lovers.³⁶ Stirner argues that society breeds imaginary "spooks," social constraints such as morality, religion, family, the state, and even love, in order to control its populace. In the violent patriarchal society of eighteenth-century England, both Catherine and Heathcliff attempt to maneuver around this "haunted" system by embracing or transcending these spooks. Heathcliff tries to live by society's rules as a prosperous landowner, whereas Catherine attempts to transcend society's restrictions as a ghost, and they both end up failing. Similar to Hindley, Heathcliff's development into a wealthy gentleman makes him a male abuser who uses his privileges to oppress others, which follows a recognizable pattern that is favored instead of being punished by the the patriarchy. Despite his social status, he is still separated from everyone and lives miserably as he undertakes his revenge and pines away for Catherine. When Catherine finds that her attempts to conform as Edgar's wife result in her oppression, she endeavors to liberate herself from these spooks by rising above them

³⁶ I am indebted to my sister Neha Ohri for bringing Stirner and his works to my attention.

in the form of a spook, only to realize her supernatural power is limited. Heathcliff's isolation in the Heights and Lockwood's brutal rejection of Catherine's ghost show that society still does not accept either of them. Emily uses an earlier period to expose that mid-Victorian society was ruled by the spooks of male privilege, family, and female/child inferiority, revealing how the belief in these concepts led to the mistreatment of the vulnerable. While Stirner thinks that the only way for people to liberate themselves from spooks is to become "egoists" free from all abstractions, Emily uses Catherine's ghost to prove that this is an unfeasible solution because people will always be subject to social pressures, even after death.

Though Heathcliff is denied a vision of her spirit as punishment, his encounter with Catherine through Cathy and Hareton halts his revenge once he realizes they are "the ghost of my immortal love" (247). During Lockwood's first visit to the Heights, he notices that Heathcliff despises Cathy for her likeness to her mother, which he may feel because it serves as a reminder that he cannot see her image in the form of the ghost. After desiring to see Catherine's ghost for the past eighteen years, Heathcliff changes his mind about completing his revenge when he finally glimpses her in Cathy and Hareton. Nelly's emphasis on their "likeness" and "resemblance" to Catherine highlights his epiphany that they are all that survives of his lover and destroying them would eradicate her legacy. Since his original enemies are dead, Heathcliff's revenge becomes futile because his grudge does not matter to the new generation; hence, his retribution against them would achieve nothing. As a victim of abuse who becomes the abuser, Heathcliff must let them go to stop the cycle before it exterminates the Earnshaw and Linton families. Their "precisely similar" eyes suggest that Cathy and Hareton have a new vision of the future and come to resemble each other as traumatized subjects who have suffered Heathcliff's abuse. The similarity between their eyes and Catherine's also signals that their vision is influenced by her as they increasingly grow

to resemble her as well as each other. They are willing to be vulnerable to each other when Cathy admits that she needs companionship despite her “haughty” air and Hareton embraces “unwonted activity” in being educated. Catherine’s reappearance in Hareton and Cathy illustrates that she lives on in the surviving victims, who will bring a positive regeneration of the two families through their marriage. Rather than being trapped in the past, Cathy and Hareton must adjust to living in the new reality of the nineteenth century and find a way to compromise with society. While critics tend to see their union as a blend of civil (Cathy) and primitive (Hareton) society, these two figures in fact select the social rules (spooks) that best allow their advance. Although they help each other adapt to the changing times, in later women’s ghost stories, the ghost has to collaborate with the intercessor to assist the survivors of abuse fit into society after escaping their hopeless situations.

Although readers, critics, and adaptors of *Wuthering Heights* have overlooked Cathy and Hareton’s ending out of dissatisfaction with their romance, this neglect downplays the importance of their role as abuse survivors. Catherine and Heathcliff’s romance has long been viewed as the animating force of the novel, which continues to attract readers drawn by the passionate intensity of their forbidden love. Peter Grudin is one of the earliest critics to argue that Catherine and Heathcliff resolve the conflicts they face by reuniting as lovers in the afterlife and wandering the moors as ghosts (391).³⁷ As previously noted, their ability to fit into society and then transcend it is flawed, so his interpretation of the ghosts at the end of the novel as existing beyond the “spooks” of English society is unfounded. Catherine’s ability to win Heathcliff’s love as one of the few characters who does not judge him an outsider and protects him from Hindley’s brutality intimates

³⁷ Later scholars argue that Emily was influenced by the ballad tradition as well as Scottish literature in her depiction of the supernatural, which she used to enhance her characters’ psychological depths (S. Smith; Germana; Gifford). In their readings of *Wuthering Heights*, Nicholas Royle and Steve Vine both draw on Abraham and Torok’s concept of the crypt to reach different conclusions on the novel’s allure (28-62; 180-185). Critics have further examined how Catherine and Heathcliff’s haunting romance influenced later writers, who use Emily’s images of spectrality in their adaptations (Stonum; Moore and Pyke).

that they are drawn together as fellow victims of abuse. Cathy and Hareton similarly bond as Heathcliff's victims who help each find strategies to not only cope with their trauma but also to continue living once they are free from his control. Although their engagement fulfills the desired union between Catherine and Heathcliff, they succeed only by adapting to society together and moving on with their lives. Cathy and Hareton display resilience in helping each other to perform the work of recovery and achieve survivor status, while part of Catherine and Heathcliff's tragedy is they never reach this stage. Instead, Nelly reports to Lockwood that the locals have gossiped about seeing Heathcliff and Catherine's ghosts wander the area together. She dismisses the testimony of a shepherd boy with the explanation "[h]e probably raised the phantoms from thinking, as he traversed the moors alone, on the nonsense he had heard his parents and companions repeat—yet still, I don't like being out in the dark, now..." (257). Although the novel leaves the existence of Heathcliff and Catherine's ghosts ambiguous, the community's knowledge of their presence serves to remind others of the trauma caused by family violence and to ensure it does not happen again with Cathy and Hareton's descendants. While ghosts are typically visible only to certain characters, the community may imaginatively create the images of Catherine and Heathcliff's apparitions to keep the memory of family violence alive. Even though the community needs to eradicate the possibility of family violence for its own survival, the supernatural reminder is important in order to prevent this abuse in the future.

In Section Two, my analysis centers on Charlotte Riddell's "Walnut-Tree House" and "Old Mrs. Jones," May Sinclair's "The Intercessor," and H.D. Everett's "Nevill Nugent's Legacy," stories in which the vulnerable characters work together to accomplish their goals. For this to happen, the intercessors, namely Edgar, Anne Jane, Garvin, and Margaret, must do more than sympathize with the ghosts and the ghosts, including George, Mrs. Jones, Effy, and Martin, must

clearly voice their aims to the living. The ghost and intercessor's alliance flourishes owing to the intercessor's status as an outsider who wants to act on his or her sympathies and involves the community in helping the ghost. In turn, the ghost persistently contacts the living out of an overpowering desire to help the intercessor as well as the abuse survivors. Roger Luckhurst argues that the concept of the "survivor" only emerged and grew to "dominate" trauma studies after 1980 due to interest in the survivors of the Holocaust, Vietnam War, and sexual abuse (*Trauma Question* 59-75). However, I find that these women writers recognized the need for survivors of abuse to come to terms with their trauma much earlier, even if they might not have used our terms to express it. I use the modern language of the survivor to describe characters who live through abuse, under the influence of recent diction. The revenge ghost also becomes central to the narrative and displays greater agency in its supernatural condition as the intercessor expresses growing confidence in facing it. At the time Sinclair and Everett were writing, Dorothy Scarborough remarked that revenge ghosts were growing more diverse, though evoking "fear" is not the main purpose of the apparitions in their stories: "The revenge ghost in modern fiction is more varied in forms of manifestation, at times more subtle in suggestion and ghostly psychology, than the conventionalized type of the drama and remains one of the most dreadful of the forms of fear" (166). In the end, the feeling of haunting remains as the ghosts continue to stay accessible to ensure that the future generations and the survivors remain protected from family violence.

Writing at the same time as Ellen Wood, Charlotte Riddell comes to a very different conclusion than she does: namely, that the ghosts and intercessors can work together to liberate victims and achieve justice. Recently, a growing number of scholars have written about Riddell, but they mainly focus on her exploration of suburbia, economics, and gender roles in her novels and ghost stories. We should look beyond her position as a City novelist or risk overlooking the

diverse concerns in her ghost stories that intersect with finance, such as family violence.³⁸ My analysis will highlight the ghosts of female and child victims in “Walnut-Tree House” (1878) and “Old Mrs. Jones” (1882).³⁹ In analyzing the first story, critics often focus on the protagonist’s efforts to redress child abuse, rather than the efforts of the surrounding community. In “Walnut-Tree House,” Edgar Stainton returns after making his fortune overseas to claim his ancestral home, which has been haunted for twelve years by the spirit of his cousin, George Fenton. While the legal clerk regards him as a “boor” due to his lack of bourgeois refinement (151), Edgar’s freedom from the locals’ classism allows him to sympathize with George. During his first night in the house, Edgar laments that he “should come home rich, to be made richer, and yet stand so utterly alone that in the length and breadth of England I have not a relative to welcome me or to say I wish you joy of your inheritance” (155). Despite his wealth, privilege, and experience, Edgar feels disappointed in being an outsider without a family, which makes him a double for George as a lonely orphan heir to the Stainton fortune who searches for love. When he hears George wandering the house, Edgar approaches the ghost with his revolver, only to be overcome by concern for the neglected boy: “For suddenly the door opened, and there entered, shyly and timidly, a little child—a child with the saddest face mortal ever be held; a child with wistful eyes and long, ill-kept hair; a child poorly dressed, wasted and worn, and with the mournfullest expression on its countenance

³⁸ See Whelan 104-105, Harde 196-198, Makala 105-112, and Margree “(Other) Worldly” 10-11. For general overviews of how avarice leads to social corruption in Riddell’s ghost stories and realist novels, see Dickerson 132-148, A. Smith 69-96, Wagner 142-146, Henry, Bissell, and Collela.

³⁹ Besides these two ghost stories, Riddell writes about domestic violence and a cross-class relationship in which an upper-class gentleman seduces a working-class girl in “A Terrible Vengeance” (1889). He later murders her through drowning because she stands in the way of his marriage to an appropriate bride, who he must marry in order to inherit his grandmother’s wealth. In an ironic reversal of the prevalent phenomena of lower-class men kicking their wives, the murdered woman gets her revenge by stamping her lover to death. Suzanne Rintoul offers a relevant observation to Riddell’s ghost story, writing “[i]nsofar as they publicize violent crimes against poor women by middle- and upper-class lovers that took place beyond the middle-class home, though, seduction/murder broadsides do subtly reference middle-class domestic turmoil and mark a turning inside-out of the bourgeois domestic sphere that created room to question its integrity by showing—and yet not showing—the brutality of intimacy among the affluent” (131).

that face of a child ever wore” (156). Edgar differentiates himself from his abusive relatives because his threat of violence toward the child shifts to compassion as he notices signs of neglect and repeatedly offers to help George. Their shared emotional vulnerability, nourished by loneliness, sparks the strong bond between the two.

Edgar forms an alliance with George that only becomes stronger as the working-class residents inform him how the Staintons’ avarice injured the local community and the young family heirs. Despite his “first horror” (158) at seeing George, Edgar does not consider leaving out of a desire to solve the mystery that keeps the ghost searching the house. He discovers the ineffectuality of the legal authorities when his lawyers deny that George and his twin Mary were mistreated and urge Edgar to abandon his investigation. Their evasiveness makes him conclude “[t]here is a mystery behind it all...I must learn more about these children. Perhaps some of the local tradespeople may recollect them” (160). An outsider like Edgar can only uncover the truth by interviewing his neighbors, including the butcher, the innkeeper, and the former housekeeper, Mrs. Toplis. Based on these interviews, Edgar realizes that his miserly grandfather Felix and great-uncle Alfred mistreated the children and the latter cheated George out of his inheritance. He grows ashamed that the Staintons have fallen into disrepute for depriving their own children, servants, and the locals of necessary economic support: “The house they had lived in [was] mentioned as if a curse rested on the place; themselves only recollected as leaving everything undone which it befitted their station to do” (163). While the locals are indignant that the family’s stinginess harms everyone, they especially resent the Staintons’ neglect of the Fenton children. Thus, Edgar promises Mrs. Toplis, “I’m quite satisfied there was some wrong done in the house, and I want to put it right, if it lies in my power to do so. I am a rich man...I would gladly give up the property to-morrow if I could only undo whatever may have been done amiss” (164). His determination to

redeem the Stainton name and make amends to the victimized children by sacrificing his property distinguishes Edgar from Felix and Alfred. Nonetheless, Mrs. Toplis points out that Edgar's money will not help George resolve the trauma of losing his beloved sister.

Through his interview with Mrs. Toplis, Edgar learns of the community's efforts to rescue the victimized children from the unscrupulous Alfred while George was still alive. Riddell published "Walnut-Tree House" right before child abuse became a major social concern in the 1880s, but her story anticipates this movement by depicting the locals intervening with the children's guardian to protect them. Despite disowning his daughter for her cross-class marriage to an inferior, Felix took in the twins because he would be legally obligated to pay their maintenance in the workhouse. The twins' mistreatment in Felix and later Alfred's care shows the current laws are inadequate to protect children from physical deprivation, medical neglect, and emotional abuse. Mrs. Toplis insists, "You never saw brother and sister so fond of one another—never. They were twins. But, Lor'! the boy was more like a father to the little girl than aught else" (165). Though George and Mary were the same age, he was forced to adopt the mature role of caring for her; they developed such a strong attachment that Felix made them his heirs due to his sympathy for them. Alfred fits the character type of the greedy uncle who mistreats his nephew out of a desire to receive the family inheritance. Mrs. Toplis attests that "[a]fter the old gentleman's death the children were treated shameful—shameful. I don't mean beaten, or that like; but half-starved and neglected" (166).

Depriving the children of proper food, clothing, and affection was not technically illegal, yet Alfred's actions arouse public indignation even years later. In contrast, lower-class women such as Mrs. Toplis and the children's aunt, Mrs. May, acted in the siblings' best interest by removing the sick Mary and unsuccessfully trying to take custody of George. Mrs. Toplis and Mrs.

May assisting the children in spite of their inferior social position reinforces the alliance between these groups as well as suggests women are more aware of the injurious effects of abuse. Alfred's emotional neglect of the children facilitates George's death of "a broken heart" (166) after being separated from his sister and Mrs. May even scolds him for killing George out of greed. While Alfred does not violently murder George, his refusal to summon medical help for either child resembles Heathcliff's unwillingness to send for a doctor to treat his dying son (223). After George's death, his ghost haunts Alfred until he goes insane and later spends the rest of his life in a madhouse:

"We were never without him afterwards, never; that, and nothing else, drove Mr. Alfred mad. He used to think he was fighting the child and killing it. When the worst fits were on him he tried to trample it under foot or crush it up in a corner, and then he would sob and cry, and pray for it to be taken away." (167)

Alfred's attempts to attack George's ghost reveal how easily neglect can evolve into violence, considering that the abuser views his victim as a dehumanized entity. His references to the child as "it" were common during the period; in fact, they echo Nelly's description of the young Heathcliff when he first arrives and may confirm the foster child's vulnerability. Edgar's fear that "[i]f I cannot lay that child I shall go mad... As mad, perhaps, as Alfred Stainton" (163) conveys his desperation to make amends to George out of a sense of guilt, rather than punishment.

Ultimately, Edgar must restore Mary to her position as a family heir through marriage and reestablish the Stainton family's ties with the community in order to satisfy George's emotional trauma. I agree with the scholarly view of George as an innocent child ghost whose main focus is to receive care from others and justice for the living (Matigny 169; Harde 197). The fact that George continues to haunt Walnut-Tree House even after Alfred dies in a mental asylum illustrates that he desires more than revenge: he hopes to be reunited with Mary. The child's relentless search for his missing sister exemplifies what Edgar must do to appease the child ghost, namely look for

Felix's missing will and the adult Mary. As a fellow orphan, Edgar identifies with George's emotional distress at losing his sister and thus welcomes Mary when she and Mrs. May visit the house. Edgar observes that George has reached peace now that he has found her and the formerly neglected Mary has been accepted into the family: "It was the child! The child searching about no longer for something it failed to find, but standing at the girl's side still and motionless, with its eyes fixed upon her face, and its poor, wasted figure nestling amongst the folds of her dress" (169). Edgar's discovery of the missing will that leaves Mary a fortune allows him to make restitution to her for Alfred coveting her inheritance. In turn, George helps both the intercessor and the survivor because they fall in love, which assuages Edgar's desire for a family and Mary's trauma at her childhood abuse. Similar to Catherine and Hareton's engagement, Edgar and Mary's happy ending helps to end the cycle of child abuse in the Stainton family by reuniting two hostile branches through love. While Edgar usurps George's rightful position as the heir, he will act differently from his ancestors as a kind and charitable master who fulfills his family's communal obligations: he rehires Mrs. Toplis, does business with the local tradespeople, and reconciles with Mrs. May's family. Although George's ghost still haunts the house, Edgar can see that "[t]here was no sorrow or yearning in his eyes as he gazed—only a great peace, a calm which seem to fill and light them with an exquisite beauty" (172). This conclusion fits with Andrew Smith's observation that Riddell's ghost stories turn away from plots of vengeful men to happy endings with financially independent women (72-73). In fact, critics find that Edgar distinguishes himself as a sensitive and imaginative man who redeems the middle classes by making restitution to George and Mary (Baker 94-95; Makala 56; Margree 73). Despite Edgar's generosity, the ghost lingers in the house and watches the the engaged couple at the end, which can be read as George remaining to ensure that family violence is not repeated in future generations of the Staintons.

In “Old Mrs. Jones” (1882), Riddell similarly portrays how an old woman’s ghost becomes empowered by reaching out to women, children, and servants in the house where she once lived to bring her abusive husband to justice. Critics view Zillah Jones as a dangerous witch or undomesticated woman who must be expelled from the suburbs for her disruptive behavior (M. Moran 135; Baker 84). While Mrs. Jones is a menacing ghost, Riddell uses her situation as an abused woman to illustrate that domestic violence can happen to women at all levels of English society. Mr. Tippens, a cabdriver, chooses to lease Dr. Jones’s house despite various warning signs, such as rumors that the house is haunted, the high turnover in tenants, and the low rent. His wife does not understand why Mrs. Jones would target her family since they never hurt her, without realizing that the ghost may want her assistance and sympathy: “At any rate, I never did any harm to the woman—never saw her, to my knowledge, so it’s not likely she would come troubling me” (180). When Mrs. Tippens learns that her children and maid Mrs. Pendleton have encountered the ghost, her husband invalidates her arguments out of male skepticism at female superstition. After the children inform her that Mrs. Jones has entered their dark room, Mrs. Tippens thinks, “If old Mrs. Jones were able, not merely to go wandering about a house for which she paid no rent or taxes, but also to find her own light, what other feat might that lady not be expected to perform?” (186). Mrs. Jones is scary because she subverts the legal system in inhabiting a house she does not own and chasing away the official tenants. Sarah Bissell argues that in Riddell’s supernatural fiction the threat of economic insecurity is more terrifying than the ghosts (73). In this case, the sinister element is the narrator repeatedly foreshadowing that the Tippens will go bankrupt due to their inability to save money and digresses into a lecture on wise spending habits. Though Mr. Tippens assures his wife, “I’m not likely either to turn teetotaller or take to beating you, lass” like the former tenants (192), it is implied that poverty will strain their marriage to the point he may

abuse her. The parallel between the wealthy Mrs. Jones and the working-class Mrs. Tippens shows that wife battering is a pervasive phenomena, which goes against the widespread Victorian belief that it was mostly confined to the poor. Frances Power Cobbe wrote only a few years earlier in her influential essay “Wife-Torture in England” that unlike the humane upper classes, “the men of the lower class of the same nation are proverbial for their unparalleled brutality, till wife-beating, wife-torture, and wife-murder have become the opprobrium of the land” (56). The neighbors used to gossip about how Dr. Jones would mistreat his wife by beating her, dragging her around, and starving her, but they isolate her to the point that they cannot assist the ghost.

In Chapters 3 and 4, Riddell interrupts her suspenseful tale and flashes back to the Jones’s marriage, as viewed through local gossip, to criticize the inadequacy of the community, police, and law to protect Mrs. Jones from harm. Critics assert that the cabman moving in and turning the house into lodgings will make the suburbs a slum (Pope 22; Baker 77). The irony is that Dr. Jones’s wicked behavior had already compromised the neighborhood’s respectability, yet the local bourgeois welcomed him and blamed his wife for being the undesirable neighbor. The gossip about Dr. Jones’s drinking, gambling, and womanizing suggests Riddell is invoking popular fears about doctors’ immorality. However, his outraged neighbors wanted to accept him socially on marrying, since “[p]rodigals are always interesting, perhaps because no one ever really believes they will reform, and Doctor Jones was a specially delightful prodigal—so clever, so handsome, so reckless, so wicked, so extravagant” (189). Mrs. Jones isolated herself to discourage her husband from his womanizing, but the community also rejected her out of xenophobia against a New Rich foreigner. The locals felt that “it would be most undesirable to introduce foreigners of no respectable colour into the bosom of British families who made their money in the City, as everybody knew” (191). The 1882 Marriage Property Act was passed with the primary intention of protecting lower-class

women's earnings from their abusive husbands (Griffin 81). In contrast, Riddell's ghost story expands beyond the poor to insist that rich women could be financially exploited as well, since Dr. Jones married Mrs. Jones for her wealth and tried to coerce her into supporting his vices. While male opportunists marrying for money is an old literary trope, I have discussed how Dr. Jones's physical abuse of his wife in order to obtain her money is unusual for characters of their class. Mrs. Jones's refusal to pay her husband's bills makes her a dark alter ego for the Irish Riddell, who offered the copyrights of her novels as security against her husband's debts (Collela 186). It is not enough for abused women like Mrs. Jones to have financial resources—they also need social support from the community. Dr. Jones's feud with his wife reached a breaking point once his bad habits placed him in heavy debt; her refusal to pay off his bills caused her frustrated husband to strangle her. The middle classes uphold a double standard in accepting a wife abuser and ostracizing his wife at the moment when she most needed their help. Only Mrs. Jones's charwoman, Mrs. Jubb, expressed any concern for her and summoned the police when both Joneses go missing; hence, the ghost appeals to female servants like Mrs. Pendleton and Anne Jane for help. The police also failed to uncover a domestic murder because they did not investigate properly and their incompetence allows Dr. Jones to live as a fugitive.

Paradoxically, Mrs. Jones's vulnerability as a victim of domestic murder empowers her in her ghostly form to reach out to other women for help in achieving her goals, particularly the intercessor, Anne Jane. Her ghost cannot ask the locals for assistance because they have already failed her in socially isolating an abused woman (Margree "(Other) Worldly" 80); instead, she approaches the women in the house who express female solidarity with her. Scholars have debated whether scenes that expose or conceal battered women's bodies in Victorian literature foster change. Suzanne Rintoul regards "the vulnerability and pain produced in representations of

intimate violence as capable of contesting, rather than merely reflecting, how women are acted upon in patriarchy” (6). Hence, Mrs. Jones brings her abuser to justice through connecting with other populations who are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. While Mr. Tippens remains unaware of Mrs. Jones’s presence, his wife, his cousin Anne Jane, and children all have various encounters with the ghost in which she looks for their sympathy. During a short visit, Anne Jane unwittingly assents to being the intercessor when she expresses sympathy for Mrs. Jones, after she dreams of Dr. Jones murdering his wife:

“He said something, I could not hear what; and then, as she cowered down, he caught her and wrenched the case out of her hand, and made a snatch at the necklace just as she flew at him, with all of her fingers bent and uttering the most terrible cries that ever came out of woman’s lips—I think I can hear them now; then, in a minute she fell back, and I could see that she was only kept from dropping on the floor by the tight grip he had on the necklace. I seemed to know she was being choked, and I tried to call out, but I could not utter a sound. I strove to rush at the man, but my feet felt rooted where I stood; then there came a great darkness like the darkness of a winter’s night.” (202)

This scene literalizes the power struggle between Dr. Jones and his wife in the form of a physical fight: his desire to get his hands on her fortune (the necklace) leads to her violent death by strangulation. Anne Jane’s inability to save Mrs. Jones parallels Mrs. Jones’s powerlessness as her husband chokes her; furthermore, the fact that the necklace doubles as a murder weapon evinces how her wealth fails to protect her. Anne Jane’s sympathy for Mrs. Jones and desire to stop Mr. Jones make her the intercessor Mrs. Jones will use to locate her fugitive husband. Mrs. Tippens remarks, “Oh! Mrs Jones, if you’d only tell us where your poor bones are mouldering, I am sure Dick would have them decently buried, let the cost be what it might” (205). The women’s sympathy enables Mrs. Jones to mesmerize Anne Jane into sleepwalking every night so that she can guide her to Dr. Jones’s hideout. As Jennifer Bann notes, the powerless ghosts of the early

nineteenth century were replaced by more powerful figures such as Mrs. Jones during the *fin de siècle* on account of Spiritualism's influence (675).

While scholars have noted in passing that Mrs. Jones resembles the victimized mad wife Bertha Rochester, they have not fully analyzed the significance of this intertextual reference to Charlotte's novel. Like *Jane Eyre*, "Old Mrs. Jones" features a man who weds his a wealthy foreign wife and proceeds to have affairs after their marriage falls apart. Mrs. Jones's ghost acts like Bertha by wandering around her husband's house at night and scaring the inhabitants, which is why critics read her as a threatening figure. They claim that Mrs. Jones uses Anne Jane to empower herself (Grimes 106), ruins her reputation through making her sleepwalk (Whelan 84), and crushes other women in the process of rebelling (Bissell 85). However, Riddell's mad wife allies with the female servant Anne *Jane* to bring her husband to justice as well as to benefit the intercessor because they are both financially exploited. By showing Mrs. Jones controlling Anne Jane through somnambulism, Riddell draws on the common association between servants and sleepwalking at the time. Stephen Thomson points out the sleepwalking female domestic is "the ideal servant: having absolutely nothing of her own, her impulsively self-willed denial of any independent will wins her fulfilment in the desires of others" (105), especially her employers. In this case, Thomson's point appears to be true; Mrs. Jones directs Anne Jane to track down Dr. Jones and bring his whereabouts to the police's attention. There are indications that Anne Jane's employers mistreat this delicate woman: they do not let her take vacations and keep her up late working hard. The locals gossip that the upset "Anne Jane was never able to go back to service, but was forced eventually to return to her native village, where to this day she earns a modest living with her needle" (214). Mrs. Jones recompenses her intercessor by removing Anne Jane from a financially abusive job so she can become an independent worker as a seamstress. It would

typically be precarious to work as a needlewoman a woman who loses her place and character, but Riddell herself views this change of career for Anne Jane in a positive light.⁴⁰

The police find that Dr. Jones has disguised himself as a “great German chemist” (213) Dr. Schloss and uses his medical knowledge to place his wife’s body “embalmed in a locked box” (214). He takes advantage of the British xenophobia that once afflicted his wife to isolate himself, but the German term “Schloss” (castle) ties him back to the home where he strangled Mrs. Jones. Although she turns him in to the police and kills him for lying about the murder, Mrs. Jones still acts like Bertha by setting the house on fire, which suggests that justice is not enough for her.⁴¹

It was indeed a conflagration to be remembered, if for no other reason than that standing on the parapet in the fiercest of the fire a woman, with streaming grey hair, was seen wringing her hands in such an apparent agony of distress that an escape was put up, and one of the brigade nearly lost his life in trying to save her.

At this juncture someone cried out with a loud voice: “It was a witch the doctor married, and fire alone can destroy her!”

Then for a moment there fell a dead silence upon the assembled crowd, while the dreadful figure was seen running from point to point in a mad effort to escape.

Suddenly the roof crashed in, millions of sparks flew upwards from the burning rafters, there was a roar as if the doors of some mighty furnace had been suddenly opened, a blaze of light shot straight towards the heavens, and when the spectators looked again there was no figure to be seen anywhere, only the bare walls, and red flames rushing through the sashless windows of the house once haunted by “Old Mrs. Jones.” (214)

Like Bertha, Mrs. Jones kindles her husband’s house for variety of reasons, namely to take revenge against him, to wipe out his memory, and to drive away future tenants; however, the fact that she burns the house in front of the entire community is significant. Her appearance on the roof

⁴⁰ When Anne Jane first appears, Riddell remarks, “Miss Toppens was the incarnation of the ideal sewing-maid in a good family. Tall, but not too tall; thin, but not too thin; with pallid face, brown eyes, thick hair brushed back, and tightly plaited till it looked of no account, not pretty or ugly, quiet of movement, soft of voice; a good girl who—at last her toilet finished—turned to Mrs. Toppens and said: ‘Now, dear, you’ll let me help you all I can while I stay here’” (XYZ).

⁴¹ In *Jane Eyre*, an innkeeper who witnessed the fire relates the scene to Jane, saying, “And then they called out to him that she was on the roof; where she was standing, waving her arms, above the battlements, and shouting out till they could hear her a mile off; I saw her and heard her with my own eyes. She was a big woman, and had long black hair: we could see it streaming against the flames as she stood. I witnessed, and several more witnessed Mr. Rochester ascend through the skylight on to the roof: we heard him call ‘Bertha!’ We saw him approach her; and then, ma’am, she yelled, and gave a spring, and the next minute she lay smashed on the pavement” (365).

communicates that she is angry with her neighbors and resents them for not protecting her when she was alive. Since they failed to help her the first time, she reenacts her trauma at being destroyed a second time and allows the crowd to watch, attracting polarized reactions from onlookers. Mrs. Jones igniting the fire with her lamp and then trying to escape the burning house suggests that she is a figure of ambivalence as both a threat and a victim. The community finally feels sympathy for her “agony” at being eradicated to the point that a fireman tries to save her; at the same time, an onlooker calls her an evil “witch” who must be destroyed. However, she creates “remembrance” among the locals who repeat her story as a warning to others about the dangers of domestic murder.

Just as the ending of “Old Mrs. Jones” rewrites *Jane Eyre* to highlight the victimized mad wife, May Sinclair’s “The Intercessor” (1911) adapts *Wuthering Heights* to focus on the bond between the neglectful mother and her daughter. Sinclair’s admiration of the Brontës would lead her to write fiction, criticism, and a biography in which she developed her literary experimentation and theories of creativity (Silvey 168). Philippa Martindale argues that Sinclair campaigned for female suffrage through her literary representations of the sisters (185). Suzanne Raitt finds that “The Intercessor” can offer “an alternative metaphor for the operations and investments of female literary history: haunting, the re-embodiment of the dead” (“Literary History” 189). Sinclair’s feeling that she was haunted by Emily’s ghost explains her focus on the supernatural elements of *Wuthering Heights* in her biography *The Three Brontës* (1912). She writes “[i]n all Catherine’s appearances you feel the impulse towards satisfaction of a soul frustrated of its passion, avenging itself on the body that betrayed it. It has killed Catherine’s body. It will kill Heathcliff’s; for it must get through to him. And he knows it” (255). In “The Intercessor,” Sinclair reworks Catherine

and Heathcliff's destructive spiritual connection into the mother-daughter relationship between Cathy (Mrs. Falshaw) and Catherine (Effy).⁴²

Scholars have examined the compassionate link between the living and the dead in Sinclair's ghost stories, with the mediator between both realms being the "intercessor" (Neff "New Mysticism" 100; Bleiler 127; Thurston 121). However, I would argue for the larger importance of the "intercessor" to the female ghost story tradition: Sinclair makes explicit the intercessor-ghost connection found in women's supernatural fiction from Emily's novel onward. The intercessor, Garvin, is a former real estate agent working on a history of Yorkshire who settles in the village of Craven with the intention to write, only to find himself distracted by the children there. The locals suggest that his dislike of children allies him with the Falshaws, who live in the symbolically named Bottom because they have been isolated due to their neglect of their daughter, Effy. When he meets the Falshaws to rent a room, "[b]y way of establishing his own incorruptibly moral character, Garvin drew a portrait of himself as a respectable, intellectual, dry-as-dust alien to human interests and emotions, intolerant of the society of his kind. So much so that he was obliged to stipulate that wherever he lodged there must be no other lodgers, and no children" (122). Garvin must learn to intervene and help victimized children like Effy in the communities he visits, rather than standing back as an objective bystander recording their history.

Despite his distaste for children, Garvin establishes his fitness for being the intercessor through his concern for an abused child because he takes multiple actions to protect Effy before realizing she is a ghost. During his first night at the Falshaws', Garvin hears her crying and thinks "[t]he wonder was how it could have waked him; the sound was so distant, so smothered, so inarticulate" (130). He responds to Effy's nightly crying with anger at the Falshaws for neglecting

⁴² In addition, see Zigger 65-68 for the Brontëan influence on Sinclair's writings.

the baby by refusing to comfort it. Garvin accentuates his “moral character” on the assumption that Mr. Falshaw’s niece, Anny, is a fallen woman; hence, he regards the crying child as her illegitimate baby. His draws his false conclusion based on the common child abuse narrative of the seduced woman who commits infanticide out of shame at having a bastard child. Over the next few days, Garvin “was qualified to witness to the Falshaws’ abominable neglect. Nobody came near the poor little wretch to comfort it. It was probably frightened there, all by itself. The mere sound of the crying wouldn’t have kept him awake but for his pity for the helpless thing that made it” (133). Although he errs in thinking the Falshaws are abusing a living child, Garvin recognizes that Effy’s ghost reenacting her cries from when her parents ignored her constitute symptoms of parental neglect. Furthermore, they continue to neglect her by refusing to acknowledge Effy as a ghost, since she still longs for their attention, especially from Mrs. Falshaw. Garvin’s compassion drives him to take several steps to help the child by asking Anny to care for it and informing an authority figure, the local doctor, Mackinnon. His determination to help Effy increasingly draws Garvin into an alliance with her and builds up trust between the intercessor and the child ghost. The growing intimacy between them culminates in Garvin finally seeing her one night sobbing in front of her mother’s door when Mrs. Falshaw refuses to admit her: “What *was* distinct, appallingly distinct, was the look it had; a look not to be imagined or defined, and thinkable only as a cry, an agony, made visible. The child stood there long enough to fix on him its look. At the same time it seemed so withdrawn in the secret of its suffering as to be unaware of him” (138). The increasing signs of Effy’s pain show that Garvin must help give definition to the trauma that she struggles to articulate as a young child.

When Garvin decides to stay and help Effy, his position as the intercessor earns him the Falshaws’ respect, especially since he lacks the fear that afflicts them and drove away their

previous tenants. Sinclair's primary way of rewriting *Wuthering Heights* is to change the beginning so that the intercessor helps the victimized child ghost reconcile with her abusers. The moment he sees Effy's agonized face, "Then—Garvin was not frightened nor even surprised at what happened then; he seemed to have expected it—the little creature climbed up the bedside and crept in beside him" (139). Despite realizing that Effy is a ghost, he is so moved that he offers her the comfort her parents denied her at a moment of extreme trauma. In Sinclair's reenvisioning, Lockwood opens the window to allow the crying Cathy inside his room out of compassion for her suffering and the two form an alliance that will cure their personal alienations (Garvin/humanity and Effy/her family). Scholars have analyzed Sinclair's sympathetic portrayal of female authors, but they do not consider her fictional renderings of male writers like Garvin. His situation resembles Vernon Lee's "Amore Dure" (1887), which also features a male historian, Spiridion Trepka, who becomes determined to help a female ghost, Medea da Carpi. The main difference is the way these characters treat the present-day people around them—Trepka isolates himself from them to obsess over a *femme fatale* from the past; in contrast, Garvin works with the child ghost to assist them. He must help the Falshaws to overcome their isolation and become reintegrated into the community as well as effect a reconciliation between Effy and her abusers. Mr. Falshaw explains that "[t]hey know; and they doan't coom to those that are afeard of 'em. They doan't coom so as to be seen...It's the pity in them" (155). In other words, ghosts like Effy cannot appear to her family without Garvin's intervention because they are scared of the ghost and feel guilty for wronging her. While the Falshaws initially disregard Garvin, they begin showing him consideration when they realize that he can see Effy: "This change from hostility to the extreme of friendliness dated from the evening when he had declared to Falshaw that he felt no fear" (144). As the intercessor, Garvin receives

special treatment for his connection with Effy, since helping him indirectly expresses the Falshaws' love for her.

Even though characters in Sinclair's ghost stories often enter a mystical union through compassion, Garvin's share in Effy's extreme trauma reveals that it is not always a positive experience for the living. The reason the intercessor needs to negotiate between the Falshaws and Effy is because they feel so guilty that they cannot confront her and they need Garvin to push them out of this stalemate. Garvin "could only suppose that their haunting was vague and imperfect. They lived on the edge of the borderland of fear, discovering nothing clearly, yet knowing all" (161). Critical discussions of the positive nature of the uncanny and mystical visions for female characters in works by Sinclair, Woolf, and Richardson overlook male characters like Garvin.⁴³ In her ghost stories, Sinclair promotes a link between the living and the dead forged through compassion and love that remains uncorrupted by lechery or self-interest.⁴⁴ Rebecca Kinnamon Neff argues that Sinclair's ghost stories incorporate her Idealist belief in New Mysticism: that the many will reach union with the one (the Absolute) ("Metaphysical Quest" 187). In her introduction to *Wuthering Heights* (1922), Sinclair asserts, "[t]here can be no doubt that Emily Brontë was a mystic, no doubt that she—or her genius—reach the vision of ultimate Reality, the supreme experience" (vii). Garvin is not afraid of interacting with Effy's ghost or consoling her, and yet he must brace himself when he sees her sighting of Mr. Falshaw having sex with his mistress, Rhoda Webster, after Mrs. Falshaw refused to allow Effy in her room:

There were two there, a man and a woman. He did not discern them as ordinary supernatural presences; the terror they evoked surpassed all fear of the intangible. Of one thing he was certain. The man was Falshaw. He could swear to that. The woman he had with him was a woman whom Garvin had never seen. He couldn't

⁴³ For more on female mysticism, see Drewery, Neff "New Mysticism," Neff "Metaphysical Quest," Botting, Seed, Ingham, Bowler, G. Johnson *Mourning*, and Theobald.

⁴⁴ See Sinclair's ghost stories "The Flaw in the Crystal" (1912), "When Their Fire is Not Quenched" (1922), "The Token" (1923), "The Nature of the Evidence" (1923), and "The Villa Désirée" (1926).

say what it was he saw, but he knew that it was evil. He couldn't say whether he really saw or whether he apprehended it by some supreme sense more living and more horrible than sight. It was monstrous, unintelligible; it lay outside the order of his experience. He seemed, in this shifting of his brain, to have parted with his experience, to have become a creature of vague memory and appalling possibilities of fear. (162-163)

By sharing this vision, Garvin understands Effy's emotional neglect (she is upset her mother locks her out), sexual trauma (she witnesses intimacy too advanced for her age), and medical neglect (she develops fits that her parents overlook). Critics have read this moment as a precursor to Freud's primal scene and Sinclair's supernatural tales as growing out of her interest in psychoanalysis during World War I. Her fascination with psychoanalysis encouraged Sinclair's desire to heal traumatized subjects through helping to found the Medico-Psychological Clinic and donating money to a fund for shell-shocked soldiers (Raitt *Modern Victorian* 136-137). In her discussion of New Mysticism, Sinclair writes that "the world has been full of these mystics, these visionaries, since August 1914" (269). It is clear that for Sinclair, mystical states can be triggered by traumatic events such as sexual knowledge and World War I.

Mackinnon's explanation of events affirms that both Falshaws were responsible for abusing Effy, yet he places greater accountability on Mrs. Falshaw for rebelling against her position as an Edwardian mother. Garvin is so shaken by his vision that he turns to Mackinnon for answers and learns about the variety of abuses Effy suffered. Mackinnon is Sinclair's version of Emily's Dr. Kenneth as the physician who treats the Earnshaw and Linton families and plays an important role in announcing their tragedies. He reports "[t]he Falshaws were severely censured at the inquest. You see, the child oughtn't to have been left alone. She'd had one fit about a month before and they knew it" (170) prior to her drowning. The Falshaws were publicly shamed for breaking recent laws such as the 1908 Children's Act, which obligated parents to give their children supervision, affection, and medical care (Behlmer 220). While both parents are

responsible for Effy's death, Mackinnon places greater blame on Mrs. Falshaw for driving her husband to adultery, staying with Mr. Falshaw, and neglecting Effy. He asserts, "[a]nd there's something exquisitely irritating, to a woman of Sarah's temperament, in a man who chuckles and grins and reckons on a baby that doesn't come" (173). Mrs. Falshaw grew to resent her husband's stereotypical view that women are defined by maternity. Using his wife's childcare duties as an excuse, Mr. Falshaw set up a bizarre *ménage à trois* with Rhoda, which angered Mrs. Falshaw so much that she subjected Effy to severe emotional neglect. Mackinnon vividly describes Effy's failure to thrive without her mother's love: "It was always cold. It fretted, you see, and though it was well-fed its food didn't do it any good. I was always being called in" (179). His indignation at Mrs. Falshaw for mistreating Effy limits his understanding of her restricted position; for instance, he condemns her for staying with her husband and overlooks the stigma surrounding divorced women. Mackinnon defensively says, "[y]ou may think I'm unjust to the woman—Heaven knows she suffered—but if you'd seen her with that child and how *it* suffered...that woman showed me the ugliest thing on God's earth—the hard, savage lust that avenges its frustration on its own offspring" (177). When Mr. Falshaw threatens to elope with Rhoda, Mrs. Falshaw blames her child for their estrangement and ignores Effy to spite her husband. Mrs. Falshaw may also deliberately neglect her daughter in order to defy the social expectation that mothers should be completely devoted to their children. Luke Thurston argues that through Mackinnon, Sinclair shifts the cause for Effy's trauma from her father to mother due to her interest in the psychoanalytic theories about the mother-child bond (123). However, this reading assumes that she endorses Mackinnon's misogynistic views, rather than critiquing them by illustrating that his interpretation of the Falshaws' troubles is inadequate to Garvin's.

Sinclair allows us to understand how the social restrictions on Edwardian women motivated Mrs. Falshaw's neglect of Effy without turning her into a feminist figure like Medea. In Victorian fiction and real life, abusive mothers were often unwed working-class women who committed infanticide or gave their illegitimate children to murderous baby farmers (hence, Garvin presumes the baby is Anny's).⁴⁵ At the time Sinclair was writing, women's ghost stories presented mothers and female guardians who justify child murder in the name of protecting victimized women and children. In Dora Sigerson Shorter's "The Mother" (1900), a dying housewife kills her child after she has supernatural dreams foreshadowing that her son will suffer from being raised by his abusive father. Violet Hunt's "The Coach" (1911) features a female baby farmer riding a phantom coach who justifies helping "those shivering, shrinking women that came to me, some of them hardly out of their teens, some of them so delicate they had no right to a baby at all!" (138). During the *fin de siècle*, Medea, who vengefully murdered her sons after her husband left her for another woman, appeared as a feminist icon in women's writing (McDonough 165). Charlotte Beyer and Elizabeth Brunton discuss how Sinclair criticizes idealized motherhood through images of dead children and baby farming in her fiction. Garvin notices that Mrs. Falshaw's face "would have been deadly hard but for the fugitive, hunted look that gave it a sort of painful life in deadness. Whether she sat or stood she was a creature overtaken, fixed in her fear, with no possibility of escape" (158). Shorter's mother and Hunt's baby farmer commit child murders that are morally ambivalent and may provoke our sympathy. Mrs. Falshaw's actions do not fall in this category because she does not perpetrate abuse to protect anyone. Her wrong lies in becoming involved in a rivalry with Rhoda, rather than siding with her daughter out of female solidarity. She must make a conscious effort to change her mentality toward the child ghost, especially since Effy was just

⁴⁵ For more on infanticide and baby farming in Victorian and early twentieth-century England, see Behlmer 17-43, Berry 127-157, Hendrick 39-44, Wiener 123-126, McDonough 123-183, and Beyer.

an innocent pawn in her parents' deteriorating marriage. Garvin recognizes that Mrs. Falshaw's pregnancy makes her particularly vulnerable: "What weighed on her was her sense of the supernatural, and her fear of it and of its inscrutable work on her, penetrating her flesh and striking the child that was to be born" (158). As Mackinnon notes, Mrs. Falshaw is so traumatized by Effy's death that she could go insane or lose her unborn child from the stress of confronting her victim.⁴⁶

Garvin botches his first attempt to reconcile mother and daughter because he places Effy's desires above the need to protect Mrs. Falshaw and her baby from the jealous revenge ghost. After learning the truth, Garvin realizes that he has more authority than MacKinnon in this situation as a result of spiritually uniting with Effy and sharing her traumatic vision: "The doctor had watched the outside of events, whereas he, Garvin, had been taken into the invisible places, into the mystic heart of suffering. He knew the unnamed, unnameable secret of pity and fear" (182). Sinclair's act of calling the child ghost's memory of abuse "the mystic heart of suffering" reveals the *reparative* nature of traumatic flashbacks. Rather than being detrimental, this vision can only be entered through compassion and it allows Garvin to understand Effy better so he can help her. Garvin further thinks "[h]e was the intercessor between Effy's passion and the Falshaws' fear. Effy's suffering had endured with her indestructible, unappeasable passion. It was through him, Garvin, that her passion clamoured for satisfaction and her suffering for rest" (184-185). His recognition of himself as an "intercessor" shows that rather than inventing this character type, it had become so common in women's ghost stories that Sinclair defined an already existing concept. When Mrs. Falshaw sends for Garvin, he tries to mediate between mother and child to reconcile them, even though she explains "[t]here's times, Mr. Garvin, when ah'm scairt for ma life o' seeing 'er, anyway. And when the fear taks hold o' me, it strikes through, as if it wud kill the child. And so

⁴⁶ This scenario also replays the unhealthy dynamics of the love square between Rhoda, Mr. Falshaw, Mrs. Falshaw, and Effy. Effy imitates her mother by taking revenge on a child out of jealousy at being ignored by her love object.

'twull, so 't wull" (189). Mrs. Falshaw's fear of Effy suggests the uncertainty surrounding the child ghost's intentions toward her mother and sibling. This ambiguity indicates the child ghost is an enigmatic figure that can be read as a revenge ghost or innocent victim, especially since her approach causes her sibling's stillbirth. Effy's unclear portrayal complicates the scholarly narrative that the child ghost transitioned from a pliable symbol in early Gothic, a victimized innocent in Victorian ghost stories, and the modern evil child (Martigny; Georgieva). Harry Hendrick and Monica Flegel point out that child welfare laws were enacted at this period out of fear that victims would grow up to become a threat to society (7; 148). In a similar vein, some critics read the abused Gothic, uncanny, or ghostly child as a dangerous presence that must be killed, which reflects an underlying adult hostility toward children (Killeen *History* 67; Shuttleworth "Childhood" 101-103). Effy conforms with Nina Auerbach's remark that "Victorian child-ghosts are not the satanic monsters on which our own Gothic literature feeds. They are something subtler, innocent, admonitory, and terrifying at the same time" (*Private Theatricals* 44). Mrs. Falshaw understands the child ghost's nature, telling Garvin, "if Affy's here, and she knaws, and she sees me takken oop with another child, 'twill be worse trooble for 'er then than 'tis now" (189). Sinclair anticipates the Freudian analysis of sibling rivalry, in which an older child acts naughty out of resentment at her mother for replacing her with a new baby. Garvin's primary mistake in trying to reconcile them is underestimating the depth of Effy's jealousy and overlooking the negative side of her "passion" for her mother.

Critics are particularly disturbed by the idea that Effy demands her sibling must die in childbirth before her mother will accept her and Mrs. Falshaw can find a resolution that will bring her happiness.⁴⁷ This scene makes sense if we read Mrs. Falshaw and Effy's relationship as a

⁴⁷ For this reading, see Bleiler 134-135, Brunton 58-59, and Raitt *Modern Victorian* 133.

replacement of the Catherine/Heathcliff bond with Catherine/Cathy. Effy's actions manifest "the impulse towards satisfaction of a soul frustrated of its passion, avenging itself on the body that betrayed it." In other words, Sinclair reworks Catherine's child ghost taking revenge on Heathcliff into Effy taking revenge on the pregnant Mrs. Falshaw by physically wearing her down. Sinclair demonstrates the futility of Effy's revenge on her mother because Mrs. Falshaw ends up so mentally shattered that she goes insane and confuses the dead child for Effy. Garvin can only succeed as an intercessor when he realizes that he is not only supposed to help Effy, but also to assist Mrs. Falshaw in overcoming her trauma so that she can become a survivor. Hence, he finally effects the reconciliation when he works with Effy to heal her mother's insanity through love, instead of revenge: "In Mrs. Falshaw's eyes there was neither fear nor any discernment of the substitution; yet she saw as he saw. She saw with sanity. Her arms pressed the impalpable creature, as it were flesh to flesh; and Garvin knew that Effy's passion was appeased" (196-197). A year later, Mackinnon writes to Garvin informing him that another historian is staying with the Falshaws for nerves; thus, their home has now become a place where people can heal from trauma. The doctor admits his misinterpretation of Mrs. Falshaw's character when he says "I'm inclined to think, Garvin, that you knew more about that woman than I ever did" (197). He describes a shrine to Effy in Mrs. Falshaw's room and remarks, "They suggest votive offerings on an altar of the dead. What does it mean? Just remembrance? Or—some idea of propitiation? You ought to know" (198). Sinclair's ghost story ends on an ambiguous note that maintains the uncertainty over whether Effy is a harmless or threatening presence. Mrs. Falshaw must continue to appease Effy by keeping this shrine in order to show that she cares for her and will not practice her abusive behavior again—otherwise, the child ghost will return. While Victorian ghost stories usually end with the family tragically dying out or happily persisting through marriage, "The Intercessor"

concludes with a unique scenario. Sinclair rewrote Emily Brontë's ending of the Linton and Earnshaw families continuing with Cathy and Hareton's marriage into the Falshaw family accepting that they will likely die out without an heir now that Effy and the baby are dead. These endings shift from focusing on the future of the family as a whole to emphasizing the present-day happiness of individual victims like Mrs. Falshaw.

While Sinclair defines the intercessor and makes this figure central to her ghost stories, H. D. Everett transforms this role to show that the living abuse victim is the one who needs the intercessor's help, not so much the ghost. "Nevill Nugent's Legacy" (1920) is written in epistolary form that presents the unfolding events with intimacy, immediacy, and verisimilitude. The narrative recorded through a series of letters is a common feature of other Gothic works, such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Rhoda Broughton's "The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth" (1868), one of the most prominent epistolary women's ghost stories, is told through two female friends' correspondence. The epistolary form is typically a feminine genre that emphasizes the direct experience of a woman's world. Margaret Campbell's letters to her friend Susan record women's hardships caring for the shell-shocked soldiers who survived in post-World War I Scotland. During the War, wives such as Margaret were expected to be self-sacrificing and to suppress their grief in serving others, especially the family (Ouditt 89-129). Terry Thompson and Agnieszka Monnet focus on how writers used War Gothic to convey the trauma of surviving soldiers and brutalized female civilians. In contrast, Everett highlights Margaret's independence as a working woman on the Homefront and later her financial hardships caring for her traumatized husband and young son, Tom.

Rather than focusing on male distress, Everett's ghost stories, "Over the Wires" (1916), "Anne's Little Ghost" (1920), and "A Girl in White" (1920) highlight women's traumatic

experiences during and after the War through the eyes of soldiers. Critics have discussed the mothers and sisters who used Spiritualism or images of haunting to deal with their mourning by contacting or fictionally imagining them postmortem (Roper 232; Kennedy 14). In one of the few studies on Everett, Melissa Edmundson Makala argues that the supernatural represents wartime trauma in these stories: “Like her ghosts, most women were liminal beings during the war, perpetually occupying an in-between space because they experienced the trauma of war but were apart from the actual fighting” (56). It is surprising that Makala’s study completely overlooks Everett’s association of the trauma of family violence and the shell shock from wartime aggression in “Nevill Nugent’s Legacy.” For instance, Margaret recounts, “But when Ken came out of hospital last January so ill and broken, my work had to stop, for I was needed to nurse him. Ever since then the money has been flowing out, with only a little—so little—trickling in: I cried over it only the night before, of course when Ken did not see” (67-68). While Kenneth’s illness is unspecified, his “ill and broken” condition suggests he could be suffering from shell shock after fighting in the war. We see the huge economic impact of male trauma on women when Margaret ends up unemployed and penniless taking care of her husband. The scene of her crying over their poverty in secret exemplifies the invisibility of female trauma as well as women’s greater resilience in handling it because Margaret manages her feelings in silence. The answer to their financial desperation comes in the form of a surprise inheritance from Kenneth’s estranged relative Nevill Nugent, namely the Scottish property of Mirk Muir. The name of the haunted house—Mirk Muir Grange—translates to a cross between “dark moor” and Thrushcross Grange, which suggests that Everett is also rewriting *Wuthering Heights*.

Margaret’s love for Tom makes her the perfect intercessor for the child ghost, Martin Wilding, due to her maternal instincts, though she initially resents his mother due to financial

competition. When Margaret thinks of Tom, she admits, “I was irrational enough to regret that he could not be with us. He would have enjoyed the adventure of new scenes and new hopes; and I set out with the thought of my one boy very much in mind—which may have had its share in attuning me to what followed” (70). The Campbells are happy with their inheritance until they learn of its financial burdens, including an annuity and permanent home for Mirk Muir Grange’s housekeeper, Mrs. Wilding. Margaret ponders, “A curious provision this, if you come to think of it; and it will be an odd us—for me—with a servant in the house over whom I can have no authority, as it is her home by as clear a right as it will be my own” (72). Nevill’s special provisions for Mrs. Wilding initially make her a suspicious character because this arrangement inverts the power dynamic between mistress and servant. Holly Blackford notes that twentieth-century Gothic fiction pits these two female characters against each other in competing over the house (235-237). Along with his mother, the child ghost upends the traditional social hierarchy by driving away the master as well as every subsequent tenant of the Grange except for his mother and stepfather, Thomas Bassett. Despite all this, Margaret reports that Mrs. Wilding “seemed anxious to be attentive, and I was ready to like her, only that it gave me a chill at heart to see her face, from which all hope seemed to have gone out” (75). That night, Margaret’s focus on Tom and her sympathy for Mrs. Wilding cause her to have a nightmare, in which she confuses Martin calling for his mother with her own son summoning her:

I broke Ken’s rest that night by an outcry in my sleep, and when he roused me to know what was the matter, I was weeping and trembling, and at first beyond speech. I had heard Tom calling for me, that was my dream; his voice screaming “Mother—mother!” as if in awful trouble or unbearable pain. I woke with the cry still ringing in my ears, and it needed all Ken’s common sense to console me. Even then I could not forget. Something terrible had happened to our child: that was my fear, but what I could not tell. I did not see him in the dream; it was a dream of sound and not of sight; the cries seemed to break out of some strange place which was his prison. (76)

Martin's supernatural call for his mother from the "prison" of the chapel room where Bassett buried him draws on to Margaret's maternal instincts by rousing her worry that her son is in trouble. His appeal to Margaret's maternal position not only captures the intercessor's attention so she can help Mrs. Wilding, but also allows both women to overcome their class conflict and bond over their shared experience as mothers.

Bassett's continued cruelty even after Martin punishes him exhibits the futility of the ghostly victims' taking revenge on their abusers or trusting to their reform out of guilt. The reason why Margaret must help Mrs. Wilding is that she remains unaware her son has been buried in the chapel room for the past eight years and she still hopes that they will be reunited. During her house tour, Margaret meets Bassett after Martin has crippled him in revenge for misusing his "uncommon strength" (79) to harm others. Ironically, he disturbs the cozy image of the family hearth by trying to beat the dog with a stick: "At first he did not appear to notice my entrance, as he kept his eye on a collie-dog, a nice creature, which was sidling round to find a resting-place within the radius of warmth. I shall not soon forget the murderous look on his face, as he struck at the animal with his stick—missing it, happily, for the blow fell harmlessly on the floor" (79). Critics have noted that Victorian authors often drew a connection between animal abuse and family violence because in both cases men mistreated vulnerable groups such as wives, children, and pets out of a sense of ownership (Tromp 115 *Private Rod*; Surridge 74-77).⁴⁸ Although his disability makes him as vulnerable as the animals and children he has brutalized, Bassett's "murderous" attack on the dog reveals that he remains unrepentant even after his supernatural punishment. Mrs. Wilding informs Margaret, "I have taken back my former name, because I will not any longer be called by his" (80) to signify that she is emotionally divorced from her abusive husband. Bassett's cruelty toward dogs

⁴⁸ For instance, Frances Power Cobbe was a campaigner against vivisection and domestic violence. Many Victorians drew a connection between animal abuse and marital violence because both subjects were victimized by men.

makes it ironic that he is named after a breed known for its easygoing and family-oriented nature, while Mrs. Wilding undercuts her surname's meaning of "undomesticated" through her love for Martin.

Rather than being rivals, Margaret and Mrs. Wilding bond across class lines and their shared vulnerability empowers these women because they open up to each other over their maternal concern, as manifested through supernatural visions. When Margaret sees Martin again, she advances a "scientific" explanation for the ghost's presence to Mrs. Wilding, admitting, "my mind was running on the fear of something having happened to Tom. I had heard of doppelgängers and apparitions of the living, and this boy was about Tom's size and age, though I could not say the figure was in his likeness: the face I did not see" (94). Only a year before, Freud had claimed in "The Uncanny" (1919) that witnessing a doppelgänger was a predictor of death. Mrs. Wilding shares Margaret's views with her assumption that the ghost is a telepathic representation of the son she always keeps in mind. She echoes Margaret's experience, commenting, "I have come to fancy—it is like to be—something made up out of my thoughts, which shows to others, though not to me—never to me. I'm always dwelling on my great trouble, that my son has gone away" (82). Her explanation draws on the contemporary theosophical concept of "thought-forms," or thoughts that gain material reality through supernatural means, popularized by Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbetter in *Thought-Forms* (1901). The authors explain the affective power of thought-forms using an example of maternal love that resembles Mrs. Wilding and Margaret's situation:⁴⁹ "Thus may we create and maintain veritable guardian angels round those we love, and many a mother's prayer for a distant child thus circles round him, though she knows not the method by which her

⁴⁹ "Anne's Little Ghost" presents a similar to Mrs. Wilding's circumstances, including a dead child, a grieving mother, and a shell-shocked husband. Everett downplays the husband's trauma by focusing on his wife's health crisis from seeing the possible thought-shape of their dead daughter.

‘prayer is answered’” (25). Both “David Garth’s Night-Watch” and “Nevill Nugent’s Legacy” feature a telepathic link between mother and child, but the change in situation reflects the improvement in protection laws between 1870 and 1920. While David Garth fruitlessly tries to contact his mother in the absence of any legal protection, Martin can now work with the intercessor to help Mrs. Wilding leave her husband.

Out of all the stories I have examined so far, Mrs. Wilding offers the most explicit critique of how British society enables family violence through granting men authority in the home. She reveals that her inability to protect Martin from Bassett’s savage beatings exerted pressure on him to leave one abusive environment for another by joining the navy so that he could someday take care of her: “Whatever hard usage I get on board ship, it can’t be as bad as what I’ve had here; and I shan’t write, for I won’t be sought for and brought back. But when I’ve got to an age and a weight so that Bassett can’t touch me, then I’ll come again to you, and we’ll go away together” (83).⁵⁰ Although Martin cannot keep his promise, he finds an intercessor to help his mother leave Bassett even after he no longer poses a serious threat, since his wife is still trapped taking care of her abuser. Mrs. Wilding’s rejection of her husband’s name is already a notable disavowal of marriage and reclamation of her autonomy, but she goes even further in speaking to her mistress about her experience of family violence:

“Ma’am, they say that marriage is an honourable estate, and a married woman is respectable. I thought but I say now that the worst day’s work that ever I did, and the wickedest, was when I married it would be good for me to be married to Bassett. To give him power over myself, body and soul, was bad enough, he being what he was; but the sin was to give him power over my child.” (83)

She delivers a radical condemnation of the institutions of marriage, family life, and social class for perpetuating the suffering of women and children in post-war Scotland. Her rejection of what “they

⁵⁰ Jen Baker examines Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’s critique of the abuse of children employed on ships through the vengeful child ghost in “Kentucky’s Ghost” (1868).

say” about the respectability of marriage in describing it as wicked, sinful, and bad reflects the pressure women feel to marry for social acceptance as well as her guilt for failing to protect her son. Hence, Mrs. Wilding is extremely critical of the legal “power” that men wield over their wives and children: her ire proves that the laws were still not advanced enough to protect these populations in 1920. Margaret’s reassurance to Kenneth that Mrs. Wilding “thinks it is a sort of thought-shape, and not a ghost. I am not afraid of it, so you need not mind” (97) conveys her sympathy for her servant and a lack of fear that makes her the perfect intercessor.

Despite setting her ghost story in Scotland, Everett presents this colonial territory as similar to England in terms of reinforcing the inequalities that promote family violence, rather than an alternative to it. In fact, Everett indicts all of Scottish society for institutionalizing violence against young boys and links it to the mass trauma of World War I through the space of the chapel room where Martin’s body is laid. Originally, Nevill built this space so that he could preach his eccentric religious doctrines there, but he never got the chance because Martin’s ghost began haunting this location. Next, Bassett treated this room like an extension of his brutal domestic sphere at the Grange by burying Martin’s body under the stone floor after murdering him. Once Nevill left, Mr. Grant opened a boys’ school and employed Mrs. Wilding as a “matron” (78) to the students, where Martin kept playing “pliskies” (pranks) on the schoolmaster by writing in copybooks:

He got very angry, and vowed he would flog the whole school, from the senior lad down to the youngest, unless the one that played the trick would come forward and confess. And then there started up a boy who was a stranger and not one of the scholars, and went up to the master’s desk with a copy-book in his hand. The dominie was about to take it from him; but no sooner were they face to face than Mr. Grant fell down in a fit, and that before ever he touched the book. And in the confusion that followed, the stranger boy disappeared, and no one could say where he came from or how he went. That was the biggest pliskie that was played. (86-87)

Besides his stepfather, Martin disables Mr. Grant with a fit in order to protect the students from corporal punishment, punish the schoolmaster for physically abusing his pupils, and end his reign of terror over them. Martin keeps writing “W. W.” and “M. M.” in the schoolbooks to draw attention to himself and possibly indicate “Wilding,” “Martin,” “mother,” and “murder,” though the alliteration also resembles the “N. N.” letters of Nevill Nugent’s name with an extra stroke added or turned upside down. The word games Everett plays here with Martin writing letters over and over suggest that the chapel room forms a palimpsest of Scottish society at multiple levels. The fact that boys are beaten in the home, the navy, and the school shows the systemic nature of child abuse as well as critiques Edwardian society for normalizing this mistreatment. Margaret reports that Kenneth “had just received an offer for it from a certain contractor, who would take [the chapel room] down at his own expense, to re-erect for some purpose connected with the war” (85). Everett links the institutionalized violence against young boys to the mass devastation of World War I by showing that the trauma of family violence is the same as shell-shock. In other words, the boys’ suffering from the widespread violence in Scottish society is also *a form of* the shell shock that soldiers experienced, rather than a new phenomenon.

Despite this link between child abuse and war trauma, Martin does not appear to Kenneth as the shell-shocked soldier who would relate to his pain because revenge ghosts are no longer concerned about receiving help themselves. Instead, he appeals to Margaret as the intercessor so that she will ally with the victim to help Mrs. Wilding reestablish her independence and become a survivor. Margaret witnesses Martin appear when “[t]here were two men at work over [the chapel floor], and the boy was talking to one of them. He seemed to be speaking very earnestly, and pointing to a part of the floor a yard or two away; and the man looked up in his face, and said something (I thought) in answer” (89). Their dismantling of the chapel to replace it with a War

facility signifies modernity's arrival in women's ghost stories; after all, World War I was one of the major factors that transformed this literary tradition. In addition, Margaret witnessing the ghost while the chapel is torn down suggests the women's psychical experiences are more important than institutionalized religion. Everett legitimizes women's turn away from organized religion, which became increasingly common with the popularity of Spiritualism during the interwar years.

The discovery of Martin's body involves the entire community at the Grange (Margaret, Kenneth, the contractors, Mrs. Wilding, and Bassett); furthermore, the ghost's assistance with discovering his body allows Mrs. Wilding to have closure and bring her husband to justice. Margaret significantly pauses in her correspondence to Susan before relating, "Mrs. Wilding has charged her husband, and will give evidence against him; and the wretch has been taken away. She says she hopes he will be hanged, but Ken thinks it is not likely the law will go to that extreme, as he is not in his right mind. But he will be shut up as a criminal lunatic for what is left to him of life" (90). Nevill has ensured that Mrs. Wilding can leave Bassett by giving her an annuity and a permanent home in the Grange, but she still needs Margaret's support to take a powerful stance in not only liberating herself from her abuser but also punishing him. At this moment, Mrs. Wilding forms a contrast to Margaret crying over her suffering in silence, since she takes an active stance in managing her trauma through taking it to the courts.⁵¹ The chance to confide in Margaret about her traumatic experiences allows Mrs. Wilding to break her silence as a victim and gives her the strength to publicly testify about her abusive marriage in court. Her testimony to the authorities is minimized compared to her radical discussions with Margaret on marriage, which reverberate through the circle of women to Susan and the public.

⁵¹ I am indebted to Jennifer Geddes for highlighting Margaret and Mrs. Wilding's opposing reactions to trauma.

The prompt action of the police and courts in bringing about justice shows how wife and child protection was being taken seriously, even though Scottish society must continue to improve these institutions. In fact, Bassett's fate of ending up in a mental institution may reflect the increasing use of the insanity defense by domestic murderers of wives during the *fin de siècle* (Wiener 279-288). In turn, Margaret is rewarded with economic prosperity and a thriving child who is treated well at school and home. Margaret's parting gesture of creating a cross of lilies (the flower of the Virgin Mary) for Mrs. Wilding to lay on Martin's grave emphasizes how their shared bond as loving mothers has brought together mistress and servant.

"Nevill Nugent's Legacy" follows Emily Brontë's method in *Wuthering Heights* of using the child ghost to expose the systemic nature of family violence, but Everett rewrites the novel to focus on a servant woman who escapes thanks to the intercessor's help. Margaret reports, "As for ourselves, I do not think it likely we shall remain here. Ken says he would rather not, as the associations are too painful: odd that the objection should come from him, the one who saw nothing, and not from me!" (91). Martin's death most likely discomforts Kenneth as a reminder of his shell shock, while Margaret takes it in stride out of her familiarity with handling male trauma, especially as an intercessor. Margaret's accepting outlook exhibits how the War had normalized trauma and the "survivor" as millions of men returned from the fighting. Kenneth's view of the Grange as a location where the "associations are too painful" drives him away, but Margaret has given Mrs. Wilding her blessing to remain as the housekeeper. Ultimately, Nevill Nugent's "legacy" is to use his wealth to empower traumatized subjects such as Kenneth and Mrs. Wilding to survive in post-war Scotland. His role is similar to Heathcliff's after his epiphany that Cathy and Hareton are the "ghost of my immortal love" as her living legacy (270), since Heathcliff's death ultimately gives his victims the means to survive. In these ghost stories, Riddell, Sinclair,

and Everett provide reassurance that victims can survive, instead of tragically dying or remaining with their abusers. The ghosts and intercessors must look past obtaining revenge by voicing their pain and concentrating on meeting the living's needs; hence, George, Mrs. Jones, Effy, and Martin increasingly strive to improve conditions for the intercessors and survivors. Whereas the victims examined in Section One would have to remain silent about their trauma in a society that condoned their mistreatment, the ghost stories in Section Two reflect a major cultural transition between 1868 and 1920. By the early twentieth century, the abused characters can move beyond victim status and break their silence as well as escape their male oppressors. The change in emphasis from the family's future to the victims' present happiness affirms that they are no longer obligated to stay in order to play the role of the obedient child, wife, and mother. Instead, they can now receive legal and communal support to leave their abusive households or to come to terms with their lives as independent agents. This respect for survivors as individuals deserving of happiness and caring treatment radically extends to working-class women and female servants like Mary Fenton, Mrs. Falshaw, and Mrs. Wilding. The compassionate behavior of the ghosts, the intercessors, and the community members in assisting the survivors to gain their independence shows them that they can move past their trauma and that living well is the best revenge.

**Chapter Two:
“Imagine Yourself Playing at Chess with an Angel”⁵²:
Finding a Balance between Faustus and Helena**

“What is this, Lucy?” said he, looking down at me narrowly. “Here is the old excitement. Ha! the nun again?”

But I utterly denied the charge: I was vexed to be suspected of a second illusion. He was sceptical.

“She has been, as sure as I live,” said he; “her figure crossing your eyes leaves on them a peculiar gleam and expression not to be mistaken.”

“She has *not* been,” I persisted: for, indeed, I could deny her apparition with truth.

“The old symptoms are there,” he affirmed: “a particular pale, and what the Scotch call a ‘raised’ look.”

He was so obstinate, I thought it better to tell him what I really *had* seen. Of course with him, it was held to be another effect of the same cause: it was all optical illusion—nervous malady, and so on. Not one bit did I believe him; but I dared not contradict: doctors are so self-opinionated, so immovable in their dry, materialist views.

– Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* (1853)

Introduction

In the epigraph, Lucy Snowe refuses to discount her explanation for the unusual vision she has had in favor of the doctor’s materialist reduction of her experience to an “optical illusion.” Lucy rejects Graham’s professional diagnosis that she suffers from a “nervous malady,” which enables him to dismiss her as an hysterical woman with an overactive imagination. She links Graham’s personal traits with his “dry, materialist views” as a doctor in order to denounce a type of bourgeois masculinity founded on a narrow scientific mindset. In hindsight, Lucy knows she and Graham are both correct: the ghostly nun is really the disguised Count de Hamal, but she still portrays Graham’s rationality as a major character flaw. Soon after, Graham fails to appreciate the actress Vashti’s talent in playing a woman metaphorically “torn by seven devils: devils which cried sore and rent the tenement they haunted, but still refused to be exorcised” (258). While Lucy is mesmerically drawn to Vashti’s “strong magnetism of genius” (259), he appears “callous” (260)

⁵² This quote is adapted from the male rationalist’s metaphorical description of his conflict with the female occult investigator in Falconer’s *Cecilia de Noël* (362).

to her female fury. Graham escorts Lucy to the theater out of respect for her as an intelligent companion, and yet his need to marry for money and status prevents him from being attracted to a poor schoolteacher. She recognizes he is partly motivated to desire women like Ginevra and Paulina by the pressure to make an advantageous union, since they have the social capital and wealth that Lucy lacks. Lucy assures us that Graham's good qualities offset his shortcomings; however, he possesses many negative aspects of the male rationalists in later Victorian women's ghost stories.

In this chapter, I argue that these female authors critique the problems with traditional Victorian gender roles through their depiction of the inequality between male rationalists and occult women. These rationalists are skeptical about the existence of ghosts and the occult sciences, come from professional middle-class backgrounds, and frequently include doctors, scientists, and psychical researchers. The ghost stories I analyze offer a twist on the idea that the male characters' rationality or their bourgeois status makes them superior to occult women who understand or practice the supernatural. Instead, these men eagerly dispense with their souls—essentially their feminine qualities of kindness, compassion, and humanity—in a Faustian exchange for possession of a rigorous scientific perspective. By 1889, H.D. Traill complains the male rationalist narrating a ghost story has become a cliché, but his theory that writers use this figure to supply readers with credible testimony seems insufficient: “But whether doctor, lawyer, or what not, he is always a sceptic by conviction and habit, and moreover—this is invariable—the ghost-seer who is going to tell you his plain tale disclaims any sort of literary ability whatsoever” (327). These ghost stories were written at a time when male scientists became eminent, as their knowledge, authority, and specialization in their field increased. In 1858, the passage of the Medical Act introduced a strict boundary between legitimate medical practitioners and “imposters,” many of

them female Spiritualist healers (A. Owen *Darkened Room* 111). At mid-century, doctors tried to establish respectability for themselves and their profession; however, a suspicious public reflected anxiety about the increasing influence of science on culture. Despite attempts to project positive images of doctors and scientists, the Gothic figure of the male rationalist predominates in the ghost stories I scrutinize in this chapter.

In her Gothic novel *Frankenstein* (1818), Mary Shelley created the male character type of the “mad scientist” who espouses a rationalist outlook, and this figure became ubiquitous in Victorian supernatural fiction by both men and women. Scholars have found that female authors frequently portray male rationalists upholding a brand of masculine identity that requires the oppression of women. Lowell T. Frye argues “[i]n ghost stories by women, on the other hand, reason—at least a single-minded devotion to a reductive, even mechanical version of it—figures as a weapon by which men dismiss and often destroy women” (175). In her work on nineteenth-century Gothic representations of masculinity, Cynthia Hendershot asserts “in order to remain the ideal scientist, the male subject must enact not only a theoretical mastery of and destruction of feminine nature but also a literal obliteration of those who occupy the role of feminine subject” (70). It is true that the scientific and medical communities were dominated by men hostile to the occult, partly because it was practiced by Victorian *women* excluded from scientific circles, at least until the fin de siècle. Despite this, Hendershot overlooks a crucial difference in the way Victorian men and women describe the fate of the male rationalist’s female victims. While male authors imagine “mad scientists” victimizing passive women or eradicating feminized monsters, female writers present occult women overcoming male rationalists through

their use of the supernatural.⁵³

These ghost stories question the misogyny underlying male rationality not only by confirming the reality of the supernatural, but also by allowing occult women to triumph over Victorian science, as defined by men. Several critics discuss how women gained power from Spiritualism and occult sciences such as mesmerism, clairvoyance, and telepathy. The belief that they were more likely to have occult abilities and intuitive feelings due to their feminine sensitivity reinforced essentialist gender differences. Therefore, Victorian women's occult activities were double-edged practices that simultaneously reinscribed conventional femininity and challenged it. Women pursued a passive trance state that in turn justified their aggressive behavior, expression of forbidden thoughts, and exercise of authority (A. Owen *Darkened Room* 11; Winter 106; Tromp *Altered States* 30). The ideal of Victorian femininity, in which women were seen as passive instruments upon which men might exercise their power, was transformed into a subversive means for contesting traditional gender roles. The line between male rationality and occult femininity is so unstable that some rationalists engage with the supernatural, since science was a broad and ill-defined area at this time. Historically, the rationalist investigation of the occult was pursued by both men and women, but these stories emphasize the conflict between men and women partly for the sake of driving the narrative. Although men's scientific knowledge may encompass the occult, they lack women's deeper understanding of the supernatural and the ability to wield it for positive ends. The occult woman also differs from the male rationalist on account of her compassion, which draws her to the supernatural as a means for self-empowerment and a way of sustaining close relationships. What emerges is a dichotomous rivalry between male rationalists, incapable of

⁵³ The stories by men that belong in this category include Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" (1843) and "Rappacini's Daughter" (1844), Arthur Machen's "The Inmost Light" (1894) and *The Great God Pan* (1894), and Robert Hichens's "How Love Came to Professor Guildea" (1900).

human love, sympathy, and companionship, and occult women, who use these empathetic qualities to foster social bonds. The occult sciences allowed women to create “an electric chord of sympathy” (*Villette* 159) between people divided by physical distance or the boundary separating life and death (Royale 4; Winter 122). Jill Galvan remarks “only women generated what we might phrase as a sympathetic excess—an affective or spiritual quality—that could transform mediating apparatus into the carriers of intentional self-to-self communication” (16). Women mediums resemble uncanny technologies that provoked wonder with their ability to enable human communication, just like the telegraph, the telephone, and the radio.⁵⁴

As an alternative to the misogynistic rationalist, female authors turn to the legend of Faustus and Helena because this pairing offers the perfect union of masculine science and the feminine occult. Besides Frankenstein, the male rationalist derives from the alchemist Dr. Faustus, who signs a blood pact selling his soul to the devil for scientific knowledge. The Faustus legend comes from an alchemical tradition that predates the rational outlook, so he considers the ability to summon ghosts and demons, such as Helena of Troy, part of his scientific pursuits. The ghost stories I examine in this chapter allude to God and Satan’s conflict for Faustus’s soul, which reflects male rationalists’ struggle with relinquishing their femininity for greater scientific perception. Since many scientific characters in nineteenth-century fiction are based on Faustus (Toumey 417; Haynes 18), female authors reimagine him in terms of his relationship with Helena’s ghost. In “Faustus and Helena: Notes on the Supernatural in Art” (1880), Vernon Lee argues that the Faustus and Helena episode is central to the ghost story tradition by showing how the imagination can open up a space beyond rationality. She claims that Faustus and Helena is a “weird and colossal ghost-story” (214) in which the female apparition gives us endless

⁵⁴ For the links between women, technology, and the occult, see Thurschwell, Peters, Sconce, Galvan, and Menke.

“imaginative probabilities” (222). Lee invokes a scene of “vague crowds, phantoms following in the wake of the spectre woman of antiquity, beautiful, unimpassioned, ever young, luring to Hell the wizard of the Middle Ages” (213). One reason why female writers adapt this legend is that Faustus’s recognition of the need for the occult makes him an ideal role model for scientific men. Unlike male rationalists, Faustus embraces Helena’s ghost and her feminized domains of the supernatural and the imagination. Victorian women could identify with him as an outsider from a scientific establishment that only supported rational inquiry and empirical observation.

Although the male rationalists in these stories are modeled on Faustus, they emulate a negative version of this character as the intellectually overreaching scientist who sells his feminine soul in return for scientific knowledge. Hence, they fall short of the ideal proposed by the Faustus and Helena legend, either never coming to accept occult women are only doing so under duress. These male rationalists renounce their humanity in the hope of acquiring money, fame, or power, only to suffer disappointment when they misuse their knowledge for selfish objectives, rather than helping others. They construct a flawed masculinity based on reason that ends up working against them, since their skepticism leads to them being humbled, punished, or destroyed by supernatural forces. In addition, male rationalists become involved in a power struggle with occult women knowledgeable about the supernatural. While men divide the world into distinct binaries of male/female, rationality/imagination, science/superstition, and authority/submission, women see the world with greater complexity. Though many real people do not fit this gendered pattern of behavior, the male and female characters in these ghost stories behave according to these conventions. The occult women succeed over male rationalists through their use of a unique female perception that is not simply “inferior” to reason; instead, it goes beyond rationality, and men cannot access it because they lack this intuition. Thus, female characters can detect and even

manipulate the supernatural in ways that allow them to reach their goals where the male rationalists fail.

Even though these women's ghost stories portray the conflict between the rational male and the occult woman to highlight the absence of women from the sciences, the reason for their clash of perspectives also lies embedded in the narrative structure. Since the authors work in the constraints of the short story, they must generate narrative tension within a brief space. While these ghost stories seek to confirm that skepticism is not the only valid outlook, the male characters play a crucial role in the narrative. There needs to be a conflict between the male skeptic and occult woman because this tension keeps the narrative going. Throughout these stories, the male rationalist and occult woman try to convince each other of their viewpoints; the stories end after the question is resolved either way and their debate has been settled. This binary division between the two is necessary to move the narrative forward in stories that are driven by the characters' development, reactions to the supernatural, and relationships to each other, rather than plot-driven. In Section Two, I will look at the ways in which the male rationalists are portrayed more conservatively than men were in real life, since they remain resistant to the occult even as psychical researchers. These ghost stories see a purpose for less flexible male gender roles compared to the dynamic female characters. The male rationalist's static nature allows for increasingly emancipated female characters, as Victorian women's access to the sciences altered their gender roles. Strikingly, even when the binary is flipped and ghost stories or science fiction feature a rational female and superstitious male, the archetypes do not change markedly.⁵⁵ This similarity

⁵⁵ I am indebted to my sister Neha Ohri for this perspective. One well-known recent example of a work that reverses this binary and presents a female skeptic and male believer is Chris Carter's TV series the *X-Files* (1993). In an interview, Carter explains "It was always a man and a woman. I'm interested in strong women characters. For me, Scully is the centre of our show, she is the skeptic in all of us. Science is at the root of science fiction, so Mulder, while he seems to be often right and it might seem to be his show, I always think of Scully as the grounding influence and the thing that keeps the solar system of the show in place...It actually wasn't [a deliberate reversal of the male skeptic and supernatural female gender roles], it just made sense to me in an instinctive way, that she would be the

implies that the tension between the two characters is much more important for the sake of undermining gender stereotypes and generating conflict between the characters in contemporary storylines. Victorian women's ghost stories use the Faustus and Helena legend to argue that synthesis between the two perspectives is the ideal.

In Section One, I investigate ghost stories by Eliot, Edwards, Riddell, and Braddon that critique how the Victorian marriage plot and the discourse of separate spheres contributed to women's absence from the sciences during the 1860s. Through their writing, these female authors highlight the disparity in men and women's gender scripts, which gives rise to the conflict between the male rationalist and the occult woman. They also expose how female characters turn to the occult to circumvent their oppressive conditions as Angels in the House. During the fin de siècle, Victorian women entered scientific fields through various channels, such as psychical research, religious occultism, and professional medicine. In Section Two, I inspect how the female occult investigator reconciles science, religion, and the occult through her compassionate approach to ghost hunting in stories written by Braddon, Falconer, Galbraith, and O'Mahony. The ghost stories I focus on in this chapter were written between 1859 and 1908: during this nearly fifty-year period, the representation of male rationalists remains fairly static, whereas the female characters evolve over time as they obtain more independence. These gender roles capture the historical reality that Victorian men held patriarchal authority, while occult women slowly gained autonomy through their cleverness, intuition, and resourcefulness. For this reason, fictional women's parts in these narratives dynamically shift from the housewife, to the occult woman, the female occult investigator, and finally the New Woman doctor.

scientist. I don't know what that says about me, but I always saw it that way." Another modern-day example appears in the latter episodes of Ashley Pharoah's neo-Victorian TV show *The Living and the Dead* (2016), in which the psychologist Nathan Appleby and his New Woman wife Charlotte are haunted by the ghost of his son.

Section One: “A Man Cannot Serve Two Masters”⁵⁶

Section One analyzes how the male rationalist’s scientific perspective causes the breakdown of the marriage plot in Eliot’s “The Lifted Veil,” Edwards’s “The Phantom Coach,” Riddell’s “Hertford O’Donnell’s Warning,” and Braddon’s “My Wife’s Promise.” While Faustus finds his ideal mate in Helena, these men face a conflict between their scientific thinking and domestic life that prevents them from being happily married. We can trace this conflict back to *Frankenstein* because Dr. Frankenstein’s obsession with his scientific research leads him to create the Monster who murders his wife on their wedding night. Tabitha Sparks argues that the doctor and his rationality prove incompatible with the courtship novel’s emphasis on love and marriage: “From approximately the 1870s to the end of the century, we see a general shift from the representation of the ‘family doctor’ to the doctor as a man of science, often hostile to or ominously distant from the marriage plot...” (19). In “The Birthmark” and “The Inmost Light,” Hawthorne and Machen portray scientists so obsessed with their work that they destroy their feminine sides by extracting their wives’ souls through experimentation. Victorian women’s ghost stories share a similar plot with these two tales: the husbands must annihilate the domestic Angels who pose a threat to their research so they can reestablish their masculinity. In men and women’s supernatural fiction, male rationalists’ single-minded devotion to reason cuts them off from their loved ones and makes them irresponsible husbands and fathers. Their inability to reconcile their empirical outlook with the domestic sphere has destructive consequences for the rationalist and his family. Where women’s ghost stories diverge from men’s is that the mistreated lovers or wives are not just reduced to being damsels or monsters.

⁵⁶This quote is uttered by an occult woman to her rationalist husband, who feels conflicted between staying home and exploring the Arctic in Braddon’s “My Wife’s Promise” (27).

Instead, these female characters are patterned on the Brontës' occult heroines, who use their feminine perception to assert themselves and facilitate men and women's sympathetic connections. In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë reconfigures mesmerism's imbalanced power relations to model how this patriarchal ideal should be changed into parity between men and women. A well-known incident occurs when St. John attempts to coerce Jane into agreeing to his marriage proposal. On the verge of accepting, she is saved by hearing Rochester telepathically call her name. The scholarship on Rochester's "celestial telegram" (Sutherland 59) highlights its links to mesmerism and the telegraph, popular topics at the time Brontë was writing.⁵⁷ While a male mesmerist usually controls a receptive woman, Brontë goes against tradition and transforms this uneven power dynamic into an egalitarian partnership that affirms the woman. John Durham Peters explains "[a]nimal magnetism created an arresting image of the total fusion of two or more souls that would, in conjunction with romantic and occult currents, reverberate throughout European and American literature in the nineteenth century" (91). In the novel, Jane is often the rigid voice of reason; hence, she is susceptible to St. John's claim that she has a duty to marry him and serve as a missionary in India. At this moment, Jane defeats her domineering cousin's mesmeric control and is guided back to her lover by nonrational modes of feeling (Heilman "Reason" 283; Hague 131). As an occult woman, Jane's intuition enables her to participate in this exchange with Rochester and her sympathy with him gives her the strength to answer his call. Brontë's use of mesmeric language to represent the "spiritual affinity" between Jane and Rochester would prove to be highly influential. The recurring Brontëan image of the mesmeric link, magnetic chain, and telepathic bond in later Victorian women's ghost stories places the heroine and her lover on an equal footing.

⁵⁷ For different views on this scene, see Heilman "Reason," Yeazell, and Hague 126-144 on supernaturalism, Dickerson 48-56 and 65-66, Sutherland 59-65, and Small 171-178 on mesmerism, and Menke 68-88 on telegraphy.

Unlike *Jane Eyre*, George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil" (1859) explores the dark side of the telepathic union between lovers by showing how the male rationalist, Latimer, violates his love interest in reading her "soul." In this story, Eliot overturns the conventional romantic paradigm that associates gratification with attaining complete knowledge of one's lover. Eliot's critique of the romantic myth of mind reading highlights the problems that arise when a woman risks losing her personal identity and independence to a man with the power to invade her mental boundaries. After Latimer develops the ability to read people's minds and see the future,⁵⁸ he regards his visions as flashes of creative insight: "Surely it was in this way that Homer saw the plain of Troy, that Dante saw the abodes of the departed, that Milton saw the earthward flight of the Tempter" (10). His allusions to the war fought over Helena and famous literary works about Satan suggest that his powers will tempt him to make a Faustian bargain to win his brother's fiancée, Bertha. Despite Latimer's insistence that he is a Romantic visionary who rejects reason for creativity, he exhibits the male rationalist's identifying traits, such as social isolation, egotism, and arrogance. Similar to a rationalist, Latimer is trained to be a scientist, spends the story's first half doubting his powers, and refers to them in the language of medicine. Eliot notes the dangers of Latimer's abilities in the epigraph she composed in 1873: "Give me no light, great Heaven, but such as turns / To energy of human fellowship; / No powers beyond the growing heritage / That makes completer manhood" (2). Its prayerlike nature implies Latimer's "incomplete" masculinity results from his lack of sympathy for others (including his wife) whose forbidden dreams, feelings, and thoughts he can access.

Critics have discussed how "The Lifted Veil" adapts the Faustus legend; and indeed, Eliot reinforces the parallels between Latimer/Faustus and Bertha/Helena through her allusions to

⁵⁸ For more on how Eliot employs the occult sciences in "The Lifted Veil," see Gray and Bull on mesmerism, Galvan 160-187 on Spiritualism, Willis on clairvoyance, and Clagett 849-854 on phrenology.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* (1831).⁵⁹ She became particularly familiar with Goethe's version after she helped her partner G. H. Lewes research his biography on the author in 1854 (Röder-Bolton 4-5). In *The Life of Goethe* (1855), Lewes contends that Faust's story teaches us a universal lesson: "the recklessness with which inevitable and terrible results are braved in perfect consciousness of their being inevitable, provided that a temporary pleasure can be obtained, is the spirit which dictated Faust's barter of the soul, which daily dictates the barter of men's souls" (469). In language resembling Lewes's, Latimer refers to his Faustian bargain of marrying Bertha even though they will someday hate each other:

It is an old story, that men sell themselves to the tempter, and sign a bond with their blood, because it is only to take effect at a distant day; then rush on to snatch the cup their souls thirst after with an impulse not the less savage because there is a dark shadow beside them for evermore. There is no short cut, no patent tram-road to wisdom: after all the centuries of invention, the soul's path lies through the thorny wilderness which must be still trodden in solitude, with bleeding feet, with sobs for help, as it was trodden by them of old time. (20-21)

Latimer's portrayal of the unloving Bertha as a "dark shadow" who haunts him unfairly demonizes her and overlooks his own responsibility for their failed marriage. He characterizes her negatively as a femme fatale, since she destabilizes his masculinity with her beauty, cleverness, and outspokenness. For Latimer, Bertha performs Helena's role in enticing him to marry her, despite the fact that he has a vision warning him they will someday be joined in a literal match made in hell. Latimer's claim that he "loves" Bertha reflects a masculine sense of ownership divorced from any sense of concern or sympathy for his wife. Hence, he marries Bertha knowing she will end up miserable with him, rather than allowing her to pursue a future that will make her happy. Goethe's version imagines Helen elevating Faust to greater heights after she tragically dies; however, in

⁵⁹ For scholarly commentary on Eliot's use of Faustus, see Gilbert and Gubar, Nurbhai and Newton, and Helms.

Eliot's scenario, Bertha refuses to accept Latimer's authority over her and struggles to escape their unhappy union.

It is natural to see "The Lifted Veil" from Latimer's first-person perspective, but if we apply pressure to the narrative by trying to see from Bertha's point of view, the story opens to reveal a very unflattering portrait of its narrator. Bertha's inaccessibility initially attracts Latimer because he is intrigued by the "fascination of an unravelled destiny" (15) that leaves him free to wonder about her true feelings. Since she is immune to his telepathic powers, Bertha provides him with a blank space on which to project his desire for love by imagining that she secretly returns his feelings. In the famous pier-glass passage in *Middlemarch*,⁶⁰ Eliot's narrator encourages us to look beyond the "little sun" of egoism (Latimer) and focus on another center of consciousness—namely, Bertha's. So much critical ink has been spilled on diagnosing Latimer as unreliable, pathological, or emasculated that few in-depth studies on Bertha exist.⁶¹ The existing studies on Bertha tend to take Latimer's characterization of Bertha as a *femme fatale* for granted; hence, she is variously interpreted as a mesmerizer (Bull), the Tempter (Helms), and a female poisoner (C. Price). In his deconstruction of these disparaging analyses, Thomas Albrecht argues that Eliot deflects Latimer's antipathy toward others onto Bertha as a transgressive woman (440). Gilbert

⁶⁰ "Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection. These things are a parable. The scratches are events, and the candle is the egoism of any person now absent—of Miss Vincy, for example" (248).

⁶¹ Critics have identified Latimer as a failed artist (Beer, Viera) an unreliable narrator (Eagleton, Wood, Galvan, Raitiere), a feminized clairvoyant (Gilbert and Gubar 443-477, Dickerson 80-102, Galvan), an epileptic (Raitiere), and even a masturbatory monomaniac (Mason). They may be tempted to uncover what is "wrong" with Latimer because Eliot uniquely writes "The Lifted Veil" as a first-person narrative to address the problem of heightened consciousness. She never explains the origins of Latimer's abilities beyond the fact that he acquires them after a serious illness; thus, some academics doubt his claim that he has occult powers. In my view, Eliot is not interested in the catalyst behind Latimer's powers—instead, she wants to explore the effect they have on his relationships, particularly his marriage. I assume that he is telling the truth, however it may be colored by his own perceptions.

and Gubar's feminist reading astutely identifies this problem: "If we wrench ourselves free from Latimer's perspective to consider Bertha's point of view, therefore, it becomes clear how he must represent for her the impoverishment of desire and the renunciation of vitality" (464). A predatory figure, Latimer abuses his occult powers by not only trapping his wife into a disastrous marriage, but also wishing to encroach upon her privacy as his desperate "prey."

Latimer's first glimpse into Bertha's thoughts reveals she is so intelligent that she has figured out her husband is telepathic, even though he has done his best to hide his powers and appear normal. After they have been married for a year, Latimer's telepathic sensitivity increases to the point that he can finally read Bertha's mind on the day his father dies. The timing coincides with Latimer's feeling more sympathy for his distant father, revealingly juxtaposed with a scene in which he refuses to extend the same understanding to Bertha. As they exchange looks, Bertha and Latimer equally "judge" each other with penetrating insight:

I know how I looked at that moment, for I saw myself in Bertha's thought as she lifted her cutting grey eyes, and looked at me: a miserable ghost-seer, surrounded by phantoms in the noon-day, trembling under a breeze when the leaves were still, without appetite for the common objects of human desires, but pining after the moonbeams. We were front to front with each other, and judged each other. The terrible moment of complete illumination had come to me, and I saw that the darkness had hidden no landscape from me, but only a blank prosaic wall: from that evening forth, through the sickening years which followed, I saw all round the narrow room of this woman's soul... (32)

In Goethe's *Faust*, Mephistopheles informs Faust that the recently deceased Helen's veil has the power to "bear you quickly / Up into the higher air, above all that / Is commonplace, as long as you endure" (lines 10, 279-10, 281). As Eliot's title suggests, she is alluding to this scene when the "veil" is lifted from Bertha's soul for Latimer; ironically, he feels disillusioned that she focuses on what he regards as trivial "common objects." For Bertha, he is "a miserable ghost-seer" who envisions "phantoms of the noon-day" because he can uncover the secrets of living people's souls.

As punishment for his desire to know Bertha's thoughts, Latimer is forced to confront his wife's true feelings for him and realize he was deluded about her. Despite this, he refuses to admit he has done anything wrong in transgressing upon Bertha's motives. Instead, Latimer blames *the victim* for being a superficial woman ("blank prosaic wall") who cannot appreciate him and his artistic taste ("the moonbeams"). Furthermore, the domestic imagery that Latimer employs in his scathing description of her does not reduce Bertha so much as it allows us to see the frustration of a woman trapped by the stifling role of a housewife.

Although she lacks Latimer's supernatural powers, Bertha still qualifies as an occult woman with a special intuition that allows her to recognize his telepathic abilities and cleverly bypass them. Latimer remains at the mercy of his powers since he cannot manipulate them, whereas Bertha understands them so well that she can negotiate around them. As the only one who identifies Latimer as a "clairvoyant," Bertha begrudges his lack of appreciation for her skill at "reading" others through deduction alone (37). At first, Bertha shows signs of caring for Latimer (16, 17, 25, 31), but he discovers—through reading her mind—that she has grown frightened of him for spying on her thoughts:

But she had begun to suspect, by some involuntary betrayal of mine, that there was an abnormal power of penetration in me—that fitfully, at least, I was strangely cognizant of her thoughts and intentions, and she began to be haunted by a terror of me, which alternated every now and then with defiance. She meditated continually how the incubus could be shaken off her life—how she could be freed from this hateful bond to a being whom she at once despised as an imbecile, and dreaded as an inquisitor. (33)

Eric Silverman explains that reading someone's mind without her consent is a serious trespass because "[p]rivacy and autonomy are directly connected to human well-being. Our secrets are among our most treasured possessions" (99). Eliot recognizes that love calls for us to acknowledge the "otherness" of the Other; otherwise, we will be drawn to another based on a narcissistic desire

for similarity, not a respect for difference.⁶² Bertha thinks of Latimer as an “incubus,” or a Gothic oppressor of defenseless women, since she must constantly worry that he will take control of her. She implicitly rejects the romantic myth that mind reading should draw lovers closer together, growing so anxious about the “inquisitor” keeping her under surveillance that she loses her feelings of security, autonomy, and independence. Thus, Bertha schemes to break her “hateful bond” with a husband who endangers her mental well-being by taking steps to counteract his abilities. To keep her thoughts private, she avoids Latimer, hires her maid Mrs. Archer as an accomplice, and conspires to poison her husband. Her desperation to escape her marriage is understandable considering that a Victorian man legally owned his wife in body and soul, so Bertha remains in Latimer’s power unless he dies or they separate.

Bertha and Latimer’s conflict is apparently overshadowed when his friend, the physiologist Meunier, revives the dead Mrs. Archer through a blood transfusion and she exposes Bertha’s fatal plot. One scholar complains that “[b]oth Mrs. Archer and Meunier are undeveloped characters who seem disconnected from the rest of the story” (Helms 59). Rather than being individualized characters, Mrs. Archer and Meunier are Bertha and Latimer’s doubles and instruments in their feud. The transfusion scene is a metaphor for Latimer and Bertha’s power struggle, with Mrs. Archer acting as Bertha’s accomplice to murder and Meunier trying to protect Latimer from her. Critics note that Meunier and Latimer both resemble Frankenstein, Meunier in his wish to resurrect Mrs. Archer, Latimer in his intellectual overreaching.⁶³ Eliot’s deconstruction of the hierarchy between masculine science and feminine imagination consists of giving her male characters opposing traits that break down these strict dichotomies (Eagleton 54; Wood 163-164). This

⁶² I am indebted to Karen Chase for this particular insight into Eliot’s views on romantic love in “The Lifted Veil.”

⁶³ See Knoepfelmacher 138-143, Wilt 183-185, and Nurbhai and Newton 108-133. Meunier also brings to mind Goethe’s character Wagner, who usurps a feminine Nature’s authority in bringing a homunculus to life: “Her way of working was organic, vital; / We synthesize men inside a glass bottle” (lines 7067-7068).

critical blurring of Latimer and Meunier implies they are both Faustian figures and male rationalists who apply quasiscientific means to women to learn forbidden knowledge about Bertha. The scene in which Latimer reads his wife's mind against her will is paralleled by Meunier enabling Mrs. Archer to speak her mind, and, indirectly, Bertha's mind. Similar to Latimer, he wants to experiment on Mrs. Archer because he is curious about the transfusion's results as well as her secret. Mrs. Archer also mirrors Bertha in the way she covertly plans to poison her master, oversteps her social position, and ends up loathing her mistress just like Bertha hates Latimer. As Holly Blackford remarks, "[i]n the Gothic form...the mistress and servant become natural doubles, engaged in perverse, erotic, and competitive relationships" (236).

Another important aspect of this scene that most scholars overlook is the transfusion Meunier performs on Mrs. Archer importantly literalizes the blood contract Latimer signed as part of his Faustian bargain. Mephistopheles's remark to Goethe's Faust that "[b]lood's a very special ink, you know" (line 1767) allows us to connect Latimer's occult powers with Meunier's research by thinking about this fluid's centrality to the Faustus legend. Kate Flint writes that Eliot's allusion to Faustus's blood pact evokes the taboo nature of this abject substance, which is why male-to-female blood transfusions are highly transgressive (468-469). Like the scientists in "The Birthmark" and "The Inmost Light," Meunier's desire to experiment leads him to probe the "soul" (41) of a woman who is both a victim and a monster. Meunier makes a Faustian bargain when he transfuses his blood into Mrs. Archer because, while she may want to reveal her secret, his motives for reviving her are invasive and sinister. Since Bertha seems to know about this potential for violation, she constantly guards Mrs. Archer to shield her own privacy from Latimer and Meunier. Drawing links between blood, language, and the body, Latimer muses about how Faustian figures only learn the true meaning of the blood pact they sign when they suffer the negative consequences:

“We learn *words* by rote, but not their meaning; *that* must be paid for with our life-blood, and printed in the subtle fibres of our nerves” (34). In a scene that builds on his previous glimpses into Bertha’s mind, Latimer must “pay for” helping Meunier reawaken Mrs. Archer by learning his wife has gone beyond wanting him dead to planning his murder.

The transfusion scene also serves as a larger aesthetic meditation on how Victorian women’s ghost stories mediate the complicated relationship between rational and imaginative forms of writing. By relinquishing his femininity, the male rationalist elevates reason, objectivity, and science over imagination, sympathy, and poetics, though this stark divide does not capture the complex interchange between rationality and imagination in these ghost stories. The male rationalist and occult woman’s troubled bond mirrors how the relation between scientific writing and fictional literature developed during this period. As a well-known male rationalist, Thomas Henry Huxley did not believe in ghosts or Spiritualism and promoted the separation of scientific and literary study. In “On Literary Style” (c. 1890), Huxley distinguishes between technical manuals and “a portion of scientific work which seems to me to have an indisputable claim to the title of literature—I mean the work of the popular expositor” (n.p.). Thus, Huxley classifies *himself* as a literary author because his writings made scientific ideas accessible to the Victorian public. Although Huxley deems aesthetic beauty optional for this “scientific” writing style (“Good Writing: A Gift or Art?” n.p.), he frequently uses literary allusions and figurative language in his works. In “Notes on Form in Art” (1868), Eliot appears to advocate a “feminine” writing style in which literary form should be shaped by emotion, and not vice versa. Otherwise, “poetry, from being the fullest expression of the human soul, is starved into an ingenious pattern-work, in which tricks with vocables take the place of living words fed with the blood of relevant meaning, and made musical by the continual intercommunication of sensibility and thought” (235). In Eliot’s

metaphor, literature is a human body that can be physically and intellectually “starved” into a skeletal form if writers treat it as a container for emotions. Eliot’s repeated images of language, blood circulation, and mental activity convey how Meunier commits a trespass in treating Mrs. Archer as a vessel for expressing hateful emotions, rather than a “soul” worthy of respect. Contrary to finding that both authors advocate for the separation of these fields, my comparison of them surprisingly highlights that Huxley and Eliot’s writings on aesthetics combine elements of science and literature, which suggests that the best literary work melds them together.

While Mrs. Archer’s accusation leaves her mistress “quivering and helpless, despairing of devices” (42), it ends up harming Latimer instead of Bertha; therefore, he takes revenge by vilifying her in his autobiography. Rather than being punished for planning her husband’s murder, Bertha receives everything she wants: Latimer separates from her, she gains half his fortune, and the public feels sorry for her. Resentful of her wealth and power, Latimer sarcastically remarks, “Bertha lives pitied and admired; for what had I against that charming woman, whom every one but myself could have been happy with?” (42). Latimer criticizes Bertha for her frivolous social life out of jealousy of the occult woman’s talent for bringing people together. In a final power play, he throws Bertha’s victory into doubt by writing his autobiography so he can socially ruin her, violate her privacy one last time, and earn his readers’ sympathy. When her plot to murder Latimer fails, Bertha only escapes their marriage because he chooses to leave her for his own protection, and after their separation Latimer threatens her independence with his unflattering narrative. As an isolated wanderer, Latimer admits he assumes “there is no religion possible, no worship but a worship of devils” (42) and writes his account one month before his death. Latimer’s situation recalls the climactic final moments of Faustus’s life, when his soul hangs suspended between heaven and hell as he struggles to repent. Strangely, Latimer never asks Meunier for support or

help with his occult powers, despite knowing about his friend's professional achievements: "Might there not lie some remedy for *me*, too, in his science? Might there not at least lie some comprehension and sympathy ready for me in his large and susceptible mind?" (38). A male rationalist who views life as a "scientific problem" (42) cannot offer Latimer enough sympathy and risks becoming an outcast if he researches the occult.

In fact, Amelia Edwards's "The Phantom Coach" ("The North Mail") (1864) features an old man punished for his occult beliefs by his scientific colleagues; however, like Latimer, he employs his powers to control and manipulate others. Displacing the occult woman from the narrative, the old man abuses his knowledge about the supernatural to convert a male rationalist to his position. As a barrister, the narrator James Murray starts in the trite manner H. D. Traill complains about by insisting on the "truth" (62) of his account: "I want nothing explained away. I desire no arguments. My mind on this subject is quite made up, and, having the testimony of my own senses to rely upon, I prefer to abide by it" (62). Murray's conventional opening signals that he has been struggling with his masculine identity ever since he rode the phantom coach. His narrative relates how twenty years ago he got lost while hunting on a Brontëan "bleak wide moor" (62) in northern England without food or supplies, as a heavy snowstorm began. Murray appears to have a telepathic link with his newlywed wife because thinking of her summons Jacob, the servant of the old man who will agree to reunite the couple: "How hard to die just now, when life lay all so bright before me! How hard for my darling, whose whole loving heart...but that thought was not to be borne! To banish it, I shouted again, louder and longer, and then listened eagerly. Was my shout answered, or did I only fancy that I heard a far-off cry?" (63). Just as servants often function as the voice of truth, Jacob's claim that Murray may become "cast away" connotes several meanings beyond being physically lost: "Eh, then, folks do get cast away hereabouts fra' time to

time, an' what's to hinder you from ben' cast away likewise, if the Lord's so minded?" (63).⁶⁴ His remark foreshadows how Murray's Faustian bargain makes him a "lost" soul, how he goes astray in boarding the phantom coach, and how he later fears being shunned for accepting the occult.

Initially, the old man seems to be an idealized Faustian figure because his scientific research into the occult led to his exile in this primitive setting, but his furnishings hint at his demonic character. When Murray follows Jacob to the old man's house, he notices that "the door was heavily studded with iron nails, like the door of a prison" (64) where the owner remains socially isolated. Once inside, Murray finds upon "[l]ifting a corner of this cloth, I saw, to my surprise, a telescope of very considerable size, mounted on a rude movable platform, with four small wheels" (64). In Edwards's time, the revelation that the universe is constantly in motion influenced literary point of view, which became concerned with perceiving the same object from multiple positions (Henchman 8). The telescope symbolizes how the old man will force Murray to reexamine his views about ghosts completely by sending him on a journey of discovery. As a "self-taught optician" (64) with the skills to build his own telescope, the old man exemplifies an independent scholar choosing to see the world differently from other scientists. Chris Baldick finds that modernized Faustian characters in nineteenth-century literature are often skilled craftsmen or chemical researchers who mirror the author's creative problems (64). A relevant example appears in E.T.A Hoffman's "The Sandman" (1816), in which the protagonist Nathanael's father and Coppelius engage in alchemy. While there is no Faustian bargain, the demonic double Coppola is an oculist and Nathanael finds his learning menacing when he examines Coppola's instruments, including a telescope. Murray expresses his confusion over the old man's laboratory by extensively listing the objects within, revealing an eclectic mix of medieval and Victorian equipment:

⁶⁴ See B. Robbins 53-90 for more on the association of servant speech with truth-telling in nineteenth-century fiction.

The whitewashed walls were in parts scrawled over with strange diagrams, and in others covered with shelves crowded with philosophical instruments, the uses of many of which were unknown to me. On one side of the fireplace stood a bookcase filled with dingy folios; on the other, a small organ, fantastically decorated with painted carvings of medieval saints and devils. Through the half opened door of a cupboard at the further end of the room, I saw a long array of geological specimens, surgical preparations, crucibles, retorts, and jars of chemicals; while on the mantelshelf beside me, amid a number of small objects, stood a model of the solar system, a small galvanic battery, and a microscope. (65)

The old man's possessions recall Faustus, with the "strange diagrams," "crucibles," and "retorts" evoking his pursuit of alchemy, while the "medieval saints and devils" on the organ allude to the conflict for his soul. These carvings indicate that the old man's belief in ghosts aligns him with a "medieval" outlook resistant to the widespread Victorian equation of superstition and ignorance. At the same time, his use of contemporary or newly available tools from a range of scientific fields, such as geology, astronomy, and chemistry, identifies him as a modern Victorian scientist. The old man's jumble of scientific devices attests to his place as a transitional figure who baffles the Medical Act's rigid separation of practitioners into professional doctors and occult charlatans.

Despite his scientific background, the old man's organ signals his association with the arts, the occult, and the imagination; however, its carvings of "medieval saints and devils" stress the demonic nature of his musical gifts. Critics have overlooked the significance of Edwards's musical references, even though she seriously trained in music, singing, and organ playing before she became a writer.⁶⁵ In drawing on phrenological language to read his host's character, Murray regards him as a misunderstood Romantic genius worthy of our admiration: "His head was singularly fine; but it was more the head of a poet than of a philosopher. Broad in the temples, prominent over the eyes, and clothed with a rough profusion of perfectly white hair, it had all the ideality and much of the ruggedness that characterises the head of Ludwig van Beethoven" (65).

⁶⁵ For more on Edwards's early musical education and career as an organist, see Rees 8-9 and Moon 13-16.

Similar to Niccolò Paganini, a violin player thought to have struck a Faustian bargain in return for his talent, the old man's facility with music links him to the devil. Murray further describes the old man's monologue in favor of the occult as an eloquent melody: "From practical science to mental philosophy; from electricity in the wire to electricity in the nerve; from Watts to Mesmer, from Mesmer to Reichenbach, from Reichenbach to Swedenborg, Spinoza, Condillac, Descartes, Berkeley, Aristotle, Plato, and the Magi and mystics of the East, were transitions which, however bewildering in their variety and scope, seemed easy and harmonious upon his lips as sequences in music" (66-67). Phyllis Weliver shows that Victorian writers connect music with mesmerism in their portrayal of demonic male musicians who use their powers to seduce others, especially women (95). The old man's ability to entrance Murray with his speech and his respect for Mesmer's work imply that he may have mesmerized his guest to ride the phantom coach.

Whether the old man inspires Murray or mesmerizes him, the latter faces a conflict between his fascination with his host's defense of the occult and his need to uphold his rational masculinity. The old man's monologue attacks the increasingly powerful scientific community for the "narrow" rationality that leads it to devalue the feminized domain of ghosts and the occult sciences:

"The world... grows hourly more and more sceptical of all that lies beyond its own narrow radius; and our men of science foster the fatal tendency. They condemn as fable all that resists experiment. They reject as false all that cannot be brought to the test of the laboratory or the dissecting-room. Against what superstition have they waged so long and obstinate a war, as against the belief of apparitions? And yet what superstition has maintained its hold upon the minds of men so long and so firmly? Show me any fact in physics, in history, in archaeology, which is supported by testimony so wide and so various." (67)

The old man complains about a research methodology that requires scientists to leave out certain types of evidence, such as the fact that ghosts appear in folklore worldwide, hold enduring appeal across the centuries, and have visited many eyewitnesses. Therefore, he considers their overreliance on experimentation a "fatal tendency" inhibiting scientific progress, even though he

risks Murray's life to obtain his guest's "testimony" about ghosts. He later declares that twenty-three years ago he was ejected from his scientific position for being a "visionary" (67)—in his enemies' sense, a man seeing the imaginary, but in his own, one thinking ahead of this time. Instead of serving as a Faustian figure, the old man plays the devil's role in offering to help Murray reach his Helena if he takes the hellish phantom coach. As Jacob guides him outside, Murray's "thoughts were full of my late host. His voice yet rang in my ears. His eloquence yet held my imagination captive" (68). The old man literally captivates Murray by introducing a sense of wonder to this practical barrister's life with his ghostly tales, as well as briefly placing him in touch with his feminine qualities.⁶⁶ This rationalist tries to reassert his masculinity through forgetting the old man's theory about ghosts, which is why he fails to recognize the phantom coach's true nature.

Edwards's choice of a pre-modern vehicle like the phantom mail coach gives Murray the chance to "traffic" with the dead and, through these interactions, come to understand that the supernatural exists. Given that mail coaches were popular from the 1780s to 1830s, only to vanish with the coming of the railroads, her readers would have responded to this spectral vehicle with nostalgia. George Walker describes how "[t]hrough the coach kept the road in the service of the posts for little more than half a century, no period of postal history has so impressed the imagination. This was partly due to the accident that the great romantic writers of the Victorian era had seen the coach at its best..." (192). Although mail coaches were valued for being quick and consistent, Edwards depicts the Gothic side of riding them, such as night driving, reckless driving, and snowstorms, reasons why the phantom coach suffered a fatal accident (G. Walker 208-209;

⁶⁶ The old man's outcast status in the scientific community resembles Edwards's later position as a woman in the male-dominated discipline of Egyptology. She remarked that she was better equipped to popularize this field than male Egyptologists with their dry reports because she had "cultivated Style—worked at it as if it was a science—and mastered it. I study style like a poet, calculating even the play of vowel sounds and the music of periods. Style is an instrument which I have practised sedulously, and which I can play upon" (qtd. in Rees 45). Despite Edwards and the old man's similar melding of artistic and scientific styles, she uses him to reflect on the problem of intellectuals employing seductive rhetoric for the wrong ends.

Hyde 33-36). In English folklore, a coach could serve as a harbinger of death or the devil's transportation at night (Mayhew 327-328), but Murray remains oblivious to this danger at first. He is so focused on reaching his wife that he neglects evidence of the coach's ghostly nature, such as the fact that that it moves "noiselessly" (70), appears "strangely lofty" (70), and has lamps "like a pair of fiery meteors" (70). Murray is forced to engage in "traffic" while riding the coach with three demonic ghosts, which involves "communication functions and 'travel' between various planes of existence or modes of understanding" (Leslie-McCarthy 273-274). Through his futile attempts to converse with the other passengers, Murray realizes the coach's ghostly condition and escapes before he plunges into an abyss symbolizing hell.

Despite his eloquence, the old man exhibits a "fatal tendency" himself by acting just as arrogant, hostile, and inhuman toward a harmless male rationalist as the scientists who persecuted him. Critics generally agree that the mail/male pun defines "The Phantom Coach" as a ghost story about the unfair prohibition of women and the occult from the Victorian scientific community. They argue that the old man sends Murray on the phantom coach to show how male rationalists will fall into darkness if they ignore the reality of the feminized supernatural.⁶⁷ The notion that Edwards produced "narratives of female absence" does not account for the fact that most of her ghost stories center on men (Basham 159). While it addresses the omission of Murray's wife from the narrative, "The Phantom Coach" primarily investigates Murray and the old man's troubled masculine identities. The old man risks turning Murray into a "dead letter" by sending him in the phantom coach to deliver his theories on the occult, knowing that the journey could kill his guest.⁶⁸ Although he defends and possibly practices the occult, we should not just accept the old man as Edwards's spokesperson or be seduced by his rhetoric, the way Murray is. At the time she

⁶⁷ For readings in this vein, see Basham 159-160, Frye 175-180, Killeen 139-141, and B. Johnson 102-104.

⁶⁸ My reading follows Brian Johnson's view that Murray functions as a letter throughout the story (103-104).

wrote this story, Edwards focused on juxtaposing demonic male intellectuals with their virtuous foils in her novels (Rees 15-17; 73-75). Initially acting like he will assist Murray to rejoin his wife via the phantom coach, the old man instead endangers an innocent man so Murray can validate the supernatural's existence. His assurance to Murray that "[y]our wish [to see his wife] can be gratified at a less costly rate" (68) than ten guineas seems sinister, since Murray must pay a high price in having a supernatural encounter that leaves him traumatized.

In fact, Murray finds his ordeal so physically and mentally distressing that he writes about it in the hope someone will believe him, all the while turning away from the caring occult woman, his own wife. Lowell T. Frye echoes other critics, stating, "'The Phantom Coach' leaves us with some hope: the rationalist Murray is transformed by his conversation with the old man and his encounter with the ghostly coach that occurs as he struggles to return to his young wife—symbolically to bridge the gap between male and female" (180). However, Murray and his wife do not successfully unite male rationality and female occultism because he keeps the truth from her: "I never told my wife the fearful events which I have just related to you" (72). He has hidden his experience from her over the past twenty years due to his fear of admitting that he embraces the occult. Paralleling other occult women, Murray's wife understands the supernatural better than her rationalist husband and sustains their telepathic link through her love for him. Thanks to her intuition, Murray's wife "had implored me to return before dusk" (63) on the day he got lost, knowing he might encounter the ghostly after dark, but Murray sidelines her in his narrative to give the old man prominence. He would have avoided meeting the phantom coach if he had listened to her, but Edward's exclusion of his wife makes for a better plot and accentuates the estrangement between them. Murray overlooks the possibility that his wife may sympathize with him and only confides in the "surgeon who attended me; but he treated the whole adventure as a

mere dream born of the fever in my brain” (72), just like the male rationalists the old man criticizes. Murray’s first lines about telling the “truth” (62) echo the old man’s claim that he has suffered for the “truth” (67), which signals how this barrister’s convictions have also isolated him from others.

In women’s ghost stories from the 1860s, the sharp divide between men and women can be traced to a concept that excludes male rationalists from the domestic realm and confines their female partners to the home as Victorian Angels, namely the doctrine of separate spheres. Anne DeWitt discusses how Victorian writers associate morality with the female character and her marriage plot, rather than the scientist and his professional narrative. Utilizing separate spheres rhetoric, the Victorian novel “depicts this distance in order to criticize it: the morality associated with women is the thing that is missing from professional science, and the division between the scientist’s personal life and professional career is repeatedly shown to have destructive effects” (14). As they grow distant from their husbands, these wives must use the supernatural to overcome the social restrictions they face so they can negotiate their troubled marriages. This occult femininity increases women’s authority and independence at a time when they were expected to be secondary to their male partners. Trapped housewives such as Bertha and Murray’s wife are resented or overlooked and cannot escape the domestic sphere. These occult women’s husbands feel threatened by the supernatural’s existence, since it causes them to question the rationality that forms the basis of their masculinity. Contrary to compassionate occult women, men with occult powers, like Latimer and the old man, cannot handle the supernatural properly due to their selfishness. I will later address how the banshee and Isabel Lawson’s occult abilities earn them both larger roles and male admiration as they gradually infiltrate men’s scientific territory. Similar to real life, however, Victorian women’s supernatural practices in these ghost stories are double-edged because they both support and challenge traditional femininity. These female characters’

occult powers can only help them bypass social restrictions; they cannot change the larger conditions that keep women oppressed.

As I have argued thus far, Eliot and Edwards speak from their position as second-class British subjects to critique the way the scientific community barred women from professionally contributing to this field during the early 1860s. Their ghost stories reflect how the Victorian marriage plot and the notion of separate spheres keep housewives such as Bertha and Murray's wife imprisoned in the home. These female characters rely on their occult knowledge to overcome their marginalization, only for their husbands to disregard them as well as minimize their presence in these narratives. Based on her experience growing up in colonial Ireland, Charlotte Riddell adds an extra dimension to Eliot and Edwards's criticism and presents a more powerful occult woman than the trapped housewife. In "Hertford O'Donnell's Warning" ("The Banshee's Warning") (1867), Riddell reveals how the prejudice against an Irish doctor exposes the larger flaws in English society and its emphasis on rational masculinity. From the first line, she places her ghost story in a medical context by setting it "[m]any a year ago, before chloroform was thought of" (59) in 1831 to relieve patients' agony during surgery. Prior to this analgesic's invention, surgeons such as Hertford O'Donnell needed to have certain qualities to perform operations that were often painful and dangerous. He displays many attributes essential for him to maintain control during surgery so he can help his patients, such as "courage" (59), "mastery" (59), "dexterity" (59), "mental strength" (59), "resource" (59), and "adaption" (59). Although his virtues make him an excellent surgeon, his indifference to his patients' suffering implies O'Donnell has become so emotionally detached that he lacks a sense of human "sympathy":

Hertford O'Donnell, however, was hard as steel. He understood his work, and he did it thoroughly; but he cared no more for quivering nerves and contracting muscles, for screams of agony, for faces white with pain, and teeth clenched in the

extremity of anguish, than he did for the stony countenances of the dead which sometimes in the dissecting room appalled younger and less experienced men.
He had no sentiment, and he had no sympathy... (59)

Jarlath Killeen argues that O'Donnell embodies Victorian fears about heartless vivisectors and intimidates his English colleagues because he has “surpassed his colonial masters in defining a rational scientific mind with muscular strength” (107). Thus, it takes a sensational event like the banshee's prediction of his estranged son's death on the operating table to shock him out of his complacency.

However, Killeen's argument about assimilation hardly captures the complexity of O'Donnell's character or situation because it fails to account for O'Donnell's proud assertion of his Irish identity. Riddell's criticism of her character does not preclude her condemnation of his English colleagues for refusing to appreciate his skills when he fails to adopt their ways: “In speech, appearance, manner, habits, modes of expression, habits of life, Hertford O'Donnell was Irish...and amongst the English he moved to all intents and purposes a foreigner...” (60). His colleagues view him as a Faustian figure who turns down the chance to behave respectably English, instead pursuing a scandalous lifestyle that places him in debt. They hold “a conviction that Hertford O'Donnell, having sold himself to the Evil One, had determined to dive the full length of his rope into wickedness before being pulled to the shore where even wickedness is negative,—where there are no mad carouses, no wild, sinful excitement, nothing but impotent wailing and gnashing of teeth” (60). Although he is repeatedly described as “rising” star, O'Donnell will never rise above the medical community's bigotry on talent alone. His colleagues stereotype him as a hard-drinking Irish Paddy, but Riddell shows that O'Donnell has become a lost soul due to personal tragedy. Ever since coming to London twelve years ago, he has been miserable over being separated from his fiancée (and, unknowingly, his son) after his parents quarreled with her family.

Similar to Edwards, Riddell uses the language of travel throughout her ghost story to convey meanings that resonate on three levels for O'Donnell: his migration to England, mental transition from rationality to the occult, and symbolic journey through life. In a passage that startlingly echoes "The Phantom Coach," Riddell breaks off from the narrative and offers an extended metaphor that imagines humanity's youthful journey as a mail coach ride:

Ah! my friends, there comes a moment when we must all leave the coach, with its four bright bays, its pleasant outside freight, its cheery company, its guard who blows the horn so merry through villages and along lonely country roads.

Long before we reach that final stage, where the black business claims us for its own especial property, we have to bid good by to all easy, thoughtless journeying, and betake ourselves, with what zest we will, to traversing the common of Reality. There is no royal road across it that ever I heard of... (61)

O'Donnell's youth ends when he loses his fiancée and is forced to walk a dreary "Reality" without her; in turn, this event motivated his literal journey by coach from home toward England. He must "travel" from skepticism to belief in the occult after he encounters the banshee that has followed him from Ireland. In reminding O'Donnell of his homeland, the banshee forces him to stop riding the mail coach to hell and confront the past ("Reality") from which he has fled. Riddell's imagery resembles Eliot's observation that "[t]here is no short cut, no patent tram-road to wisdom" ("The Lifted Veil" 21) because people can only learn through experiencing hardship, particularly Faustian figures.

Through O'Donnell's thoughts, Riddell criticizes the English class system for its promotion of such things as shallow values over merit, hypocritical bourgeois masculinity, and prejudice against the Irish. O'Donnell is tempted to make a Faustian bargain and marry an aptly named older heiress, Miss Price-Ingot, as a way to repay his debts and obtain acceptance from the English. Ironically, he disobeyed his mother's order to wed a socialite or risk disinheritance, so his willingness to marry Miss Price-Ingot indicates the loss of his principles as well as his betrayal of

his fiancée. Remarking on his cynicism, the narrator says, “[t]o most men, deliberately bartering away their independence for money seems so prosaic a business that they strive to gloss it over even to themselves...Not so, however, with Hertford O’Donnell” (62). One of the reasons for his pessimism is that he remains honest about his transgressions, instead of being self-righteous like the “respectable” (60) Englishmen who upbraid him. Riddell does not censure O’Donnell for his immoral pursuits so much as his unfeeling nature, which has partly developed because he lives in such an artificial society. He bitterly thinks of how the rich “[c]latter along the streets with a pair of hired horses, snub the middle classes, and drive over the commonalty—that is the way to compass wealth and popularity in England” (62). O’Donnell’s image of the upper classes trampling people such as him expresses his resentment at being socially ostracized as long as he lacks money or connections. He does not radically protest the exclusivity of English society so much as wish to be included, but Riddell’s ghost story poses a more extreme critique than his thoughts advance. Her metaphor of the mail coach suggests that O’Donnell desires to ride the *wrong* type of carriage in wishing to assimilate into English society through a loveless marriage.

Riddell’s use of the distinctively Irish banshee as the occult woman who jars O’Donnell out of his skepticism allows him to reclaim his national identity just as he is in danger of losing it. Critics have remarked that the banshee’s general absence from Victorian fiction makes Riddell’s inclusion of her in “Hertford O’Donnell Warning” prominent (Denmen 70; C. Silver 174).⁶⁹ One major exception occurs in the work of Charlotte Brontë, who, like Riddell, had a paternal Irish heritage; in *Villette*, Lucy Snowe compares the stormy winds to the banshee’s shriek before the deaths of her employer (38) and her lover (495). O’Donnell mistakes the banshee’s cries for his

⁶⁹ In *The Uninhabited House* (1875), Riddell portrays the banshee as a symbol of Irish literary pride when one character tells an Irishwoman “that all the fanciful legends and beautiful stories for which Ireland is celebrated have their origin in the supernatural. There are, for instance, several old families who have their traditional banshee” (42).

dormant “conscience” (62) after her interruption of his marriage proposal to Miss Price-Ingot prevents his cultural assimilation. Besides reminding him of his past, the banshee brings to light O’Donnell’s inner conflict over whether he should choose an English or Irish identity. Hearing her lament, he muses “[i]t’s a mighty queer thing to think of, being favored with a visit from a banshee in Gerrard Street” (63). For O’Donnell, his comedic take on the banshee’s invasion of London highlights the strangeness of his position as an Irish expatriate in foreign surroundings. Paradoxically, “[t]he man was fairly frightened, and would have thought it no discredit to his manhood to acknowledge as much. He was not afraid of death, he was not afraid of trouble, he was not afraid of danger; but he was afraid of the banshee...” (64). The repetition of “man” and “afraid” illustrates O’Donnell is more terrified of the death-messenger than death itself because she shakes the foundation of his rational masculinity. She functions as an Irish family ghost whose presence informs others about O’Donnell’s noble background, but his ancestry fails to win him any respect in England. Patricia Lysaght finds the idea that the banshee only cries for Irish families—the Macs and the Os—intensified in response to the threat the English posed to Irish cultural identity (60). Riddell’s inclusion of the banshee affirms the dignity of her characters’ lineage at a time when the English would have overlooked it. O’Donnell’s presumed return home as a nobleman with his fiancée marks his rejection of English ways and, more importantly, signals that the Irish must reclaim their cultural heritage from their colonizers.

Under the banshee’s influence, O’Donnell suspends his rational judgment and follows his occult impulses; in the process, however, he loses his scientific ability to perform the amputation necessary for saving his son’s life. As an occult woman, the banshee symbolizes the Romantic imagination, with her wails being more mournful than “the plaintiveness of the Eolian harp” (63). Riddell also links her to the arts of music and Irish storytelling by stating that her shrieks “came

in a rush of sound, like a gradual crescendo managed by a skilful musician, and it died away like a lingering note” (63). Despite his scorn of “old women’s tales” (62), O’Donnell thinks of eight different “banshee stories” (64), two of which I have traced to Riddell’s home county of Antrim, Ireland.⁷⁰ After the banshee’s screams fade, a series of unexplained events heighten O’Donnell’s fear, such as his dog’s agitation, bizarre doorbell rings, allegorical dreams, and mysterious voices. The fact that O’Donnell’s urge to go to the hospital comes to him like “an inspiration” (65) shows how he taps into his occult/creative side in following these supernatural promptings. His walk through London parallels getting off the mail coach and walking the “common of Reality” because he confronts his past memories during the journey. Although O’Donnell regains his professional demeanor before he operates, he grows unsettled when his son affirms that the banshee has intruded on the male enclave of *Guy’s Hospital*:

“Can you see her now?” Hertford O’Donnell inquired, stepping to the side of the table. “Point out where she stands.”

Then the lad stretched forth a feeble finger in the direction of the door, where, clearly as he had seen her seated on the stairs, the surgeon saw a woman standing,— a woman with gray hair and scanty clothing, and upstretched arms and bare feet.

“A word with you, sir,” O’Donnell said to the house-surgeon, drawing him back from the table. “I cannot perform this operation: send for some other person. I am ill: I am incapable.” (66)

⁷⁰ The second story O’Donnell remembers “about the Round Chamber at Dunluce, which was swept clean by the banshee every night” (64) concerns the banshee Maeve Roe of the McQuillans of Dunluce Castle. Maeve refused to marry her father’s choice of husband because she had fallen in love with the son of a family rival, Reginald O’Cahan. For her disobedience, Maeve’s father confined her in a tower that she spent her days sweeping, but she secretly escaped while he was absent, possibly with her father’s help. Unfortunately, Maeve and Reginald took off in a boat during a terrible storm and were drowned together. Ever since then, she haunts the tower where she was held captive and sweeps the room nightly. The third story he thinks of “about the bed at a certain great house in Ireland, which was slept in constantly, although no human being ever passed in or out after dark” (64) alludes to Nein Roe of the O’Neills of Shane’s Castle. In 1857, a former servant of the O’Neills’s declared that that one of their ancestors married a strange lady who constantly longed for her otherworldly home. An impressive funeral was held for her, though it was rumored that the reason why no one saw her body was because she had returned to the fairies. A housemaid noticed that the bed in the lady’s favorite room was occupied every night and decided to take special care of it. However, their master provoked Nein Roe’s wrath by placing a state-bed in her room for guests, and she is allegedly responsible for the fire that burned down the castle in 1816 (134-135).

His son's confirmation of the banshee's presence shatters O'Donnell's "nerves of steel" and renders him ineffective at his work after he has a double revelation: not only is this occult woman real, but his patient turns out to be his child. He collapses in a feminine swoon before he can perform the operation, which suggests that his surgical abilities are no match for the fatal power of the banshee's warning.

At a painful cost, O'Donnell's relationships with his son and women such as the banshee, his fiancée, and Miss Price-Ingot change him for the better and enable him to rejoin Irish society. Victoria Margee writes "[t]o come to an appreciation both of the value of money, and of what is valuable besides money, [Riddell's heroes] 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" (82). O'Donnell is rewarded for assuming a properly feminine stance, one that likely entails giving up his medical career. By appearing to three generations at once—O'Donnell, his son, and his parents—the banshee reunites him with his fiancée and reinstates him as the family heir. Lysaght's study on the banshee explains "[t]he death messenger belief mirrors the prevailing attitude towards death in Irish traditional society: that death is not as much a private as a communal affair" (148). Her wails bestow value on an illegitimate child who would not have been regarded as part of the family or an acceptable member of Victorian society. It may seem cruel that O'Donnell's redemption only happens due to his son's death, but Riddell emphasizes the painful nature of his transition and the need for him to *choose* whether he will return home. O'Donnell's decision to acknowledge the banshee's warning and reclaim his national identity is his way of paying tribute to her authority as an occult woman. Riddell also stresses his fiancée and son's economic vulnerability as poor Irish immigrants, since his son suffers a lethal injury after falling from his shoddy residence. She is aware of how fallen women pay the

greatest price for premarital sex, which is why his fiancée endures hardship while O'Donnell can make a decent living in London. In spite of her worse circumstances, his fiancée's loyalty ensures against the temptation to make a Faustian bargain and marry for wealth; hence, this woman with "the face of an angel" (67) will guide O'Donnell to heaven through her good influence. Miss Price-Ingot graciously forgives him for failing to propose to her out of sympathy for the lovers, facilitating their marriage by offering his fiancée a place to stay until they wed.

In the same fashion as "Hertford O'Donnell's Warning," Mary Elizabeth Braddon's "My Wife's Promise: A Tale" (1868) associates the occult with a geographic space that was subject to British occupation during the nineteenth century. While Riddell pushes against English values by portraying a banshee leading an Irishman back home, Braddon looks at the pull the Arctic exerts over a woman unfairly excluded from Northern exploration, Isabel Lawson. Scholars such as Robert G. David and Jen Hill have linked the Arctic's allure to the British desire for imperial expansion during the nineteenth century. Richard Dunrayne's conflict between journeying to the North Pole and enjoying domestic happiness with Isabel can be traced to Frankenstein's friend Robert Walton. In her essay "On Ghosts" (1824), Mary Shelley laments that scientific rationality has stolen the imaginative potential from every place except for "our sole mare incognitum, the north-west passage" (253). Braddon's (and Shelley's) choice of a polar setting taps into the Victorians' fascination with the Arctic as a place of magic, mystery, and the occult.⁷¹ Like Walton, Richard is an English Arctic explorer whose obsession with going on scientific expeditions to the North causes him to neglect his family. In the opening line, Richard refers to the North as a mesmerist drawing him, the passive subject, away from England: "It was my fate at an early period

⁷¹ For more on beliefs that the North was an icy hell or the land of spirits, see **Davidson 26-38 and 145-158. See also Chapin's study of the romance between Spiritualist medium Margaret Fox and Arctic explorer Elisha Kent Kane.**

of my life to abandon myself to the perilous delights of a career which of all others exercises the most potent fascination over the mind of him who pursues it” (20).⁷² As the heir to a noble family, he eschews the option of pursuing an easy career and helps fund several expeditions he joins. Richard is so absorbed in his work that he does not think about the consequences of leaving his parents behind to go on dangerous missions to what was uncharted territory at the time. In addition, he represents his single-minded desire to travel North as a Faustian bargain: “If I had bartered myself body and soul, by the most explicit formula, to some demon of the icebergs, or incarnate spirit of the frozen sea, I could not have been more completely bound than I was” (20). Richard pays the price for choosing his passion over his personal life by being away on an Arctic mission when his mother dies.

After he marries Isabel, Richard settles in England because he is flattered by her interest in his travels, while Isabel admires Richard for having visited an exotic location she can only dream about. The fact that Isabel becomes tempted to explore the North through the “magic” of storytelling shows how occult women harmonize the disparate elements of science, the arts, and the supernatural. Richard remains at home to nurse his dying father out of guilt over deserting his mother, even though he feels no “sympathy” (21) with upper-class English society in London. His claim that he “came back to England [from the North] to find a fairer enchantress than the spirit of the frozen deep, and to barter my liberty to a new mistress” (23) ignores how his seniority and travel experience give him power over Isabel. During their courtship, Richard marvels, “God help my darling, the glamour of the frozen north was upon me, and the mere story of the wondrous world I knew had magic enough to win me the heart of this angel. She was never tired of hearing

⁷² Richard’s language resembles Walton’s early confession to his sister Margaret that he is attracted by the North’s imaginative potential, in spite of its dangerous nature: “Inspired by this wind of promise, my day dreams become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight” (*Frankenstein* 7).

me describe that wild region I loved so well” (23). Isabel’s fascination with Richard’s travel narratives about this “wondrous world” suggests *she* wants to journey there herself. However, she knows a young and sheltered Victorian lady would not be allowed to join male-only English Arctic expeditions. Isabel’s experience reminds us that most Victorian women, including those reading Braddon’s story in *Belgravia*, learned about men’s Arctic exploits through sanitized accounts in periodicals (Spufford 120).⁷³ Isabel expresses a vain wish when she asks, “Don’t you think we ought to spend our honeymoon at Cape Crozier [a place in Antarctica], Richard?” (23), and he replies, “My precious one, God forbid that I should ever see you in that wild place” (23). Richard’s firm belief in separate spheres makes him treat Isabel like a delicate “angel,” so he cannot imagine her accompanying him to the North.

Although Richard and Isabel remain happily married for several years, the tragic loss of their son reveals the fragility of domestic happiness to Richard and leaves him disaffected with his home life. Richard settles down as a devoted husband who refurbishes their country estate and delights in “home joys with as sweet a wife as Heaven ever gave to man since Adam saw Eve smiling on him among the flowers of Paradise” (24). This ominous simile foreshadows that like Adam and Eve, Richard and Isabel will suffer a “fall” and depart Paradise in mourning. In contrast to “Hertford O’Donnell’s Warning,” the death of Richard’s son cannot reform the father or reunite the parents. Riddell briefly touches on the darker implications of O’Donnell’s son—a Christ figure—dying to redeem his father on Christmas Eve: “‘Peace on earth, good will towards men.’ But there was little peace that morning for Hertford O’Donnell. He had to look on the face of his dead son...” (67). At his son’s funeral, Richard “tried to picture him, among the band of such child-angels; and

⁷³ A comparable example to Isabel’s occult abilities appears in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), when Mina Harker develops a mesmeric connection to Dracula after he drinks her blood. Her occult powers are similarly ambivalent because she is controlled by men such as Van Helsing when he hypnotizes her; at the same time, her trances are vital to helping the group track Dracula’s movements.

I knew that life could never again be to me what it had been” (24) because he finds sentimental Victorian notions of child death meaningless. His friends’ callous sentiment that Richard will overcome his grief once he has other children illustrates that he cannot cope in a society where men are expected to suppress their feelings and quickly move on. When Isabel insists they move to London, Richard gets drawn into his former pursuits, since “[t]he fate of Franklin was yet unknown, and the debates upon this subject were at fever-heat” (25). The disappearance of Sir John Franklin’s 1845 Arctic expedition captured the Victorian public’s imagination, fueled intense speculation, and encouraged dozens of rescue parties. Richard’s grief over his son parallels the national mourning over Franklin, to the point where he wants to compensate for his loss by finding Franklin and his missing friends from a different expedition.

Richard becomes so depressed over his son’s death that he selfishly decides to lead an Arctic mission, while Isabel exhibits her maturity in allowing him to go. Isabel knows she is fighting a hopeless battle against Richard’s desire to travel North, so she supports the renewal of his Faustian bargain to his “master,” the icy demon, instead: “I think I know you better than you know yourself. A man cannot serve two masters. Your master is *there*. He beckons you away from me” (27). She is the selfless and compassionate occult woman who encourages Richard to leave her, even though this means shouldering the burden of losing her child, her husband, and her marriage. Isabel’s actions are especially poignant because her occult intuition warns her that her life will be sacrificed to his undertaking, just like his mother’s was. Richard is so focused on his voyage that he misses the significance of her making a British flag, observing that “[s]he set to work upon the fabrication of a Union Jack. I remembered a melancholy incident in the life of Sir John Franklin, and I hardly cared to see her thus employed; but I could not sadden her with the story...” (27). The fact that both of Franklin’s wives made him British flags confuses Richard into

thinking her actions signal his death, when they actually foreshadow Isabel's passing.⁷⁴ The obvious solution would be for Richard to take Isabel with him, but this act is unthinkable for a man invested in separate spheres. As the wife of an Arctic explorer, Isabel is only allowed to perform the homely task of sewing the British flag that Richard will plant on any new territory he discovers.

Compared to Bertha, Murray's wife, and the banshee, Isabel is the strongest occult woman because she not only understands Victorian pseudosciences, but can use them to protect Richard from his dangerous scientific ambitions. Before her husband's departure, Isabel declares that their mesmeric bond is so strong they will remain connected in spirit, despite the vast physical distance separating them:

“I think I know that distant world as well as you, Richard,” she said to me on the last [day Richard spent in England]. “In my dreams I shall follow you—yes, I *know* that I shall dream of you every night, and that my dreams will be true. There must be some magnetic chain between two beings so closely united as we are, and I am sure that sleep will show you to me as you are—safe or in danger, triumphant or despondent. And in my waking dreams, too, dear, I shall be on your track. My life will be a double one—the dull, commonplace existence at home, where my body must needs be, and the mystic life yonder, where my spirit will follow you. And, dear husband,” she continued, clinging to me and looking up with a new light in her eyes, “if I should die before you return—”

“Isabel!”

“Of course that is not likely, you know; but if I should be taken from you, dearest, you will know it directly. Yes, dear, at the death-hour my spirit will fly to you for the last fond parting look upon earth, as surely as I hope it will await you in heaven!” (27)

⁷⁴ John Franklin was an Arctic explorer who led three teams North in 1819-1822, 1825-1827, and 1845-1847. Braddon clearly did her research in modeling Richard's fourth voyage on Franklin's 1819 and 1845 expeditions. The 1819 endeavor “assumed Gothic proportions” (Delgado 64), with allegations of starvation, murder, and cannibalism among the crew. As an easygoing man, Franklin was heavily influenced by his two strong-willed and accomplished wives. Isabel combines facets of his first wife, Eleanor Porden and his second wife, Jane Griffin. Eleanor was a respected poet whose health worsened due to tuberculosis, just as Franklin was preparing for his 1825 trip. Despite this, she minimized the seriousness of her condition, convinced her husband to leave as planned, and created a Union Jack for him. She died less than a week after his departure. Jane embodied the faithful Arctic explorer's wife in launching a tireless campaign to find Franklin and his missing men. Like Eleanor, she created a British flag for Franklin's 1845 trip, unwittingly mimicking the practice of covering dead men with it when she tossed it over her husband's feet. For more on Franklin and his wives, see Rasky 36-66, Spufford 94-149, and Cavell.

Isabel takes advantage of the supernatural power of dreams, mesmerism, and ghosts to rise above the social limits on her as a Victorian Angel and journey spiritually with her husband across the North. Though Richard is a veteran explorer, Isabel cultivates an impressive knowledge of the Arctic from her husband's polar voyages and his attendance at the Royal Society's meetings. She even adapts mesmeric language to suit her needs by promising to carry on a "double" life split between her physical body at home and her spirit in the North. Rather than emphasizing their intimacy, the "magnetic chain" signifies the physical and emotional *distance* between the couple. Isabel's spirit overcomes this divide by oscillating between the feminine home and the masculine North, navigating in a way that a male rationalist like Richard dismisses as nothing more than "old-world Scottish superstition" (27).

Richard's interest in leading this Arctic expedition wanes after his unsuccessful search assumes a Gothic character, but the cultural emphasis on masculine strength makes him too proud to admit defeat. The ship Richard takes for his trek is fittingly called the *Forlorn Hope*, which characterizes his catastrophic mission as his men catch scurvy, lose limbs, and starve to death. By basing Richard's experiences on the psychological horror of Franklin's 1819 voyage, Braddon constructs a Victorian polar narrative that combines realist and Gothic elements. Richard's voyage to the North is analogous to the gendered geography of exploration in works such as *Frankenstein* and *Heart of Darkness* (1899), with the exclusion of female characters such as Walton's sister Margaret and the Intended. His "potent fascination" with the Arctic changes into "horror" of the icy hell where he and his men may die without fulfilling their mission: "No words can paint the desolation of this wild region—no mind can imagine that horror of perpetual snow, illimitable as eternal" (28). In this situation, why does Richard feel his "spirits [rise] with the extremity of trial" (29), instead of returning to England to save his men's lives, the way Walton does? Offering a

possible answer, Jen Hill notes that Franklin's lost 1845 expedition "failed to produce the legible heroic masculinity on which larger national and imperial projects relied" (7-8). By going back, Richard's admission that he could not endure these hardships or locate his lost friends would reflect his failed masculinity, and, in a larger sense, Britain's failure as a nation. On Christmas Day, Richard assumes the feminine role of looking after his sick men when a crew member reports that Isabel's ghost is outside. Before the man can clarify that the figure is supernatural, an angry Richard presumes that this woman comes from "an Esquimaux tribe, no doubt. Why didn't you hail her, and bring her back to us?" (29). Richard reveals his national prejudices in objecting to a British Angel traveling to the Arctic while expecting an Inuit woman to live there and assist his expedition.

At this moment, Faustus and Helena find a balance with each other because Richard accepts Isabel's ghost and writes this first-person account testifying to the reality of her occult beliefs. In her spectral form, Isabel becomes a powerful occult woman who can finally visit the Arctic and complete Richard's mission by leading him to his missing comrades' graves. Despite knowing about the magnetic chain, Richard doubts Isabel's occult powers until he sees her "familiar" yet "awful" figure (30), an uncanny sight that challenges his rationality. Her supernatural presence fits what Sean McCorristine terms "polar love," in which "the woman was psychically connected to her male lover across the cartographic divide, transgressing even the boundaries of what was natural in the physical world" ("Supernatural Arctic" 48). Isabel's insight permits her to go beyond tracking her husband's movements, since she gains knowledge about this unmapped territory that empowers her to accomplish Richard's task. She functions similarly to the Victorian women whose clairvoyant visions of Franklin's fate allowed them to travel imaginatively to a place they could never visit (Spufford 129-136). Her ability to force Richard to look at the lost explorers' graves

indicates that she now has a stronger mesmeric power over him than the Arctic: “Though it was of *her* I thought only, yet it was as if an irresistible force compelled me to stop, and to obey the command of that pointing hand” (30). Once she disappears, Richard recognizes that Isabel is a formidable occult woman who saves her negligent husband and “had followed me to that desolate world in the very moment it was liberated from its earthly prison” (31). Rather than just her body, the “earthly prison” Isabel must be freed from through death is the home, where she remains confined until she can spiritually visit the place that has captivated her imagination.

In these supernatural tales, several important patterns arise that capture the shifting Victorian attitudes towards gender roles, marriage, and the occult throughout the 1860s. The female characters develop from trapped housewives with supernatural knowledge (Bertha, Murray’s wife) into occult women with impressive abilities (the banshee, Isabel). Furthermore, the antagonistic relationship between the male rationalist and occult woman changes to one in which Faustus comes to accept Helena. These advances illustrate how the occult woman’s supernatural powers increase her agency, but at the expense of the deteriorating marriage plot. On a positive note, the rationalist demonstrates more respect for women, from writing resentful or dismissive first-person accounts about the occult woman’s knowledge to paying homage to her expertise. He must question the rational assumptions beneath his masculinity, moving from Latimer and Murray’s disregard of their wives’ occult knowledge to O’Donnell and Richard’s appreciation for the banshee and Isabel’s supernatural abilities. Since she is the most fully realized occult woman thus far, Isabel emerges as an appropriate figure for transitioning into Section Two. She embodies the double-edged nature of occult femininity due to the fact that she can use her powers to overcome her confinement in the home, rescue her husband’s crew, and visit the Arctic. However, Isabel’s fate reinscribes the social restraints on the Victorian Angel because she can only draw on

the supernatural for limited agency after she dies. Her appearance in 1868 is significant, given that she represents a precursor to the female occult investigator, torn between the roles of the Victorian Angel and the New Woman. As I address in Section Two, Isabel's situation underscores women's gradual progression from exercising autonomy through indirect occult means to achieving independence by entering the sciences.

Section Two: "The Medium is Made of Such Uncommon Stuff"⁷⁵

The genuine ghost? And is not this he, or she, this one born of ourselves, of the weird places we have seen, the strange stories we have heard—this one, and not the aunt of Miss Jemima Jackson? For what use, I entreat you to tell me, is that respectable spinster's vision? Was she worth seeing, that aunt of hers, or would she, if followed, have led the way to any interesting brimstone or any enduring beatitude?

The supernatural can open the caves of Jamschid and scale the ladder of Jacob: what use has it got if it land us in Islington or Shepherd's Bush? It is well known that Dr. Faustus, having been offered any ghost he chose, boldly selected, for Mephistopheles to convey, no less a person than Helena of Troy. Imagine if the familiar fiend had summoned up some Miss Jemima Jackson's Aunt of Antiquity!...

Hence, my four little tales are of no genuine ghosts in the scientific sense; they tell of no hauntings such as could be contributed by the Society for Psychological Research, of no specters that can be caught in definite places and made to dictate judicial evidence. My ghosts are what you call spurious ghosts (according to me the only genuine ones), of whom I can affirm only one thing, that they haunted certain brains, and have haunted, among others, my own and my friends'...

—Vernon Lee, "Preface," *Hauntings*, 1890

Introduction

Lee's "Preface" expresses the curiosity, mockery, and defiance of many Victorians when the Society for Psychological Research (SPR)'s mission to scientifically investigate and prove the supernatural led to the creation of the "genuine ghost." Founded in 1882, the SPR's primary members were a group of Cambridge-educated scholars: Henry Sidgwick and his wife Eleanor, F. W. H. Myers, Edmund Gurney, and Frank Podmore. Although there had been similar organizations before, the leaders' intellectual reputation gave weight to their scientific pretensions. Striking a

⁷⁵ This title comes from the male rationalist's description of the female occult investigator in *Cecilia de Noël* (442).

balance between belief and skepticism, they acted cautiously and rigorously in order to avoid Spiritualist fraud, criticizing materialists for being unreceptive to their research. According to Gurney, psychical researchers were traveling beyond the regions “mapped out” by science to a “vast terra incognita” (vol. I, 7) that they would study with open minds. In his augural address as the SPR’s first president, Sidgwick declares, “[s]cientific incredulity has been so long in growing, and has so many and so strong roots, that we shall only kill it...if we are to bury it under a heap of facts” (12). Despite its huge impact on late Victorian medicine, psychology, and literature, the SPR and its claims were never accepted by mainstream science (McCorristine *Spectres* 210).⁷⁶

For different reasons, the medical and literary communities objected to the SPR’s development of the psychical case study, a first-person narrative in which the author recounts his or her mysterious experiences. Based on Sidgwick’s desire to validate the supernatural using “a heap of facts,” investigators collected thousands of eyewitness testimonies from the public as evidence of telepathy, ghosts, and haunted houses.⁷⁷ An anonymous writer for the *Lancet* scornfully characterizes these accounts as records of mentally ill people’s delusions: “No sober-minded person can doubt that all impressions of seeing, or hearing, or feeling spiritual manifestations must be morbid. Such things exist only in the imaginations of the persons who are subject to them” (1104). The rationalist author worries that the SPR encourages a dangerous form of “imagination” among the people under the assumption that the only scientific explanation for the supernatural is individual pathology or mass hysteria.⁷⁸ In contrast, female writers such as Isabella Banks, Vernon Lee, and Olivia Howard Dunbar complain that these case studies do not

⁷⁶ For more on the SPR’s history, methodology, and influence, see Haynes, Oppenheim, and McCorristine *Spectres*.

⁷⁷ For the antecedent organizations that examined the supernatural prior to the SPR, see Oppenheim 123-134.

⁷⁸ See Eliza Lynn Linton’s history of British witch trials during the seventeenth century, *Witch Stories* (1861). She voices the common fear that Spiritualism exemplified the revival of the mass hysteria that had produced the earlier witch hunts: “Those who believe in direct and personal intercourse between the spirit-world and man, will probably accept every account with the unquestioning belief of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (iv).

exhibit *enough* artistic imagination (i-ii; 39-40; 332). They fear that the SPR's wish to subject ghosts to scientific investigation, stripping them of their mystery by explaining them away, will lead to the Victorian ghost story's decline. Lee parodies the psychical case study in her depiction of Miss Jemima Jackson's account of seeing her aunt's apparition, drawing on the common complaint that real ghosts seem purposeless and lack dramatic interest. She ridicules the psychical investigator's preference for Miss Jemima's tedious narrative; instead, her choice of Faustus conveys how science should embrace the occult's imaginative potential. Ten years before, Lee pondered the relation between the arts and the supernatural in "Faustus and Helena," but the SPR's research spurred her to go beyond theory and produce innovative ghost stories. Ironically, Lee, Banks, and Dunbar's resistance to the SPR's practice of using ghosts to "dictate judicial evidence" motivated them to contribute to the golden age of the ghost story by writing their own supernatural fiction.

Several decades later, Dorothy Scarborough and Virginia Woolf would recognize that the SPR greatly expanded the ghost story's possibilities by proposing new character types, narrative techniques, and psychical concepts (55, 75; 63). George Johnson examines the ways in which the psychical case study shaped the ghost story, introducing conflicting eyewitness testimony, tension between skepticism and belief, and unresolved narrative threads ("Apparition" 15). Scholars have written about how actual psychical researchers were refashioned into male occult detectives who solve supernatural mysteries.⁷⁹ Two male occult detectives modeled on SPR investigators were created by male and female writing teams: L.T. Meade and Robert Eustace's John Bell (1897) and Kate and Hesketh Prichard's Flaxman Low (1898). In these stories, evil men or monsters often

⁷⁹ For more on the occult detective's history, features, and investigative methods, see Briggs 52-75, Ashley "Fighters of Fear," Roden, Ascari 77-90, Smajic *Ghost-Seers* 181-199, Parlati, and Crofton. Sheridan le Fanu's Martin Hesselius (1869) and Dr. Abraham Van Helsing from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) represent important forerunners to Low and Bell.

victimize female characters, causing one man to remark, “[w]omen are of little use in serious investigations—she fainted!” (Prichard and Prichard “Baelbrow” 57). As an alternative to the male occult detective, Susan Schaper points out that “domestic women” who banish ghosts through their bourgeois virtues gain importance in fin-de-siècle ghost stories. Oscar Wilde’s “The Canterville Ghost” (1887) features the first “domestic woman,” since the heroine, Virginia Otis, redeems the damned ghost through her pity. I build on Schaper’s argument, though I reject her claim that “domestic women” are ultimately surpassed in authority by male occult detectives such as Low because these men exercise rationality and professionalism (12). Male occult detectives also care about the state of their clients’ souls (Roden 221), but critics primarily identify them by their use of rational deduction, supernatural knowledge, and eyewitness accounts to solve cases.

Even though they appeared several years before Low and Bell, female occult investigators in Victorian women’s ghost stories have gone unnoticed due to the scholarly focus on male occult detectives and specific criteria in defining them.⁸⁰ The reason for this neglect may be the critical assumption that male occult detectives are outsiders summoned by clients to perform an objective inspection of the supernatural. In contrast, female occult investigators start out as witnesses with a personal interest in their cases and employ a less rigorous strategy for handling ghosts, specifically empathy. The SPR had a higher number of female witnesses, substantial female membership (nearly 40 percent), and notable female psychical researchers such as Eleanor Sidgwick and Ada Goodrich-Freer. The medical community agreed with the *Lancet* that women’s occult interests suggested hysteria or madness; however, the SPR’s trust in the reliability of female ghosts-seers challenged these beliefs (M. Walker 236). By trivializing Miss Jemima’s experience, Lee ignores the fact that the SPR legitimized women because it took their supernatural experiences

⁸⁰ Mike Ashley and Barbara Roden claim that the first female occult detective did not materialize until 1920, Ella Scrymgeour’s Shiela Crerar (“Fighters of Fear” 41-42; 215).

and ghost narratives seriously. In this section, I analyze female doctors who researched the supernatural such as Anna Bonus Kingsford and Rosina Despard, creating an environment for the female occult investigator to emerge in fiction. While male psychical researchers demand physical evidence of the supernatural's existence, female occult investigators take a unique emotional approach to ghosts by showing them love and compassion. I consider the portrayal of these male and female character types in Braddon's "My Dream," Falconer's *Cecilia de Noël*, Galbraith's "In the Séance Room," and O'Mahony's "Hester's Ghost."

The New Woman Doctor

During the *fin de siècle*, several examples of Victorian female physicians who delved into the supernatural may have influenced the female occult investigator's characterization as well as her transition into the New Woman doctor. While female doctors interested in Spiritualism first began working in America during the 1850s, these figures arose later in England because women could not practice medicine there until 1877.⁸¹ We can see the precursors for the female physicians who study the occult in the form of venerated reformers who practiced medical work, including Agnes Jones, Sister Dora, and Florence Nightingale. These women's early adoption of nursing during the mid-Victorian era made it a respectable profession for middle-class women. They were often portrayed as saintly role models who went far beyond ordinary women in caring for others outside of the Victorian Angel's domestic context. As I will discuss, Nightingale applies a highly spiritualized image to her nursing work when she alludes to the female Christ that will pave the

⁸¹ For more on Victorian women's fight to enter professional medicine, see Bonner 120-137. Alex Owen and Ann Braude document how English and American female Spiritualists practiced alternative healing, which brought these women into conflict with a male-dominated medical community that regarded them as charlatans (*Darkened Room* 142-161; 107-138). Braude observes that Spiritualists encouraged women, including healing mediums, to become doctors in the belief that their inherent nurturing qualities made them suitable for this role (148-149). Owen states "[o]ne of the ironies of this period of medical history is that educated middle-class women were fighting to gain entry to a profession which sought to denigrate a healing tradition in which women were already active" (*Darkened Room* 138) in England. Contrary to Owen's claims, Kingsford's fierce criticism of vivisection reveals that not all female doctors accepted male medical practices for the sake of career advancement.

way for liberated women in her classic feminist work, *Cassandra* (1860). Nightingale foretells that “[t]he next Christ will perhaps be a female Christ. But do we see one woman who looks like a female Christ? or even like ‘the messenger before’ her ‘face,’ to go before her and prepare the hearts and minds for her?” (53). Their pioneering work in nursing and spiritualized auras make Nightingale, Jones, and Sister Dora likely forerunners to Kingsford and Despard. These female physicians characterize themselves as powerful authorities on occult matters and scientific advancement. They crafted an image of women as superior moral guides with occult powers who drew their authority from their unique synthesis of religious, scientific, and occult philosophies. This characterization represents a major shift in women’s historical roles and may have influenced the ethereality of the female occult investigator, whose compassionate view toward others should inspire female readers to action. Diana Basham writes about how women’s claim to possess occult powers became a major part of the Victorian feminist movement and the representation of female characters in women’s ghost stories. My discussion of Cecilia de Noël will foreground that while a role model does not have to be realistic, her saintliness limits real women’s ability to emulate her and makes her more of an aspirational figure.

A pioneering English female physician, Anna Bonus Kingsford grew popular in occult circles during the 1880s for her teachings on hermetic Christianity. This female Faustus successfully collaborated with her male “Helena” Edward Maitland, her co-author and “co-worker” on occult matters (qtd. in Pert 118). In *Dreams and Dream-Stories* (1888), Maitland published a collection of Kingsford’s dream visions she had between 1876 and 1887, many of which she experienced while studying medicine in France. She remarks that “the priceless insights and illuminations by means of my dreams have gone far to elucidate for me many difficulties and enigmas of life, and even of religion, which might otherwise have remained dark to me...” (18).

Kingsford's medical knowledge allows her to defend her dreams from being dismissed as female "hysteria" (19), since they display literary artistry and inspire her fiction, including ghost stories. Several weeks after she thought about quitting her studies, she imagined that she has died and become a spirit in "A Dream of Disembodiment" (January 1878). This dream reflects her ghostly position, as a woman who can only appear to her loved ones through a male medium, but finds it too difficult to possess or adopt his form (58-59). Kingsford's frustration with her distance from the men in her life is understandable; at the time, she often argued with Maitland and lived apart from her husband Algernon (Pert 71-74). We also obtain the "insight" that she felt invisible as a female medical student for steadfastly refusing to assume the role of her male peers and condone scientific practices such as vivisection.

After earning her medical degree in 1880, Kingsford gained recognition for her teachings as a Christian mystic, beginning with the publication of the lectures she co-wrote with Maitland, *The Perfect Way* (1882). Besides her vivid dreams, she received "illuminations" in her sleep that offered her spiritual truths she had learned in her past lives. In a letter, she informs a friend "I have no occult powers whatever, and have never laid claim to them. Neither am I, in the ordinary sense of the word, a clairvoyant. I am simply a 'prophetess'—one who sees and knows intuitively, and not by any exercise or any trained faculty" (qtd. in Pert 124). One of Kingsford's major beliefs was that the soul must achieve a perfect balance between its two sides, male intellect and female intuition. However, the female side is ultimately superior because it leads a person to divine truth, and anyone who rejects it remains incomplete (*Perfect Way* 185-188). In her illumination on "*A Prophecy of the Kingdom of the Soul, mystically called the Day of the Woman*," Kingsford envisions a future in which the male principle will submit to the female:

There shall no more be a reproach against women; but against men shall be the reproach.

For the woman is the crown of man, and final manifestation of humanity.
 She is the nearest to the throne of God, when she shall be revealed.
 But the creation of woman is not yet complete: but it shall be complete in
 the time which is at hand. (*Clothed with the Sun* 9)

Besides exalting female intuition, this feminist prophecy predicts that New Women such as Kingsford will overthrow patriarchal rule by using their spiritual authority to campaign on behalf of other oppressed women. Her belief that the souls of both sexes contain an inferior masculine side and superior feminine side also lays bare the contradiction in traditional gender differences and reverses the hierarchy of power. She resolves the paradox of intuition being a lower bodily instinct *and* a higher spiritual insight by insisting that it is part of the spirit, which is constituted of both the material (intellect) and immaterial (intuition). Her doctrine on the male and female duality of the soul inspired other occult leaders, such as S. L. MacGregor Mathers, a co-founder of The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1888.⁸²

As I argue, Kingsford's spiritual philosophy as a New Woman doctor makes explicit many of the implicit criticisms of the scientific community that Victorian women writers integrated in their earlier ghost stories from the 1860s. Her medical knowledge, literary talents, and occult interests made her a powerful campaigner on issues that were controversial for the scientific community, namely women's rights, vegetarianism, and anti-vivisection. On January 23, 1882, she delivered a lecture called "'Violationism,' or Sorcery in Science" to the British National Association of Spiritualists, which was republished in the Spiritualist newspaper *Light*. In her talk, she states advocates of science are wrong to claim that followers of "Spiritual Science" (157) practice fraudulent evil sorcery. Instead, Kingsford insists "[a]n almost exact parallel to the modern

⁸² For more on Kingsford's impact on the late Victorian occult world, see Oppenheim 181-190, Basham 67-72, Greer 52-56, Owen *Place of Enchantment* 40-50, 92-94, and 161-165, Butler, and Pert. For Greer, "[t]he magnetic and influential Anna Kingsford was thus, in some sense, the mother of the Golden Dawn and its first magical woman" (56) due to her effect on MacGregor Mathers.

vivisector in motive, in method, and in character is presented by the portrait thus preserved to us of the mediaeval devil-conjurer” (162). Although she never explicitly mentions Faustus, Kingsford characterizes vivisectors as self-interested men willing to sacrifice their humanity and dissect animals for the sake of scientific knowledge. In contrast, “Magians” such as herself respect the moral limits on the desire for knowledge and look after people’s spiritual health, not just their physical welfare. Kingsford openly censures male rationality, endorses the moral superiority of the soul’s feminine side, and champions women’s authority on occult matters. She also progressed beyond the fictional occult woman as a wife and mother who rejected the role of the Victorian Angel to pursue a career that effectively combined medicine, literature, and the occult.

Taking Kingsford’s duality in another direction, Rosina Despard plays out her conflict between opposing images of femininity—the Victorian Angel and the New Woman—through her encounters with the Cheltenham ghost. Despard gained importance among psychical researchers after she published her “Record of a Haunted House” under the alias Rose Morton in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* of 1892. As a female medical student, Despard ingeniously makes herself the heroine of a psychical case study who tries to solve the mystery of the Cheltenham haunting. According to SPR researcher Andrew MacKenzie, her report detailing how the ghost of a lady in black disturbed the Despard residence from 1882 to 1889 is still one of the most well-respected psychical case studies (40). Despard’s account even impressed the skeptical Podmore because it was well-documented compared with typical haunted house narratives, a fact he attributes to “the scientific training and temper of Miss Morton” (272). From the 1870s, Victorian authors began representing female medical students and doctors as heroines in popular fiction. For instance, Kingsford depicts Dr. Mary Thornton preventing a greedy physician from murdering his sister-in-law for money in “A Cast of Fortune: The Holiday

Adventures of a Lady Doctor” (1877). Despard constructs her narrative to portray herself as the perfect psychical researcher, since her attempts at rational examination make a strong case for the ghost’s authenticity. In a memorable episode, she characterizes herself as showing great bravery and self-control by observing the ghost for a long time without alerting her family: “She stood behind the couch for half an hour, and then as usual walked to the door. I went after her, on the excuse of getting a book, and saw her pass along the hall, until she came to the garden door, where she disappeared” (315).

Even though other eyewitness accounts supplement Despard’s narrative, for her the ghost’s unhappiness at being a Victorian Angel highlights the importance of remaining liberated as a New Woman doctor. Despard uses all sorts of clever methods to establish “Proofs of Immateriality” (321), such as unsuccessfully trying to photograph the ghost in the dark and attaching strings across the staircase to trip her. Similar to an occult detective investigating a case, Despard gathers evidence by documenting the ghost’s appearances, interviewing other eyewitnesses, and identifying her as the spirit of a former owner’s wife, Imogen Swinhoe. Significantly, Despard discovers that Swinhoe was an unhappily married alcoholic who fought with her husband for control of his first wife’s jewels and her stepchildren’s upbringing. She remarks that “when I was able to analyse my feelings more closely, and the first novelty wore off, I felt conscious of a feeling of *loss*, as if I had lost power to the figure” (323). Peter Rogerson argues that in attempting to tame the fallen Swinhoe, Despard domesticates her own sensual nature so that she can become a celibate intellectual (n. p.). The ghost also serves as a warning for Despard about the dangers of losing her independence if she accepts the Victorian Angel’s role; hence, this may be why she chose to remain single and focus on her medical career (MacKenzie 53-54). Although Despard writes the longest narrative as the primary eyewitness, the SPR believed in the necessity of corroborating testimony.

Therefore, her account is followed by six more records from her family, friends, and servants, each one recalling his or her individual encounters with the ghost. The unique structure of the psychical case study, in which the ghost haunting a particular house is described from multiple perspectives, would prove so influential that Falconer reproduces it in *Cecilia de Noël*.

The Female Occult Investigator

Kingsford and Despard's ability to reconcile the conflicting areas of science, occultism, and religion through ghost hunting may have shaped the female occult investigator's place in these supernatural tales. Their discussions of the binaries in Victorian gender roles expose their ambivalence about the divide between patriarchal authority/female independence and the Victorian Angel/the New Woman. This uncertainty affects how they characterize their change from passive occult witnesses to active supernatural investigators. At first, they describe themselves as conduits for the occult, since Kingsford's illuminations come to her unbidden and the lady in black just appears to Despard one day. However, they justify their later supernatural inquiries on the grounds that their major contributions to science and religion will benefit all of humanity. Unlike men of science, Kingsford and Despard saw no contradiction in blending the fields of medicine, religion, and the occult throughout their careers. During the fin de siècle, the growing interest in occult and psychical research and the increasing female presence in the sciences gave women the opportunity to become supernatural investigators. While the female occult investigator slowly evolves into the New Woman doctor, her characterization fell *behind* Victorian women's professional advances. Though the New Woman doctor surfaced in real life during the late 1870s, women writers preferred to depict the less radical female occult investigator in their ghost stories throughout the 1880s and 1890s. Since they are already personally involved with the supernatural incidents, the female characters easily switch from being witnesses to investigators.

They eschew an objective approach to examining the supernatural and readily believe in it, whereas male rationalists refuse to even consider it may exist. The female occult investigator shares qualities with the New Woman doctor that further her success, such as her compassion for the unfortunate and desire to “cure” the ghost. Similarly, Kingsford is concerned with healing people’s souls and Despard first addresses the lady in black by asking the latter if she needs help (Despard 314). Kingsford and Despard also model how these female characters can use the occult to increase their authority and achieve their forbidden desire for independence.

Over twenty years after writing “My Wife’s Promise,” Braddon reworked this story as “My Dream” (1889) at a time when female gender roles came under such pressure that women from the educated classes were forced to choose between the Victorian Angel or New Woman position. While many could oscillate between these two options in practice, these ghost stories simplify the reality in order to heighten the female characters’ internal conflict and sharpen the exploration of the conflicting expectations for women in the confines of the short story. “My Dream” must be read in the context of psychical concepts such as dream theory, telepathy, and crisis apparitions. Although Braddon sets her story during the mid-Victorian period, her portrayal of the heroine’s occult powers is informed by the SPR’s research during the 1880s. I analyze this story within the contemporary framework established in 1886 by Gurney, Myers, and Podmore in their influential study, *Phantasms of the Living*. This framework consists of scrutinizing the shared features of “My Dream” with the hundreds of psychical case studies that these SPR investigators use to prove the existence of their primary hypothesis, telepathy. In the opening lines, Bessie Lester expresses insecurity about her upcoming marriage to Gilbert Strangford because while she has loved him for eleven years, he only proposed to her after his lover jilted him. Along with her doubts about Gilbert’s love, there are other strains on their relationship, the most important one of which is that

Bessie must give up her desire of becoming an artist after she gets engaged. Instead, she is expected to prepare for her role as a Victorian Angel who will devote herself to her husband: “My books, that daily tale of serious reading which I had accomplished ever since I was twenty, had been put aside; my work-basket had become a dusty tangle of silks and wools; my friends were all indignant at unanswered letters; my piano practice was a thing of the past; and I had discovered that it had never been worth while to cultivate my insignificant faculty for art” (194). The list of the various creative activities that Bessie has abandoned indicates she is closely associated with the arts (reading, writing, and music), just like other female characters with occult powers. Similar to Kingsford, Bessie’s dreams reveal she has a vivid imagination that could inspire her literary work, a trait Gilbert notes in his remark that she “must dream a three-volume novel per night” (195). Bessie’s former dedication to the arts and her gift for inventing stories suggest it is no “insignificant faculty for art” that requires her to relinquish them, but rather her awareness that these pursuits have no place in marriage. In fact, Bessie practices female accomplishments performed within the domestic sphere in order to train ladies to be Victorian Angels, which may be why she finds them inadequate for developing her creative abilities.

Besides her reluctance to sacrifice her talents, Bessie dreads entering an unequal marriage in which she and Gilbert must assume the roles of submissive wife and authoritative husband. In their dreams, Bessie and Gilbert’s exciting adventures draw them closer together, but in reality the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles drives them apart. Bessie comments that “[w]e were both interested in the psychology of dreams, and read everything we could discover that had been written upon the subject” (194-195). When they discuss the supernatural nature of prophetic dreams, Gilbert adopts the perspective of a male rationalist, laughing at Bessie’s fears that her dreams about him dying in an accident will come true. Echoing opponents of the SPR’s theory on

telepathic dreaming, Gilbert declares that people dream so much these scenarios sometimes happen coincidentally: “That perpetually revolving kaleidoscope of yours must develop an occasional hard fact” (195; Gurney vol. I, 299-300). Their debate about whether dreams are material or supernatural was central to Victorian science because the answer could illuminate the nature of the human mind, body, and soul (Brown 159). Punning on Gilbert’s surname, Bessie repeatedly describes her dreams as “strange” (195) to imply that they cannot be explained by rational thinking and correctly foretell the couple’s impending *estrangement*. Although her dreams about Gilbert’s death are upsetting for Bessie, they bring to light her unconscious ambivalence about whether she wants to marry the man she loves or keep her independence. Bessie makes Gilbert quit the military so that they can enjoy their future domestic life together, only to find the expectation that she will act like a Victorian Angel disempowering. When she hears that his friends are attending a local shooting tournament, Bessie feels compelled to urge Gilbert to participate while she waits at home: “I pleaded against myself, feeling all the time that I was making a stupendous sacrifice, and, as it were, forestalling my duty as a wife, which would be to make my pleasure subservient and secondary to his” (196-197).

The night before Gilbert goes to the tournament, Bessie’s dreams warn her that she made a mistake in acting “subservient” to him and insisting they follow their respective gender scripts because he will die in a hunting accident. Her dream reveals Bessie’s underlying wish that Gilbert be removed so she can focus on reading and writing, and its fulfillment plays out her repressed desire to remain single:

Then that awful dream-feeling of utter helplessness and dumbness, of limbs that seemed like water, and dry lips and throat that tried to shape a cry of terror and could not, came upon me as I had never felt it before. The men came slowly on with their load, the prostrate figure, one arm hanging loose by the side of the litter. I saw it swing as they came along with their burden—hanging from shoulder to wrist with flaccid lifeless hand.

The face was hidden as they came towards me; but I knew whose face it was, the one face upon earth for me. I knew, I knew—and in my great and bitter agony I awoke with a half-strangled cry.... (198)

Despite trying to intercept Gilbert before he leaves, Bessie finds herself as incapable of saving him in real life as she was in her dream, since her stopped watch misleads her about the time of his departure. The fact that Bessie's watch halts around the same time as she has her prophetic dream signifies that Gilbert's fate is inevitable, especially considering stopped watches were deemed occult symbols of death (Crowe 51). Gurney devotes a nearly one hundred-page chapter in *Phantasms* to supernatural dreams, but he refuses to investigate prophetic dreams, which cannot be explained through telepathy (vol. I, 367-368). Natalya Lusty and Helen Groth note that "the clarity and brevity of intense dreams of the death of a loved one suited statistical analysis, which [Gurney] elaborated in painstaking detail in the section devoted to dreams" (71). In several important respects, Bessie's dream corresponds with the psychical case studies involving telepathic dreams that Gurney examines. Consistent with his observations, her dream is distinct, unexpected, unusual, and so intense that she not only remembers it after waking, but also discovers that it coincides with actual events. Like the majority of people who have telepathic dreams, Bessie experiences a "dream-feeling of utter helplessness," since she can only passively stand by and observe as her loved one dies (Gurney vol. I, 300-303; 311).

Although Bessie feels "powerless" (189) to contact Gilbert in both her dream and real life, she receives inspiration for overcoming her difficulty from Jane and Rochester's telepathic bond:

Suddenly an idea flashed across my brain. I thought of a story which my sweetheart and I had read together, within the last few weeks—a novel of rugged power, and an eloquence that had held us like a spell. I remembered that appealing cry of love which Jane Eyre heard across the bleak Yorkshire hills—blind, broken-hearted Rochester's cry to the woman he adored; and I too called aloud to my lover, called with all the strength of anguish, "Gilbert! Gilbert! come back to me, come back! My beloved, my life, come back to me." (199)

At the time Braddon wrote “My Dream,” the SPR began collecting thousands of psychical case studies for its “Report on the Census of Hallucinations” to scientifically prove its main psychical theory, telepathy (McCorristine *Spectres* 197). Braddon’s rewriting of this famous scene from *Jane Eyre* shows that Brontë had already depicted telepathic union in a way that empowered women over forty years earlier.⁸³ Unlike the SPR’s tedious case studies, *Jane Eyre* possesses a “rugged power” and “eloquence” that makes its representation of telepathy compelling for female readers such as Bessie. Drawing on mesmeric theories, Bessie regains her authority through exercising her female “will-power” (199) and using her occult abilities to initiate spiritual communication with her absent lover. While this “appealing cry of love” makes Jane and Rochester equals, several major deviations from Brontë’s original scenario emphasize the female occult investigator’s *superiority* over the male rationalist. For Jane and Rochester, this telepathic exchange leads to their reunion and happy marriage; in contrast, Bessie meets Gilbert’s ghost for a short time before he vanishes, leaving her alone. She also has stronger occult powers than Jane because Gilbert obeys her when she calls, whereas Jane returns to Rochester at his behest. One could argue that Jane reasserts her superiority by refusing to tell Rochester she heard and obeyed his summons, but her silence means that he never openly acknowledges her occult powers the way Gilbert credits Bessie’s abilities.

Despite Bessie’s attempts to rationalize her supernatural experiences, the appearance of Gilbert’s “crisis apparition” confirms her occult powers and the lovers’ telepathic bond. As she waits for Gilbert, Bessie spends the entire day feeling torn between skeptically dismissing her intuitive perception and embracing it. She attempts to reassure herself that “[t]he dream was only a dream, after all” (201), but the immediate arrival of Gilbert’s ghost undermines her rational

⁸³ Bessie Lester’s name can also be seen as tribute to Jane’s beloved childhood nurse at Gateshead Hall, Bessie Lee.

outlook. In portraying Gilbert's spirit, Braddon partly draws on the SPR's reconfiguration of the true ghost into the "crisis apparition." According to Gurney, the "phantasm" of a dying person (agent) can telepathically appear to a loved one (percipient) up to twelve hours after the former's death. Bessie and Gilbert's encounter closely adheres to the SPR's criteria for a "veridical" or true hallucination: Bessie is ignorant about his death, she knows the exact time and day of their meeting, and she notifies others about his visit (Gurney vol. I, 147).⁸⁴ An exchange between Bessie and Gilbert's ghost conveys how Braddon invests the "crisis apparition" with emotional significance missing from the SPR's dry analyses and scientific language:

"If there were any truth in that romantic idea about will-power you would have felt the force of my will today," I said; "but I suppose that notion is just as foolish as my dream."

"I did feel the power of your will today," he said, "and obeyed it. I should not be here else." (202)

Along with being converted from his rationalism, Gilbert assures the doubting Bessie that her occult powers are real, since he died like her dream foretold, heard her telepathic call, and came to her side as a ghost. Instead of being a "romantic idea," the fact that Gilbert complies with Bessie's will to visit her from beyond the grave is highly ironic, since the occult satisfies her conflicting desires for love and autonomy. Not only does Gilbert obey her overt wish to return so he can affirm his feelings for her, but he also fulfills her repressed desire to stay independent by dying before he arrives.

Bessie's encounter with Gilbert's ghost establishes that she is a female occult investigator whose powers are fueled by her love for him *and* a Faustian figure who sacrifices him to preserve her freedom. After the crisis apparition vanishes, Bessie perceives that the blood from Gilbert's

⁸⁴ Bessie's meeting with Gilbert's ghost shares parallels with Mrs. Lichfield's psychical case study, which Gurney classifies as a telepathic case involving sight and touch. Mrs. Lichfield reports that her fiancé's crisis apparition appeared and kissed her on the forehead at the same time that he suffered a hunting accident. Unlike Gilbert, Mr. Lichfield survived to marry his lover (qtd. in Gurney vol. II, 137-139).

wound serves as physical proof that her supernatural powers are effective and she has been speaking with his ghost: “He had come and gone as the shadows come and go, and the only trace of his presence was the blood-stain upon my hand. Then I knew that my dream-picture was the picture of that which had been, and that my call had been answered from the land of shadows” (203-204). Evoking Faustus’s blood contract with the devil, this fluid signals that Bessie is a female Faustus with the ability to summon ghosts, which she uses to bring Gilbert from the “land of shadows.” Tellingly, Bessie calls *herself* rather than Gilbert’s ghost a damned soul in writing that she “looked back to [her engagement] afterwards as a spirit in torment might look back upon a year in Paradise” (193). In addition to her artistic studies, Bessie is well-versed in the discourse of occult sciences such as dream theory and mesmerism: “There had been much discussion about mesmerism, animal magnetism, and electro-biology of late; and a great deal had been said about will-power” (199). At first, Bessie seems to differ from the male rationalists who forfeit their humanity in return for selfish objectives because she gains her powers through her love for someone else. On closer inspection, she represents a Faustian figure whose longing to know if her supernatural abilities are genuine and unconscious desire to be a writer leaves her with Gilbert’s blood on her hands.

As a female occult investigator, Bessie progresses beyond the occult woman I examine in Section One because she takes a more active role in exploring the supernatural, exorcizing the ghost through her compassion, and using her powers to cultivate personal relationships. The change in title from “My Wife’s Promise” to “My Dream,” together with the shift in narrator from Richard to Bessie, exhibits the female occult investigator’s greater agency and interiority. This figure embodies the tension between the conflicting images of the Angel in the House and the New Woman during the 1890s and early twentieth century. Women writers such as Braddon were self-

conscious about how these stories' concern with the occult changed from proving its existence in the 1860s to the psychological service it performs for the female characters during the fin de siècle. In late Victorian ghost stories, the supernatural expresses the female occult investigator's forbidden desire for liberty and her intense ambivalence toward women's gender roles. She mirrors the conservative standards of the Victorian Angel in behaving selflessly, preparing to accept the marriage plot, and trying to fit into the constraining domestic sphere. Bessie wants to remain independent and follow her creative aspirations, but she is restricted by the traditional gender roles that destroy Gilbert and render her powerless. Gilbert's mother exemplifies the frustrating limits marriage imposes on Victorian women, since "her life for the last ten years has been one of dullness and self-sacrifice" (196) for her elderly husband. Bessie also observes the other female houseguests engaging in trivial "talk about absent friends and acquaintance—other people's incomes, other people's children" (201).

Contrary to the occult woman, the female occult investigator chooses to remain single and independent, gradually turning into the liberated figure of the New Woman emerging at this time. Roger Luckhurst maintains that "the novelty of psychical concepts helped the self-definition of the New Woman, herself a novel object" (225), since late Victorian women wrote about female characters whose innate sensitivity gives them occult powers. Bessie's occult abilities are much stronger than Isabel's because while she cannot save Gilbert or track his movements in her dreams, she has the authority to summon his ghost on command. Isabel must die before she can wield her powers to the fullest and rescue Richard; in contrast, Bessie receives proof of Gilbert's devotion *and* pursues her life as she wishes. Bessie does not mention how she has occupied herself in the thirty years since Gilbert's death, but writing this account enables her to testify to her occult powers

and fulfill her dream of becoming an artist.⁸⁵ The crucial point is that female occult investigators outgrow their need for these abilities as they gain autonomy by adopting the New Woman role. These female characters' use of the supernatural to empower themselves naturally lessens as they slowly take on men's professional roles in the sciences and medicine during the fin de siècle. Bessie notes, "I have been a light sleeper, and at times a very bad sleeper, for the last thirty years, but the faculty of dreaming for good or for evil, went from me for ever after that fatal dream" (204). With Gilbert dead, she no longer needs these abilities now that she is freed from the possibility of marrying and ending up secondary to a man.

In Lanoe Falconer's *Cecilia de Noël* (1891), this troubled divide between the sexes becomes important in quite a different manner because the protagonists are fully aware of their competing faculties.⁸⁶ Falconer addresses various scientific, religious, and Spiritualist "gospels,"⁸⁷ but the main opposition she draws is between male rationality (Atherley) and female occultism (Cecilia). As first cousins, Atherley and Cecilia were raised by a religious maiden aunt and grew up developing widely differing outlooks, which are tested according to how these two help a damned soul haunting Atherley's home. There is a power struggle between Atherley and Cecilia's gospels throughout the story, ending with the triumph of female compassion. Falconer spells out

⁸⁵ Bessie's narrative evokes the tragic love story of Lucy Snowe's employer Miss Marchmont in *Villette*, particularly when the latter asks "For what crime was I condemned, after twelve months of bliss, to undergo thirty years of sorrow?" (40). Like Bessie, Miss Marchmont is an elderly lady reminiscing about how she eschewed feminine helplessness and tried to save her fiancé before his death thirty years ago, an event that leaves her in the complex position of mourning for the lover whose loss allows her to remain autonomous.

⁸⁶ Lanoe Falconer was the pen name of Mary Elizabeth Hawker (1848-1908), a member of a well-to-do genteel family from Hampshire. As a single woman, she began writing professionally in the 1880s to earn an independent income and protect her autonomy from her controlling stepfather. In 1890, she became a literary sensation with the publication of her novel *Mademoiselle Ixe*, particularly after it was endorsed by the Prime Minister, William Gladstone. Her ghost story *Cecilia de Noël* (1891) and short story collection *The Hotel d'Angleterre* (1891) were also bestsellers. Unfortunately, weak health and a mental breakdown in 1894 cut Falconer's promising literary career short. Despite her desire to write, Falconer suffered from hopeless depression and a loss of inspiration, and she produced little work by the time she died of consumption. For more on Falconer's life, see Rowland. For more on the Victorian reception of *Cecilia De Noël*, see Stewart 118-123 and Rowland 187-201.

⁸⁷ For more on Falconer's critique of late Victorian religious and Spiritualist philosophies, see Sutphin.

in a letter that the “chief import” of her ghost story is “the only revelation which science cannot explain away is the revelation of goodness in human character” (qtd. in Rowland 193). *Cecilia de Noël*’s optimism distinguishes it from other late Victorian Gothic texts that explore humanity’s darker side and conclude tragically. Offering spiritual enlightenment to people who question God’s existence, Cecilia says “it is just the same to me as if they should ask me whether the sun was shining, when all the time I saw the sunshine on their faces” (440). In contrast, Atherley’s desire to see “clear daylight” filtered through a “modern plate-glass window” (361) is inadequate for solving social issues like gender inequality, extreme poverty, and religious strife. Falconer suffered backlash as a female author for daring to criticize Victorian religion and science (C. Stewart 122), perhaps due to her representation of a woman having greater spiritual wisdom than these male-dominated fields. For Falconer, Cecilia is a Kingsford-style female “prophetess” who preaches a new Christian gospel and gives a better alternative to the psychical investigator’s cold rationality.

At the same time, Cecilia’s absence from the majority of the narrative brings male characters like Atherley and his friend Lyndsay to the forefront, suggesting Falconer’s interest in analyzing masculine gender identities. Despite the SPR’s creation of new roles for men in real life and fiction, psychical investigators in these ghost stories are just a newer iteration of the male rationalist whose scientific mindset prevents him from accepting the supernatural. These male characters scorn the female occult investigator’s supernatural pursuits, abilities, and knowledge, only to be proven wrong when she banishes the ghost. Compared to the female characters, the rationalist’s fairly static nature from the 1850s to the 1890s indicates he is a narrative constant that allows for progressively liberated female characters to appear. *Cecilia de Noël* uniquely provides a spectrum of male rationalists, which includes the charming Atherley, a well-meaning physician, and the hypocritical Canon Vernade. During the 1870s, Sir William Crookes and Alfred Russel

Wallace's investigations into Spiritualism paved the way for actual and fictional psychical researchers to delve into the supernatural. SPR members ranged from being skeptics (Podmore) to believers (Myers), but they created a space for men to inspect psychical incidents with a rational, yet accepting viewpoint. In fiction, Flaxman Low is an "occult psychologist" who believes "there are no other laws in what we term the realm of the supernatural but those which are the projections or extensions of natural laws" (Prichard and Prichard "Konnor" 140). John Bell admits "[f]rom my earliest youth the weird, the mysterious had an irresistible fascination for me" (Meade and Eustace "Introduction" 1), though most of his cases have logical explanations. Male occult detectives both practice and *undermine* rational deductive methods because they never know whether their cases will be supernatural; hence, they occupy "a special position of informed ignorance" (Crofton 31). The huge disparity between the roles of psychical investigators in real life, occult detective fiction, and women's ghost stories suggests men's place was more rigidly defined in fiction during the early 1890s. While Falconer imagines a variety of male rationalists with different gospels, they are all similarly resistant to occult beliefs.

Indeed, Atherley's unyielding views lead him to promote rationality over imagination in his gospel, but his blurring of these two elements hints that they are much more closely entwined than he would like to admit. In his monologue from the opening chapter, "Atherley's Gospel," he values a factual approach to the world so much that he dismisses the significance of the imagination, literature, and the occult. However, in his conversations with Lindsay, Atherley undermines his rationalist propositions by employing literary devices such as similes, metaphors, and personification to sell the "gospel of fact" (361):

"What does science discover in the universe? Precision, accuracy, reliability—any amount of it; but as to pity, mercy, love! The fact is, that famous simile of the angel playing at chess was a mistake. Very smart, I grant you, but altogether misleading. Why! the orthodox quote it as much as the others—always a bad sign. It tickles these

anthropomorphic fancies, which are at the bottom of all their creeds. Imagine yourself playing at chess, not with an angel, but with an automaton, an admirably constructed automaton whose mechanism can outwit your brains any day: calm and strong, if you like, but no more playing for love than the clock behind me is ticking for love; there you have a much clearer notion of existence.” (362)

Here, Atherley alludes to Thomas Henry Huxley’s reworking of the Faustus story into a metaphor of a human playing chess for his soul against a loving angel (rather than the devil) hoping she will lose.⁸⁸ Huxley devised this chess metaphor to illustrate that a person may receive a liberal education by learning to play according to Nature’s “rules,” which include engaging in positive social interaction. Atherley misreads Huxley’s language, since the latter comments that the laws of Nature, or science, are “playing for love” in the sense that they are motivated *by* love, not trying to *obtain* it. Atherley also seems inconsistent by asking his listeners to “imagine yourself” as part of a literary metaphor that he uses to justify why rationality is more important than imagination. Despite Atherley’s rejection of the angel, the fact that Cecilia is cast as this literary occult figure connects her with the arts, similar to other female occult investigators, like Bessie. Falconer maps out the entire conflict between Atherley and Cecilia through Huxley’s metaphor, with him playing chess against this “angel” to see which of their gospels will win.

In addition to being contradictory, Atherley’s scientific gospel does not apply to men who fail to embody normative masculinity such as Lyndsay, since it devalues him as a feminized

⁸⁸ Huxley’s Faustian metaphor originally appears in his “A Liberal Education; and Where to Find It” (1868). During the 1880s, Falconer read Huxley’s collection in which this lecture is found, *Lay Sermons* (1873) (Rowland 89):

Yet it is a very plain and elementary truth, that the life, the fortune, and the happiness of every one of us, and, more or less, of those who are connected with us, do depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well, the highest stakes are paid, with that sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated—without haste, but without remorse.

My metaphor will remind some of you of the famous picture in which [Moritz] Retzsch has depicted Satan playing at chess with man for his soul. Substitute for the mocking fiend in that picture a calm, strong angel who is playing for love, as we say, and would rather lose than win—and I should accept it as an image of human life. (209)

disabled man. Unlike his able-bodied friend, Lyndsay cannot meet the criteria for rational masculinity because his crippled leg leaves him characterized by his emotional sensitivity and relationships with others. Ten years ago, Lyndsay suffered a spinal injury in a horse-riding accident, which exposes the negative side of gender conventions that require men to prove themselves through risky activities. Mary Klages and Martha Stoddard Holmes write that in Victorian American and English literature the disabled are portrayed as suffering emotional pain that helps them to respond to others with compassion (6-7; 29). Atherley's relative Mrs. Molyneux articulates this view when she tells Lyndsay "for you know what it is to be weak and suffering; you are as sympathetic as a woman, and more merciful than some women" (432). His disability is emasculating for rendering him emotionally vulnerable, physically weak, and domesticated. While Lyndsay is a charitable landlord devoted to caring for his tenants, Atherley's reminder that he cannot participate in masculine pursuits such as hunting and professional work embitters Lyndsay: "If there was nothing behind and beyond all this, what an empty freak of destiny my life would have been—full, not even of sound and fury, but of dull common-place suffering: a tale told by an idiot with a spice of malice in him" (380). Besides his allusion to *Macbeth*, Lyndsay classifies himself as a "freak of destiny" along with "an idiot" according to late Victorian scientific theories (particularly eugenics) that considered such people worthless. Ultimately, Lyndsay rejects Atherley's scientific gospel for denying disabled people a sense of humanity, failing to sympathize with them, and viewing them as leading meaningless lives.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Lyndsay resembles disabled male characters who "embody a feminised philanthropic tradition, and occupy a position, as inherited landowners, which could be regarded as socially anachronistic in the late-nineteenth century" (Gore 373). Despite the failure of his courtship plot, it fits with Kathleen A. Miller's point that Victorian women writers' Gothic works avoid portraying disabled bodies as monstrous through romantic conventions (194-195).

Though Lyndsay draws out Atherley's good qualities through their strong bond, his inflexibility and sexism prevent Atherley from showing sufficient understanding or compassion for other people, particularly ghost-seers. In spite of Atherley's endorsement of rational masculinity, Lyndsay's presence evokes his hidden caring side and complicates his character. Hence, they fit Karen Bourrier's pairing of the weak man and the strong man. As she argues, the sensitive male invalid became a popular narrator in Victorian fiction because he could reveal the emotional depths of his stoical friend (13). Atherley complains about Cecilia welcoming the needy into her home, but he does the same thing by taking in Lyndsay and looking after his poor tenants. His witty humor and sophistication make Atherley an appealing character; however, his rationality causes him to express sexist remarks, especially about female ghost-seers: "[The ghost] reappears, generally, I may observe, when some imaginative female in the house is in love, or out of spirits, or bored in any other way" (367). Notwithstanding Atherley's skepticism, we discover he has read extensively on the latest psychical theories when he compares his family ghost to the apparitions in SPR case reports:

"...It is a curious thing that in the dark ages the devil was always appearing to somebody. He doesn't make himself so cheap now. He has evidently more to do; but there is a fashion in ghosts as in other things, and that reminds me our ghost, from all we hear of it, is decidedly rococo. If you study the reports of societies that hunt the supernatural, you will find that the latest thing in ghosts is very quiet and commonplace. Rattling chains and blue lights, and even fancy dress, have quite gone out. And the people who see the ghosts are not even startled at first sight; they think it is a visitor, or a man come to wind the clocks. In fact, the chic thing for a ghost in these days is to be mistaken for a living person."

"What puzzles me is that a sceptic like you can so easily swallow the astonishing coincidence of these different people all having imagined the ghost in the same house."

"Why, the coincidence is not a bit more astonishing than several people in the same place having the same fever. Nothing in the world is so infectious as ghost-seeing. The oftener a ghost is seen, the oftener it will be seen. In this sort of thing particularly, one fool makes many." (422-423)

Along with his modernized adaption of Huxley's chess metaphor, Atherley's insistence that the medieval devil no longer emerges to tempt people suggests that the Faustus legend has become old-fashioned for the Victorians. Therefore, he (and Falconer) acknowledges that the ghost of a damned Elizabethan soul is "rococo" next to the purposeless ghosts in psychical case reports. In answer to Lyndsay's reference to the "astonishing coincidence" of several witnesses seeing the ghost, Atherley expresses his rational belief that the genesis of this phenomenon is psychical.

In contrast to Atherley's mockery of Christian beliefs and SPR case reports, Lyndsay creates a narrative that combines the New Testament and the psychical case study by assembling various fictionalized gospels together in his search for the "truth." While the ghost differs from those in psychical case studies, Lyndsay's compilation of first-person narratives from witnesses who see it parallels the structure of the Cheltenham haunting report. Falconer knew that *Cecilia de Noël's* experimental structure might make it a hard sell to the British public, but the publisher Thomas Fisher Unwin admiringly writes "[y]ou seem to have created a new form in literature" (qtd. in Rowland 197). This ghost story's originality springs from the way Falconer patterned her narrative on the psychical case study consisting of different eyewitness reports, especially haunted house accounts.⁹⁰ Each of the seven chapters represents the unique spiritual gospel of a character whose beliefs are challenged when he or she comes across a damned soul, including an

⁹⁰ Although I claim that Falconer based the narrative structure of *Cecilia de Noël* on the non-fictional psychical case study, there is an argument to be made that Lyndsey's compilation of different narratives was also influenced by detective fiction. After all, the genre of occult detection was shaped by detective fiction and psychical research. One possible precedent appears in Poe's first Dupin story, "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" (1841). In Poe's work, the newspaper reports the gruesome murder of two women by an orangutan from the perspectives of various eyewitnesses. Another one is Wilkie Collins's novels, especially *The Moonstone* (1868), which consists of a series of accounts compiled by Franklin Blake. In the "Preface," Collins writes "The attempt made, here, is to trace the influence of character on circumstances. The conduct pursued, under a sudden emergency, by a young girl, supplies the foundation on which I have built this book. The same object has been kept in view, in the handling of the other characters which appear in these pages. Their course of thought and action under the circumstances which surround them, is shown to be (what it would most probably have been in real life) sometimes right, and sometimes wrong. Right, or wrong, their conduct, in either event, equally directs the course of those portions of the story in which they are concerned" (3).

Evangelical, a High Church canon, a Low Church curate, and a Spiritualist. Jen Cadwallader asserts that *Cecilia de Noël* uses these ghostly encounters to stress that totalizing belief systems are not a proper replacement for self-knowledge (*Spirits* 168). Every account is focalized through Lyndsay because he is a sympathetic man and listens to the witnesses without judging them. In contrast, Atherley, the skeptical psychical investigator, keeps explaining away every encounter as the result of natural causes. Ironically, despite Myers's insistence that the large number of witnesses proved the Cheltenham haunting's validity, the multiple perspectives in *Cecilia de Noël* leave the ghost's existence ambiguous. Since Lyndsay and Atherley never see the ghost, Lyndsay refers to John 18:38 in saying "I heard the lessons of the last few days repeated: witness after witness rose and gave his varying testimony; and when, before the discord and irony of it all, I bitterly repeated Pilate's question, the smile on [Jesus's] dead face would rise before me, and then I hoped again" (428). The "varying testimony" of each witness causes Lyndsay to ask "What is truth?," given that the discrepancies make him uncertain about whether the ghost exists and which creed he should adopt.

In his desperate condition, Cecilia gives Lyndsay hope because she shows him the compassion Atherley lacks and offers him a gospel that embraces all people; however, her angelic status arises from her virtues, *not* her position as a Victorian Angel. Regardless of the romantic overtones of Lyndsay dreaming of Cecilia, their platonic bond signals how these ghost stories move away from the marriage plot to explore a variety of male-female relationships. When they first meet, Lyndsay remarks, "I saw her, as I often see her now in dreams...like a new Madonna, holding the child of poverty to her heart, pressing her cheek against its tiny head with a gesture whose exquisite tenderness, for at least that fleeting instant, seemed to bridge across the gulf which still yawns between Dives and Lazarus" (435). His view of her as a "new Madonna" gestures at

how Cecilia has learned to sympathize with others' suffering from her grief over losing her son. The wealthy Cecilia's concern for the destitute woman's baby highlights how she crosses the huge gap between rich (Dives) and poor (Lazarus) through her benevolence.⁹¹ Cecilia is so loving that she associates her redemption of the damned ghost with giving the thirsty Dives cold water while he burns in hell, which Lazarus refuses to do in Jesus's parable (445). Falconer is careful to differentiate the angelic Cecilia from the Victorian Angel, since she derives her spiritual authority from her compassion and inner character, rather than her success as a housewife. While Cecilia exhibits the Victorian Angel's sympathy, she otherwise fails at this role: she is a terrible housekeeper, her husband is always away, and her child is dead. As she remarks, "[t]he fact is, James [Cecilia's husband] spoils me so when he is at home. He remembers everything for me, and when I do forget anything he never scolds me" (438). Like Woolf's Orlando, Cecilia cleverly marries a sailor whose frequent absences and respect for her autonomy enable her to stay independent. Though Bessie's repressed desire to maintain her freedom results in Gilbert's death, Cecilia's open avowal of her need for liberty and ability to remain self-reliant means the supernatural does not need to fulfill this secret desire for her.

The other-centered focus of Cecilia's gospel demonstrates that since the occult has helped to liberate these female characters, they should return the favor and act on their compassion to alleviate other people's sufferings. Cecilia's situation exemplifies how the supernatural places these female occult investigators into more autonomous situations from which they can exercise their kindness to serve the less fortunate. Given that she has no use for the occult to release her

⁹¹ Falconer adapts this scene from her earlier supernatural tale "Was it a Ghost?" (1889), in which the frame narrator, Mrs. Mantell, relates how she carried a poor woman's baby in a third-class train carriage on her way to attending the Lechester races. Three years later, the poor woman's ghost repays Mrs. Mantell's kindness by leading this destitute woman to a potential employer's house, where Mrs. Mantell ends up working as a nursery governess and eventually marries her mistress's son. Falconer's reworking of this scene in her supernatural fiction insinuates that she thought maternal love could facilitate trans-class sympathy between rich and poor women.

from oppression, Cecilia performs unpaid volunteer work like the Victorian Angel, even though her qualities would make her an excellent New Woman doctor. She constantly keeps “chronic invalids” (364) in her home as though it is a doctor’s office, and cares for “patients” that the medical community and Victorian society deem unfit. After she sees the ghost, the frightened Mrs. Molyneux orders Atherley to send for Cecilia rather than a physician, telling Lyndsay, “[a] great London doctor said to me once, ‘Remember, nothing is shocking or disgusting to a doctor.’ That is like Cecilia. No suffering could ever be disgusting or shocking to Cecilia, nor ridiculous, nor grotesque” (434). Falconer’s identification of this passage as key to Cecilia’s character suggests her heroine could be a New Woman doctor because her bravery is a consequence of her desire to help the sick (qtd. in Rowland 193). There is a tension between whether Cecilia’s healing constitutes the Victorian Angel’s volunteer work or the New Woman doctor’s paid work. Similar to Braddon, Falconer presents her heroine as a powerful female occult investigator to compromise between these conflicting angels of Victorian womanhood, one passive in mind and body and the other active. In this capacity, Cecilia is deliberately invited to solve the haunting, telepathically summons the ghost, and endangers her life to cleanse the home. Instead of dismissing Cecilia like he does the other witnesses, Atherley recognizes her occult powers when he positions himself as an SPR investigator interviewing a female “medium”: “I am up to a delicate psychical investigation which requires the greatest care. The medium is made of such uncommon stuff; she has not a particle of brass in her composition. So she requires to be carefully isolated from all disturbing influences” (442). Atherley takes the unusual step of questioning Cecilia himself, seeing that she is “made of such uncommon stuff” that he suspects she *may* have truly observed the ghost.

In the final chapter, “Cecilia’s Gospel,” Cecilia draws on her grief as a bereaved mother to add a different element to the female occult investigator’s compassion, using the occult powers

she gains through divine maternal love to redeem the damned Faustian soul. Atherley, Lyndsay, and Cecilia all treat those in need with compassion, but Cecilia goes further in building her entire gospel around serving others. Since Atherley supports rationality and (outwardly) eschews “pity, mercy, [and] love,” the ghost never appeals to him for help because his logical explanations do not allow for the supernatural’s existence. Cecilia is the only one of the witnesses who unquestionably accepts that the ghost is real and overcomes her fear to assist him. After she comforts Mrs. Molyneux, Cecilia summons the ghost by praying to a God she characterizes as feminine and maternal, feeling “part of that wonderful great Love above us, about us, everywhere, clasping us all so tenderly and safely” (443-444). In a platonic twist on the spiritual contact between lovers, she describes her telepathic communication with the ghost as “the thoughts seemed to pass in some strange way into my mind” (445). Learning that the ghost’s wicked deeds have isolated him from others, Cecilia assumes the role of the “angel” and risks losing the game of chess to redeem him:

“...And I said: ‘Why did you not turn for help to God?’

“Then it gave a terrible answer: it said, ‘What is God?’

“And when I heard these words there came over me a wild kind of pity, such as I used to feel when I saw my little child struggling for breath when he was ill, and I held out my arms to this poor lonely thing, but it shrank back, crying “‘Speak to me, but do not touch me, brave human creature. I all death, and if you come too near me the Death in me may kill the life in you.’

“But I said: ‘No Death can kill the life in me, even though it kill my body. Dear fellow-spirit, I cannot tell you what I know; but let me take you in my arms; rest for an instant on my heart, and perhaps I may make you feel what I feel all around us.’ (446)

By asking Cecilia “What is God?,” the ghost stands for the many late Victorian readers undergoing a loss of faith, and Cecilia is the female Christ whose willingness to sacrifice herself to redeem the ghost’s sins illustrates God’s divine love for everyone. Cecilia’s instinct to relate the ghost’s question to her dying child informs us that her loss triggered a religious crisis, which ended with her realization that “God” embodies love for the unfortunate. At the same time that her grief makes

her sympathetic to people's earthly sufferings, it also renders her closer to the ghostly. While she could not save her son, Cecilia's maternal "pity" for her "fellow-spirit" is strong enough to liberate the ghost and preserve her life.

Despite its optimistic tone, Cecelia's gospel fails to propose a practical way that the Victorian women reading Falconer's ghost story could save declining religious faith or combat rational science. The problem with Cecilia's Christlike depiction is that it etherealizes her to the point where she no longer serves as a realistic role model; at best, her "gospel" suggests a standard to which real women should aspire. However, her kind engagement with others provided hope in the face of the growing rationality and atheism that failed to satisfy the late Victorians' spiritual yearnings. Although *Cecilia de Noël* has fallen into obscurity today, it was a bestseller in 1891 that captured people's anxieties about the rise of scientific materialism and religious doubt during the fin de siècle. As female prophetesses, Kingsford and Cecilia's spiritual authority is reinforced through comparisons with religious figures such as Christ, Mary Magdalene, and the Woman Clothed with the Sun. In both cases, Kingsford and Falconer understood that their readers struggled not to yield to despair or atheism, which is why they apply a Christian cast to their occult philosophy. Janet Oppenheim goes so far as to argue that Spiritualism, psychical research, and occultism constituted "surrogate faiths" meant to fill a spiritual void and oppose scientific rationality (62; 152; 160). Falconer was especially bold in claiming that Cecilia would redeem people as a female Christ, a feminist image used by another influential woman in Victorian medicine, Florence Nightingale ("Cassandra" 53). Knowing that her readers' religious doubts made them feel guilty and meaningless, Falconer characterizes Cecilia as divine to make them heed her heroine's call to action. The fact that Cecilia's crisis inspired her kindness toward others

gestures at how women must enact a similar change in their lives, rather than giving into disbelief or hopelessness.

Despite Atherley calling Cecilia a “medium,” Falconer distinguishes her occult powers from those of the female Spiritualists in Lettice Galbraith’s “In the Séance Room” (1893) because she judged the latter deceptive. After Atherley finishes “investigating” Cecilia, he tells Lyndsay, “[i]t is the most easily explained of all the accounts. It was a dream from beginning to end” (447). We know from “My Dream” that the female occult investigator’s dreams can be supernatural; therefore, Atherley’s rational explanation still allows for Cecilia’s encounter with the ghost. For Lyndsay, her gospel restores his faith and sense of purpose: “Thank God! she is no vision, the woman who could dream this dream! [Atherley], how do you explain the miracle of her existence?” (447). Atherley begins *Cecilia de Noël* as the voice of rational science, but he finds Cecilia’s account so emotionally moving that he answers Lyndsay by remaining “silent” (447). *Cecilia de Noël* was published soon after Vernon Lee’s collection of psychological ghost stories, *Hauntings* (1890), and similar to them it leaves the ghost’s existence doubtful. The ambiguous reality of Cecilia’s occult powers represents how she stands poised between the Victorian Angel and New Woman in terms of asserting her independence. Falconer also focuses on Cecilia’s character—rather than her occult activities—as the story’s real “miracle” to elevate her heroine above shady mediums who claim to channel the dead. Due to widespread fraud, SPR investigators were suspicious of physical mediums, which is why they experimented with mental mediums such as Leonora Piper and Rosina Thompson (Owen *Darkened Room* 237).⁹² Through Atherley, Falconer satirizes Mrs. Molyneux as a gullible socialite for adopting the latest Spiritualist trends and being swindled by mediums: “These are precisely the lines on which a spiritual séance is conducted. . . you have a paid

⁹² For an in-depth historical account of Spiritualist fraud during the nineteenth century, see Brandon.

medium who supplies the material for your fancy to work upon” (378). Since female readers could not act like “miracles” without potentially being reinscribed into the Victorian Angel’s role, Galbraith senses that Spiritualism and psychical research were more accessible ways of encouraging them to be generous.

Another important difference between Falconer and Galbraith is that Cecelia’s gospel asks women to help all outcasts, whereas Galbraith narrows her focus to women looking after themselves, along with other oppressed women, so that they can escape patriarchal control. In Galbraith’s tale, the Victorian Angel’s act of leaving her husband signals that the female characters in these stories recognize their concern for the male rationalist is misplaced. The rationalist, Valentine Burke, is ironically named after the patron saint of love, since he behaves selfishly and mistreats the women in his life. Rather than the phony female medium, the male psychical investigator uses his supernatural powers to entice a rich woman, Elma Lang,⁹³ into marriage in order to seize control of her fortune: “...but Burke was ambitious, and he had a line of his own. He dabbled in psychics, and had written an article on the future of hypnotism which had attracted considerable attention. He was a strong magnetiser, and offered no objection to semi-private exhibitions of his powers” (189). As a materialistic doctor, Burke abuses his occult knowledge to gain money, fame, and power, particularly because he performs mesmerism as a cheap party trick to attract the wealthy. Elma’s meeting with Burke through the Society for the Revival of Eastern Mysticism evidences her occult interests, but she mistakenly turns to an organization modeled on one the SPR debunked in 1885, the Theosophical Society. Burke reads a sensational article about how the police have misidentified a female suicide as Katherine Greaves (with a pun on grave /

⁹³ Considering Galbraith’s use of allusory names, Elma’s surname may refer to the writer, folklorist, and anthropologist Andrew Lang; like him, Elma is fascinated with psychical research and eager to investigate the supernatural. The name of Burke’s fellow psychical researcher, Mr. Falconer, brings to mind Lanoe Falconer.

grief), a lover he cruelly abandoned to marry Elma. While Burke knows that Katherine is still alive, he does not inform her family; instead, he burns her love letter “damp with a woman’s tears” (191) to cover his tracks by destroying the evidence of their affair.

The balance of power temporarily shifts in Burke’s favor because he can access his mesmeric powers through rationality, but his misuse of them precludes him from reproducing the women’s impressive occult feats. Once she unexpectedly appears, the “timid” (191), “fainting” (192), and overtrusting Katherine acts dependent on the uncaring Burke, which leaves her helpless against the mesmeric powers he uses to murder her. The alarmed Burke realizes that the news of his relationship with Katharine will endanger his marriage to Elma, though their “ruin” is gendered so he will lose his career, Katherine her social reputation. Galbraith condemns the sexual double standard when Burke justifies murder on the grounds that as a fallen, and thus “impure” woman, Katherine has no worth: “Why should she not die? Her life was over, a spoiled, ruined thing. There was nothing before her but shame and misery. She would be better dead” (193). Although Katherine shows daring and intelligence in leaving her family to locate Burke, her belief that her value lies in playing the role of a Victorian Angel and marrying him makes her vulnerable to abuse. Burke’s employment of his mesmeric powers in an unequal power struggle with Katherine conveys the danger of a woman subsuming her identity, autonomy, and desires to a man: “There was a long silence while their eyes met in that fixed stare—his cold, steady, dominating, hers flinching and striving vainly to withstand the power of his stronger will” (194). Galbraith reverses the double standard in characterizing Burke as “fallen” for his evil deeds, while Katherine is his innocent victim who unfairly incurs blame for being seduced. The narrator radically states “[n]o living soul, save the ‘sensitive’ on whom he was experimenting, heard those words, but they were registered by a higher power than that of the criminal court, damning evidence to be produced one day against

the man who had prostituted his spiritual gift to mean and selfish ends” (194). Burke signifies a damned Faustian figure in the way he “prostitutes” his occult powers to ensnare a rich wife, and his debased motives limit his ability to wield the supernatural compared with the female characters.

Burke is particularly insidious as a male rationalist who pretends to believe in the supernatural and flaunts his limited powers in order to become a leading member of the occult community. Elma grows disillusioned with Burke’s cynical skepticism when she realizes that her husband is a duplicitous psychical researcher and he abuses his masculine privilege to suppress women, including her. After ordering Katherine to commit suicide, Burke stages a scene in which he attempts to save her to make himself a heroic figure in Elma’s eyes and throw suspicion off him. Elma and Burke’s differing responses to the loss of his engagement ring during this sham rescue reveal their incompatible personalities: he views it as an expensive commodity, while she loves him more than a mere object. Four years later, Burke has socially advanced as “an acknowledged leader of the new school of Philosophy, an authority on psychic phenomena, and the idol of the ‘smart’ women who played with the fashionable theories and talked glibly on subjects the very A B C which was beyond their feeble comprehension” (196). Galbraith criticizes these ironically named “smart” women for resembling Mrs. Molyneux as frivolous Spiritualists, but she is more scornful of Burke’s deceiving them with false occult teachings. Instead of becoming a psychical investigator, Elma functions as Burke’s research assistant and “an admirable wife, interesting herself in his studies, and assisting him materially in his literary work” (196). Although she funds Burke’s research with her own money, Elma subordinates her interest in the occult to her husband’s as the perfect Victorian Angel. She feels estranged from him due to Burke’s misogynistic contempt for women’s occult abilities, since he relegates his wife to a secondary role and tries to debunk a popular medium, Madame Delphine. These marital tensions surface when

Elma expresses her belief in the medium's powers, whereas Burke wants to verify she is a "humbug" (197)—just like himself:

"Valentine," she cried, sorrowfully, "is there no truth in anything you say or write? Do you believe in nothing?"

"Certainly. I believe in matter and myself, also that the many fools exist for the benefit of a minority with brains. When I see any reason to alter my belief, I shall not hesitate to do so. If, for instance, I am convinced that I see with my material eyes a person whom I know to be dead, I will become a convert to spiritualism. But I shall never see it." (197)

As Burke's devoted supporter and a believer in the supernatural, Elma despairs that her husband is an arrogant materialist hypocritically claiming Spiritualists are con artists when he dupes "many fools" through his occult powers and manipulative charm. She finally realizes Burke has developed a cult of personality that permits him to lead people astray and subjugate his female disciples, his wife, and women mediums.

The female characters recover their power in the feminine space of the séance room by unmasking Burke as an imposter who lacks the occult abilities as well as the integrity to lead the psychical community. As a cross between the ghost story and crime fiction, Galbraith's tale depicts occult women uncovering a murder through their supernatural powers; in contrast, the rational male detectives fall short with their empirical methods. "In the Séance Room" features crime fiction aspects such as a murder, a misidentified corpse, criminal evidence, and the revelation of the murderer's identity. In light of Sherlock Holmes's popularity, it is significant that "able detectives" (190-191) act incompetent, mixing up a female suicide with Katherine, overlooking her relation with Burke when she vanishes, and failing to uncover her murder. Several critics have discussed the importance of supernatural avengers who punish wrongdoers where the police are unsuccessful in Victorian crime fiction.⁹⁴ While male occult detectives are typically seen as

⁹⁴ See Ascari 17-90, Cook 52-69, and Carney. Ascari traces the literary history of divine revenge in crime stories from the early modern era to the nineteenth century, finding that in the Victorian period "the paradigm of legal/scientific

representing the overlap between crime fiction and ghost stories, Galbraith imagines several occult women working together to solve a crime. Fittingly for Galbraith's story, Chris Willis notes "...the detective would be virtually redundant if the medium could summon a murder victim back from the dead to name the murderer" (62-63). The séance room allows these female characters to replace the rational male detective by "materializing" a spirit that stages their resistance to traditional femininity (Owen *Darkened Room* 11; Tromp *Altered States* 22-23).

Galbraith's title, "In the Séance Room," points to the transformative nature of a space in which three women with occult powers arise: Katharine, the occult woman; Madame Delphine, the female Spiritualist; and Elma, the female occult investigator. The spectrum of different *types* of occult women shows how female gender roles evolved to the point that these characters gradually came to depend less on the supernatural. The helpless Katherine attains power as a ghost, using "direct writing" in response to Burke's question to remind him that it is the four-year anniversary of her death: "Burke did not believe for a moment that the answer to his question had been dictated by the disembodied spirit of his victim" (198). In contrast to his indifference toward Katherine's love letter, Burke is now forced to pay attention to her ghostly writing, but his rationalism makes him suspect Madame Delphine of trying to dominate him through blackmail. Elma's supernatural "brilliant inspiration" (199) of asking the medium to restore Burke's engagement ring enables Katherine's ghost to arrive with the key clue that proves his crime as well as the occult:

...Suddenly the stillness was broken by a shriek of horror. It issued from the lips of the medium, who, like a second Witch of Endor, saw more than she expected, and crouched terror-stricken in the chair to which she was secured by cords adjusted by the test committee. The presence which had appeared before the

detection vied for supremacy with that of divine detection" (55). Cook examines how Doyle constructed revenge tales with fractured narratives that feature ghostly figures exacting retribution outside the law in the Holmes canon (58). James Carney argues that rational detectives such as Sherlock Holmes and Father Brown display the "privileged epistemic access" or mind-reading powers of punitive supernatural agents (204).

black curtain was no white-clad denizen of 'summer-land', but a woman in dark, clinging garments—a woman with wide-opened, glassy eyes, fixed in an unalterable stony stare. It was a ghastly sight. All the concentrated agony of a violent death was stamped on that awful face.

Of the twenty people who looked upon it, not one had power to move or speak.

Slowly the terrible thing glided forward, hardly touching the ground, one hand outstretched, and on the open palm a small, glittering object—a diamond ring!
(199)

The Biblical allusion is particularly apt considering that like Saul, Burke hypocritically seeks to banish those who practice the occult while consulting a female medium (the Witch of Endor) and dies through suicide the day after seeing the ghost she summons. Despite her “horror” at the sight of Katherine’s ghost, Madame Delphine uses the apparition to manifest her underlying hostility toward the skeptical psychical researcher who ties her up to confirm that she is not impersonating the spirits she summons. Madame Delphine indirectly retaliates against Burke through Katherine because the ghost accuses him of murder in front of nineteen other witnesses, ruining his reputation, ending his marriage, and causing his suicide.

Elma tries to redeem Burke through her love as a female occult investigator, but she transfers her compassion to Katherine when it becomes clear that she cannot save her unrepentant husband. Besides taking revenge on Burke, Madame Delphine and Katherine help Elma break free from his control after they awaken her suspicions against him. Although Elma offers Burke forgiveness in an attempt to overcome their estrangement, he rejects the opportunity to confess and thus chooses damnation: “Valentine, I beseech you, by everything you hold sacred, tell me the truth now before it is too late. I could forgive you almost—almost anything, if you will tell me bravely; but do not leave me to find it out for myself” (201). The Victorian Angel realizes that she cannot redeem her husband if he refuses to listen to her, especially since he views nothing as “sacred” except his disproven materialist beliefs. The next morning, Burke notices that Elma has

left him due to the absence of her “usual feminine impedimenta” (202), symbolizing how she has given up living as the Victorian Angel “impeded” by her domestic role. As a contrast to Katherine’s love letter in which she begs Burke to reconcile with her, Elma writes a tear-streaked note explaining the reasons for her departure:

...I implored you to trust me. You put me off with a lie. Am I to blame if I used against you a power which you yourself had taught me? In the last four hours I have heard from your own lips the whole story of Katharine Greaves. Every detail of that horrible tragedy you confessed unconsciously in your sleep, and I who loved you—Heaven knows how dearly!—have to endure the agony of knowing my husband a murderer, and that my wretched fortune supplied the motive for the crime. Thank God that I have no child to bear the curse of your sin, to inherit its father’s nature! (202)

Elma displays elements of the occult detective in employing her supernatural abilities to solve a “crime,” figure out a “motive,” and extract a confession of murder from the sleeping Burke. She turns Burke’s use of his occult powers to obtain authority over women against him by resorting to mesmerism so she can regain her “power” over her teacher. Her actions constitute a reversal of “The Lifted Veil” because Elma’s occult powers make the husband’s secrets legible to his wife. Elma’s relief at remaining childless implies that motherhood would have tied her to being a Victorian Angel and made it harder to desert her marriage.

Burke’s death leaves a space for an honest and caring woman like Elma to replace him as an occult leader; in fact, the ending allows for the possibility that she could start a career as a psychical researcher or a New Woman doctor. When Elma reclaims her fortune and independence, Burke finds himself so powerless without her that he parallels Katherine in taking his mesmerizer’s (unwitting) suggestion to commit suicide: “As Elma had said, there was only one thing left for him to do, and—he did it” (203). We know that while Burke may not face earthly justice, a higher court will sentence him to damnation, illustrating that here the Faustian soul receives no mercy like he does in *Cecilia de Noël*. The male rationalists who appear in later women’s ghost stories, such as

Florence Marryat's *The Dead Man's Message* (1894) and Ellen Glasgow's "The Shadowy Third" (1923), are difficult or impossible to redeem. Instead, in a show of female solidarity, Katherine's ghost liberates Elma from a stifling marriage so she is not enslaved to Burke the way his unfortunate lover was. Elma's compassion for Katherine's "horrible tragedy" compels her to abandon Burke for victimizing other women, which fulfills the ghost's need for revenge. In comparison to Katherine and Madame Delphine wielding the supernatural to overcome their powerless situations, Elma's talent for mesmerism is just one of the many resources at her disposal, such as her money, intelligence, and education. Despite being a country physician's daughter, Katharine never seems to consider working as a New Woman doctor, given that she comes from a parochial place where her career would probably be discouraged. After becoming an occult woman, Katharine still encounters limits because she must die before she can use her powers as a ghost, and she relies on her connection with a medium to materialize. Madame Delphine's constricted position as a female medium is conveyed by the fact that she must be restrained during séances and expresses fear of her own supernatural abilities. With the support of these occult women, Elma arrives at a position where she can establish herself as a career woman and utilize her resources to assist others.

In the end, Braddon, Falconer, and Galbraith find that the gender roles of the male rationalist and the female occult investigator are inadequate for different reasons, so women writers provide a solution—the New Woman doctor.⁹⁵ Nora Tynan O'Mahony's "Hester's Ghost"

⁹⁵ Florence Marryat negatively portrays rational male doctors in her ghost stories, namely Henry Aldwyn in *The Dead Man's Message* (1894) and Dr. Karl von Steinberg in *The Strange Transfiguration of Hannah Stubbs* (1896). Therefore, it is striking that Marryat offers a positive depiction of an American female doctor, Dr. M- K-, a guest at a séance she attended led by a male medium, in her book advocating Spiritualism, *The Spirit World* (1894) (276-279). Marryat admiringly writes that Dr. M- K- had "come to that séance a perfectly unprejudiced woman, but at the same time a perfectly calm and dispassionate minded one, as ready to expose deceit and trickery as she was to acknowledge the faces she saw to be those of her parents" (276). Similar to Hester, Dr. M- K- is a successful New Woman doctor who blends rationality and sympathy, investigating the supernatural with an open mind and lovingly accepting that the materialized ghosts of her deceased parents are genuine.

(1908) opens with a modernized take on the conventional Victorian scene of friends telling ghost stories around a Christmas fire.⁹⁶ Madge, Eileen, and Hester are part of the first generation of New Women attending college and earning a living. The focus on these “bachelor girl friends” (90) spending the holidays together underscores how far female solidarity has displaced the marriage plot. Female authors understood the need for fictional New Women doctors to reconcile the conflict between their “femaleness” and professional ambitions if they were to lead productive lives (Swenson 128). Hester resolves this tension because her balance of male and female characteristics allows her to successfully combine rationality and sympathy. O’Mahoney describes how Hester wins professional respect for her masculine practicality and competence, but these qualities are offset by her feminine kindness and compassion:

[Hester] had a certain boyishness, or perhaps one should say manliness of manner—the result of many years of companionship with class-fellows of the opposite sex—that was at once amusing and refreshing; and sometimes in a moment of forgetfulness she would address your outraged femininity in her soft Munster brogue with sentences like “Oh, man, it was grand!” or “Boys, it was enough to break your heart!” Yet beneath this veneer of masculinity Hester was the sweetest, most modest, most womanly woman you might meet in a day’s walk, all softness and kindness, heart and soul, full of loving tenderness towards little children, the old and the ailing, toward all helpless and suffering humanity. She had the virtues of the opposite sex without any of its little faults and pettiness. No one knew this better than these old companions of her schooldays, who were wont to say of her “Hetty is good through and through. (191)

Hester is somewhat idealized in the way she can bridge both gendered worlds. She displays a “veneer of masculinity” that she probably acquired while attending medical school with other male students. At the same time, Hester’s female college friends perceive that she is a “womanly woman” whose concern for the needy helps her to treat her patients. The fact that “Hester’s Ghost”

⁹⁶ Honora (Nora) Tynan O’Mahony (1865-1954) was an Irish author and the sister of the well-known writer Katherine Tynan. After marrying the Irish barrister John O’Mahony in 1895, O’Mahony pursued a writing career while raising her sons, particularly after she was widowed in 1904. Despite her success as a writer and favorable depiction of a New Woman like Hester, O’Mahony wrote an anti-suffragette article called “The Mother” (1913), in which she argues that modern Irishwomen were losing their domestic virtues by seeking to work outside the home.

was published in an American magazine aimed at Irish immigrants and Hester's "soft Munster brogue" identifies her as an exemplary Irishwoman suggests progressive gender roles are bound up with national pride.

Hester's mingling of the best qualities of the male rationalist and female occult investigator makes her the perfect candidate for dealing with the supernatural. Her account of her ghostly encounter resembles an SPR case study with a purposeless ghost, since her coworker, a storekeeper, kills himself and then meets with a distant colleague for no apparent reason: "But his face I could not see, for when I looked closer under the hard felt hat, there was no face! Nothing but a great, gaping wound" (192). The view of the ghost's face as a "great, gaping wound" signifies that he was an emotionally damaged bachelor who committed a sin (suicide) and appears to Hester in the hope she can "cure" him by taking mercy on his soul. When Madge tries to rationalize her experience, Hester echoes Rosina Despard in citing her dog's fear as evidence of the ghost's presence: "But supposing that I did imagine it, how could you account for the dog?" (Despard 322-323; 192). Since Hester does not need the supernatural to assert her independence, she is so estranged from her occult powers that her friends must advise her about helping the ghost. At Madge's suggestion, Hester decides to request that masses be said for his soul, remarking, "even though I'm not a 'papist'—may I not feel with you that it is a holy and beautiful practice to pray for the dead?" (192). Hester springs from the female occult investigator, particularly Cecilia, because her prayers and compassion will send a damned soul to heaven. She also demonstrates aspects of the male rationalist in objectively judging her meeting with the ghost and using proof to validate his existence. Instead of Hester and the storekeeper being a reenvisioning of the Faustus and Helena pairing, Hester effectively unites science and occultism in the single character of the New Woman doctor.

Atherley is correct when he calls the female occult investigator a “medium made of such uncommon stuff” because she blends the unlikely areas of science, religion, and occultism through ghost hunting. The unique elements in her characterization, such as her personal approach to the supernatural, ambivalence toward the Victorian Angel/New Woman dichotomy, and gradual progression into the career woman, separate her from the male occult detective. As male rationalists, Gilbert, Atherley, and Burke refuse to accept Bessie, Cecilia, and Elma’s reconciliation of these conflicting subjects or their advocacy of love for others. However, in real life, Cecilia de Noël was so influential that male psychical investigators imitated her in supporting a sympathetic outlook toward ghosts.⁹⁷ Braddon, Falconer, Galbraith, and O’Mahony produce innovative literary experiments by crossing the psychical case study with different genres, such as the novel, the gospels, crime fiction, and the Christmas ghost story. Their supernatural tales reflect a brief period during the fin de siècle when religion, science, and occultism coexisted as distinct yet harmonious disciplines. Victorian women like Kingsford and Despard participated in a short-lived but exciting interdisciplinary field that turned obsolete as rational science came to dominate English society. In these ghost stories, we can track how the female occult investigator follows Kingsford and Despard’s lead by abandoning the Victorian Angel’s role and becoming the New Woman doctor. Between 1889 to 1908, the female occult investigator evolved from an aspiring writer with a repressed desire for independence to a liberated woman doctor with a perfect balance

⁹⁷ Oliver Lodge was a prominent physicist who endorsed psychical research’s legitimacy and the need to reconcile science and religion (Oppenheim 373, 386). His universal Christian catechism for children, *The Substance of Faith Allied with Science* (1907), describes an afterlife in which spirits are reunited with their loved ones. The selfish person will “find himself alone in the universe; and, unless taken pity on and helped in a spirit of self-sacrifice, may as well be out of existence altogether. (A book called *Cecilia de Noel [sic]* emphasizes this truth under the guise of a story” (57). In *Psychical Investigations* (1917), Lodge’s friend J. Arthur Hill cites Cecilia in a footnote as “an exemplification of the right attitude” to addressing ghosts with “friendliness and love” (49). Algernon Blackwood created the occult detective John Silence, but he wrote about a New Woman redeeming a damned Faustian soul through her salvific kiss during a psychical investigation in “The Woman’s Ghost Story” (1907).

of male and female qualities. The advances in women's career and educational prospects finally allowed for the ideal union of Faustus and Helena to occur in Hester's character. At the same time, a New Woman doctor like Hester becomes alienated from religion and the occult, since she occupies an independent situation and can serve others in a professional capacity. While these female characters no longer need the supernatural as they enter scientific positions once held exclusively by men, their feminine sense of compassion poses an important challenge to masculine rationality's cultural power.

Chapter Three:
“Sounds That Could Do Me No Harm”⁹⁸:
The Invisible Presence Below Stairs

“A man who is born into a world already possessed, if he cannot get subsistence from his parents on whom he has a just demand, and if the society does not want his labour, has no claim of *right* to the smallest portion of food, and, in fact, has no business to be where he is. At nature’s mighty feast there is no vacant cover for him. She tells him to be gone, and will quickly execute her own orders, if he do not work upon the compassion of some of her guests. If these guests get up and make room for him, other intruders immediately appear demanding the same favour. The report of a provision for all that come, fills the hall with numerous claimants. The order and harmony of the feast is disturbed, the plenty that before reigned is changed into scarcity; and the happiness of the guests is destroyed by the spectacle of misery and dependence in every part of the hall, and by the clamorous importunity of those, who are justly enraged at not finding the provision which they had been taught to expect.”

– Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, second edition (1803)

Introduction

Victorian female authors’ ghost stories highlight the frustrations of middle-class women forced to toil in service as lady’s maids, governesses, or housekeepers due to the limits on their educational opportunities, social influence, and career choices at the time. The sympathetic depiction of the plight of distressed gentlewomen calls attention to the unfair restrictions on all bourgeois ladies. The supernatural tales demand the expansion of middle-class women’s privileges as well as the separation of the middle and upper classes from the working classes. Since these stories center on the hardships of distressed gentlewomen and are directed toward a middle-class readership, they do not advocate radically transforming the class system or curing the ills of the lower classes. They fit with the same reforming, gradualist spirit that guided a series of Parliamentary reform bills, marriage laws, and Factory Acts, which progressively extended rights and improved conditions for more and more people. In the epigraph, Malthus’s feast is an apt metaphor for how these ghost stories create an impression that there are limited seats for those

⁹⁸ This title is a slight rewording of the phrase “sounds and sights that could do me no harm,” which comes from Gaskell’s “The Old Nurse’s Story” (26). In its original context, the housekeeper, Dorothy, asks the nurse, Hester, if she will abandon the child in her care because she fears the ghosts haunting Furnivall Manor.

who enjoy full social, economic, and political rights. These stories suggest that middle-class women's class privilege means they deserve a place at the table beside middle- and upper-class men. They legitimize bourgeois women's "right" to attend this metaphorical feast by fending off aristocratic interference from above and ambitious upstarts from below. Malthus discusses the roles of the mistress (nature), guests (the privileged), and intruders (the destitute) at his feast, but the male and female domestics needed for serving the banquet are missing from this scene. Similarly, the ghost stories I analyze in this chapter push to consolidate middle-class women's power, with no thought for the struggles of working-class women. They seem to offer a narrow view of social reform in overlooking the working classes, through their representation of lower female servants as invisible presences haunting the margins of these ghost stories.

These ghost stories do not take advantage of the revolutionary social possibilities offered by apparitions in looking to expand women's privileges and keep the working classes in their accustomed places.⁹⁹ My argument disagrees with the scholarly view that women's ghost stories were progressive in outlook and critical of social inequalities at all levels of the hierarchy. Melissa Edmundson Makala claims that Victorian female authors who envision haunted houses in their fiction "sought to bring greater understanding and bridge the gaps between genders and between socio-economic classes in British society. These authors opened the door regarding the issues of communication, as well as contributed to the discourses on social, gender, and religious inequality that many people preferred to ignore or simply were not aware of" (*Women's Ghost Literature* 129-130). In contrast, I see no such communication because women's stories sidestep the issue of the lower female servants in middle-class women's homes by portraying distressed gentlewomen

⁹⁹ For instance, their adaption of a Malthusian view of a socially exclusive table is out of keeping with the Victorian attitude toward spirit rapping and how it made the supernatural ordinary, even vulgar. With the rise of Spiritualism, the mundane nature of furniture meant anyone could interact with ghosts through table rapping, regardless of his or her social class (Cottom 768-770).

working in country houses and meeting with ghosts that represent bourgeois anxieties. The stories criticize the upper classes for abusing their power and ignore the working classes, a move that enables them to legitimize the middle class as superior by default. The centrality of distressed gentlewomen may also signal anxiety about the instability of middle-class women's position as ladies; as a result, upper servant women encountering ghosts is more terrifying for middle-class readers. The preoccupation with needy ladies in these stories corresponds to how reformers paid disproportionate attention to governesses during the 1840s, even though they were a small number of the overall servant population (Peterson "Victorian Governess" 7-8; Poovey 127; Hughes 148). They overlook male indoor servants as well, but this omission can be explained by the fact that men constituted a small minority of the servant population. Since male servants were much more expensive to maintain, only the wealthy could afford to employ them. Given that domestic service grew increasingly "feminized" during the nineteenth century, the frequent presence of female servants reflects how they were becoming commonplace.¹⁰⁰

At the same time, it is important not to ascribe classist intentions to the female authors under study because the absence of lower female servants does not mean that they or middle-class women were uncritical of the Victorian social order. Bourgeois ladies were expected to employ servants to take care of their homes, help raise their children, and indicate their class status to the world. They held responsibility for maintaining their social standing as well as establishing class barriers in the domestic sphere. Elizabeth Langland argues that their privileges made them take their superiority for granted, so their sympathy did not extend to the domestics they hired:

¹⁰⁰ Theresa McBride and Bridget Hill document how service became "feminized" beginning in the eighteenth century, as more women were hired as household staff and the number of male indoor servants declined (37; 39). After 1850, the number of women entering service grew, until it became the largest occupational group of females in England (Lethbridge 9). By 1900, men accounted for a tiny minority in service compared to women; there were about 1.3 million female domestics and roughly 50,000 male indoor servants (Huggett 28-29).

“Frequently interpreted only as victims of patriarchal oppression, bourgeois women were both oppressed as women and oppressors as middle-class managers” (53-57). To police the boundaries between classes, they exerted their authority over the lower orders by supervising their female servants and paying charitable visits to the poor. Jeanne Peterson finds that since their class identity as bourgeois subjects took precedence over their gendered selves, middle-class ladies ignored the hardships of women across the entire social spectrum: “The private was surely political, and gentlewomen’s experience of the (relative) freedom of their rank was, in their view, only their due as members of the ‘upper orders’ of society. Their sense of hierarchy and their due left them indifferent to the severe constraints under which women less fortunate than they had to live” (*Victorian Gentlewomen* 84). Despite the validity of their views, Langland and Peterson overgeneralize about middle-class women’s apathy toward the struggles of the lower classes. It should be noted that the promotion of solidarity according to class status rather than gender was not always inevitable during the Victorian era. For instance, while the social reformer Karl Marx did not regard servants’ labor as productive, his daughter Eleanor saw that both mistress and maid were oppressed based on gender (Higgs 203; Steedman 72-73).¹⁰¹ Other middle-class women regarded their most meaningful work in “serving” the poor or the needy in prisons, streets, and

¹⁰¹ In “The Woman Question: From a Socialist Point of View” (1886), Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling see a parallel between the subjugation of the bourgeois mistress and the working classes; however, Victorian ladies’ privileged status prevented them from joining with their inferiors to demand their rights: “The truth, not fully recognised even by those anxious to do good to woman, is that she, like the labour-classes, is in an oppressed condition; that her position, like theirs, is one of merciless degradation. Women are the creatures of an organised tyranny of men, as the workers are the creatures of an organised tyranny of idlers. Even where this much is grasped, we must never be weary of insisting on the non-understanding that for women, as for the labouring classes, no solution of the difficulties and problems that present themselves is really possible in the present condition of society. All that is done, heralded with no matter what flourish of trumpets, is palliative, not remedial. Both the oppressed classes, women and the immediate producers, must understand that their emancipation will come from themselves. Women will find allies in the better sort of men, as the labourers are finding allies among the philosophers, artists, and poets. But the one has nothing to hope from man as a whole, and the other has nothing to hope from the middle class as a whole” (211).

hospitals. In Section Two, I will discuss Victorian women's attachment to the nurses who raised them, especially for telling ghost stories that inspired them to write their own.

The distressed gentlewomen working in service offer a way to critique the unfair restraints on middle-class women, who had few professional avenues except to become schoolteachers or upper servants, particularly governesses (Hughes 38, 192). The plight of distressed gentlewomen highlights the unstable and ambiguous nature of "ladyhood," undermining the image of the socially exclusive table with clear boundaries. For instance, a reoccurring figure in ghost stories, the governess oscillates between being an upper and lower servant, while the nurse or housekeeper occupies a more well-defined place. Critics have discussed how the governess's very existence challenged the ideal of the leisured lady and sheltered private space; some of their remarks can be generalized to all distressed gentlewomen working in service or teaching. The presence of distressed gentlewomen revealed how not every woman could be a manager of her own home, since the domestic realm was always vulnerable to economic upheaval. After all, genteel ladies could become distressed at any time if they experienced financial necessity and would lose rank in working to support themselves. The situation of upper female servants provided a way for these stories to lay claim to further privileges for middle class women by indicating there were alternatives to being an idle lady.¹⁰²

Despite the subordinate position of distressed gentlewomen in the Victorian social order, their ghost stories depict them as having superior values bourgeois to their betters. As previously mentioned, these stories show the instability of bourgeois women's position through their focus

¹⁰² For more on how masters and servants' social bonds changed between the eighteenth and nineteenth century, see Hill, Steedman, and Straub. During the eighteenth century, the paternalistic mindset that servants were "children" in need of care shifted to a businesslike one that regarded them as hired employees (Steedman 148). At the time, servants performed all kinds of tasks inside and outside the home, which were not strictly gendered or confined to one's job title (Steedman 84). The Victorian era brought several major developments, such as the upstairs/downstairs service model, the emergence of a rigorous servant hierarchy, and the growing demand for domestics among the middle-classes.

on distressed gentlewomen working for the upper classes. They discriminate between bourgeois and middle-class values in order to advocate for a social identity that adopts the former, rather than the latter. In these ghost stories, female upper servants function as representatives of all middle-class women and are characterized as sensible, reliable, and intelligent employees. Despite the obvious differences between their positions, these distressed gentlewomen act like Victorian Angels running the households of the landed elite. Their greater ability to oversee the country house, take care of the aristocratic family, and successfully manage encounters with ghosts reveals their superior inner worth, especially compared to their idle, proud, and spoiled employers. At the same time, their talents suggest how unfortunate it is for them to be trapped as domestic managers to the nobility when they are capable of so much more. The stories illustrate that *acting* like a lady is more important than *being* a lady. The distressed gentlewomen follow bourgeois values, which stress the importance of cultivating a worthy character, behavior, and principles. In contrast, the aristocracy and the new rich live according to middle-class values, which judge a person based on his or her background. The distressed gentlewomen's superiority confirms that people should not be assessed based on lineage, education, property, wealth, or rank because these are arbitrary markers of class identity outside of their control.

In addition to showing the conflict between bourgeois and middle-class values, the distressed gentlewomen experience an internal conflict that reveals the distinction between their individual and social identities. These female characters occupy an awkward and stressful position in which they face constant anxiety about their future and uncertainty over where they belong. They often sympathize with other genteel ladies who have endured financial difficulties and resent the mediocre upper-class women who mistreat them. Hence, they experience conflict between different parts of their characters (economic, social, and psychic), which generates tension with

the need to consolidate these parts to form their class identity. This tension reveals the contradiction between social and individual identity as well as the need to place boundaries on each one. The imperative to distinguish between the two identities arises from the fact that individual identity must be allowed to express itself in socially distinct and yet acceptable ways. For instance, most of the ghost stories I look at in this chapter present female servants who recount their ghost stories to various audiences, a topic I will expand on further in Section Two. These distressed gentlewomen's ghost stories are crafted to evoke sympathy for their inferior status and indignation that they are viewed as lower than their masters. In this way, the stories advocate for giving these characters the opportunity to express their gift for storytelling in a socially legitimate manner. Their social identity should accommodate the individual talents of distressed gentlewomen, rather than forcing all of the female characters to all follow the same path and become Victorian Angels. The unique narrative patterns and open-ended conclusions of these ghost stories write new trajectories for women's lives outside of the conventional marriage plot. The distressed gentlewomen can use the power of storytelling to convey their struggle to reconcile their individual facility for storytelling with their desire to make it integral to their social identity.

Along with the distressed gentlewomen's need to reconcile their individual and social identities, it is essential for them to develop healthy social identities that can handle encounters with people's differences or they risk engaging in competition with other women. They must strike a middle ground between being strong enough to resist those with differing values and being open-minded enough to accept these differences without their class identity feeling threatened. The stress of trying to form a stable class identity can create loneliness, depression, and illness in the distressed gentlewomen. In contrast, their aristocratic and new rich players are portrayed as unhealthy due to their cruelty, snobbery, and laziness. The upper classes constantly feel threatened

by the women in their service and the possible values their inferiors may bring to their social “superiors.” These stories’ focus on health signals that class identities must be flexible instead of rigid because the latter state brings women of different social classes into competition. At the same time, healthy class identities can only form when genteel women in economic distress reach stable class positions, rather than fearing decline or being ambitious. As the Malthusian banquet indicates, the stability of class identities can be threatened if anyone from below can take a place at the table. They become precarious through competition between women close to one another (sisters/relatives/friends) or outsiders (servants hoping to improve their position). This female rivalry may turn so deadly that one or both of the opponents will die unless they can create flexible class identities. The competition between middle- and upper-class women distracts from the fact that these ghost stories demand the extension of privileges to middle-class women, without considering the same for lower female servants. Also, the hostility between women of different classes thwarts these ghost stories’ push for feminist reform because their promotion of class division prevents women from allying against the patriarchy.

In striving to define distressed gentlewomen’s class identities and their competition with other women for places at the table, these ghost stories overlook the struggles of lower female servants. Women’s ghost stories render a jarring disconnect between lower female servants and ghosts, which turns the working classes and poor into a *felt absence* uninvited to Malthus’s table. Lower-class women are not substantially represented in these tales, despite having the largest numbers in service, the most physically demanding jobs, and the least amount of social influence. During the *fin de siècle*, middle-class wives benefited from legal reforms, but lower-class women in service and marriage alike were subject to their employers and husbands until World War I (Davidoff 406). The strict division between upper and lower servants and intense snobbery among

domestics made it difficult for them to ally together as a united group. This lack of working-class representation suggests that these stories control this demographic by not allowing them to speak on their own behalf or ask for greater rights. The classism that I perceive in these ghost stories works against an effective social critique because they side with the patriarchy through the banishment lower-class women. They cannot successfully urge readers to reach out to distressed gentlewomen across class lines if sympathy does not extend to lower female servants as well. These ghost stories replicate the oppressive class structure they sought to change by allowing social differences between women to overpower female solidarity, turning lower female servants into the invisible presence haunting Victorian women's ghost stories.

The effect of these ghost stories being set in the homes of the nobility is that they avoid criticizing the middle-class reliance on servant labor or showing ghosts interrupting bourgeois domesticity.¹⁰³ The urban haunted house / suburban ghost story made middle-class London homes a popular setting, and the most prominent contributor to this genre was a female author, Charlotte Riddell. While the early Gothic tradition displaced bourgeois class anxieties onto the foreign castle or country house, a major transition occurs during the Victorian era, when the setting changes to urban and suburban spaces in England. This shift resulted from trends in urban planning as suburbs became popular residences for the middle classes as well as the influence of sensation fiction's portrayal of the home as a threatening place. The suburban ghost story mounts a critique of bourgeois life, exposing the domestic sphere's flaws as well as the failure to maintain secure boundaries between the middle and lower classes. These stories link haunted middle-class homes to urban lodging houses inhabited by the poor and feature undomesticated women who refuse to

¹⁰³ Lara Baker Whelan remarks "the suburban house in supernatural fiction becomes the locus of a struggle for dominance between the lower class or class-less and a middle class interested in solidifying its position within the Victorian social structure" (80).

act respectably (Marcus 124-125; Whelan 85). Most tellingly, suburban ghost stories contain an “undercurrent of middle-class guilt” (Whelan 94) arising from the middle classes’ attempts to separate themselves from the very people they were responsible for helping. The absent working classes in ghost stories focusing on distressed gentlewomen become an obvious presence in this genre, serving to remind bourgeois readers of their obligation to help the lower classes improve.

In this chapter, I examine how Victorian women’s ghost stories avoid evoking this remorse by being set in English country houses and excluding female inferiors altogether. They fiercely condemn the aristocracy and new rich for acting snobbish about their class privileges, but do not apply the same critique to the middle classes. Part of the reason lower female servants may be overlooked is that these domestics were expected to be invisible and perform their work out of sight: “[S]ervants were generally viewed as just ‘there,’ an inevitable presence from whom simultaneously nothing was hidden and yet with whom little was really shared” (Lethbridge 118). In these tales, the ghost-seeing female servant is middle class because lower servants fail to notice or appreciate these phantoms, which do not speak to working-class problems, anxieties, or experiences. In Section One, I analyze ghost stories by Gaskell, Trevanion, and Oliphant in which the younger distressed gentlewomen are placed in conflict with the ghostly doubles representing the limits on their social possibilities. In Section Two, I consider ghost stories by Gaskell, Buisson, and Braddon in which the servant narrators recount “female rivalry narratives” in which women come into conflict with each other over unworthy men. The fact that the ghost-seer is a distressed gentlewoman in stories ranging from 1852 to 1884 marks a clear shift from the tradition of the uneducated and superstitious servant girl witnessing ghosts, which goes all the way back to the early modern period.¹⁰⁴ The reports of supposedly true hauntings show that lower female servants

¹⁰⁴ For more on how masters and servants’ social bonds changed between the eighteenth and nineteenth century, see Hill, Steedman, and Straub. During the eighteenth century, the paternalistic mindset that servants were “children” in

used ghost stories to draw attention to themselves and voice their concerns as marginalized women (Gowing 198; Pearson 72; Handley 17-18). The change in the type of female servant who observes ghosts points to a historical transition in the class anxieties spirits raise from the early modern era to the Victorian period.

Section One: “What Means That Double Girl I Saw?”¹⁰⁵

Section One explores how distressed gentlewomen who observe ghosts in Gaskell’s “The Poor Clare,” Trevanion’s “A Ghost Story,” and Oliphant’s “Old Lady Mary” confront their uncanny doubles. In these three ghost stories, teenage girls confused about their identities meet with their uncanny doubles, and through this encounter with the supernatural, articulate their troubled social, personal, and economic identities. While enabling self-discovery, these ghostly encounters leave the witnesses suffering from mental stress, social anxiety, and deathly sickness because they realize they do not want to end up like their doubles. Freud states that the *doppelgänger* could be produced by uncertainty about one’s individuality, such as when “the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is” (234). The double becomes what he calls “an uncanny harbinger of death” (235) for these women in posing a threat to their lives and thus must be rejected or excised. Since the double reflects the lack of career and personal options for these young ladies afforded by middle-class values, they feel estranged from it and resist the social identity it maps out for them. Rather than being satisfied with the opportunity to have rank, money, or upper-class privileges, the heroines adopt bourgeois values in wishing to prove themselves on their own merits and hard work. These distressed

need of care shifted to a businesslike one that regarded them as hired employees (Steedman 148). At the time, servants performed all kinds of tasks inside and outside the home, which were not strictly gendered or confined to one’s actual job title (Steedman 84). The Victorian era brought several major developments, such as the upstairs/downstairs model of service, the emergence of a rigorous servant hierarchy, and the growing demand for domestics among the middle-classes.

¹⁰⁵ In Gaskell’s “The Poor Clare,” Bridget asks the narrator this question after seeing her granddaughter’s uncanny double (89).

gentlewomen prefer to have a choice in their futures instead of following the path dictated by the rigid social order, a desire that places them in conflict with the older generation. Simon Hay calls open-ended ghost stories “unsatisfying fragments[s]” (88) in which characters see the invisible social structures of their world, a way of knowing that becomes unbearable (87-90). Although these needy ladies are unsettled by seeing the double that makes their restricted possibilities visible to them, this knowledge may also give them a way to escape these constraints. The only way to resolve this conflict is for the distressed gentlewomen to confront their doubles and feel secure enough no longer feel threatened by their difference. The uncanny double must accept their choices by being exorcized, disappearing, or forgotten and the distressed gentlewomen left free to choose their own futures. They must form healthy class identities that accommodate their desire to write their own story as a wife, author, or New Woman by leaving their endings open to interpretation. They are further doubled or connected with lower servants, but deny this association by reinforcing their social status as genteel women, even though both groups are in a dependent position and have few options.

In contrast to the uncanny double signifying Victorian women’s limited choices, the lack of narrative closure found in these ghost stories points to greater prospects for middle-class ladies besides just marriage or service. Kate Krueger asserts that “the ghost story resists the kind of closure that conforms to established social patterns” and shows how this genre undermines the ideal of affluent couples living happily ever after (68). In *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë portrays distressed gentlewoman Lucy Snowe being haunted by her double and turning against the ghostly nun. When her lover departs for the West Indies, Lucy says “M. Emmanuel was away for three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life. Do you scout the paradox?” (493). Unlike most Victorian heroines, Lucy is happy in her lover’s *absence*, since it leaves her free to

work as an independent schoolmistress and later a writer. While she allows optimists to “picture union and a happy succeeding life” (496), her frustrating vagueness about M. Paul’s fate implies that Lucy’s outcome cannot be conveyed by typical narrative conventions. Similarly, women servants do not pursue the common female character arc of the marriage plot, which may be why their personal lives are disregarded in these ghost stories. There are gaps in these tales where the courtship plot should be because these women have failed to secure husbands or stay married; frequently, unrequited love, widowhood, or unhappy marriages force them into service. These ghost stories fit the narrative of the distressed gentlewoman found in popular governess novels like *Agnes Grey* (1847) and *Jane Eyre* (1847). The major difference is all of them contain the suggestion of an unfulfilled marriage plot that is left suspended, cast aside, or jokingly depicted, upsetting readers’ expectations of the way a Victorian woman’s life “should” turn out. The futures of these young women remain ambiguous to gesture at the endless possibilities that could be available to middle-class ladies if they receive, or were to receive, more privileges. However, nowhere do these stories favor extending the same privileges to lower servants, who recognize that the doubles have nothing to do with them or that they must invent narratives about the ghosts relative to their own situations.

In “The Poor Clare” (1856), Gaskell’s sympathetic portrayal of three generations of Fitzgerald women reveals her willingness to bring middle-class Irish Catholic ladies to the forefront and advocate for their class privileges. Scholars have observed that Gaskell displays acceptance of Irish distressed gentlewomen, and her tolerant attitude is notable in light of the popular anti-Catholic discourse of the 1850s.¹⁰⁶ The lawyer narrator relates how Bridget’s talents

¹⁰⁶ Alan Shelston claims Gaskell resorts to “mid-Victorian sensationalism” (143) in her stereotypical portrayal of Irish Catholics, but other scholars have recognized her more liberal approach. Louise Henson and Rebecca Styler argue Gaskell judges certain aspects of Bridget’s Catholic beliefs positive according to her Unitarian values. Rachel Ingelbein reads the story as a critique of the English government’s heartless response to the Irish Famine and finds it

go unappreciated when she comes to England to work for the Starkeys, since there is no place for a gifted woman like her in a bigoted society. As they arrive at Starkey Manor, the Starkeys, Bridget, and her daughter Mary proceed in order of rank. The Fitzgeralds soon overturn the social hierarchy by wielding authority over their masters: “The Squire lost interest in all secular things: Madam was gentle, affectionate, and yielding...But if everyone yielded to [Bridget’s] ‘magic of a superior mind,’ her daughter not unfrequently rebelled. She and her mother were too much alike to agree” (53). Bridget usurps the Starkeys’ place because she is forceful, intelligent, and charismatic compared to her employers, clearly deserving to occupy a better position than that a lady’s maid. Her twofold “magic” allows her to direct the weak-willed Starkeys and use witchcraft to discipline the locals, but she cannot peacefully coexist with her daughter in fighting for control of Starkey Manor. Bridget and Mary’s conflict arises because both are strong women whose talents cannot find expression in their social identities beyond being servants to the inferior Starkeys; hence, they turn against each other in struggling for power, rather than allying against the patriarchy. Mary’s social ambition leads her to go abroad as a lady’s maid seeking greater prospects for herself, which leaves her vulnerable to being seduced by a dissolute lord, Gisborne. Mary hopes her marriage will be “a pleasant surprise to her mother; [Gisborne’s] station and fortune being...far superior to anything she had a right to expect” (56) by making her an aristocratic lady in charge of her own country house. She proves herself “too much alike” her mother by repeating her mistakes; Bridget endured an unhappy marriage with a depraved Irish noble that ended with her returning to Lady Starkey’s service. The similar failure of these two cross-class unions between a female domestic and upper-class man illustrates how an

“remarkably free of sectarian prejudice” (13). While the “Bridget” figure was common in American homes during the nineteenth century, Irish female servants were considered undesirable as domestics in England. In 1851, even though they were in desperate need of work, Irish women were regarded as the most unwanted candidates for service because they were stereotyped as “unruly and unmanageable” (Walter 144).

advantageous marriage does not necessarily bring a secure conclusion to distressed gentlewomen's career.

Due to her lack of class privilege, Bridget must use her magical abilities to redress the oppression she faces in an unjust social order. However, her witchcraft yields negative results because it is linked to her grief over her lost child. After the Starkeys die, Bridget's "magic of a superior mind" and sorcery protect her from the locals of Coldholme, but the pun on "cold home" indicates their fear of her power. For instance, a fellow servant Bridget saved from dismissal shows murderous hostility toward her, telling his superior she "needs a ducking" (80) for practicing magic. In 1711, she curses Gisborne for shooting her dog Mignon, saying "[h]e has killed the only creature that loved me—the dumb beast that I loved. Bring down heavy sorrow on his head for it, O ye saints! He thought I was helpless, because he saw me lonely and poor; but are not the armies of heaven for the like of me?" (59). During the eighteenth century, servant women would call on ghosts to demand justice for themselves (Handley 211), which is what Bridget does in entreating the "armies of heaven" for support. Bridget's imploring this ghostly mass to avenge her emphasizes her helplessness as a female servant who has to appeal to a higher power to defend her from abuse by an upper-class man. While she wants violent reprisal against her oppressor, her curse only results in her innocent granddaughter Lucy being persecuted. Although she has a valid grievance, Bridget's crisis of faith in the wake of Mary's disappearance has allowed hellish forces to pervert her magic so that her wishes are granted in a twisted fashion (66, 92). Telling the narrator about her missing daughter, Bridget says "my heart's will is fearful and strong...I wonder often it has not drawn [Mary] out of the grave to come and stand before me, and hear me tell her how much I loved her" (66). Bridget's two desires of punishing Gisborne and compelling Mary's ghost "out of the grave" to visit her are fulfilled when Lucy comes to be haunted by an evil double

resembling the “dead Mary” (88). The narrator speculates that Bridget’s curse on Gisborne is a divine judgment for turning Mary into a fallen woman, especially since she drowned herself on finding out she was officially “neither to have nor to hold” (81).

In view of Mary and Lucy’s physical similarity, the demon can be read as Mary haunting her daughter because Bridget’s desire for her child’s presence has overshadowed the happiness of the next generation. As a mother, Bridget is troubled by a *lack* of closure in knowing Mary’s fate for many years, so she begs the Virgin Mary (another grieving parent) for answers about her missing daughter: “Am I for ever to hope? Grant me at least despair!” (62-63). Bridget is so preoccupied with her daughter’s memory that her sorrow comes at her granddaughter’s expense by threatening Lucy’s life. Mary is the absence shaping the entire story in that she never appears after going abroad, yet functions as the connecting thread that draws all the characters together. The narrator and his uncle untangle aristocratic lineages to settle property disputes, with the former setting out to find Mary as the heiress to the Irish Fitzgerald estates. The narrator explains that “to hear [his uncle] talk, at leisure times, about any coat of arms that came across his path was as good as a play or romance” (61). As middle-class men who earn their wealth making sense of the arbitrary nature of noble family trees, the uncle and his nephew show these genealogies to be nothing more than a convenient legal fiction that forms the foundation for middle-class values, just like a “play or romance.” The narrator follows bourgeois values is a hardworking, responsible, and open-minded man who earns the reader’s admiration with his concern for social outcasts like Bridget and Lucy. He unravels the origins of Lucy’s double and her maternal ancestry when she reports the gossip she overheard at her father’s house: “I heard a whisper among the servants that a doom was over [Gisborne], and that he knew it” (76, 82). While their testimony proves that Gisborne is being punished for mistreating Bridget, the lower servants do not relate this lady’s

maid's plight to their own condition. They speak of Bridget's curse and Lucy's evil double from an outsider's perspective, since these supernatural incidents are only relevant to the Fitzgeralds as distressed gentlewomen, not the lower servants.

Lucy's conflict with the ghostly double reveals that she has developed a class identity based on bourgeois values that seeks expression, rather than to acquire the trappings of middle-class values. Her desire for a stable class identity distinguishes her from her maternal heritage and its links to domestic service, since she does not aspire to a higher position the way her mother and grandmother did. Critics have remarked that Gisborne has branded Lucy as illegitimate through his sham marriage to Mary, and her bastardy should prevent her from inheriting the Fitzgerald estates (Lawson and Shakinovsky 102). Lucy tells the narrator how her father "reproached me for my undue familiarity—all unbecoming a gentlewoman—with his grooms. I had been in the stable-yard, laughing and talking, he said" (77). The sight of Lucy's double flirting with the grooms makes Gisborne uneasy because she is throwing her already uncertain status as a "gentlewoman" into doubt by transgressing social barriers. Her "familiarity" with the grooms—in a social, romantic, and personal sense—is a troubling reminder to her father that she comes from a line of female servants. As a practitioner of bourgeois values, Lucy dissociates herself from this entity along class lines by stressing that her double did not conduct herself like a "lady" (77) the way Lucy would in dealing with the male lower servants. Despite being closely associated with domestics and even descended from them, Lucy distinguishes between herself and those who serve her, such as Gisborne's grooms and her governess Mistress Clarke. Lucy agrees with Gisborne that social boundaries must be upheld, and yet she is flexible enough to be willing to marry beneath her to the bourgeois narrator. At one point, the narrator tries to console Mistress Clarke when she laments

that the demon endangers her charge's health by slowly draining away her life, following Lucy wherever she goes, and isolating her from others through its misbehavior:

“And what is all the wealth in the whole world to that poor girl?” she said. “[The Fitzgerald estates] will not free her from the ghastly bewitchment which persecutes her. As for money, what a pitiful thing it is! it cannot touch her.”
 “No more can the Evil Creature harm her,” I said. “Her holy nature dwells apart, and cannot be defiled by all the devilish arts in the whole world.” (81)

Lucy gets into a conflict with the double representing her maternal and paternal heritage because she does not want to follow either direction; hence, her “holy nature” exists apart from The demon as well as a class identity based on property, wealth, or lineage. Her true self remains equally unaffected by her mother's Irish estates and the demon representing her paternal heritage, which signals that she wants a different future for herself than to wind up like either her maternal ancestors or Gisborne.

Lucy's disorienting first encounter with her double in the mirror gestures at how she must figure out her individual identity by confronting the demon and turning against the embodiment of Gisborne's vices as an upper-class man. Hence, her internal clash between her individual and social identities brings her into a confrontation with the double signifying her father's class standing. After wronging two generations of Fitzgerald women, Gisborne's influence on Lucy and his class status can only be negative, which is why his declaration of love for her summons her evil double and turns her into his next victim. She is unaware of her identity because Gisborne has kept her lineage a secret from her, but the demon's appearance exposes his vicious character, hinting at the danger of Lucy becoming like her father:

“[Gisborne] came in with a riding-whip in his hand; and, accusing me harshly of evil doings, of which I knew no more than you, sir, he was about to strike me... he stopped his arm mid-way, gasped and staggered, crying out, ‘The curse—the curse!’ I looked up in terror. In the great mirror opposite I saw myself, and right behind, another wicked, fearful self, so like me that my soul seemed to quiver within me, as though not knowing to which similitude of body it belonged. My father saw my

double at the same moment, either in its dreadful reality, whatever that might be, or in the scarcely less terrible reflection in the mirror; but what came of it at that moment I cannot say, for I suddenly swooned away.” (77)

In the weeks leading up to this scene, Gisborne’s escalating aggression toward Lucy illustrates his cruel and unrepentant character; significantly, he sees the double just as he is about to whip her violently for wrongs it has committed, not her. Perceiving the “wicked, fearful self” of his daughter, Gisborne recognizes that he is being punished by Bridget’s curse for seducing Mary, killing Mignon, and acting tyrannical. Lucy’s doppelgänger mimics her father in trying to entice the grooms just like he lured Mary away, but he cannot tolerate the same behavior in his own daughter. He realizes that “the sins of the fathers are indeed visited upon the children” (79; 82) when his own sins are reflected back at him, since the evil Lucy has inherited his depraved nature and loose sexuality.¹⁰⁷ She experiences a confusion of identity once her true self (“soul”) cannot recognize its proper body, but Mistress Clarke and the narrator’s conversation indicates she has never yielded to the demon’s temptations to stray. Although Bridget cursed Lucy, Gisborne carries the deeper guilt of provoking her by abusing his class privilege and further shows his unwillingness to atone by expelling his daughter in “disgrace” (77). In contrast, female servants like Mistress Clarke and Bridget prove to be far stronger than the male characters, acting as Lucy’s protectors while she is haunted by the demon.

Typical of professional men in ghost stories, the narrator, his uncle, and Bridget’s confessor Father Bernard are powerless against the demon, and Bridget realizes they must “[l]eave me to wrestle with it!” (89) to deliver her granddaughter. Bridget and Lucy turn out to be doubles as

¹⁰⁷ For readings that see Bridget as more culpable for the demon or insist Lucy comes from a cursed female line, see Reddy 261-263, Lawson and Shakinovsky 95-97, Stoneman 43-44, Styler 41-43, Koustinoudi 32-36, and Makala 55-63. These critics overlook the fact that Gaskell specifically blames a *male* ancestor (“sins of the fathers”) and that Gisborne is the most obvious candidate for tainting Lucy. She heard the original kernel for the story from M. Bonette, of “a man’s falling in love with a mysterious Girl at a watering place, & her telling him of the Fiendish Double by which she was haunted for some *sin of her Father’s*” (Letter 168; emphasis added).

marginalized women struggling to gain acceptance despite being surrounded by negative supernatural activity. Lucy displays more strength during her ordeal than her lover does because she has greater “faith” in Bridget’s ability to rescue her and provides her grandmother with a different model than revenge for responding to oppression: “Lucy lives her own pure and loving life, unharmed and untainted, though all men fall off from her. I would I could have her faith!” (95). At the same time, the narrator considers her forbearance a double-edged virtue, saying “[Lucy’s] gentleness and piety, under the pressure of so horrible a life, seemed over-passive to me” (89). Lucy adopts bourgeois values of love, patience, and forgiveness that align her with the narrator and serve as a model for Bridget. The only way Bridget can save Lucy is to become a Poor Clare, in the process combining aspects of the female domestic and Victorian Angel by serving the destitute in Antwerp. For her, taking orders changes Bridget into a ghostly presence “utterly dead to everything” (96) except her duty to meekly help those in need. Critics have interpreted Bridget’s decision to enter a convent as a punishment (Reddy 262), victimization (Martin 38), or containment (Styler 43) of a proud woman. In the context of the time Gaskell was writing, however, joining a convent or becoming a sister of mercy was regarded as a better profession for women than being a teacher or a governess. Traveling to Antwerp, the narrator arrives just as Belgian rebels are fighting off Austrian invaders, with Gisborne “serving” (90) as an officer for the tyrants and still bullying the lower classes. The narrator’s act of siding with the working-class men in their revolt makes it obvious that this historical fiction is drawing an analogy with the Victorian present, as detailed in Gaskell’s novels *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1855). Contrary to Gisborne, Bridget learns to be “the meanest servant of all” (97) in a Christian sense, which culminates in her giving Gisborne her last morsel of food and starving to death during a terrible famine.

As scholars have noted, “The Poor Clare” lacks a sense of finality because the narrator abruptly ends the story with Bridget telling him that the double has vanished as a result of her self-sacrifice. She rings the bell for service (in a religious, not domestic, sense) to unite the community in feeding her as repayment for her charity, assembling “both Anversois [Belgians] and Austrians—pressing onward with set teeth, and no word spoken; and all over, and through all came that sharp tinkle—that cry for help in extremity” (101). Bridget produces a collapse of the social order and a truce between warring sides, with everyone coming to her aid regardless of their class, religion, or nationality. Rather than espousing a radical breakdown of the class system, Bridget acts on Lucy’s behalf in order to exorcize the double that is limiting her opportunities as a gentlewoman. Lucy’s class identity can finally form now that she can cement her position as a lady, rather than fearing to descend to her mother’s or striving to reach her father’s. The scarcity of food vividly recalls Malthus’s feast and how the upper-class Gisborne has a place at the table even though he does not deserve it, while Bridget must yield her seat for him, in a scenario that should strike readers as unjust. To some critics, the ending appears bleak for the lovers, since we never definitely learn if Lucy is released from the demon, inherits the Fitzgerald estates, or marries the narrator (Lawson and Shakinovsky 102; Koustinoudi 32). These gaps in the story do not necessarily imply that Lucy suffers a bad outcome, only that the narrator may not know how to articulate it. He has studied his uncle’s books on noble bloodlines and they “treated of things that were past; none of them planned or looked forward into the future” (61), just like he leaves his narrative about Lucy open-ended. Bridget and Mary endure unhappy marriages, but the same might not be true for Lucy if her relationship with the narrator resolves the social tensions that have erupted by uniting male/female, Irish/English, and Catholic/Protestant. Bridget’s death leaves readers sympathizing with her as a heroic woman capable of greatness who was restricted by her lack of social privileges.

Nonetheless, Bridget's claim that her granddaughter "is freed from the curse!" (102) hints that there may be greater choices open to Lucy without her paternal or maternal heritage holding her back.

Instead of revealing the burden of family lineage, the spectral double in Ada Trevanion's "A Ghost Story" (1857-1858) conveys how inadequate female education and career routes can impede distressed gentlewomen whose talents lie elsewhere than teaching or service.¹⁰⁸ Trevanion portrays the close bond that develops between Ruth Irvine and her English teacher Miss Winter in Woodford House, a female boarding school run by Mrs. Wheeler. Ruth's opening comments state "[t]here are many incidents on record which resemble the following plain narrative, and in books of wise men may be found attempts, more or less plausible, to account for similar facts without having recourse to anything supernatural. The reader will draw his own inferences" (16).¹⁰⁹ In writing her story, Ruth insists that she will not rationalize her sightings of Miss Winter's ghost the way male skeptics do in their "books," marking herself as different for being a female author. She promises a lack of narrative closure from the beginning, leaving it up to the reader to devise a logical explanation for her experiences. During the Victorian era, girls' schools were bourgeois

¹⁰⁸ Trevanion was a frequent contributor to magazines and released a book of verse entitled *Poems* (1858), which one Victorian reviewer called a good example of contemporary "mediocre poetry" (528). He judges her based on certain stereotypes about female writers when he affirms "[i]t is easier for ladies to shine in mediocre poetry than for men" ("Mediocre Poetry" 528) due to their constricted education. Rosemary Jackson dismissively characterizes "A Ghost Story" as a typical Victorian supernatural tale with an "archaic tone" (xiii) and "didactic style" (xxiii). Emma Donoghue describes the meetings between Ruth and Miss Winter's ghost as "weird, passionate encounter[s] between a living woman and her dead friend" (131) without elaborating on this possibility of same-sex desire. Trevanion should be of greater critical interest given her literary heritage. After all, her mother Georgiana was Byron's favorite niece and her father Henry eloped with Elizabeth Medora Leigh (Rowse 195). Her allusion to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* brings attention to her family's Romantic connections, while Ruth's poem in four cantos about a wicked pirate is a veiled reference to Byron's *The Corsair* (1814). Trevanion also wrote several poems about depressed women who commit suicide by drowning just like Miss Winter, such as "Cathleen's Ghost," "The Ruined Tower," and "Lost Agnes."

¹⁰⁹ I discovered that Trevanion published "A Ghost Story" in two magazines in 1857 and 1858, and the different versions have notable textual variants that impact how one reads the story. Throughout this chapter, I will refer to the 1858 version because the earlier one has an awkward narrative frame and concrete details that detract from the enigmatic quality of Trevanion's story.

institutions that defined themselves as “homes” where everyone was part of a family (de Bellaigue 19), but, as a student, Ruth is conscious of her inferior status at Woodford. Rather than acting like a “school-mother,” Mrs. Wheeler has a “loud voice” (16) and “very authoritative manner” (16), fostering an unhealthy respect for wealth among her students. Mrs. Wheeler emphasizes money, “deportment” (16), and female accomplishments; however, the story shows that being a lady requires more than a set of artificial behaviors. By way of contrast, Miss Winter’s eyes poetically “with the least emotion, seemed to fill, as it were, with light, like the flashing brilliancy of moonshine upon water” (16). Ruth’s fascination with her shining eyes highlights Miss Winter’s passion, sensitivity, and intelligence, bourgeois values that make her teacher ill-suited to Mrs. Wheeler’s middle-class values. Miss Winter’s frustration arises when she cannot socially express her interest in literary activities beyond the drudgery of being an English teacher to a group of spoiled *nouveau riche* girls. This simile also foreshadows Miss Winter’s death, suggesting she commits suicide by drowning when she is unable to cope with her feelings, and Ruth’s emotional vulnerability makes her susceptible to a similar end.

Ruth’s resemblance to Miss Winter as a distressed gentlewoman following bourgeois values places her at odds with the middle-class values of her new rich classmates and Miss Wheeler. She is drawn to Miss Winter rather than the more exotic characters because she senses that solving the mystery surrounding her teacher’s family life will help Ruth figure out her own identity and position in the world. Woodford has several “mysterious inmates” (17) who provoke Ruth’s imagination due to the whimsical stories she could tell about them, but “[they] were outshone, on the whole, by Miss Winter, who never talked about her relations, called at the post-office for her letters...and, further, had a small oak wardrobe in her room, the key of which she wore around her neck” (17). She considers Miss Winter the most intriguing resident for being so

similar to Ruth herself, since they are both well-read women who feel out of place at Woodford and depressed by their humble station. As Ruth says, “I thought this interval [evening studies] the pleasantest part of the day, for Miss Winter was clever, and took great pains where she saw intelligence or a desire to learn” (17) in bright students like her. Mrs. Wheeler’s emphasis on status over academic pursuits means Ruth’s affluent classmates only attend to flaunt their class position. Bullying her for being a teacher’s pet, the rich girls claim Ruth’s destitute father has sent his daughter to Woodford out of ambition, given that she could ascend the social scale by studying to become a governess or teacher.¹¹⁰ Their claim reveals that the other schoolgirls taunt Ruth out of feeling threatened that their social inferior is intellectually superior to them, as well as a rigid adherence to class identity that leads them to close ranks against a perceived interloper. Although Ruth is more admirable than her *nouveau riche* classmates, Mrs. Wheeler’s focus on how to act like a Victorian lady on a superficial level makes her unable to appreciate her student’s good qualities: “O! Mrs. Wheeler’s earnest endeavors to make me graceful; her despair of my elbows; her hopelessness in my shoulders, and her glare of indignation at my manner of entering a room!” (18). By portraying Ruth’s insecurity at failing to walk gracefully or play the piano, “A Ghost Story” joins in the general criticism of girls’ schools for only teaching students flashy accomplishments to attract suitors (de Bellaigue 172).

Ruth meets with her double in the form of Miss Winter’s ghost several times because she is a teenage girl confused about her true self and the place she occupies in a class system that hinders her from incorporating her literary aspirations into her social identity. During summer break, Ruth must stay at Woodford while her father is abroad, becoming so upset at her “homeless state” (18) that she falls sick with “depression” (18). Miss Winter comforts the lonely Ruth by

¹¹⁰ Wanda Neff describes how “[t]he more conscientious young women studied by themselves after their schooldays were over” (164) if they were training to become governesses, like Ruth does.

showing her sisterly affection and offering her a picture of family life, describing the siblings she loves so much she would overcome “death or life” (18) for them. Ruth’s remark that Miss Winter “never allowed herself to look forward with much hope to the future” (18) implies that her teacher may have been planning to drown herself when she leaves to visit her family. In discussing her personal life with Ruth, Miss Winter does not talk about her present or future, as though doubtful she has good prospects for either one. Ruth’s pining for the absent Miss Winter reveals she is too deeply attached to her teacher and must learn to be self-reliant if she is to have a worthwhile future. Before her departure, Miss Winter gives Ruth a copy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* to express her support of her student’s literary interests. This work about a fantastical sea voyage is fitting for a girl who uses her Romantic imagination to escape her dreary existence. In keeping with her literary interests, she composes a long poem about Mrs. Sparkes’s husband being a pirate “shot for a voluminous catalogue of atrocities” (19). Ruth feels guilty about her creative endeavors right before she sees the ghost, which presents the future that awaits her instead of a writing career. During the first encounter, Ruth longingly reaches for Miss Winter and grows worried after the ghost vanishes, suggesting that her dependence on her teacher makes Ruth fear she has been abandoned. The next morning, she hears “the servants at their work below, and was sure it was very late” (19) by reasoning that they are toiling to finish their tasks before noon. Ruth becomes aware of the discrepancy between her experience and theirs, since the lower female servants remain oblivious to a ghost that does not speak to any of their concerns, just Ruth’s.

In spite of the encouragement Miss Winter gives her, Ruth must distance herself from her double shadowing forth an undesirable social identity for her if she wants to overcome her hopelessness at her inferior social position and pursue her literary ambitions. During the second encounter, she is “dreamily” (20) staring out the glass door leading to the garden where she loves

to read by herself, but the ghost's arrival disrupts her creative meditation:

The door was closely shut, and the bolt still fast; but standing in the moonlight, where I had lately stood, was the slight figure of Miss Winter! She was as white, and still, and speechless as she had been on the preceding night; it almost seemed as if some dreadful misfortune had struck her dumb. I wished to speak to her, but there was something in her face which daunted me; and besides the fever of anxiety I was in began to dry up my lips, as if they would never be able to shape any words again. But I moved quickly toward her, and bent forward to kiss her. To my surprise and terror her form vanished. (20-21)

Ruth perceives Miss Winter's ghost as though looking at her reflection in the glass, since the ghost is positioned "where I had lately stood" and they are both silent, reinforcing the parallels between the two as doubles. Miss Winter's bleak outlook, surname, and appearance would raise deathly associations for Victorian readers accustomed to telling Christmas ghost stories and thus the specter assumes an ominous air. Like Miss Winter, Ruth suffers from depression and comes from a shaky financial situation, so she could very well grow up to be a distressed gentlewoman who might kill herself out of despair. The ghost represents both a possible future as well a warning against it for Ruth if she does not find a way to reconcile her individual and social identities, and she feels a "fever of anxiety" that threatens to render her speechless forever because this outcome would interfere with her dream of writing. She is "daunted" by the sight of the ghost for compelling her to come to terms with Miss Winter's death. Her failure to kiss Miss Winter before she disappears signifies that Ruth must learn to be self-sufficient instead of relying on her teacher, but her reluctance to act on her own prevents her from accepting her loss just yet. It is essential for Ruth to come to terms with her grief over losing Miss Winter so she does not become overwhelmed by sorrow, which could very well end in her following her double's example.

While "A Ghost Story" was clearly inspired by Charlotte Brontë's novel *Villette*, the major difference between the two works is the former's emphasis on the need for distressed gentlewomen to support each other. There are many similarities between Miss Winter and Lucy Snowe,

including their names, class status, positions as English teachers, and interest in literary activities. However, Lucy lacks the close bond that Miss Winter develops with Ruth beyond her antagonistic relationship with her self-involved student, Ginevra Fanshawe. Ruth's stay at school during summer break resembles Lucy's isolation over the long vacation at the Pensionnat, which leads to her becoming depressed and confessing her loneliness to a Catholic priest in a confessional. Lucy eloquently describes the sorrow distressed gentlewomen suffer without any future to look forward to besides working in teaching or service for the rest of their lives:

My spirits had long been gradually sinking; now that the prop of employment was withdrawn, they went down fast. Even to look forward was not to hope: the dumb future spoke no comfort, offered no promise, gave no inducement to bear present evil in reliance on future good. A sorrowful indifference to existence often pressed on me—a despairing resignation to reach betimes the end of all things earthly. Alas! When I had full leisure to look on life as life must be looked on by such as me, I found it but a hopeless desert: tawny sands, with no green field, no palm-tree, no well in view. (156)

Lucy's existence and that of others "such as me" appears metaphorically barren because she struggles with the lack of satisfaction in multiple areas of her life, such as her absence of love, satisfactory employment, and literary interests with her social position. However, Trevanion's ghost story reworks Lucy's narrative by telling it from a schoolgirl's perspective in order to focus on the younger generation and Ruth's relationships with multiple distressed gentlewomen. In Trevanion's version, Miss Winter gives into despair and likely commits suicide without anyone to help her resolve her conflict between her individual and social identity. Ruth avoids this fate with help of other distressed gentlewomen who display healthy versions of class identity for her, since they develop strong inner selves while empathizing with other genteel ladies in their position.

While Ruth feels most akin to Miss Winter, Mrs. Wheeler and Mrs. Sparkes present her with other female role models who have survived hardships and gone on to enjoy independent and productive lives. Despite Mrs. Wheeler's promotion of shallow values and learning, Woodford

acts as a haven for distressed gentlewomen whose fathers or husbands have failed to provide for them. The rarity of married English schoolmistresses means Mrs. Wheeler's husband must be dead or financially unsuccessful, leaving her to run Woodford to support herself (de Bellaigue 73). Mrs. Sparkes, the parlor-boarder, is a sea captain's widow rumored to have lost a huge fortune, inspiring a "vague association of her with the sea, and storms, and coral reefs, which occasioned the wildest legends to be circulated as her history" (17). Mrs. Sparkes's past is a romanticized version of what happens to Miss Winter and other distressed gentlewomen transmuted into exciting fiction, like Ruth's poem. In Miss Winter's absence, Mrs. Sparkes looks after Ruth, expressing skepticism of her belief that she has seen the dead instructor. However, she agrees to sleep in the girls' dormitory with Ruth and is present during the ghost's final appearance:

A night-lamp was burning in the room, for Mrs. Sparkes never slept in the dark. Its light showed me the pale still face of Miss Winter more clearly than I had seen it on the previous nights. The features were like those of a corpse. The eyes fixed direct on me, the long-familiar, grave, shining eyes. I see them now; I shall see them till I die! O how sad and earnest they looked! A full minute, or it seemed so, did she gaze in silence; then she said, in a low, urgent tone, still looking through me with her eyes, "Ruth, the oak wardrobe in the room which was mine, contains papers of importance, papers which will be wanted. Will you remember this?"

"I promise that I will," I replied. My voice was steady, though the cold drops stood on my brow. The restless, wistful look in her eyes changed, as I spoke, to a peaceful and happy expression. So, with a smile upon her face, she passed away. (22-23)

Miss Winter's apparition visits Ruth to tell her about hidden documents in a wardrobe that will help the Winter siblings recover money from a dishonest relation, but the ghost also allows her to understand herself better. The burning of Mrs. Sparkes's lamp and her presence with Ruth makes her realize she is not quite as alone as she thought, and Mrs. Sparkes's name conveys life, warmth, and optimism that counteract Miss Winter's hopelessness. Unlike their earlier meeting, when Ruth was "daunted" (20) by Miss Winter's expression from looking at her, she can now face her teacher's "corpse"-like visage and acknowledge her death. The reoccurring image of Miss

Winter's shining eyes and Ruth's verb tense switch of "I see them; I shall see them till I die!" highlight how intensely present her teacher is for her. While Ruth insists she will recall Miss Winter until her death, her greater confidence at this moment and the ghost's parting smile imply she will not end up like her instructor. In fact, Miss Winter must count on Ruth to deliver her message, and her stare directs Ruth to look for strength in herself now that she can no longer depend on her late teacher.

After the double vanishes, the lower female servants who maintain Woodford briefly appear and repudiate the ghost's existence, underscoring how they have been excluded from the story's plea on behalf of distressed gentlewomen. When the terrified Mrs. Sparkes wakes up the cook and housemaids, they bravely get up in the middle of the night to protect the school in Mrs. Wheeler's absence. Listening to their conversation, Ruth learns that they consider the ghost a figment of Mrs. Sparkes's imagination, because Ruth's journey of self-discovery and Miss Winter's fortune have nothing to do with them: "And as the servants went back to bed I heard them agree what a tiresome and wearing thing it was when ladies took fancies" (22). The fact that the female domestics are left out of Ruth's supernatural experiences establishes a class difference between the two, even though she comes from an inferior background, like them. Ruth swoons after Mrs. Wheeler hints that Miss Winter has left, suspecting from the ghost's appearances that her teacher is dead. Mrs. Sparkes's summary of the newspaper obituary leaves narrative gaps for Trevanion's audience to fill in by reading between the lines to discover that Miss Winter committed suicide: "The story of her death was, like all sad stories I have ever heard told in real life, very-very short. She had left the house where her sisters were lodging, late one evening; that was the last time they saw her alive. She had been found dead, lying along the rocks under the cliff. That was all there really was to tell. There was nobody near her when she was found, and no

evidence to show how she came there” (22-23). Ruth’s story gives us insight into Miss Winter’s motives that is missing from the “very short” newspaper account, portraying how she was depressed by her life as a schoolteacher. She chooses to die knowing her family would receive a substantial amount of money, which illustrates that Miss Winter is not satisfied with obtaining the trappings of middle-class values in the form of wealth or social rank. Instead, Miss Winter and Ruth want access to professional fields related to literature beyond just teaching, and Miss Winter’s suicide is an example of what will happen to middle-class women as long as society continues to deny them the opportunity to express their passion for writing in a socially legitimate way.

The ending of “A Ghost Story” offers a lack of closure because Ruth does not explain what happened to her after she leaves Woodford except that it has been “[s]ome years” (16) since Miss Winter’s death. The arrival of Miss Winter’s younger brother introduces the possibility of a marriage plot for Ruth, but this narrative never materializes in a story that centers on female relations and places men at the periphery. Ruth’s name recalls her Biblical namesake being rewarded for her loyalty to her mother-in-law Naomi with marriage to Boaz in the seasonal context of agriculture (winter/spring); however, “A Ghost Story” does not end with Ruth marrying or having a family. In return for uncovering the hidden papers, the brother gives Ruth a locket with his sister’s hair and calls himself her “brother” (24) to make her an honorary member of the Winter family.¹¹¹ Instead of rejecting her double, Ruth cherishes the locket to keep Miss Winter “woven into the texture of life at all turns, giving it one of its essential meanings, its impetus and starting point for stories” (Lutz 128). Ruth’s father arrives to take her home just as she comes to accept

¹¹¹ The 1857 version makes Ruth’s induction into Miss Winter’s family even more obvious. The two find the papers in the false drawer “with all the other things Miss Winter had most cherished—the letters which had passed between her father and mother before they were married; her mother’s wedding-ring; her brother’s picture; the first copy-books of her sister’s [*sic*] when they were learning to write; *the little keepsakes which I at different times had given her*” (193; emphasis added).

Miss Winter's death and shifts from mourning to memorializing her. The fact that the last word of the story is "now" (24) shows that Ruth is focused on the present and can compose her own ending from here. In Coleridge's poem, the Ancient Mariner must tell his ghost story to get respite, saying, "[s]ince then, at an uncertain hour, / That agony returns: / And till my ghastly tale is told, / This heart within me burns" (lines 583-586). Similarly, Ruth has a compulsion to narrate that leads her to repeat the story of her encounters with Miss Winter's ghost to Mrs. Sparkes twice just within her brief account (20, 21). Rather than succumbing to Miss Winter's tragic fate, Ruth stresses the positive side of her instructor's life by buying her a tombstone and commemorating her in print, becoming an author in the process. The warm relationships between distressed gentlewomen exhibit that they need to receive support from other women to improve their status, along with better schooling and career training, so they can have more fulfilling educational and professional lives.

Unlike Gaskell's emphasis on family lineage and Trevanion's on female education, Oliphant expresses concern about class status and what it means to be a "lady" in her story "Old Lady Mary" (1884). While lineage, education, and ladyhood are all social expressions of female identity, they are each motivated by different desires and follow a varied direction, which makes them distinct from each other. Oliphant's ghost story displays anxiety about gentlewomen's rights at a time when the New Woman began to appear in *fin-de-siècle* literature, reflecting how women readers had to choose between idleness and independence. Like Malthus's privileged class, Lady Mary represents the leisured aristocrat who has "come to the higher table-land of life, and [] borne all the spites of fortune" (64) in her elevated social position.¹¹² Her lavish lifestyle allows her to

¹¹² According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "tableland" came to refer to an elevated social position in the early nineteenth century, thirteen years after Malthus wrote about the table as a metaphor for the position of the upper classes.

enjoy a peaceful old age in a “pretty house full of things” (65), waited on by her servants and goddaughter, “Little” Mary Vivian. Lady Mary feels proud that “[t]he poor had no reason to complain of her; her servants were very comfortable; and the one person in her house who was nearer to her own level...was very comfortable too” (65). The repetition of “comfortable” shows that Lady Mary’s financial support of the poor, her domestics, and Little Mary keeps all of them dependent on her and subject to her whims. For instance, she patronizes her maid Jervis by ordering her to go to bed rather than visit her fiancé, the steward Brown, thinking she is being playful: “I suppose I have been spoiling sport, keeping you here” (71). She is oblivious that Jervis and Brown can envision a life independent of her, with them planning to marry and set up a lodging house after she dies. The narrator’s observation that “Nobody is rude to the Lady Marys of life” (69) confirms that she exacts deference from others on the grounds that her wealth and prestige justify a certain degree of capitulation to her whims. Thus the vicar, doctor and lawyer must be overly tactful in urging her to compose a will in Little Mary’s favor. By expecting people to defer to her based on her money and power (), she forces her vicar, doctor, and lawyer to be overly tactful in urging her to make a will in Little Mary’s favor. Since she has grown too attached to her easy life to accept she will ever die, she treats her loyal goddaughter’s future as a joke by hiding her will in her Italian cabinet. Lady Mary assumes Little Mary will ““take care of the servants”” (71) when she becomes an heiress, only to leave her goddaughter and servants destitute because she passes away without anyone knowing the will’s location.

Once Lady Mary dies, we follow her ghost’s perspective during her journey from Purgatory to earth as a supernatural distressed gentlewoman, without the middle-class accouterments of rank, money, or family to help her uncover her will. Dickerson claims that Lady Mary’s time as a spirit calls attention to the Victorian Angel’s helplessness (142-143), but she suffers the most from her

experience of being socially invisible. In Purgatory, Lady Mary is told “you are a great lady no longer” (77) and must labor for repentance like everyone else, suggesting a society established on bourgeois values in which people ascend through hard work, not privilege. She reacts with horror at her folly in leaving Little Mary penniless, refusing to take the dead’s view that her goddaughter will learn of her good intentions after dying. In an echo of Malthus’s image of “nature’s mighty feast,” Lady Mary thinks that providing for Little Mary is “a thing which nature demanded” (66), and she deserves a place at the table for being related to a noblewoman. Her knowledge of ghost stories makes her well aware that those left behind usually fear apparitions, but she returns anyway to atone for her wrong. Lady Mary expresses her reluctance to go back in classed terms because she shrinks from becoming “a vulgar wonder,—a thing that the poorest laughed at, yet feared” (83) and giving up the respect she once commanded. Instead, she suffers the undesirable fate of going unnoticed by everyone besides the most dependent, those innocent of class prejudice: dogs, babies, and children. Her invisibility among her social inferiors teaches her how it feels to be a “poor dependent” (91) like Little Mary, such as when her tenant Catherine fails to notice her “kind mistress” (91). Lady Mary assumes an uncanny quality as “an exile” (90), “a stranger” (93), and an “outcast” (123) in a terrifying state of powerlessness: “[T]o be thus left outside of life, to speak and not be heard, to stand, unseen, astounded, unable to secure any attention!...A great panic seized the woman who was no longer of this world” (91). In her ghostly state, she mirrors Little Mary as a lady who must depend on her own resources to succeed after suddenly losing her privileged lifestyle.

While the concealment of Lady Mary’s will deprives both Little Mary and the upper servants of their legacies, everyone is more concerned about how her goddaughter will preserve her genteel status as a distressed gentlewoman. The experience of being ignored leads Lady Mary

to journey below stairs to see her upper female servants, feeling a newfound sense of empathy with those she had earlier overlooked. The housekeeper, Prentiss, acts indignant that Lady Mary did not leave any provision for her faithful domestics, but she saves her most stinging rebuke for her mistress's neglect of Little Mary:

“[Lady Mary] was one of them, and I’ve known a many, as could not abide to see a gloomy face...She kept us all comfortable for the sake of being comfortable herself, but no more....What’s you [Jervis] or me, or any one...in comparison of that poor little thing that can’t work for her living like we can; that is left on the charity of folks she don’t belong to? I’d have forgiven my lady anything, if she’d done what was right by Miss Mary.” (92-93)

Prentiss questions Lady Mary's pride in making her servants “comfortable” by pointing out the selfish motives underlying the middle-class values she follows, namely, that her mistress took care of her servants just so she would be taken care of in turn. Though she specifically talks about Lady Mary, her “I’ve known a many” suggests she is making a broader critique of the insensitivity aristocrats display toward their servants. While the story makes Prentiss seem ethically superior to Lady Mary, her social criticism is undercut by the fact that she worries more about Little Mary's troubles, as if her difficulties are not as important as a distressed gentlewoman's. The locals' debate over what Little Mary should do reveals her options are limited to marrying, living on her friends' charity, or getting an annuity. They take Prentiss's view that she cannot support herself. Oliphant comically raises the possibility of a marriage plot between Little Mary and Lady Mary's doctor; however, it only exists in the mind of his disapproving mother and never comes to fruition. The doctor's mother recognizes that he does not have to save Little Mary from poverty by marrying her. Instead, she has the option of earning her living as a potential New Woman: “[Little Mary] must know one time or another how she is left, and that she must learn to do something for herself” (86). As a lady, Little Mary resents it when Brown insists she is ““in the same box”” (96) as the upper servants, and yet she ends up working as a servant in her former home. To reclaim her

independence, she accepts a position as a governess to Connie Turner, the youngest child of the *nouveau riche* tenants who are renting Lady Mary's house.

Little Mary realizes that hard work is part of bourgeois identity and naïvely assumed that she will have unlimited prospects as a governess, hoping that by entering service she will assert her independence from her friends and no longer be indebted to them. However, she faces a conflict between her individual and social identities when she discovers that she cannot express her newfound sense of autonomy in Mrs. Turner's employment. Rather than being a tragedy, Lady Mary's death and hidden will give Little Mary the chance to learn self-reliance, since she cannot prove herself as long as someone else looks after her. She expresses frustration that everyone hides her situation from her and treats her like a child, showing no confidence in her ability to choose her future or survive by herself. However, Little Mary does not react to the truth with dismay as they expect: "One has read of such things—in books," she said, with a faint courageous smile; "and I suppose they happen,—in life" (88). Her familiarity with the plot of the distressed gentlewoman making it on her own implies the unspecified "books" she devours may be governess novels.¹¹³ Regardless of whether Little Mary is reading *Jane Eyre*, these novels about successful distressed gentlewomen give her a false sense of the adventure, excitement, and liberty of a governess's life. She keeps thinking her poverty has opened up a "new world" (88; 97) of opportunities that will allow her to leave her old life as Lady Mary's companion. When Mrs. Turner disregards Little Mary's objections and orders her to sleep in her old room to be near Connie, her governess broods over "the lonely career on which she was setting out, the subjection to the will of strangers in

¹¹³ In *The Story of a Governess* (1895), Oliphant uses this trope when Janet Summerhayes thinks, after being treated kindly by her employers, "From *Jane Eyre* to the *Family Herald*, they had all been one tale—there had been compensations of an exciting character, no doubt, always, or almost always—but never a reception like this" (20). Katherine West similarly muses, "We had cause to wonder...whether girls about to become governesses derived a part of their prejudices from books" (242)

which henceforth her life must be passed” (103). Little Mary faces a clash between her individual desire to explore her possibilities and the narrow confines of the governess role. Although Little Mary played the role of Lady Mary’s companion for her entire life, she dislikes having to act obedient to Mrs. Turner because she cannot exercise her free will. Little Mary does not realize she is similar to the Turners as a middle-class worker who has to climb up the social ladder to reach success, learning the skills she needs to survive in their employment. Lady Mary’s haunting the estate represents the past intruding on the present as she struggles to call attention to her will, in the belief that Little Mary will be happy if she becomes an heiress. The photograph depicting a portrait of Lady Mary as a young debutante in Little Mary’s bedroom serves as a reminder that she could become a wealthy socialite if she inherits the money, just like her godmother.

Little Mary and her friends snobbishly believe that seeing Lady Mary’s ghost must be a privilege reserved for her goddaughter and not Connie or the lower servants because they sense that the spirit relates most to her interests as a distressed gentlewoman. After the ghost disrupts Mrs. Turner’s household by appearing to Connie, Little Mary’s position as a governess perfectly situates her to find out why her double is there and “save” (102) Connie’s life. The story of Connie’s haunting is relayed to the doctor, Little Mary, and the vicar, but they are baffled by Lady Mary’s behavior in showing up to a new rich family. Little Mary haughtily asks twice, “Oh, why does that child see her, and not me?” (108; 115) out of frustration that her godmother would manifest to a rich middle-class girl instead of her genteel relation. Due to her misery over her choice to go into service, Little Mary longs to see her double in order to resolve her doubts as to whether she *should* be a governess. Lady Mary’s loved ones are so focused on how her behavior does not fit their notions of the way in which a “lady’s” ghost should act that they fail to see she is trying to send them a message about her hidden will.

While “Old Lady Mary” portrays female upper servants like Jervis and Prentiss as individuals with clearly defined motives and personalities, the lower servants remain an indistinct presence and only serve as a punchline to a joke. As Connie’s testimony filters below stairs, the lower servants invent “vulgar” (116) stories about meeting the ghost to call attention to themselves. The doctor points out the absurdity of these reports, mocking the idea “that Lady Mary, the greatest old aristocrat in the world, should come and make private revelations to Betsy Barnes, the under housemaid” (118). Although Lady Mary interacts with animals and children, the doctor’s opinion that these stories are false is in fact correct; it would be too socially improper for her to manifest before the lower servants. Despite her criticism of class distinctions, Prentiss upholds these social differences in informing Little Mary that the lower servants are beneath Lady Mary’s notice compared to a bourgeois lady like Little Mary: “I could well understand if she couldn’t rest in her grave,—if she came and told all to *you*” (117; emphasis added).

As Little Mary’s double, Lady Mary’s rigid inability to accept Little Mary wants to find a different social position than being a wealthy heiress through working to support herself places the two in conflict. With all her good intentions, Lady Mary’s desire to impose her will—in both senses of the word—on Little Mary resembles the mortmain or dead hand plot, in which the deceased try to control the living through their last testament (Rowe 116-117). Critics have noted that Lady Mary’s return interferes with Little Mary’s development because her goddaughter must learn to be independent by supporting herself (L. Walker 183; Makala 124).¹¹⁴ She may be trying to protect Little Mary from poverty, knowing through personal experience how difficult “the spites of

¹¹⁴According to Leila Walker, “Old Mary’s postmortem attempt to take care of Little Mary is irrelevant at best, and harmful at worst. Little Mary realised *on her own* that she is capable of taking care of herself, and the will is eventually discovered without supernatural interference” (183). Likewise, Makala observes that Little Mary’s personal growth involves “coming to terms with her own financial obscurity and fighting against the notion of being a charity case for the vicar’s family” (124).

fortune” (64) can be. As a result, Lady Mary attempts to impose her middle-class lifestyle onto an enterprising bourgeois woman who wishes to act for herself. After an unsuccessful encounter with her goddaughter, Lady Mary acknowledges she has been driven by class “pride,” but her inability to get what she wants has somewhat humbled her:

“I have failed. What am I that I should do what they [the souls in Purgatory] all said was impossible? It was my pride, because I have had my own way all my life. But now I have no way and no place on earth, and what I have to tell them will never, never be known. Oh, my little Mary, a servant in her own house! And a word would make it right!—but never, never can she hear that word. I am wrong to say never; she will know when she is in heaven. She will not live to be old and foolish, like me. She will go up there early, and then she will know.” (115)

Despite being chastened, Lady Mary’s misery at her goddaughter laboring as a “servant” means that she refuses to accept Little Mary’s decision to work. Therefore, she acts as a “harbinger of death” by predicting her early demise and negatively affecting her wellbeing. Her speculation that Little Mary will soon die and learn of her good intentions “in heaven” reflects how her inability to respect her goddaughter’s actions leads to unhappiness for both. Connie’s attachment to Little Mary makes her grow weaker, since her charge constantly demands her attention and transfers her sense of feeling haunted to her governess: “[Little Mary] had never got over the impression that a secret presence, revealed to no one else, was continually near her, though she saw no one. And her health was greatly affected by this visionary double life” (119). The doctor notices that the double’s appearance precipitates Little Mary’s decline by making her experience a conflict between following her own desires (individual identity) and fulfilling her godmother’s expectation (social identity). No matter how much they love each other, the two cannot speak as long as they have different views on Little Mary’s future.

“Old Lady Mary” leaves Little Mary’s fate unresolved because we never find out if she inherits her godmother’s money or chooses a different path; what matters is that the two come to

an understanding that allows Little Mary to develop her social identity. Little Mary denies Connie's theory that Lady Mary wants to make restitution to her goddaughter, even though she can sense the ghost's presence. She resists this idea out of her wish to "rather a thousand times be poor and earn her daily bread" (104) than give into the pressure to obey her double's plans or let money taint her love for Lady Mary. Although Connie tries to point out the will to her governess with Lady Mary's help, Little Mary bids her godmother farewell and collapses before she can discover the secret. Despite her severe illness, Little Mary does not fulfill Lady Mary's prediction of dying young, which indicates that she is strong enough to live free of her godmother's power: "For a moment, a moment,' she would cry; 'only a moment! and I had so much to say.' But as she got better, nothing was said to her about this face she had seen. And perhaps it was only the suggestion of some feverish dream" (122). After she recovers, Little Mary's doubt as to whether this meeting with the ghost occurred shows that Lady Mary's influence on her is waning. Realizing that love matters more than wealth, Lady Mary gives up her quest and returns to Purgatory, telling her friends, "I am forgiven...She whom I wronged, loves me and blessed me; and we saw each other face to face. I know nothing more" (124). In this recognition scene, Lady Mary sees her goddaughter "face to face" for permitting Little Mary to live as she wants and no longer worries about her outcome. She remains ignorant that two children discovered her will by accident, and readers are stranded in her position of not being told if Little Mary receives her inheritance. It does not matter if we learn this information—Little Mary has proven that she can handle herself and take control of her own future. Similar to Jane Eyre, Little Mary receives wealth after she has worked as a governess and suffered complete poverty, which may make it seem as though she achieves the ending of a governess novel. However, the major difference is that Little Mary does not end up in a marriage plot, which shows that she contrasts with Jane as an independent woman who

establishes a different narrative pattern for her life. Lady Mary's return to Purgatory signals she will have to labor hard to repent for her sins, which parallels how Little Mary may very well decide to become a New Woman by working for a living.

Gaskell, Trevanion, and Oliphant's ghost stories focus on teenage girls, who represent the future of Victorian women, as a way to appeal to the next generation of middle-class readers. Their heroines are struggling to understand their identities, navigate their social positions, and maintain their independence when they meet with their uncanny doubles. These young women's naïve, confused, and hopeful approach to the world leads them to assume that they have bright futures with limitless possibilities. By turning to the supernatural for answers, Lucy, Ruth, and Little Mary find that their desire to choose their own path clashes with the middle-class values of the doubles (the older generation) that try to confine them to narrow roles. The heroines do not want to be forced by family privilege, inferior education, or inherited wealth to follow behavioral patterns encoded in conventional Victorian narratives for women, such as the marriage plot. Their anxiety reflects a concern about the scarcity of options for ladies beyond just being upper servants, schoolteachers, or Victorian Angels. The lack of closure in these stories gestures at how the younger generation will write innovative narratives in pursuing new social, educational, and professional opportunities that have yet to be offered to Victorian women. In keeping the heroines' fates hidden, the ghost stories leave the door open for them and future generations of bourgeois ladies to follow their interests.¹¹⁵ As ghostly doubles, foils, and mentors, Mary Fitzgerald, Miss Winter, and Lady Mary serve as a warning to the heroines, helping them realize that they must

¹¹⁵In *A Room of One's Own* (1928), Woolf also notes that women must receive more opportunities in real life if they are to change the narrative conventions for female characters when she addresses how a fictional author, Mary Carmichael, portrays Chloe and Olivia working together in a lab: "I began to read the book again, and read how Chloe watched Olivia put a jar on a shelf and say how it was time to go home to her children. That is a sight that has never been seen since the world began, I exclaimed" (63).

avoid their social prescribed roles if they are to preserve their freedom. Lucy, Ruth, and Little Mary neglect their other doubles—the lower female servants who are similarly trapped in their jobs and have few other prospects outside of service. The lower female servants talk *about* the ghosts as outsiders who are excluded from the distressed gentlewomen’s supernatural experiences, considering them imaginary, spreading gossip related to them, or inventing meetings with them. Since the stories only focus on extending the privileges of middle-class women, these domestics must resign themselves to their invisible lives in service.

Section Two: “A Fascination None of Us Could Resist”¹¹⁶

In telling stories, fairy tales, or romantic adventures to children, all reference to ghosts and frightful apparitions should be avoided. Nothing but pleasant and pretty fancies should linger in a child’s mind after a fairy story. There are some nurses who take a pleasure in telling children what they call fairy tales, but which are in truth nothing but vulgar and exaggerated horrors, unconnected jumbings-up of ghosts, hideous appearances, and black bogies, which make timid little hearts beat faster with superstitious fright, and which often result in the children becoming afraid to go upstairs, and becoming perfect martyrs to nervous terror if they are left alone in the dark. This sort of story-telling is most unhealthy and pernicious.

– Marie Corelli, “How to Tell a Fairy Story,” *Windsor Magazine* (1898)

Introduction: The Servants Tell Old Wives’ Tales

In Section Two, I examine how Victorian women’s ghost stories employ the female servant narrator to articulate middle-class interests in Gaskell’s “The Old Nurse’s Story,” Buisson’s “A Story Told in a Church,” and Braddon’s “At Chrighton Abbey.” During the nineteenth century, female servants were often criticized for telling children ghost stories, which could inflict mental damage on their young listeners. Many Victorians believed children have such vivid imaginations that their caretakers’ supernatural tales could cause them lasting harm by retaining a powerful hold on their minds into adulthood. Female domestics also introduced middle- and upper-class children to dangerous working-class attitudes, so these tales modify the tradition of servants’ ghost stories

¹¹⁶ This title comes from the speaker’s description of the servant narrator’s gift for storytelling in “A Story Told in a Church” (57).

to reinforce bourgeois class values. They make the speaker a distressed gentlewoman who serves as an artist shaping her ghost story to have a certain impact on middle-class female readers. Gaskell, Buisson, and Braddon's ghost stories repurpose children's nursery tales for an older audience in order to teach women to show compassion and understanding for females across class lines. In these three stories, the threat of inter-class romance or desire for social approval leads to a lethal female rivalry, illustrating that women must stop competing with each other and cultivate strong bonds. This female solidarity is especially important because the male love interests prove themselves unworthy by mistreating women and inciting class conflict, snobbery, and resentment among them. These ghost stories still privilege the middle class by portraying one rival as a spoiled aristocratic woman who abuses her power, while her genteel rival or foil seems more deserving of class privileges by comparison. They also use the nineteenth-century adaptation of the traditional Gothic curse narrative, in which the supernatural curse hanging over a noble family is transformed into hereditary madness or a family ghost (Mighall 98). In keeping with Mighall's ideas, the female servant narrators heroically try to protect the upper-classes from this curse, indicating that bourgeois women represent a better alternative to the decaying aristocracy. The female rivalry narrative is consistent with the feminist idea that women must stand together despite their social differences, since it benefits the patriarchy to separate them. However, the ghost stories limit their effectiveness to push for social equality by silencing lower female servants, so they cannot serve as narrators, play significant roles in the plot, or openly voice their social grievances.

By hearkening back to the established tradition of women servants telling ghost stories, these authors try to win credibility for a form of female narrative that has been disparaged since classical times, namely, the old wives' tale. While female domestics may have been recognized masters of the oral ghost story, this genre was relegated to a lower status than written accounts due

to class and gender prejudice.¹¹⁷ As Marina Warner explains, the oral narratives that nurses used to entertain children were dismissively called “old wives’ tales” to signify “a piece of nonsense, a tissue of error, an ancient act of deception, of self and others, idle talk” (19). She further emphasizes that the nanny who recounts fairy tales was an ancient literary convention meant to create the *illusion* of a purely oral storytelling tradition (24-25). While Victorian domestics were typically linked with oral and written materials, these literate narrators blend both types of modes, which shows the authors’ awareness of the stylized nature of female servant storytellers: “[S]ervants were perceived as richly, at times subversively, imaginative, while also being frequently and perniciously associated with the practices of fiction, whether oral or written” (Fernandez 5). Bruce Robbins remarks that even today critics often distrust female servant narrators who tell ghost stories due to the ambiguity raised by their class status, citing the controversy surrounding Nelly Dean and the governess in James’s *The Turn of the Screw* (99). As I discuss in these ghost stories, it is important to distinguish between the governess and the nurse because the function and status of both was diverged widely. The nurse would most likely be uneducated and remain with the family due to the emotional attachment of her charges; in contrast, the governess was hired on a temporary basis to educate children as well as signal the family’s

¹¹⁷ A number of scholars have documented the historical shifts in attitudes toward “old wives’ tales” and ghost stories by female servants in England, which they used to entertain the children of middle- and upper-class families left in their care. Men were not always prejudiced against nurse’s stories; in fact, sometimes women could be more critical of them due to class snobbery. In early modern England, men caricatured old wives’ tales to validate male literary culture, but they displayed an array of views toward nursery tales, including disapproval, nostalgia, and fondness. John Locke is widely credited with advancing the idea in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) that parents should forbid female servants from telling children ghost stories because these tales could injure their youthful minds. During the eighteenth century, writers influenced by Locke tried to instill rational values in middle-class readers through children’s literature, a genre that developed in opposition to nurses’ ghost stories and was meant to replace them. Women like Maria Edgeworth, Mary Wollstonecraft and Sarah Trimmer objected to Gothic elements in children’s books due to their lower-class associations, but included them in stories written for adults. Although the Romantics would celebrate ghost stories for allowing the haunted child to reach imaginative heights, parents, educators, and doctors would continue to blame nursery tales for mentally scarring children throughout the nineteenth century. See Warner, Fox 173-212, Lamb 45-61, Pickering 40-69, O’Malley 39-65, Townshend, Wroth, Grenby, Davies 137-140, Gathorne-Hardy 282-287, Shuttleworth 42-59, McCuskey, Trodd 69-95, and Watson-Ferrier 65-72.

class status. In contrast with those who attack old wives' tales for their negative influence, female writers demonstrate how they spark women's creativity, imagination, and literary activities. The narrators are repeatedly described as exerting a "fascination" (in the sense of casting a spell) on their listeners and having the witch-like ability to enchant people with their storytelling. The bourgeois servant narrator shares important features with the female writer as a powerful raconteur who seeks to reclaim a maligned genre for the purposes of middle-class women. Thus, Gaskell, Buisson, and Braddon's stories attempt to remove the working-class connotations of old wives' tales by making their narrators distressed gentlewomen. In the process, they usurp the authority of lower-class female servant storytellers, turning them into minor or absent characters with minimal narration or dialogue.

Victorian parenting manuals and medical guidebooks often caution readers not to allow nurses to frighten children with "uncanny" ghost stories, reflecting the widespread suspicion of old wives' tales at the time. Sally Shuttleworth observes that Charles West introduced the concept of child night terrors to medical literature in 1848, which she links with scenes like Jane Eyre's terrifying encounter with Uncle Reed's ghost in the red room (46-49). She also points out that middle-class parents constantly blamed nurses for scaring their children, even with the rise of other explanations for youthful fears, such as evolutionary instinct (57). In *Notes on the Early Training of Children* (1884), Elizabeth Whitehead Malleon¹¹⁸ offers a representative sample of the exhortations for parents to shield their little ones from ghost stories, fairy tales, and violence:

No children, however young, should ever hear disagreeable or frightening things said in their presence. Ghost and goblin stories, murders or terrible descriptions of every kind, such as those in 'Blue Beard' and the 'Forty Thieves,' ugly, *uncanny*, mysterious, or painful pictures, everything capable of exciting fear, must be avoided by the entire household. (34; emphasis added)

¹¹⁸ Malleon was a prominent Victorian feminist, educator, and advocate for the training of nurses in rural areas.

Malleson's admonition to the "entire household" to avoid telling children ghost stories may appear socially inclusive, but she then cites an example of an "indiscreet governess" (34) upsetting a girl with a supernatural tale. In *Health in the Nursery* (1898), Dr. Henry Ashby¹¹⁹ is even more explicit about female servants being the culprits behind children's fears. He claims that nurses act grossly negligent by telling children ghost stories to make them behave:

How many children's lives have been rendered miserable through fear of being left in the dark, by ghost stories, by *uncanny* noises, and the horrors associated with death! Nurses who play upon the fears of children have much to answer for, whether done for their own amusement, or in order to frighten them into obedience. (11; emphasis added)

Malleson and Ashby's hysterical tone in warning parents that nurses could destroy the reason, sanity, and innocence of their charges reflects the elitist worry that middle-class children's minds would be warped by lower-class women's ignorance. Their description of these ghost stories as "uncanny" stresses the nurses' crucial role in enabling children to experience this feeling by acquainting them with the superstitions they must overcome as adults. The target audience for these manuals is middle- and upper-class families who could afford nurses, so they conveniently scapegoat lower-class female domestics for corrupting children.¹²⁰ Since leisured ladies were discouraged from physically tending their sons and daughters, these ghost stories do not challenge the practice of female servants raising the children, despite its apparently harmful effects.

Victorian men rejected the nursery tales of their childhood for making them vulnerable to the power of lower-class female storytelling, but their overblown condemnation of old wives' tales appears to conceal their fondness for these narratives. Ghost stories were long thought to pose an

¹¹⁹ Ashby was the physician to Manchester Children's Hospital and a well-known expert on children's diseases.

¹²⁰ Theresa McBride reports that a family needed to earn at least £100 a year to hire a nurse, an amount close to the incomes earned by many lower-class skilled artisans, at a time when the middle class was rapidly growing (45). The thin boundary between the middle and lower classes shows there was a large range among the bourgeois of those who could afford to employ nannies.

especial threat to boys because the nurse could transfer her irrationality to her charges and injure their adult masculinity (Davies 138-139). In Freud's analysis of E.T.A. Hoffmann's "The Sandman," he erases the important role Nathaniel's nurse's ghost stories play in making him feel the uncanny as an adult. By pulling back from this reading, Freud renders his theory of the uncanny more confusing for the sake of "a single gain: the repression of the servant and her influence on the bourgeois imagination" (McCuskey 427). As Dickens famously declares in his essay "Nurse's Stories" (1860), "If we all knew our own minds (in a more enlarged sense than the popular acceptation of that phrase), I suspect we should find our nurses responsible for most of the dark corners we are forced to go back to, against our wills" (220-221).¹²¹ Anthea Trodd argues that Dickens represents his nurse's stories as superstitions boys must turn against to reach imaginative maturity, a popular scenario in the writings of later Victorian men (71). Mary Ellen Lamb accounts for early modern men's excessive disapproval of old wives' tales by suggesting that it hides the youthful pleasure they took in these stories (51). Similarly, Victorian men may have suppressed their appreciation of nurses' tales, since it did not fit with the standards of middle-class masculinity.¹²² While Dickens discusses ghost stories meant for children, his use of plural pronouns like "we" and "our" indicates he is addressing fellow readers from the middle and upper classes who can recall listening to nursery tales. At the same time that he expresses fear of the

¹²¹ Katharina Boehm writes about how "Nurse's Stories" and Dickens's other essays in *The Uncommercial Traveller* take part in the contemporary discussions on childhood terror, which were famously spearheaded by his friend Charles West (122-128). While Dickens expresses reservations about telling young listeners ghost stories, he shares Corelli's opinion that fairy tales are an essential part of childhood in "Fraud on the Fairies" (1853) and *Hard Times* (1854).

¹²² In contrast, early nineteenth-century men openly declare their affection for nursery stories, insist on people's innate love of the supernatural, and advocate for its importance in storytelling. In "Witches and Other Night Fears" (1821), Charles Lamb asserts "[f]rom my childhood I was extremely inquisitive about witches and witch-stories" (66) and laments that as an adult "[f]or the credit of my imagination, I am almost ashamed to say how tame and prosaic my dreams are grown" (68). Sir Walter Scott remarks in "On the Fictitious in Supernatural Composition" (1827) that "[i]t is chiefly the young and indolent who love to be soothed by works of this character, which requires little attention in the perusal. In our riper age we remember them as we do the joys of our infancy, rather because we loved them once, than that they still continue to afford us amusement" (225-226).

“dark corners” where his nurse Mercy led him, Dickens invokes a sense of nostalgia in his adult readers and takes ghoulish delight in retelling her ghost stories. Similarly, critics express a contradictory stance, wanting to prevent children from hearing old wives’ tales and yet betraying their fascination with these stories long after they had left the nursery.

In “Nurse’s Stories,” Dickens honors Mercy as the “female bard” (224) who inspired his talent for telling ghost stories, but his outlook as a middle-class man prevents him from acknowledging her stories’ feminist message and emphasis on lower female servants. Victorian authors like Dickens, Stevenson, and the Brontës were positively influenced by the supernatural tales they heard from their nurses or female servants, Mary Weller (“Mercy”), Alison Cunningham, and Tabitha Aykroyd, respectively (Gathorne-Hardy 129-131; 284-285). Mercy’s ghost stories contain similar narrative patterns to the supernatural tales I analyze in this section, emphasizing the importance of feminine bonds and the centrality of female servants. Her tale about the Captain Murderer features a cannibal who devours a series of unsuspecting brides, a plot that highlights the violence a patriarchal tyrant can wreak on women through marriage. Diana Wallace’s reading of Gaskell’s adaptation of the Bluebeard plot in “The Grey Woman” as exhibiting “the ways in which male power erases or represses women” and “the redemptive possibilities of female relationship” applies to Mercy’s story (61). Captain Murderer’s killing spree is brought to an end when a “dark twin” figures out that he has eaten her “fair twin” sister and uses her resourcefulness and intelligence to get revenge. The dark twin tricks Captain Murderer into wedding her by invoking the female rivalry plot, saying, ““Dear Captain Murderer, marry me next, for I always loved you and was jealous of my sister”” (222). However, she ingests poison so that her husband will die after consuming her toxin-filled body, illustrating that the rivalry plot disguises her solidarity with the fair twin and other women. Although the dark twin ends up dying,

her death turns out to be a noble sacrifice that not only secures justice for the fair twin's death, but also stops Captain Murderer from harming any more women. The younger Dickens, at least, appears to miss the story's implications about gender, because he dwells on Captain Murderer's painful death rather than his female victims' fate (223). Similarly, he appropriates Mercy's position by assuming that the ghosts in her supernatural tales will haunt *him*, even though she makes it clear they appear to lower female servants like her. For instance, Mercy describes how she was required by the ghost of a woman buried under a glass-case to take her bones and give them a proper funeral. Instead of noticing Mercy's camaraderie with the female ghost or heroic role in helping her, Dickens applies the story to himself, saying he has "a personal interest in disproving" it out of fear the spirit will request the same of him (229).

To avoid potentially traumatizing child readers, these servant-narrated ghost stories are aimed at an older audience of middle-class women, who are sophisticated enough to grasp the female rivalry plot's class nuances. Echoing Malleson and Ashby, Corelli and Gaskell warn against female domestics telling children ghost stories; they avoid this mistake by directing their own supernatural tales at adults. Corelli exhibits this mindset in the epigraph when she describes working-class nurses' stories as "unhealthy" due to their chilling content and "unconnected jumbings-up" lacking narrative coherence. She indicates that her narrative abilities are superior to those of servant narrators by instructing readers in how to replace their nurses and tell youthful listeners whimsical fairy tales.¹²³ Gaskell did not think "The Old Nurse's Story" was suitable for children, remarking, "one or two of the H.W. [*Household Words*] stories might not so well do for young people. One is an unexplained ghost story for instance" (Letter 260). Her use of the word

¹²³ According to Freud, the major difference between ghost stories and fairy tales is that the latter lack the uncanny because they are not set in the world of everyday reality. Therefore, there is no uncertainty about whether the supernatural events actually happen; we take it for granted that they can occur in the make-believe realm of fairy tales (250).

“unexplained” implies it does not fit with the “explained supernatural” of Anne Radcliffe’s early Gothic novels, in which ghostly events are discovered to have logical explanations. Even more importantly, Gaskell’s diction serves to distinguish between her work and the genre of mock ghost stories for children. She appears to think that mock ghost stories are more age-appropriate, since they teach children to approach the supernatural from a rational viewpoint. Sean Ferrier-Watson’s study explains that ghost stories were absent from American periodicals aimed respectively at white and black children and they instead featured mock ghost stories (33-122). Like the ghost stories Dickens recollects Mercy telling him, Gaskell, Buisson, and Braddon’s supernatural tales are directed toward middle-class adults looking back at their upbringing by female servants. It is true that there are child listeners in the frame narratives of “The Old Nurse’s Story” and “A Story Told in a Church” who hear their female caretakers’ ghost stories. However, the young audience is dropped in “At Chrighton Abbey,” a supernatural account written by a governess and clearly aimed at adults, even offering several nostalgic allusions to fairy tales (74, 83). Instead of standing for the intended readers, the children provide a counterpoint to the adult servant narrators and highlight their maturity, which is an important contrast because Victorian servants were often infantilized (Gerard 58). In these stories, the narrators speak above the heads of the fictional children to older readers about joining with other women to extend bourgeois ladies’ class privileges.

Florence Marryat and Isabella Banks go further than Dickens in insisting on the value of nursery tales, which give female domestics a creative way to entertain children, along with inspiring women to write their own ghost stories. Marryat reveals in her essay “Three Ghosts” (1866) that “from the time when, as a child, I listened openmouthed to the superstitious revelations of my nurse...the supernatural has always held great charms for me” (120). She identifies her

nurse's stories as a major source of her interest in ghosts, and they most likely contributed to her becoming a noted Spiritualist and ghost story writer later in life. In the preface to her collection of supernatural fiction *Through the Night* (1882), Banks writes, "Science, which has driven so many a beautiful myth from our nurseries, and driven the childhood out of our children at the same time, has done much to depopulate Fairyland. The elf and the hobgoblin only linger in green nooks untrodden by the proverbial schoolmaster; and he has shaken his rod at the wraith and the banshee"

(ii). She displays none of the misgivings about servants' ghost stories voiced by Malleson, Ashby, Corelli, and Gaskell, instead blaming the rational mentality promoted by science for the unpopularity of the "beautiful" nursery stories she loves. The teacher wielding his male "rod" of authority to expel supernatural creatures is the perfect metaphor for how education must help children to overcome the superstition engendered by their nurses. Jane Eyre, Bessie Lee, and Nelly Dean set a precedent for imagining compelling female servants who recount supernatural events, and Victorian women took a cue from them in creating their own servant narrators. However, their stories use the female rivalry plot to advance middle-class women's rights, rather than taking the radical step of turning to lower female servant narrators. One of Bruce Robbins's major claims is that literary servants can promote the utopic vision of an egalitarian society just by mutely appearing on the scene (123). Gaskell, Buisson, and Braddon's ghost stories deny the narrative power of working-class servants in order to endorse a modified version of Malthus's feast. While these writers appreciate old wives' tales, the effect of their revision of this tradition involves erasing lower female servants.

"Idle Tales"?: Female Servant Narratives

The Brontës were highly influential in refashioning the genre of old wives' tales by writing popular novels about female servant narrators who tell ghost stories, such as Bessie Lee and Nelly

Dean. Anne, Charlotte, and Emily highlight the positive bonds between female servants and the girls or women in their care through their depiction of the rapport between Helen and Rachel, Bessie and Jane, and Nelly and Cathy. Charlotte and Emily defend nursery stories for revealing that art can be a satisfying creative outlet for women, promoting strong female trans-class relationships, and critiquing the Victorian class system's unfairness. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane grows attached to Bessie because she is the only person who cares for her at Gateshead, entertaining Jane with the stories that will turn the heroine into her artistic successor. By initiating Jane into superstition with her "fireside chronicles" (35), Bessie sets her up for the terrifying meeting with Uncle Reed's ghost in the red room, which the adult Jane must rationalize away as lamplight. Despite this, Bessie exerts such a profound creative impact on Jane's writing that the supernatural figures from her nursery stories constantly reappear in Jane's autobiographical writing (Steere 51).¹²⁴ The young Jane eschews snobbery in her respect for Bessie's artistry, claiming her nurse "had a remarkable knack of narrative; so, at least, I judge from the impression she made on me by her nursery tales" (24). A hybrid of the ignorant servant and educated woman, Bessie relates ghostly legends alongside the realist novel *Pamela* (1740) in a melange of the oral and written tradition. Jane's narrative also silences Bessie because we never hear her tell Jane any of her tales except secondhand. Regardless of their closeness, Jane's status as a middle-class girl allows her to receive the formal schooling denied to Bessie and to enter service as a governess.¹²⁵ When she

¹²⁴ For more on how Bessie influences Jane's art, see Kreilkamp 334-337, Wells 75-76, Cadwallader 239-243, and Miller 252-254.

¹²⁵ For instance, at school Jane is also inspired by girls of her own social position who engage in different forms of storytelling. Mary Ann's flair for narrative encourages lower forms of storytelling focused on the world of everyday events, while Helen Burns's interest in the otherworldly piques Jane's curiosity about the afterlife. She compares the two when she comments that Mary Ann "had a turn for narrative, I for analysis; she liked to inform, I to question; so we got on swimmingly together, deriving much entertainment, if not much improvement, from our mutual intercourse. And where, meantime, was Helen Burns? Why did I not spend these sweet days of liberty with her? Had I forgotten her? or was I so worthless as to have grown tired of her pure society? Surely the Mary Ann Wilson I have mentioned was inferior to my first acquaintance: she could only tell me amusing stories, and reciprocate any racy and pungent

visits the adult Jane, Bessie affirms the value of her education in developing her creative talents. She also recognizes the class difference between them when she calls Jane “quite a lady!” (78) for her female accomplishments. Jane still keeps returning to Bessie’s tales of fairies, the gytrash, and prophetic dreams of children to make sense of her supernatural experiences. Many characters observe Bessie’s effect on Jane in the startling originality of her paintings and her “elfish” imagination (108), showing how the nursery tales of her childhood inspire her to pursue the arts into creative maturity.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Nelly acts like a “regular gossip” (31) whose nursery tales are crucial to advancing various love stories and assisting in the rescue of her charge, Cathy, from captivity. Instead of passing on her superstition to Lockwood, Nelly’s narrative offers him an explanation for his earlier meeting with Catherine’s ghost when he sleeps in her bed during his overnight stay at the Heights.¹²⁶ She proudly tells her elitist listener about her self-education at the Grange: “You could not open a book in the library that I have not looked into, and got something out of also” (58). Nelly’s schooling blurs the distinction between oral and written traditions because her reading contains rational *and* supernatural material, causing her to express uncertainty about prophetic dreams (73), Heathcliff’s demonic nature (290), and the existence of ghosts (296). In developing a warm relationship with Cathy, she nurtures her literary interests with “nursery lore” (204) consisting of old legends, fairy tales, and print books. Cathy uses Nelly’s creative works to sustain her courtship with Linton (“he was charmed with two or three pretty songs—*your* songs, Ellen” (220)) and Hareton. Nelly indicates that her narrative’s purpose is to make

gossip I chose to indulge in; while, if I have spoken truth of Helen, she was qualified to give those who enjoyed the privilege of her converse, a taste of far higher things” (66).

¹²⁶ In her article on Emily Brontë’s use of folklore, Paula M. Krebs declares “*Wuthering Heights* demonstrates the failure of progress to eliminate old wives’ tales: all of Lockwood’s middle-class sophistication and even his violence fails to exorcise the ghost of Catherine.... Lockwood needs access to the past, through the liminal figure of the teller of tales—the spinster, the old wife who has no husband, ‘Mrs. Dean.’ And Nelly must make the ghost believable by making clear its origins” (48-49).

Lockwood fall in love with Cathy so he will free her from Heathcliff's tyranny; she effectively achieves her goal when she facilitates Cathy and Hareton's courtship through books. In fact, Nelly's intervention prevents the Earnshaw and Linton families from dying out by bringing the remaining heirs together in marriage. After Heathcliff dies, Nelly tells Lockwood, "the country folks, if you ask them, would swear on the Bible that he *walks*: there are those who speak of having met him near the church, and on the moor, and even within this house. Idle tales, you'll say, and so say I" (296). While she agrees with Lockwood's skepticism, Nelly's powerful old wives' tale and her ongoing doubts leave readers with the impression that the accounts of Heathcliff and Catherine's ghosts wandering the moors are not just "idle tales."

In Gaskell, Buisson, and Braddon's supernatural fiction, the servant narrators find the act of storytelling empowers them to articulate their unique individuality through conveying "biographical" accounts of their lives in the form of fictional ghost stories. They construct their narratives to highlight their impressive bourgeois qualities of creativity, loyalty, and heroism, which diverge from the middle-class values of the morally inferior affluent characters. Their ghost stories express the conflict between their superior individual identities and the inadequate social roles they play as servants to the mediocre upper classes. The disparity between their talents and the positions they occupy makes them jealous or resentful of their betters for not valuing them properly. At the same time, they emphasize the importance of female solidarity in trying to defend their superiors from supernatural forces that attempt to destroy them, especially the women. In addition, they suffer an internal conflict over the different imperatives of their lives, such as the need to earn money, maintain their independence, and establish a home. These conflicting imperatives make it difficult for the servant narrators to form healthy social identities that integrate their desire to be taken seriously as creative storytellers or writers. While nurses and governesses

often told the children in their care narratives, this aspect of their personal identities is not a valued part of their social positions, since their ghost stories are disdained as “old wives’ tales.” The distressed gentlewomen appear healthier than the upper classes by bringing an infusion of bourgeois values that would benefit the decaying aristocracy, including artistry, industry, and compassion. In contrast, the upper classes suffer from “madness” evinced in negative emotions of jealousy, snobbery, and resentment toward the aspiring lower classes who threaten their positions. Their unhealthy social identities further manifest in female rivalries over undeserving men, which may end with both opponents dying or surviving. Their survival depends on whether they can create flexible class identities that allow for female solidarity across class lines against the patriarchal figures that may separate them.

Although the servant narrators’ protective measures toward other distressed gentlewomen and the upper classes show the importance of female solidarity, they do not offer this concern to lower female servants and the working classes. They take the same dismissive view toward the lower classes that their superiors display toward them in their ghost stories, but they do not even notice the parallelism in their characterization of themselves. Rather than seeing the importance of allying with the lower classes across social boundaries, they render their inferiors invisible in their narratives because they regard these characters as potential rivals. They gradually evolve into achieving the class flexibility necessary to stand up to the upper classes without rigidly adhering to their social identities. Despite the general contempt for old wives’ tales, Victorian female authors’ positive outlook toward them means that Hester, Dora, and Sarah’s talents as mesmerizing storytellers and writers of ghost stories may give them special status. The fact that they could be raconteurs instead of nurses and governesses conveys their struggle to express their individual talents and make them fit with their social identities. As I discuss in Chapter Four, women writers

considered the gift for telling ghost stories a major accomplishment, since women expected to receive canonical status for their supernatural tales. Hence, it is significant that lower female servants are absent from ghost stories that insist women's creativity is a major source of power. Instead, the servant narrators display snobbery, ignorance, and condescension toward the lower female servants, working classes, and destitute people who serve them. The lower female servants lack the the distressed gentlewomen's narrative authority, which prevents readers and listeners from sympathizing with them. Even when they listen to the lower female servants, the distressed gentlewomen may appropriate their narratives for themselves or doubt their at their credibility, as we will see in the case of Agnes and Mrs. Marjoram. While Hester, Dora, and Sarah realize the harmful effects of classism, they do not extend the same recognition to the lower female domestics around them. These characters are denied the benefits of representation and thus they seem unrelatable and worthless. Their lack of visibility shows that the servant narrators do not think about allying with women on the bottom of the social order, which is significant because their stories cannot mobilize public sympathy to help them.

Gaskell's respect for the oral storytelling tradition and her familiarity with the Brontës' servant narrators may have influenced her to adopt a female domestic's voice in her classic Victorian supernatural tale, "The Old Nurse's Story" (1852).¹²⁷ Out of all three stories, Gaskell's appears to be the most progressive for presenting the nurse, Hester, as a heroic working-class woman. Now an aged retainer, Hester tells her young charges that she began working for their

¹²⁷ With her interest in sharing and recording oral ghost stories, Gaskell was such a skilled teller of supernatural tales that Charlotte Brontë shrank from listening to her and Dickens used one of her plots for his story "To Be Read at Dusk" (1852). Anne Thackeray Ritchie writes "the remembrance of [Gaskell's] voice comes back to me, harmoniously flowing on and on, with spirit and intention, and delightful emphasis, as we all sat indoors one gusty morning listening to her ghost stories" (ix). For more on Gaskell and the oral ghost story tradition, see Martin 29-32 and Shelston 137-143. Besides "The Old Nurse's Story" and "The Poor Clare," Gaskell recounted other ghost stories about servant women. Augustus Hare reports she once saw a ghostly former lady's maid "with hard features, in a common lilac print gown" (588) staring at her from a window (586-588).

family as a nurse to help their grandparents with raising their mother, Rosamond Esthwaite. However, when she discusses her personal history, Hester notes, “I see you [the children] don’t care so much for this part of my story” (11) because they would rather hear about Rosamond. Her use of the phrase “my story” and Gaskell’s title make the focus of Hester’s tale ambiguous, suggesting that *she* may actually be the heroine, instead of the little girl she serves. Hester subtly chastises the children by commenting that they are not as kind or pleasant as the young Rosamond was, since they lack their mother’s appreciation for a female servant like her. Although Hester is a lower-class country girl and not a middle-class lady, this educated servant practices the bourgeois values of respectability, sensibility, and hard work (Fernandez 55-56). Rosamond herself is the product of a trans-class marriage between a “real lady born” (11) and a curate who worked his way up from trade through his dedication and compassion, much like Hester. The nurse’s criticisms of the children show that her immature listeners have to learn from their mother and grandmother’s example about respecting others across class lines. After her employers die, Hester proudly speaks of how Rosamond’s uncle will shelter them and promote her to service in his country house: “I was well pleased that all the folks in the Dale should stare and admire, when they heard I was going to be young lady’s-maid at my Lord Furnivall’s at Furnivall Manor” (12). Her haughty attitude is undermined when Rosamond’s uncaring uncle sends them to the gloomy household headed by the elderly Grace Furnivall and her maid, Mrs. Stark. Besides being well-founded, Hester’s misgivings about bringing Rosamond to the Manor prove that she prioritizes her charge’s safety over her desire for social advancement.

At Furnivall Manor, Rosamond unites the domestics and their employers through their love for her and creates social unity in a home that has been torn apart by class pride, but this open-minded approach does not extend to lower female servants. Instead, Hester intimidates a lower

female servant into telling her a ghost story and appropriates it for her own purposes. As a child, Rosamond can easily travel between the spaces of masters and servants, since she does not understand Victorian social divisions, and, for her, [k]itchen and drawing-room, it was all the same” (16). In contrast, the youthful portraits of Grace and her older sister Maude display the “scornful pride” (17) that gave rise to their lethal female rivalry. Grace and Mrs. Stark reveal that they have not let go of their destructive snobbery after all these years when they attribute Rosamond’s fondness for the servants to her paternal roots in trade: “[they] were a little surprised at her taste; though, to be sure, as Mrs. Stark said, it was not to be wondered at, remembering what stock her father had come of” (16). Gaskell portrays how servants can be equally as arrogant as their masters, and the rigid order maintained by both distorts the characters’ personalities and relations in encouraging the abuse of power. As an upper servant, Hester asserts her superior position by bullying the kitchen maid, Agnes, into telling her about the organ played by the spirit of Grace’s father, Lord Furnivall: “So then I tried Agnes, though I always held my head rather above her, as I was evened to James and Dorothy, and she was little better than their servant. So she said I must never, never tell; and if ever told, I was never to say *she* had told me” (18). Although Gaskell’s quick composition of her short stories often led her to mix up minor characters’ names, it is significant that she designs a complex Furnivall family tree, but does not keep the kitchen maid’s name (Agnes/Bessie) consistent (16).¹²⁸ Even though Hester display snobbery before coming to the Manor due to growing up in a clear hierarchy, she in puts it into practice at the Manor and it intensifies in this setting. While her snobbery appears worrying, her mistreatment of a lower servant like Agnes fails to elicit any concern. Just as the story overlooks Agnes, Hester

¹²⁸ For a visual representation mapping out five generations of the Furnivall family, see Parkin-Gounelas 141.

does not sympathize with her terror over losing her job if she is found out, yet makes excuses for herself to Grace when Rosamond goes missing.

After the ghost of Rosamond's cousin endangers her life, Hester must take a rational approach to the situation and assume the absent mother's place so that she can protect her charge from "madness" that runs through the Furnivall family. Their social arrogance produces an unhealthy class identity that turns into a madness threatening to destroy the entire family, including Rosamund. As she travels between drawing room and kitchen, Rosamond enters an uncertain space between these two worlds, and, at this moment, the spectre child appears at the window to lure her outside. After failing to discover a second pair of footprints in the snow, Hester accuses Rosamond of lying about the spectre child's existence, a sign that she wants to find a logical explanation for this strange incident. Her skeptical attitude, search for evidence, and insistence Rosamond is "telling stories" (22) about the ghost suggest that Rosamond has not gotten her old wives' tale from the levelheaded Hester. Rosamond relates how Maude's child led her into the cold night and Maude tried to draw her into a fatal "sleep," in a reenactment of her own daughter's death from hypothermia:

"[The spectre child] took me up the Fell-path, up to the holly-trees; and there I saw a lady weeping and crying; but when she saw me, she hushed her weeping, and smiled very proud and grand, and took me on her knee, and began to lull me to sleep, and that's all, Hester—but that is true; and my dear mamma knows it is," said she, crying. So I thought the child was in a fever, and pretended to believe her, as she went over her story—over and over again, and always the same. (23)

The image of the ghostly Maude comforting a child, along with Rosamond's appeal to her late "dear mama," highlights the number of dead, absent, or murderous mothers in this story: Mrs. Esthwaite, Maude, Lady Furnivall, and the adult Rosamond. Therefore, Hester must step in to mother Rosamond by saving her from freezing to death and worrying that her "fever" is making her hallucinate Maude and the child. Hester's hope that the child will wake up mentally "bright

and clear” (22) speaks to her worry that Rosamond could have inherited the Furnivall “curse” of madness or have suffered trauma from her near-death experience. Her fear that insanity may run in the Furnivall family is valid; after all, Lord Furnivall was “mad after music” (26), Grace acts “crazy” (23), and Maude is found “crazy and smiling” (28) after her child dies. Rosamond escapes the other Furnivalls’ fate thanks to Hester’s devotion and her healthy mix of middle-class and aristocratic lineage. In fact, Hester is instrumental in preserving the endangered Furnivall family by making sure Rosamond grows up to marry and produce the next generation of children for her nurse to raise.

Once she realizes the ghosts’ true nature, Hester has to shield Rosamond from the toxic female rivalry still playing out between Grace and Maude because the children are being used as pawns in their quarrel. In the process, Hester faces a conflict between the fact that she is more competent to care for Rosamond and yet her social identity as a working-class woman precludes her from raising the child. Hester stops believing Rosamond is lying, sick, or going mad when she sees the spectre child pleading to be let in and learns that the family curse involves the ghosts of Grace’s victims, not mental illness. This incident upsets her so much that she tells the housekeeper, Dorothy, “I had made up my mind. I would carry my darling back to my father’s house in Applethwaite; where, if we lived humbly, we lived at peace” (25). Radically, Hester thinks that Rosamond would be safer if she were raised in a working-class home, but Dorothy objects that taking her away is illegal. Hester faces an impossible situation as a caretaker who has no legal right to act in Rosamond’s best interests and yet is expected to raise her in the place of her absent uncle. Hence, her conflict arises over the fact that she is much more skilled at protecting Rosamond and yet her social identity restricts her from taking guardianship of her ward. To defend Rosamond, Hester must listen to the oral narratives of her fellow servants that relate how the sisters became

rivals over a foreign musician, who schemed to gain power over the Furnivalls. After learning that Maude secretly married him, Grace provoked her father's wrath by informing him of her sister's transgression, and he turned Maude and her child outdoors on a cold night. Employing her child to lure Rosamond, Maude's ghost tries to punish Grace by killing the child she has grown to love, just as Grace's actions led to the death of her niece.¹²⁹ Although the spectre child threatens her life, Rosamond wants to admit her into Furnivall Manor as a recognized family member; she is sympathetic to a girl rejected for being the result of a trans-class marriage, like Rosamond herself. In contrast to Grace and Maude's rivalry, Rosamond refuses to engage in a competition with the spectre child by accepting her, unlike the rest of the Furnivalls. A remorseful Grace declares, "Hester! keep her from that child! It will lure her to her death! That evil child! Tell her it is a wicked, naughty child...Oh, have mercy! Wilt Thou never forgive! It is many a long year ago" (23). Her words reveal Grace's failure to understand that Maude will not forgive her sister as long as she lacks compassion for the "evil child" who is the innocent victim of her jealousy.

While critics have acknowledged that "The Old Nurse's Story" centers on the violent sibling rivalry between Grace and Maude, they have not discussed how this plot reoccurs in other ghost stories narrated by female servants. The instability of Grace and Maude's class identities as noblewomen becomes accentuated when it comes under threat by lower servants trying to better themselves. Gaskell's story reinforces the dangers of female rivalry by including multiple conflicts

¹²⁹ There are several notable parallels between "The Poor Clare" and "The Old Nurse's Story." Most obviously, Gaskell is concerned with the burden family legacy places on innocent women in both tales. The foreign musician's role is similar to the one Bridget plays in the Starkey family, but he remains unsympathetic as a deceitful male servant who takes advantage of his mobility to desert his wife and child. Like Gisborne, Lord Furnivall assumes the part of the guilty father who passes his class pride onto his daughters and remorselessly ousts his child from home for her involvement with a male servant. Mirroring Lucy's double, Maude's spectre child is the result of a trans-class marriage of questionable legitimacy and manifests as a supernatural being that acts harmfully based on the "sins of the father." Rosamond seeing her uncanny double in a reflective surface and the spectre child's leading her to try dangerous behavior prefigures Lucy Gisborne's evil doppelganger appearing in the mirror and later tempting her into "wicked actions" ("Poor Clare" 83).

between women of similar and different class backgrounds, including Grace and Maude, Maude and Mrs. Stark, and Rosamond and her cousin. According to Vanessa Dickerson, Grace “has sinned, but not against the father; she has sinned against the mother, against woman and sister” (117) because she betrays Maude instead of showing her kindness. Francesco Marroni claims the haunting is a psychological projection of Grace’s guilty conscience as well as Maude’s revenge on her sister (126). In his psychoanalytic study of the Furnivall sibling rivalry, David Galef argues that the combination of an absent mother and distant father causes the two sisters to fight over the foreign musician, an acceptable stand-in for the desired patriarch (56-57).¹³⁰ These readings overlook Grace’s culpability in valuing her relationship with Mrs. Stark over her sisterly bond with Maude, treating her as “much more of a friend to [Grace] than ever her sister had been” (27). Mrs. Stark ingratiates herself into Grace’s favor by discovering she has a niece; this information helps Grace to retaliate against Maude. Later, she cares for the elderly Grace and shields her mistress from the hauntings. Gaskell’s story endorses close relations between masters and servants in her fiction, but this does not mean she supports placing domestics before one’s own family.¹³¹ Not only would the servants be illegitimate family members who join the family out of self-interest rather than affection, but the foreign musician also becomes a member through seduction. When she compares British and Gallic culture in “French Life” (1864), Gaskell differentiates between

¹³⁰ In their studies of how nineteenth-century British authors portray sisterly rivalry, critics find that these feuds follow the narrative patterns established in the stories of Cupid and Psyche, Cinderella, and William Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. For Amy Levin, literary sisters assume rigidly distinct roles to prevent romantic competition, but the tension between them only eases after they marry (25-27). Sarah Annes Brown contends that love rivalries between sisters are rare in works of the time: “The shade of sororal jealousy is raised only to be contained, circumvented, or denied” (122). Likewise, Sharon Marcus explains that “[n]othing may seem more natural to us than female rivalry over men, but nothing seemed more odd to Victorian readers” (*Between Women* 106). Since Victorian writers generally avoided depicting sisterly rivalry, Gaskell’s readers would have been especially shocked by Grace and Maude’s violent feud. They would also have found the foreign musician’s courtship of Grace while secretly being married to Maude alarming because relations between a man and his sister-in-law were considered incestuous at the time.

¹³¹ For discussions of Gaskell’s literary treatment of servants, see Stoneman 30-44, Nash, Elliot “Class Act,” and Lambert 139-165.

the family and the household in her discussion of servants and their masters (XYZ). Hence, servants like the foreign musician and Mrs. Stark are pernicious for currying favor with their employers to advance themselves beyond being members of the household. Hester realizes that Grace and Mrs. Stark's inability to overcome the Grace-Maude rivalry and be redeemed for their past wrongs means they cannot protect Rosamond from present dangers: "I knew no good could be about them, with their grey, hard faces and their dreamy eyes, looking back into the ghastly years that were gone" (29).

Gaskell withstood Dickens's repeated demands that she change the ending's narrator from Hester to Rosamond; in this way, she avoids diminishing the impact of a scene that illustrates the deadly outcome of Grace and Maude's hostility. Grace, Mrs. Starkey, Hester, and Rosamond observe the ghosts replay the moment when Lord Furnivall expels Maude and her child, while Hester clings to her charge so Rosamond cannot follow them:

"They want me to go with them on to the Fells—they are drawing me to them. Oh, my little girl! I would come, but cruel, wicked Hester holds me very tight." But when [Rosamond] saw the uplifted crutch, she swooned away, and I thanked God for it. Just at this moment—when the tall old man, his hair streaming as in the blast of a furnace, was going to strike the little shrinking child—Miss Furnivall, the old woman by my side, cried out, "O father! father! spare the little innocent child!" But just then I saw—we all saw—another phantom shape itself. . . It was the likeness of Miss Furnivall in her youth; and the terrible phantoms moved on, regardless of old Miss Furnivall's wild entreaty,—and the uplifted crutch fell on the right shoulder of the little child, and the younger sister looked on, stony and deadly serene. (31)

In Dickens's proposed ending, only the spectre child is visible to everyone beside Rosamond: "[Y]ou weaken the terror of the story by making them all see the phantoms at the end" (qtd. in Uglow 307). Just as he relates Mercy's tales about her supernatural experiences to himself, Dickens thinks a bourgeois child like Rosamond should be affected by the ghosts: thus, he wants her to seize the narrative from Hester at the climactic moment. Gaskell knows this scene would have been too mature for a little girl to narrate coherently, which is why Rosamond faints before

she can witness a case of child abuse, while Hester stays conscious. Instead of condemning her niece, Grace follows Rosamond's example in pitying her victim and begs her father to have mercy on the "innocent child." Despite learning her lesson, Grace must watch her younger double assume a "deadly serene" look as she commits her past wrongs, knowing there is nothing she can do to change them. Grace collapses in a paralysis signifying her feelings of helplessness and dies repeating "What is done in youth can never be undone in age!" (32), last words that stress the tragic consequences of women hating each other.

Gaskell's story neutralizes her servant narrator's radical potential to advocate for working classes through its depiction of Hester serving the interests of her employers as a loyal servant, rather than those of people from her own social status. Therefore, she makes Hester a loyal servant who values Rosamond's safety before her own, restrains her dangerous social ambitions, and succeeds through her adherence to bourgeois values. Compared to Braddon and Buisson's tales, "The Old Nurse's Story" has the most daring portrayal of a working-class female, with Hester being an admirable storyteller and heroine. As critics have noted, Hester delivers an entertaining and self-aware narrative, one in which she responds to her listeners' indifference toward her by making herself the protagonist (Fernandez 55-56; Simpson 91-92). Her ghost story warns the future Furnivall heirs who "don't care so much" (11) about her that they should not overlook their mother's rescuer. However, just as Hester's subversive plan to take Rosamond to her father's house miscarries, her potential to develop into a voice for social justice comes to nothing. Instead of using the ghost story to speak out for her class, Hester is content to settle down with Rosamond and raise her children, but her story about an inspiring trans-class friendship cannot hide these social tensions. Dorice Williams Elliott observes that in Gaskell's fiction, "[d]espite an appearance of genuine friendship between mistress and servant, the relation between them still involved an

exchange of money for service, a real difference in power, and a struggle over conditions of work and control of representations” (“Class Act” 123). Her point captures how Hester and Rosamond’s idealized bond conceals the transactional nature of the mistress-servant relationship. The presumably still living adult Rosamond remains disturbingly absent from the story, since her position entails hiring a nurse to raise her children, signal her status, and leave her idle. Although Hester depicts how her adoption of bourgeois respectability morally improves her, it also causes her to develop a snobbish attitude toward the laboring classes and places her at odds with another working-class woman. When she harasses Agnes, Hester misuses her authority over a fellow lower-class woman, and yet she suffers no penalty or remorse for being unkind to another female. Hester’s snobbery toward Agnes manifests that social position must always be solidified by putting down one’s and inferiors as long as the class system consist of a rigorous hierarchy. While Gaskell’s story may reject the Furnivalls’ aristocratic pride and the servants’ conniving actions, she does not endorse better conditions for a lowly servant like Agnes or female solidarity among the lower classes.

Ada Buisson’s “A Story Told in a Church” (1868) centers on a governess, Dora Montem, whose powerful “gift” (57) for storytelling wins her admiration of the girls listening to her supernatural tale, despite her social inferiority to them.¹³² Gaskell depicts Hester briefly addressing

¹³² As the editor of *Belgravia* from 1866-1876, Braddon contributed to the ghost story genre by publishing her own supernatural tales, along with those by skilled writers such as Le Fanu, Marryat, and Banks, in this magazine. Besides “At Chrighton Abbey” (1871), several ghost stories narrated by governesses appeared in its pages, including Ada Buisson’s “A Story Told in a Church” (1868) and “The Bryansfort Spectre” (1874). The prominence of governesses in these works is not surprising. After all, reviewers attacked Braddon’s sensation fiction for presenting ambitious female servants, such as Lady Audley (Steere 16-18). Her vampire story “Good Lady Ducayne” (1897) features a poor gentlewoman named Bella Rolleston, who serves as a companion to the titular character and provides her with the blood necessary to sustain her immortality. It is worth analyzing “A Story Told in a Church” for its shared themes with “At Chrighton Abbey,” especially since scholars have mistakenly assigned Buisson’s works to Braddon (Carnell 396). While there are similarities between the two stories, I am not claiming “A Story Told in a Church” inspired “At Chrighton Abbey.” It would be hard to prove a direct line of influence because Braddon was not involved in the daily operations of *Belgravia* and entries were usually read and chosen by others (Carnell 175).

Rosamond's children throughout her narrative and leaves it up to readers to imagine how they respond to her message about the dangers of female rivalry. Contrary to Hester, the unnamed frame narrator of Buisson's tale conveys how Dora's listeners react to her story; furthermore, they model the way older female readers should interpret it. Dora's flair for storytelling conveys how inadequate her role as a governess is for accommodating her talent. As Dora is overseeing the girls deck a church on Christmas Eve, one of them reports, "We are absolutely locked in! Every door is firmly closed, and I believe it is the doing of those dreadful boys, who have been trying to frighten us out of our wits all the afternoon with their ghost-stories" (56). Similar to how the patriarchy consigned Victorian women to "imprisonment" (56) in the domestic sphere, the girls are held captive by overbearing boys who intimidate them. While the boys' ghost stories provoke the girls' disdain, Dora's narrative abilities earn their respect because she relates her ghost story at their request and uses it to distract them from their terrifying situation:

We all knew the strange power the usually silent governess possessed for storytelling. It was the only time indeed she unbent or seemed like other human beings; but when she did condescend to indulge us, she possessed a fascination which none of us could resist; and we all knew that whilst listening to her we should care very little for the cold or darkness. (57)

Since the frame narrator understands the value of oral storytelling, she recognizes that Dora not only has the "strange power" of inventing ghost stories, but also knows when to save them for the right audience and circumstances. Dora's stories are so gripping that she exerts a "fascination" over her female listeners whenever she speaks, which has a humanizing effect on a governess required to behave professionally in front of her charges. The girl who narrates the frame tale reveres Dora for being "handsome" (56) and "self-possessed" (56), so she enjoys how the act of narration can create intimacy between the girls and their distant caretaker. These middle-class

girls' view that Dora "condescend[s]" any time she shares her talent suggests that it elevates her above the very listeners who socially outrank her.

While Dora represents the girls' school she attended ten years ago as a close-knit female community isolated from aggressive men, she highlights how the students' social differences led to conflict among them, especially the distinction between bourgeois and middle-class values. According to Dora, the schoolmistress Mrs. Morris "treated me kindly and fairly; and amongst the girls I had friends whom I loved dearly. Besides, Mount Silver, as the place was called, was conducted on the home principle, and there was not one of us who regarded our existence whilst there but as intensely satisfactory and enjoyable" (57). Although Mrs. Morris fosters friendly relationships among her students, Mount Silver does not constitute a feminist utopia because the women there are treated differently according to their class positions. Mrs. Morris sympathizes with Dora as a fellow distressed gentlewoman and acts as her role model, showing her how an independent woman can successfully provide for herself through hard work. The local aristocrat, Lady Jane Power, by way of contrast, is an old woman "who passed her time nursing her cat, knitting, and physicking her various imaginary ailments" (57). Milly Power and Irena Dupont, the girls in Lady Jane's care, dislike her for engaging in these worthless activities, whereas they appreciate Mrs. Morris for efficiently running Mount Silver. Despite being maternal cousins, Milly and Irena develop a rivalry due to the social disparity between them, since Milly is Lady Jane's spoiled heir and Irena comes from a struggling new rich family: "They were our head girls, our leads—Milly Power by right of age and rank, Irena Dupont by right of her daring spirit and rich beauty. Ah, heavens! how beautiful that girl was!" (57). Lacking Milly's privileged status, Irena still becomes popular thanks to her beauty, passion, and vivacity; hence, Milly grows jealous of her cousin for winning the girls' esteem through her good qualities alone. While the girls admire

Mrs. Morris for practicing bourgeois values and a stain lady power for her useless middle-class values, they allow these same difference is to separate them and create class division. The frame narrator's gushing over Dora's "handsome" (56) looks is mirrored in Dora's praise of Irena's "beauty," with both using the language of heterosexual romance to describe women they find captivating. As a penniless orphan, Dora knows from experience that people can be prejudiced against the Other, which is why she remains undeterred by Irena's status as a *nouveau riche* Frenchwoman. She also relates to another middle-class woman whose uncertain economic condition makes her subordinate to Milly and dependent (however indirectly) on Lady Jane for money and gifts.

Through the complex social web entangling Milly, Irena, and Dora, Buisson's ghost story explores how class inequalities negatively affect genteel women, since female solidarity within the middle classes is threatened by these fine distinctions. The rivalry between Irena and Milly takes centerstage of Dora's narrative and she noticeably overlooks the hardships of the lower female servants preparing for Christmas. No matter how much she adores Irena, Dora must compete with her for Milly's favor because she gains more advantage from befriending a rich girl in return for noble patronage. Dora criticizes Milly for being "fair, cold, haughty, proud of her ancient family, yet qualifies her remarks, saying, "[b]ut *I* ought not to make her any reproach, for she was a kind friend to me" (58). The emphasis on "I" indicates that while Dora is grateful to Milly for giving her clothes and money, she is fully aware that her friend uses her wealth to assert her control over both Dora and Irena. When a heavy snowstorm forces the girls to spend Christmas at Mount Silver, Milly becomes vindictive toward Irena for attracting her cousin, Arthur Power. Mrs. Morris rightly worries about the havoc Arthur could cause by staying at a girls' school, but she is forced to yield to her social superior and allow him to visit his female relatives. She mistakenly thinks she can

protect the girls by sending them to decorate the church; however, Arthur disregards her authority, sneaking off to meet Irena and to help her hang wreathes:

And we did go, and what we saw was beautiful—Irena mounted on a chair, twining a holly wreath round a cherub’s head; and there beside her, gazing up and handing sprays of shining green, stood Arthur Power. Two other girls were near, but it was Irena Dupont on whom those handsome blue eyes were fixed so earnestly that even our approach was unnoticed.

“So you have found us out, Arthur, in spite of Mrs. Morris,” Milly exclaimed, with a smile on her lips, but O, such wildly angry eyes! (59)

This scene maps out how the characters’ different social backgrounds affect the unfolding of the love triangle: Arthur breaks the rules to see Irena, Irena acts as his forbidden love interest, Milly becomes jealous of their trans-class romance, and Dora remains an overlooked spectator. Unlike Milly, Dora thinks the sight of Irena and Arthur working together to adorn a cherub statue (a Cupid allusion) is “beautiful,” diction she only associates with Irena and which suggests her feelings for the French girl are being sublimated through Arthur’s desire for her. Neil Armstrong explains that middle-class ladies were the primary church decorators during Christmas, so Arthur encroaches on a female activity when he assists Irena (““Gothic”” 7).¹³³ The absence of any domestics except for Dora is a striking omission from her ghost story, since lower female servants labored tirelessly to make Christmas enjoyable for their masters: “With servants already being burdened with additional labors during key moments in the domestic celebration of Christmas, it is clear they did not fully experience the potential joys of the festive season” (Armstrong *Christmas* 79). Dora elides their work in glossing over the servants’ holiday preparations at Mount Silver, instead focusing on the bourgeois schoolgirls decorating churches.

¹³³ Peter Anson claims Victorian women decorated churches for Christmas just like they filled their homes with objects. Thus, it represented an extension of their household duties: “[The Victorian housewife] had a passion for tassels, fringes, bobbins, peacock’s feathers, and lacquered bullrushes. All her table-clothes touched the floor, and table-legs were regarded as slightly indecent, just as were columns in churches, at least on the great festivals” (qtd. in Armstrong ““Gothic”” 10).

During the Christmas party, Arthur disrupts the female solidarity at Mount Silver by exacerbating the hostility between his relatives, to the point where Milly uses this opportunity to murder Irena. While Dora's ghost story serves to draw the girls in the frame narrative closer together, Arthur's supernatural tale heightens the tension between Milly and Irena, to the point that it leads to the latter's murder. Dora grows nostalgic in recalling how the lack of men at the celebration promoted harmony between the girls, since they were not divided by the need to compete for romantic partners: "There was little ceremony, no elaborate toilettes; we all knew each other, and the female element considerably preponderated; but the dancing was no less delightful, the smiles no less radiant, the enjoyment no less intense" (60). Initially, the girls vie with each other for Arthur's attention, but everyone except for Milly withdraws out of respect for Irena when it becomes clear he prefers her. Like the boys in the frame narrative who harass Dora's charges with supernatural tales, Arthur disturbs the girls' holiday cheer in telling them a "wild" (60) ghost story that leaves them frightened. He proves to be a frivolous nobleman when he challenges the girls to bring him a cypress branch from a tomb behind the church in return for a gold locket.¹³⁴ Milly, Irena, and Dora's participation in this race literalizes the competition between the women for Arthur's favor; ironically, the only one who succeeds is the person outside the love triangle, namely Dora. This sensible woman joins in Arthur's childish scheme because Milly has conditioned her to do things for the nobility in exchange for gifts like the gold locket. Ashamed at her conduct, Dora reasserts her power over Arthur by denying him any narrative authority in her retelling, not even duplicating his story beyond hinting that he offers a standard Gothic narrative about a ghostly monk haunting the church. Milly's class identity grows unstable at the prospect that Irena could usurp *her* place as Arthur's wife. Her social identity is so rigid that

¹³⁴ Ever since classical times, cypress trees have been associated with death, mourning, and the underworld in literature.

she feels threatened by Irena as a perceived competitor and seizes this chance to bury her cousin alive in a secret vault.

The madness that runs through the Power family and afflicts Milly may also be a manifestation of her unhealthy class identity. Dora heroically tries to save a repentant Milly from suffering punishment for her murder of Irena, but she is defeated when Irena's ghost kills Milly in order to exact revenge and prevent her marriage to Arthur. After she takes up a teaching post in Germany, Dora grows so homesick for Mount Silver that Milly manipulates her into acting as her bridesmaid, sending her money and appealing to her loneliness. Dora tells her listeners, "It is only those who are homeless who can sympathise with me in the intense affection I bore to that dear [Mount Silver] and all its occupants" (62). By drawing attention to her "homeless" state, Dora juxtaposes her charges' privilege in having homes, families, and money with her sad condition in needing to leave her beloved school to support herself. Unlike Dora, who feels "haunted" (62) by the trauma of losing her friend, both Milly and Arthur appear indifferent to Irena's fate, the former planning on marrying in the church where she buried her rival. Although Irena has only been missing for a year, Arthur's decision to wed Milly now that Lady Jane has left her a fortune indicates he does not care about his lover. With Milly acting so strangely, Mrs. Morris confides in Dora that she thinks the wedding should be canceled, suspecting that the bride has gone insane and could pass her condition onto her children: "There is a family malady hereditary to the Powers, you probably know...It is something more awful—insanity" (63). The fact that both Irena and Arthur could be inflicted with madness implies that Irena would have been a better choice because she may have brought health to the deteriorating upper classes. Since the aristocratic characters act frivolous, violent, and irrational, the distressed gentlewomen are left with the responsibility of protecting Milly and the Power family from this curse. As she watches Milly for signs of madness,

Dora witnesses her reenact the race and run back to the church in the middle of the night to unearth Irena. Milly's entreaty of "Don't shriek so, Irena—O, O, don't shriek so!" (64) suggests Irena's revenge ghost is pursuing her, which leaves Milly so overcome with remorse that she collapses in a deadly swoon. Buisson never clarifies whether Milly has gone insane, struggles with a guilty conscience, or is haunted by Irena's spirit when she hears her cousin's screams of horror at being buried alive.

Milly's act of sealing up Irena in the vault allows Buisson to tap into the increasingly widespread *fin-de-siècle* fear of premature burial (taphephobia) a phenomenon that reflects Victorian anxieties surrounding class differences, gender roles, and narrative closure. Walpole, Lewis, and Radcliffe's early Gothic novels feature shocking scenes of live burial that play upon eighteenth-century readers' taphephobia (Behlmer "Grave Doubts 214). According to Jan Bondeson, "[t]he popular fear of premature burial was at its greatest in the early Victorian era, at times virtually amounting to mass hysteria" (97). While Victorian readers would be horrified at several events in Buisson's story—including Milly's murder of Irena and the ghost's deadly revenge—Milly's method of killing her cousin would enhance their dismay. This theme allows Buisson to critique the belief that distressed gentlewomen should remain invisible, exemplified in the way Irena endures live burial for showing her transgressive interest in Arthur. Milly acts as an instrument of the patriarchy by killing her own cousin for the sake of a man, imprisoning Irena just like the boys from the frame narrative lock the girls in the church. In addition, Holly Furneaux explains that "[t]hrough horror-inspiring images of live burial, Braddon rejects the institutionalized expectation that a married woman should suffer the complete obliteration of her individual identity" (431). Her observation about Braddon's work is consistent with how Milly ends up being buried right before her wedding, which represents her fate if she had become Arthur's wife. The

ending's ambiguity contributes to the terrifying quality of Irena's fate because readers are left to imagine her terror at live burial and invent the grisly details for themselves. Milly lures Irena into the freezing vault just like the spectre child draws Rosamond into the cold, but Dora's first-person narrative limits us from knowing exactly how she does this. In her analysis of premature burial in *Villette*, *Aurora Leigh*, and *Lady Audley's Secret*, Audrey Murfin finds "[t]he buried woman is unable to communicate, meaning that live burial involves in all cases a suppression or submersion of narrative voice or narrative possibilities, occasionally opening the way for others" (n.p.). By burying Irena, Milly tries to erase, silence, and destroy a remarkable young woman with the potential to achieve great things so as to forestall her marriage to Arthur. However, she only manages to unleash a ghost that torments her to death with its screams and thereby suppresses Milly's future, leaving it to Dora to tell their story.

Dora uses her narrative on tragic outcome of Milly and Irena's rivalry to teach her charges about the importance of befriending women, including less privileged ones such as herself, rather than looking down on them. She reports that while "a horrified group" (64) watches as Irena's body is exhumed, "Millicent Power lay gasping away her life, and murmuring only two words, 'God forgive! God forgive!'" (64). The dying Milly suffers a fate eerily similar to Grace Furnivall's in that she feels remorse over killing Irena, but discovers too late that she cannot make amends for her haughtiness. Distressed gentlewomen like Irena, Mrs. Morris, and Dora are unfairly relegated to inferior roles in society, even though they clearly deserve more privileges than the selfish upper-class characters. Milly's jealousy of Irena leaves both Mrs. Morris and Dora "puzzled" (58, 60) because they enjoy the female community at Mount Silver and try to support other women, not hurt them. Instead of being a real sickness, as previously mentioned, the "family

malady” Milly suffers from is the snobbery she has acquired as a member of the Powers,¹³⁵ which fosters her resentment when a bourgeois woman outshines her. Her loss of mental stability after she murders Irena demonstrates how jealousy between women can be a madness that causes them to hurt one another needlessly. Rather than banding together to fight the unequal social order, Irena and Milly turn against each other through violence, even though their hostility does not solve the problem. Milly’s classism toward Irena mirrors the way Dora ignores the lower female servants at Mount Silver, and yet she faces no negative consequences for acting like they are unworthy of her notice. Dora breaks off when she speculates how Milly trapped Irena, saying “...but enough of this—it is too dreadful,—and God forgive us all!” (64), despite the fact that she is the only one with enough knowledge to reconstruct the crime. Dora only cares about giving the young girls a feminist lesson on how female camaraderie should overcome rivalry over unworthy men, such as the boys and Arthur. In telling her story, Dora portrays herself decorating a church for Christmas just like her charges so they can relate to her better, showing them that she once was a young woman who resembled them. The frame narrator conveys that the governess’s ghost story has succeeded in uniting the girls and Dora across class barriers when she says “[w]e all huddled together as Miss Montem’s voice dropped” (64) in a display of solidarity. They echo Dora in repeating “God forgive us all!” before they are freed from the church, asking to be pardoned for turning against other women. Nonetheless, the fictional children keep repeating this phrase as though they are too immature to absorb her story properly; hence, it is up to Buisson’s older readers to not just to echo “God forgive us all!,” but to implement change in their own lives. Despite being ostensibly innocent, the young girls recognize that they all harbor “guilt” in the sense that they are complicit with a class system that perpetuates the mistreatment of distressed gentlewomen. Though

¹³⁵ The surname Power deliberately highlights the family’s privileged status as aristocrats and the authority they hold over others.

Dora's act of telling her ghost story brings together females of different social positions, but the group only consists of bourgeois girls and a distressed gentlewoman.

In "At Chrighton Abbey" (1871), Braddon's heroine Sarah Chrighton crafts the most self-consciously critical ghost story of all three servant narrators on how the paternalistic outlook of the English country house leads to the neglect, shaming, and exclusion of talented distressed gentlewoman. After working overseas as a governess for twelve years, the narrator, Sarah Chrighton, becomes so homesick that she decides to visit her family for Christmas. As she explains, "[o]ut of respect for the traditions and prejudices of my race, I made it my business to seek employment abroad, where the degradation of one solitary Chrighton was not so likely to inflict shame on the ancient house to which I belonged" (72). It is ironic that Sarah takes such pride in her family's station, considering she must leave not just the Abbey but *England itself* to preserve the Chrightons' reputation. While she clearly recognizes that she has been exiled due to social "prejudices" against her, Sarah has internalized these classist beliefs and accepts her subordinate position without question. Unlike Hester and Dora, Sarah refers to the "business" of working in service and openly discusses her wages, acting like a professional woman who approaches governessing as a lucrative career. She exhibits her independence when she tells the housekeeper, Mrs. Marjorum, "I don't require the help of a maid once in a month. I am accustomed to do everything for myself" (75). Although idle ladies were expected to rely on lower servants, Sarah's decision to forgo their help adds to her dignity, since she can exercise more autonomy without them. At thirty-three years old, Sarah feels "content to think of myself as a confirmed old maid, a quiet spectator of life's great drama, disturbed by no feverish desire for an active part in the play" (73-74). Her allusion to Shakespeare's metaphor of the world being a stage shows she is not just a dull Victorian spinster, as a creative, intelligent, and resourceful woman with strong literary

interests.¹³⁶ Although Sarah is an admirable distressed gentlewoman with much to offer her family, she is treated as a “quiet spectator” akin to a ghost by the Chrichtons. Sarah feels so estranged from her home that she adopts a foreigner’s perspective toward it—her description of the Abbey is colored by her experience working abroad: “The scene reminded me of some weird palace in a German legend” (74). Her socially ambiguous position allows Sarah to act as a liaison between the worlds above and below stairs and makes her the perfect confidant of both Mrs. Marjorum and the Abbey’s mistress, Fanny Chrichton.

When Sarah learns that her cousin, Edward Chrichton, plans on marrying a proud socialite named Julia Tremaine, she expresses hostility toward his fiancée out of her unspoken belief that *she* would be a more suitable choice as a country house mistress. Despite Sarah’s feeling of being unwelcome, Fanny reassures her by looking past her class position to appreciate her good traits: “Ashamed of you! No, my love; I admire your industry and spirit” (76). In return, Sarah respects Fanny for fulfilling a demanding role as the Abbey’s mistress, while her husband shirks his duties so he can spend his days in the library reading.¹³⁷ Sarah calls attention to Fanny’s hard work in arranging the holiday celebrations, giving Christmas gifts to the poor, and taking care of her children. Fanny tells Sarah in private that she is especially anxious to protect Edward from the family curse, which often results in unmarried firstborn sons dying before they can inherit their position. Therefore, she supports her son’s marriage to a “good and appropriate” (73) match like Julia, even though the two appear incompatible, argue constantly, and barely know each other. Sarah’s concern that her cousin may marry the wrong person does not explain why she quickly misjudges Julia as a proud heiress and repeatedly insists she cannot understand what Edward sees

¹³⁶ This allusion is to William Shakespeare’s play *As You Like It*, Act II, scene vii, lines 139-166.

¹³⁷ According to Jessica Gerard, “Apart from their roles as companionate wives and involved mothers, landed women had many other recognized, distinctive and demanding functions to perform for their families, class, and community: as housekeepers and hostesses, as participants in Society, and as philanthropists” (115).

in Julia (77, 78, 80). At one point, Sarah “glanced at [Edward’s] bright expressive face now and then as he talked to [Julia], and could not help wondering what charm he could discover in one who seemed to me so unworthy of him” (78). In deeming Julia “unworthy” of Edward, Sarah overlooks the middle-class values the Chrichtons approve of—her position, wealth, and family—and judges her inferior based on bourgeois values, specifically personal qualities. Sarah’s unstated assumption is that *she* would make a better wife for Edward because she cares about him, shares similar interests with him, and would run the Abbey well.¹³⁸ Her conviction that she represents a more fitting choice for Edward than a socially acceptable woman like Julia serves as an implicit challenge to a class system that precludes her from this role for being a poor relation. The Chrichtons’ aristocratic class identity produces a decline in the family line that they view as a supernatural “curse” of firstborn male dying young. In contrast, those from the middle-class who possess bourgeois values such as Sarah retain social health.

Although Sarah’s jealousy of Julia offers the perfect scenario for female rivalry, Braddon’s narrative breaks away from this narrative, with Sarah taking Julia’s side against Edward when he acts domineering toward his fiancée. In other words, both female characters ally together rather than competing for him when they realize that his classism and misogyny harm all women and the poor. Rather than remaining a “quiet spectator” at the Abbey, Sarah joins in the festivities because she finds “to me the old familiar English country-house was a perpetual delight” (79). In contrast, Julia adopts the role of a passive “spectator” (80) watching other people celebrate, since she does not share Sarah and Edward’s deference to upper-class traditions. She proves unwilling to

¹³⁸ Braddon had already depicted a trans-class marriage between a governess and upper-class male (à la Jane and Rochester) in the bigamous union of Helen Graham and Michael Audley in *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862). However, only Hay briefly comments on the possibility that Edward may have disappointed Sarah in a romantic sense: “We might retrospectively wonder at the parallel sorrow Sarah herself suffered, perhaps at the hands of this same Edward that has led to her own life without marriage” (115).

accompany them on their trips to deliver Fanny's gifts to the poor; instead, Julia questions the paternalistic motives behind this display of holiday generosity:

“And again, what is the use of visiting [the poor]? It is only an inducement to them to become hypocrites. Surely it is better to arrange on a sheet of paper what it is just and fair for them to have—blankets, and coals, and groceries, and money, and wine, and so on—and let them receive the things from some trustworthy servant. In that case, there need be no cringing on one side, and no endurance on the other.”
(81)

Julia's refusal to personally engage in philanthropy signals her rebellion against a social order in which upper-class women like her were expected to conduct face-to-face charitable visits so they could reinforce the landed elite's authority over the locals (Gerard 128). She highlights that the power imbalance of this type of gift-giving encourages the poor to act like “hypocrites” feigning gratitude for their landowners' charity, all the while “cringing” out of hurt pride. The extensive list of objects Julia recites suggests how the wealthy wield power: *they* decide what is “just and fair” for the poor to have and offer them a share from their own large collection of goods. Rather than listening to Julia, Edward defends this paternalistic custom and acts distant from her after she insists that she will not follow Fanny's example as his wife. Julia pursues her own method of giving donations by choosing Sarah as her “trustworthy servant” to distribute her money secretly so the poor can receive help without feeling ashamed. This brief moment of female understanding leads Sarah to gain such an appreciation for her rival that she acts as an intermediary between Edward and Julia in the hopes of reconciling them. When Sarah advises Edward to make peace with Julia rather than go hunting, he tells her “[e]verything splendid in horseflesh and womankind is prone to that slight defect, an ugly temper” (84). According to Marlene Tromp, Edward's sexist comparison of Julia to his horse Pepperbox reveals that he expects both to yield to him, and will gladly crush any hints of defiance (“ugly temper”) on their part (*Altered States* 71).

Sarah's sighting of the family ghost forces her to recognize how paternalism turns the upper classes into benevolent tyrants who subjugate women, the lower classes, and animals in the name of "taking care" of them. Both women's prior bonding makes them agree that Edward is at fault and gives them the confidence to stand up to him. Since she prides herself on her independence, Sarah objects to Edward's controlling attitude toward Julia: "I shall take Miss Tremaine's part. I believe it is you who are in the wrong in the matter of this estrangement, Edward" (84). Her decision to speak in Julia's favor shows Sarah no longer unquestioningly accepts paternal authority; hence, she blames Edward for trying to impose his will on his fiancée. At the same time, she worries that he will fall victim to the family curse while foxhunting because the Chrichtons often suffer fatal accidents during the chase. The family has been in decline ever since Edward's great-grandfather Meredith sold the Chrichtons' hounds, and one important indication is their inability to successfully enjoy this aristocratic male privilege. From her window overlooking the empty kennels and stables, Sarah watches a ghostly hunting party replay the moment when Meredith's heir was brought home dead after a riding accident:

I ran to the window; for this ghastly shimmer flashed through the window upon the opposite wall. The great gates of the stable-yard were open, and men in scarlet coats were riding in, a pack of hounds crowding in before them, obedient to the huntsman's whip...I saw the stable doors opened one after another; gentlemen and grooms alighting from their horses; the dogs driven into their kennel; the helpers hurrying to and fro; and that strange wan lantern-light glimmering here and there is the gathering dusk. But there was no sound of horse's hoof or of human voices—not one yelp or cry from the hounds. (85)

Rather than focusing on Meredith or his dead son, Sarah's vision brings to light the silent dogs and horses that are forcibly confined by the servants, highlighting the voiceless beings "obedient to the huntsman's whip" that the nobility brandishes. Their complete silence underscores the powerlessness of the mute servants and animals alike as they perform their duties for their masters before being put in their places. Considering Edward's expressed desire to control the poor, Julia,

and Pepperbox, these ghosts demonstrate how the aristocracy always tries to exert its power, whether it be through kindness or force. Sarah's supernatural encounter mocks Fanny's hope that Edward will restore the Chrichtons to the glory of Meredith's time. Instead, he dies after falling from his horse and his body is carried home, just like Meredith's son. Along with foretelling Edward's tragic fate, the family ghost warns Sarah that his death is the only way to end the Chrichtons' paternalistic rule.

Regardless of their differences in looks, class, and personality, Sarah and Julia are not only drawn together by Edward's impending death, but also prove to be more similar than they first appear. Both Sarah and Julia survive through avoiding a rivalry by learning to sympathize with each other as women who are mistreated by Edward in different ways. Based on the affinity between servants and apparitions, Sarah knows that she must reach out to Mrs. Marjorum and listen to her oral history if she wants to discover the meaning of her ghostly vision. She is so horrified at the prospect of losing Edward that she tries to dismiss it by resorting to the classist belief that the old wives' tale is the province of the gullible housekeeper, not a cultured lady like herself: "It is natural enough for an old servant to believe in such things...but for me—an educated woman of the world—preposterous folly" (89). Despite her skepticism, Sarah's anxiety over this ghostly omen leads her to transform from a "quiet spectator" into a heroine who tries to save Edward's life. Before his departure, she begs the unrelenting Julia to convince Edward to stay by yielding to him, just like the ghostly dogs, horses, and servants. Sarah's prejudiced view toward Mrs. Marjorum is paralleled in Julia's ridicule of the governess for believing this "old woman's folly" (90) because she expects better of her as a middle-class woman. Julia faces intense pressure to act like a Victorian Angel and make amends for her behavior first, but she refuses to save Edward if it means capitulating to a man who will limit her freedom as his wife. Whereas she once

described Julia as “the reverse of sympathetic” (77), Sarah identifies with her anguish over waiting for Edward and bonds with her when he fails to return home on time: “Some touch of sympathy drew me to the side of Julia Tremaine on this particular morning. I had watched her very often during the last few days, and I had seen that her cheek grew paler every day” (91-92). While critics have noted the connection between Julia and Sarah, they tend to look at how the women serve as obvious foils, missing out on the crucial parallels between them. Analyzing Sarah’s belief in the ghost, Eve Lynch writes that her “willingness to risk humiliation by exposing her social weakness is juxtaposed with Julia’s unbending arrogance” (248). The subtle hints that Sarah and Julia are doubles—artistically inclined, strong-willed, and apt to sit in windows—come to the fore as both await Edward’s return and spend the night mourning him together after hearing about his death.

While Edward’s loss may be heartbreaking, his absence loosens up the Abbey’s rigid social world so that Fanny, Julia, and Sarah can have more substantial roles now that the male heir no longer overshadows them. Julia and Sarah survive through developing a healthy sympathy for each other across class lines, but their stance against the patriarchy necessitates Edward’s death. After his death, Sarah remarks “[s]o does a great sorrow change the current of a woman’s life” (95) by giving his female relatives more liberty, since Edward is no longer at the center of everyone’s attention. The male branch of the Chrichtons ends with him, leaving the Abbey a female legacy: Fanny focuses on her neglected daughters, Julia becomes a tireless philanthropist, and Sarah frequently visits Fanny. Critics are particularly interested in how Julia reverses her stance on charity and performs good works in honor of her lost love: “[Julia] is still unmarried, and lives entirely at her father’s country house; proud and reserved in her conduct to her equals, but a very angel of mercy and compassion amongst the poor of the neighbourhood” (95). Edward dies when Pepperbox throws him off during a steeplechase in order to free itself from his control; similarly,

Julia resists her fiancé when he tries to subdue her and “wins” their argument. Typically, scholars read her fate as Julia’s punishment for her refusal to submit to Edward, a chilling view that holds her responsible for “murdering” him. For instance, Alysia Kolentis writes that “Julia’s contrition implies that her initial resistance was misguided and futile; she is bound to be relegated to the confines of female domesticity as determined by the dominant male authority” (75).¹³⁹ Unlike Grace and Milly, Julia does not suffer death for killing a woman over an unworthy man because her spurning of Edward draws her and Sarah closer together. Although she performs her female duty as an “angel of mercy,” Julia aligns her interests with the poor instead of her own class, in a way that challenges the use of charity as a means of exacting obedience. Sarah benefits the most from Edward’s death insofar as she loses her exile status, which allows her to retain her independence as a governess and visit the Abbey without shaming her family. As her guest, Sarah witnesses how Fanny mourns the ending of the Chrichtons’ line as well as the passing of the aristocratic way of life, beginning in the 1870s. The ending conveys that the aristocracy will destroy themselves through their arrogance unless they agree to offer bourgeois and upper-class women a seat at the Malthusian table.

In writing about her ghostly experience, Sarah marginalizes the lower classes in favor of highlighting her own unfortunate situation so she can appeal to the bourgeois female readers Braddon was trying to attract as *Belgravia*’s editor. Compared to the bullied Agnes and the invisible servants at Mount Silver, working-class people frequently appear in Sarah’s tale, but they remain an amorphous and voiceless presence. Sarah’s disdain of Mrs. Marjorum for being superstitious reveals her latent snobbery, which is undercut when the housekeeper turns out to be

¹³⁹ For more on how Julia’s outcome is her penalty for not reconciling with Edward, see Lynch 245-249, Hay 114-115, Kolentis 74-75, and Carpenter 56-60. See Tromp *Altered States* 69-71 for an opposing reading that views Julia as being delivered from her cruel fiancé.

right about the family ghost. Despite working in service herself, Sarah refrains from sympathetically portraying the lower female servants at the Abbey because she considers herself above them as a genteel lady. The privileged characters, such as Edward, Julia, and Sarah, debate what is best for the working classes, who are not given the chance to speak for themselves or convey their own desires, just like the ghostly servants. Although Julia questions the patronizing treatment of the poor, she retains her superior position at the expense of those she helps as an “angel of mercy,” since they remain financially dependent on her (Elliot *Angel* 11).

Instead of orally relaying her ghost story to a group of fictional children, Sarah writes a supernatural tale aimed directly at *Belgravia*'s older female readers. The titles of “The Old Nurse’s Story” and “A Story Told in a Church” emphasize the orality of Hester and Dora’s ghost stories, while “At Chrighton Abbey” highlights the country house setting under critique. Sarah joins the ranks of literary governesses who proliferated in Victorian fiction, due to their unique opportunities to watch people and transmute their suffering into art. Nora Gilbert finds that one of the reasons why the governess seemed like such a threatening figure during this period was that she could socially empower herself through her writing (479). Edwin Fussell’s remark about the governess in Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw* applies perfectly to Sarah’s ghost story: “If a woman writes a novel as good as a man—the same novel as a man—why indeed should she be a governess?” (128). Sarah’s ability to write as well as Braddon invites readers to identify with her plight as a distressed gentlewoman, along with suggesting that she should be an author rather than a governess. She renders lower female servants incapable of telling their own ghost stories so as not to deflect her bourgeois readers’ attention away from the need to extend *her* social privileges.

In “Man-Size in Marble” (1893), Edith Nesbit recognizes that middle-class female writers profited from their servants’ ghost stories when the male narrator explains how his wife Laura bases her spooky tales on those related by their housekeeper, Mrs. Dorman:

[Mrs. Dorman’s] face and figure were good, though her cooking was of the homeliest; but she understood all about gardening, and told us...of the ‘things that walked’, and the ‘sights’ which one met in the lonely lanes of a starlight night. She was a great comfort to us, because Laura hated housekeeping as much as I loved folk-lore, and we soon came to leave all the domestic business to Mrs. Dorman, and to use her legends in little magazine stories which brought in guineas. (18)

Mrs. Dorman financially benefits everyone, including herself, with her ghost stories: she frees Laura from demanding housework so she can write for a living, tells her mistress “legends” that she publishes for money, and earns her wages from these sales. In her analysis of how Lockwood pays Nelly after she finishes her tale about Catherine’s ghost, Jean Fernandez refers to “the servant’s marketable powers of narration” (73). The allusion to “guineas” reminds us that while female servants may have respected their masters, they were also paid employees who enabled bourgeois female writers’ literary careers in a variety of ways. Through her portrayal of Laura, Nesbit comments on how authors like Gaskell, Buisson, and Braddon used servants to perform housework for them and to narrate their fictional ghost stories. Although their stories urge middle-class women to befriend distressed gentlewomen working in service, the desire to uphold their privileged status leads to the acceptance of the continued subjugation of lower servants.¹⁴⁰ Hester, Dora, and Sarah prove to be talented artists whose spellbinding ghost stories and heroic actions convincingly promote the extension of middle-class ladies’ rights. As previously mentioned,

¹⁴⁰ In a similar vein, Dorice Williams Elliot writes “Gaskell’s depiction of ideal servant-mistress relations characterized by mutual respect and regard is also a fiction that covers over the power differential, market relations, and competition that are built into dealings between servants and mistresses. The tension between her desire to represent and treat servants as equals and friends and the necessity of having servants who were willing to act the role of subservient, loyal dependent in order to maintain her own class position—as well as her ability to write professionally—is ultimately unresolvable. Thus, in her representation of servants, Gaskell comes close to recognizing that social class is constructed and fictional, but she ultimately backs away from that recognition” (113-114).

working-class women would orally share old wives' tales in order to demand justice for themselves from an unfair class system. In contrast, these three ghost stories deploy middle-class servant narrators who appropriate this lower-class genre for an audience of mature gentlewomen. These ghost stories' empowering message about overcoming female rivalry through trans-class friendship is seriously undermined because they endorse women's oppression of other women. They reveal the middle-class fantasy of being seated at Malthus's table and waited on by silent laboring women who will not question the social inequalities between their mistresses and themselves.

Chapter Four:
“The Power of Seeing Things to Others Mercifully Invisible”¹⁴¹:
The Artist Heroine’s Uncanny Vision

“Now, then,” sneered he, “we must have a confiscation of property. But first, let us take a peep into the studio.”

And putting the keys into his pocket, he walked into the library. I followed, whether with the dim idea of preventing mischief, or only to know the worst I can hardly tell. My painting materials were laid together on the corner table, ready for to-morrow’s use, and only covered with a cloth. He soon spied them out, and putting down the candle, deliberately proceeded to cast them into the fire—palette, paints, bladders, pencils, brushes, varnish—I saw them all consumed—the palette-knives snapped in two—the oil and turpentine sent hissing and roaring up the chimney. He then rang the bell.

“Benson, take those things away,” said he, pointing to the easel, canvass, and stretcher; “and tell the housemaid she may kindle the fire with them: your mistress won’t want them any more.”

Benson paused aghast and looked at me.

“Take them away, Benson,” said I; and his master muttered an oath.

“And this and all, sir?” said the astonished servant, referring to the half-finished picture.

“That and all,” replied the master; and the things were cleared away.

- Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848)

Introduction

Notwithstanding its lack of supernatural elements and understated use of the Gothic (a tyrannical husband, a wife fleeing captivity, and a ruined mansion), Brontë’s novel serves as a prototype for women’s ghost stories centering on female artists. In the epigraph, Huntington commits violence against Helen Graham by reading her diary and burning her artistic materials, depriving her of the means to escape and to support herself and her son Arthur. This scene marks Helen’s breaking point before she leaves her emotionally abusive husband, who tries to forestall her independence through violating two of her creative pursuits, writing and painting. While Huntington is not physically aggressive, he perpetuates a symbolic act of violence against his wife by invading her privacy, usurping her voice, and ruining her art, all with the intention of reducing

¹⁴¹ In Charlotte Riddell’s ghost novel *The Haunted River* (1877), the artist heroine Margaret “Peg” Vernam uses this phrase to describe her ghost-seeing abilities (309).

her to a powerless dependent. The threat of even worse retaliation makes Helen feel she must reissue his commands in her own voice to the butler, thus seeming to participate in her own subjection. Huntington does not completely hinder Helen's creative activities so much as seek to control her self-expression, especially because her artwork is a means of conveying her erotic feelings (Shaw 13; Losano 5; White 52). During their courtship, he makes no objection when Helen draws the portraits that signal her hidden desire for him; in fact, he inspires and approves of her early attempts at painting him as a male muse. Similar to other Victorian female artists, Helen continues writing in her diary after Huntington intrudes on her privacy, since she has the resolve to keep creating art in spite of the attendant risks of male hostility and dominance. His complaint that Helen's negative characterization of him in her writing is unfeminine resembles the attacks of the male critics who suspected Acton Bell's true gender and thus condemned Brontë for her stark depiction of Huntington's vices.¹⁴²

Helen becomes romantically involved with two male character types who superficially appear different, yet they both restrict *and* motivate her artistic creation by attempting to exert their authority over her body, sexuality, and artwork through violence. The first, her drunk and womanizing husband, expresses anger at the "disgrace" (311) her career will bring on him. Ironically, his debauchery constitutes the topic of most of her diary entries and drives her to *become* an artist. The second, her bumbling yet good-natured suitor Gilbert supports her profession and recognizes her paintings' aesthetic value. Lisa Surridge observes "[w]hat Brontë articulated—resistance to coverture, claim to children, financial independence—was to be the foundation of the liberal feminist response to marital violence for the next three decades" (86). Several critics have

¹⁴² In the Preface to the second edition, Brontë responded to these attacks by challenging her critics' literary double standards: "All novels are or should be written for both men and women to read, and I am at a loss to conceive how a man should permit himself to write anything that would be really disgraceful to a woman, or why a woman should be censured for writing anything that would be proper and becoming for a man" (5).

analyzed how Brontë's portrayal of domestic violence intersects with Helen's art; for instance, Huntington's burning of her paintings is read as a figurative assault/rape of his wife.¹⁴³ Antonia Losano crucially argues that Helen's diary shifts attention away from her body so that she resists being reduced to an art object and instead emerges as an artist (23). Despite her best efforts, the gossipy residents of Linden-Car mark Helen out as a "fallen woman" for living alone, being a "widow" with a shady past, and working as a painter. Even Gilbert displays a cruel streak similar to Huntington's when he brutally attacks Helen's brother Lawrence in the mistaken belief that she is his mistress. Although he never harms Helen, the jealous Gilbert assaults Lawrence as a proxy for her so he can indirectly control and punish her transgressive sexuality. In keeping with Victorian expectations, Helen ceases her painting and writing after she marries Gilbert, who gains power over her by enclosing her diary in his frame narrative.¹⁴⁴ While he circulates Helen's diary without her consent, Gilbert also makes her a published author late in their marriage, long after the artist heroine's career is thought to have run its course. This tension between male encouragement of and violence toward female artists cuts across both male character types that Brontë bequeathed to women authors who wrote ghost stories featuring artist heroines.

In this chapter, I argue that a certain group of Victorian women's ghost stories are classified as female *künstlerromane*, since they relate the artist heroine's journey to establish her professional

¹⁴³ For more on Helen's career as a professional artist, see Shaw, White and Losano. For more on the legal, social, and cultural issues surrounding Brontë's handling of domestic violence, see McMaster, Jacobs, Poole, Ward, and Berg.

¹⁴⁴ *Tenant's* complicated structure has generated much scholarly commentary seeking to defend Brontë's narrative choices from George Moore's position that she should have allowed Helen to tell Gilbert her story in person. See Gordon, Jacobs, Langland "Voicing" 111-123, Signoretti, Senf, Stewart "Narrative Economies," and Berg. I follow Signoretti and Berg's reading that Gilbert attempts to control Helen as well as her literary work by containing her diary within his letter to his brother-in-law Halford. Losano disputes the view that Brontë's artist heroine chooses domesticity over her career, stating "there is no textual evidence that Helen gives up painting after marrying Gilbert" (21n). While I agree with Shaw and White that Helen appears to relinquish her creative activities after remarrying, Gilbert's circulation of her diary turns her into a published author. Brontë moves beyond the reductive notion that the female artist must choose between love or a career due to pressure from an "Eternal Masculine" character to consider how Huntington and Gilbert both provoke and restrict Helen's art at various stages of her life.

career. Maurice Beebe and Roberta Seret trace the start of the *künstlerroman* tradition to late eighteenth-century male Romantics such as Jean Jacques Rousseau, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Lord Byron (21-49; 17-29). At the same time, the idea emerged of the male artist hero as a sensitive, introverted, and feminine “genius” who is marked as an outsider due to his unique individuality (Battersby 35). Throughout the nineteenth century, women had to struggle with negative images of the woman artist, such as Sappho and Corinne, as well as a lack of female precursors or mentors. Despite Sappho’s expressions of sexual desire for women in her lyric poems, it was popularly believed that she hurled herself off the Leucadian cliff out of heartbreak that her lover, Phaon, abandoned her.¹⁴⁵ As the first influential female *künstlerroman*, Germaine de Staël’s *Corinne, or Italy* (1807) inspired many Victorian women to become authors and write *künstlerromane* featuring artist heroines (Lewis 9-10). Corinne dies of sorrow after her lover Oswald marries her submissive half-sister Lucile, producing the “Corinne myth” of the female artist who meets a tragic end because she cannot have her true love. The Brontë sisters created positive images of female artists to replace Sappho and Corinne through their invention of creative heroines, such as Helen Graham, Jane Eyre, and Lucy Snowe. However briefly, Helen is liberated by her art and “has it all” in terms of a career, a suitor, and a child, taking “pleasure” (74) in her work while not glamorizing her obstacles or self-doubts.

During the Victorian era and early twentieth century, women were ignored, trivialized, and ridiculed for entering male-dominated creative professions, views that were reinforced by literary portraits of suicidal and mad female artists. In many nineteenth-century literary works, the artist heroine must choose either love or a career, which creates an internal conflict between the woman and the artist. Linda Huf notes the heroine “is torn not only between life and art but, more

¹⁴⁵ For more on Victorian representations of Sappho, see Prins and Gubar “Sapphistries.”

specifically, between her role as a woman, demanding selfless devotion to others, and her aspirations as an artist, requiring exclusive commitment to work” (5).¹⁴⁶ The images of the despairing Sappho and the lovesick Corinne serve as a warning that the female artist will suffer if she selects fame, creativity, and ambition over love, since only the latter will make her happy.¹⁴⁷ In settling for love, however, the woman must sacrifice her professional identity, subsume her interests to those of her husband, and retire to the domestic realm. The artist heroines are also regarded as “monstrous” or “freakish” for acting egotistical enough to pursue their dreams, instead of remaining content to serve their families (G. Stewart 109; Battersby 46; Huf 12). The conservative readings of *Corinne* existed alongside radical interpretations of the artist heroine’s divided nature as a hybrid character. Corinne’s heritage influenced the Victorian practice of imagining artist heroines who embody two separate nationalities, since she is half-Italian on her mother’s side and half-English on her father’s side. She even insists to Oswald that her hybridity uniquely enhances her creative gifts: “... [I]t was my destiny to have particular advantages because of the unusual circumstances of my dual education and, if I may put it that way, two different nationalities” (256).

¹⁴⁶ There are exceptions to the pattern that Huf notes in Victorian realist short stories. For instance, Grace Aguilar’s “The Authoress” (1852) features a man named Dudley Granville who rejects his love interest, Claire Stanley, when he discovers that she is a professional author due to his negative experience being raised by a pretentious woman writer. Granville is partly convinced by a friend who alludes to the love versus work conflict when he claims that “a public literary character cannot be a domestic wife” (220). However, Dudley realizes that Clara can handle both responsibilities when he discovers that she has nursed his motherless daughter through serious illness while continuing to engage in her writing. When he asks how she balances these two aspects of her life, Clara replies, “Simply, Sir Dudley, because, in my opinion, it is impossible to divide them. Perfect in them, indeed, I am not; but though I know it is possible for woman to be domestic without being literary—as we are all not equally endowed by Providence—to my feelings, it is not possible to be more than usually gifted without being domestic. The appeal to the heart must come from the heart; and the quick sensibility of the imaginative woman must make her feel for others, and act for them, more particularly for the loved of home. To write, we must think, and if we think of duty, we, of all others, must not fail in the performance, or our own words are bitter with reproach. It is from want of thought most failings spring alike in duty as in feeling. From this want the literary and imaginative woman must be free” (232-233).

¹⁴⁷ For instance, despite her literary success, Letitia Elizabeth Landon contributed to these cultural narratives with her poem “Sappho” (1822). Landon writes “...Phaon soon / Forgot the fondness of his Lesbian maid; / And Sappho knew that genius, riches, fame, / May not soothe slighted love” right before her suicide (lines 69-72).

Throughout the nineteenth century, the hybrid artist heroine allows de Staël as well as later women writers to critique English prejudice against female artists by highlighting other national customs that grant women more autonomy. Growing up in her fatherland, Corinne finds her creative interests stifled due to society's mediocrity, conventionality, and philistinism, along with the expectation that women should become obedient housewives. She criticizes English restrictions on not only female artists but women in general when she states "it seems to me that I could have sent a delicately improved mechanical doll in my place. It would have fulfilled my function in society very well" (249). Corinne resents that Englishwomen are expected to be a combination of a robot that acts out a traditional gender script and a toy that is meant to amuse others. While Oswald presents himself as a conservative Englishman, de Staël complicates his national identity by making him a colonized Scottish subject who fights to conquer other nations for the English military. de Staël figures the power dynamics between men and women in terms of the larger relationships between different countries. Corinne links her imaginative faculties with her maternal heritage because she can freely pursue her career in her motherland, and her artistic "genius" leads to her becoming Italy's political representative. Oswald's threat to turn Corinne into his domestic "slave" in England by making her choose marriage over her career parallels how her motherland has been violently subdued by masculinized foreign powers.¹⁴⁸ In the ghost stories under examination, the artist heroines are all either national hybrids or described as such, and their English ancestry is what impedes their professional careers. Mulholland's Lisa is half-Italian, half-English; Edwards's Katrine is an Italian adhering to German ways; Braddon's Barbara is an

¹⁴⁸ Although *Corinne* is set during the 1790s, de Staël uses it as a lens to comment on the politics of her day. Throughout the novel, Corinne defends Italy's glory as the nation's "poet laureate," even though it was ruled by foreign powers during the late eighteenth century. At the time de Staël was writing in 1805, Napoleon had exiled her from France as his political enemy, since she believed he was a tyrant who should be replaced by a republic. Hence, she indirectly attacks him through Corinne because he had control of both France and Italy. Given that de Staël was nicknamed "Corinne" after her heroine, we can also read the novel as her urging French readers to side with the political views of a female artist like her, rather than their despotic leader (Lewis 37-41).

Englishwoman identified with Italy; Lee's Alice is an Englishwoman equated with the Italian muse Beatrice; and Oliphant's Honey and Burnett's Ysobel are Scottish subjects. The artist heroine's biological or spiritual divide between England and another country permits these authors to provide other outcomes for their female characters than being Victorian Angels through the examples afforded by other nations.

As an alternative to Sappho and Corinne, critics explore the artist heroine's division between woman/artist and her relationship to older female or maternal characters in terms of the Demeter and Persephone legend. This Greek myth is central to female *künstlerromane* for its depiction of a young woman's growing independence, the unfavorable aspects of patriarchal marriage, and the importance of mother-daughter bonds. There is extensive scholarship on the centrality of the mother-daughter rapport and the association of female creativity with childbearing in the Victorian female *künstlerroman*.¹⁴⁹ While scholars typically look at the Demeter and Persephone narrative in realist female *künstlerromane*, it could also be found in women's supernatural fiction. In these ghost stories, Demeter and Persephone often appear as doubles or the artist heroine contains both as a representation of her division between woman (Demeter) and artist (Persephone). These two figures achieved popularity with Victorian intellectuals, particularly female authors who used them to critique the darker aspects of patriarchal marriage (Radford 49-86; Louis 43-54, 71-73). Some feminist critics read the myth in negative terms for its portrayal of women's agony at being separated from their female communities and treated as objects of male exchange.¹⁵⁰ Holly Virginia Blackford offers a more nuanced perspective on Persephone's abduction in fiction about young women's journeys through fantasy worlds, which is relevant to

¹⁴⁹ For more on the importance of the mother-daughter relationship to women's writing and the female *künstlerroman*, see Walker, Stewart 40-105, Blau DuPlessis 84-104, Gubar "The Birth" 19-59, and Gerber. For more on the association between female creativity and procreativity, see Heilmann 155-193, Friedman, and Weber.

¹⁵⁰ See Gubar "Marriage of Death" 305 and Irigaray 109.

my analysis of artist heroines who are mostly in their teens or early twenties: “Daughters who dared to artistically shape words or take up the pen find that their entry into transitional space might well awaken the daemon of artistry within. This daemon looks perilously like Hades, and his sophisticated underworld is, in fact, the creative unconscious” (12). In these ghost stories, Persephone teeters on the border between childhood and adulthood, experiencing a sexual and creative “awakening” when she meets Hades. The maternal characters turn out to be failures for demanding that Persephone adopt a traditional role and even the sympathetic Demeter loses control as Hades tempts Persephone to fulfill her ambitions. Persephone’s conflict between her male and female “muses” is expressed by Grace Stewart’s remark that “she is also sorrowful, split between male and female lovers, between mother and husband, and their battle for control” (47) of her. Furthermore, the underworld associations surrounding Persephone fit the artist heroine’s position, since she is a female ghost-seer who serves as an intermediary between the living and the dead.

Although the Persephone characters in these ghost stories are not subject to rape, the myth’s brutal episode perfectly captures how they are victimized by male lovers or husbands who try to control their art or their sexuality. Elizabeth Bronfen explains that women must function as passive, beautiful muses who are violently “killed” into art objects in order to inspire male artists and reflect their genius (362). The female *künstlerroman* tradition features the “Eternal Masculine” character who impedes the artist heroine’s career by insisting that she must act as a Victorian Angel; hence, he is often eliminated so that she can pursue her dreams in a wish-fulfillment scenario (Huf 9, 31). Huf’s analysis does not fully apply to the male characters in these ghost stories, since they are artists who do not obstruct the artist heroine so much as restrict her self-expression or exploit her creative potential. The Persephone figures project their forbidden artistic impulses onto acceptable substitutes, namely men—hence, they are “haunted” by the ghosts of the

male artists/Hades figures they aspire to be. In Victorian female *künstlerromane*, women must come to terms with their artistic “demons,” so it is fitting that their professional aspirations are embodied by male ghosts. The male artists’ work is marked by incompleteness or failure when the artist heroines refuse to be the passive muses they need to create. As a result, the male characters punish the artist heroines because the former perceive the latter’s talent and feel jealous at being inferior to female rivals. In these supernatural tales, a curse, vigilante justice, or warfare connected to male revenge is also a recurring situation in which the artist heroine frequently becomes a victim of masculine violence.

This chapter argues that the female artists in the ghost stories under analysis resist being violently objectified as voiceless muses for the creation of men’s art; instead, they demand their right to produce their own music, handicrafts, and literature. When the female characters assert themselves creatively or sexually, the rival male artists/lovers attempt to subjugate them out of a desire to reestablish control or to discipline these women. These ghost stories exhibit the Victorians’ widening views on domestic violence, especially after the 1870 case *Kelly v. Kelly* made emotional and mental cruelty grounds for divorce (Hammerton 129). The authors I will discuss recognize subtle and indirect forms of domestic abuse; for instance, the male characters refrain from physically injuring the artist heroines and instead psychically scar them by hurting a proxy. Although Hades inspires the artist heroine and provides her with a role model in the absence of artistic foremothers, it is dangerous for her to identify exclusively with the masculine because this means she must deny Demeter and her own femininity. The male ghosts simultaneously materialize the women’s struggle with men for artistic independence and the frustration that leads them to retaliate against their oppressors. In a reversal of the artist-muse paradigm, Hades is sacrificed to become a source for the artist heroine’s inspiration and the subject of her art, rather

than an obstacle standing in the way of her dreams. Section One investigates the female characters' struggle to transition from beautiful muses into professional artists in ghost stories from the 1860s and 1870s. Mulholland, Edwards, and Braddon recount how these artist heroines are brutally suppressed by their male rivals for their presumption in trying to rise above their inferior status as makers of commodified art. In Section Two, I inspect Lee, Oliphant, and Burnett's rendering of middle-class female authors during the *fin de siècle* and early-twentieth century. The artist heroines develop a model of female authorship in which they offer their ghost stories as gifts meant to inspire their women readers to compose supernatural tales. Despite the continuing hostility against women writers, the evolution in their construction of the artist heroine over fifty years (between 1866 and 1916) shows they were gaining confidence in their professional status as they established a female ghost story canon.

Section One: "The Living Embodiment of My Dream"

"You are not a woman. You may try—but you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. To have a pattern cut out—'this is the Jewish woman; this is what you must be; this is what you are wanted for; a woman's heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed receipt.' That was what my father wanted. He wished I had been a son; he cared for me as a makeshift link. His heart was set on his Judaism. He hated that Jewish women should be thought of by the Christian world as a sort of ware to make public singers and actresses of. As if we were not the more enviable for that! That is a chance of escaping from bondage."

- George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 1867

Introduction: Realism versus the Supernatural

In their ghost stories, female authors use realism's capacity to encompass alternative literary genres as a way of conveying women artists' struggle to achieve creative independence from male domination. Isobel Armstrong examines how Victorian women poets developed an "expressive theory," writing within affective conventions that address female subjectivity in order to change them (323, 341-343). Armstrong's concept suggests how women writers self-

consciously fashioned a ghostly literary canon in which their artist heroines find different ways of liberating themselves within constraints. Similar to their creators, these artist heroines work within masculine artistic traditions, study under male mentors, and compete with male rivals in pursuing their artistic careers. While this strategy gives them the opportunity to exercise their talents, they are also subject to male disapproval, censorship, and violence that thwarts their full artistic expression. They must move beyond the confining norms of male culture and establish their own female artistic legacies through their supernatural insight. Similarly, women writers invented a distinctly female ghost story tradition through shared narrative elements, self-reflexive meditations on art, and challenges to male artistic hegemony. According to Srdjan Smajic, “nineteenth-century realism was not only exceptionally flexible about its objectives and methods but also routinely mobilizes the supernatural as an instrument with which to both formulate and critically interrogate its projects and procedures” (“Supernatural Realism” 3). Victorian and early twentieth-century ghost stories by women accord with the artist heroines’ hybrid nature because they merge two modes, one repressively conventional (realism) and the other imaginatively liberating (the supernatural). Rather than being at odds, the blend of literary modes enables women writers to expose the social realities that inhibit their artist heroines as well as to imagine possibilities for them that may exist one day.

The female artist’s nature as a “sensitive” woman who experiences uncanny dreams, visions, and emotions gives her a special ghost-seeing ability that can release her from the limits on her artistic practice, to a certain extent. At the time, artist heroines and female ghost-seers’ excessive imagination in terms of creating art or “making up” ghost stories led to both being regarded as emotionally and psychologically unstable. From the Romantics onward, male artists were seen as divinely inspired figures whose creativity gave them an extraordinary penetration

bordering on the supernatural. Writing about male painters who devise magical portraits, Bo Jeffares asserts “nineteenth-century authors managed, by implying that the artist had unusual visionary powers, to create situations in which he could easily be awarded superiority verging on omnipotence” (98). In contrast, female ghost-seeing was considered “profoundly equivocal in Victorian culture,” since it could be interpreted as revealing either sensitivity or mental illness (Schaper 8). These artist heroines are doubly stigmatized as creators and ghost-seers in a society where the feminine imagination appears suspect for its relation with madness. Despite this stigma, women writers connect feminine intuition, creativity, and artistry, which implies that they risk evoking these negative associations because ghost-seeing empowers their artist heroines. Their capacity for ghost-seeing allows the artist heroines to develop a unique language for their ambitions, dreams, and talents that avoids the pessimistic images of Sappho and Corinne. This imaginative perception frees them from the restrictions on women in fiction and real life, such as the Victorian Angel, the marriage plot, and domestic confinement. The uniquely feminine nature of ghost-seeing also liberates women from being controlled, inhibited, or outshone by male artists or love interests who lack this perception. Female ghost-seeing becomes more complex in nature as the artist heroines acquire greater creative autonomy; however, there are limits on how optimistic or emancipatory this vision can be.

We can see the artistic constraints of realism compared to the imaginative possibilities of the supernatural by setting the ghost stories I will examine in Section One against Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1876). I have chosen to compare the ghost-seeing artist heroines with Eliot’s female artists because her novel is filled with writers, actors, singers, and musicians. Eliot published her novel around the same time as Mulholland, Edwards, and Braddon wrote their ghost stories, during the transitional period of the late 1860s and 1870s. Eliot’s depiction of female artists is highly

ambivalent due to her timing: she was writing after feminists had challenged the Victorian Angel but before the New Woman appeared in the 1880s. The critical literature explores how Eliot's female artists express her discomfort about negotiating her feelings of ambition, egoism, self-display, and rebelliousness as a writer.¹⁵¹ In *Daniel Deronda*, the foreign musician Klesmer is respected by everyone for his musical virtuosity and aesthetic judgments. As a male artist, Klesmer is the most powerful arbiter of female artistic competence of three characters: Gwendolen Harleth, Mirah Lapidoth, and Miss Arrowpoint. These women are all held to a masculine standard as they explore careers and mastery in singing, acting, and opera, which is crucial for Gwendolen and Mirah in their financially precarious situations. After listening to Gwendolen sing, Klesmer declares, "I don't pretend to speak absolutely; but measuring probabilities, my judgment is:—you will hardly achieve more than mediocrity" (221). He insists on hearing Mirah perform, "Let us shake hands: you are a musician...Not for great tasks. No high roofs. We are no skylarks. We must be modest" (415). In contrast, Miss Arrowpoint is a wealthy heiress who can afford to study under Klesmer out of her ambition to become a great musician. Although she can expertly play three different instruments and writes an operetta, he does not consider her a great artist. When Klesmer tells her, "Even you can't understand the wrath of the artist: he is of another caste for you," Miss Arrowpoint replies, "That is true...He is of a caste to which I look up—a caste above mine" (207).

The reason why Eliot's female artists all fail is because they never move beyond the limits of the masculine creative authority that Klesmer represents to establish their own traditions. They become artist *manqués* who suffer from the lack of female artistic legacy that they could fashion through their creative vision, which would allow them the means for self-expression. These female characters endure what Linda M. Lewis calls an Erinna complex, meaning that they are ultimately

¹⁵¹ See Fricke, Blake, Midler, Lisle, Bodenheimer, Zangen, Pope, Krasner, and Hadjiafxendi.

silenced or lose their genius (183). The fear that the female characters' voices are too weak is a metaphor for how their art cannot flourish in a world dominated by men, where women must make strategic alliances with them in order to succeed in the arts. The problem is that Klesmer retains control over all three female characters and they generally do not compete with him or question his criticism. Rosemarie Bodenheimer remarks "Klesmer reigns as the deciding father who withholds or bestows laurels of his caste in audition scenes with promising young ladies" (30). She rightly points out that the master-pupil scenes between Klesmer and the female artists is fraught with emotional and romantic complications. While his power is initially offset by his financial dependence on the Arrowpoints, his marriage to their daughter gives him social status that adds weight to his artistic judgments. The female characters must be guided by him, since he can provide them with the training, instruction, and connections they need to prosper. However, in acting complicit with a male authority, Mirah, Gwendolen, and Miss Arrowpoint lose their voices and never express themselves artistically. Instead, all three find themselves trapped in the Victorian marriage plot for deciding to restrict themselves based on Klesmer's artistic critique. Miss Arrowpoint disappears from the novel after marrying him, Mirah gives up her singing career to marry Daniel, and the widowed Gwendolen ends up emotionally broken.

In the realist novel, the female artists suffer from their lack of supernatural perception because their talents are reduced and their ambitions founder, except for Daniel's mother Alcharisi. Out of all the female artists, she is the only one who successfully pursued her career goals and became a prima donna for nine years, before the fear of losing her voice drove her to marry a Russian noble. Alcharisi is a female ghost-seer associated with the underworld as a driven artist who faces a conflict between being a celebrated opera singer and proper Jewish wife and mother. However, her representation is unflattering, since she is viewed through the eyes of the child she

abandoned for her career. In the epigraph, when Daniel sympathizes with her frustration at her father prohibiting her career, Alcharisi expresses her resentment of the patriarchal limits on women's creative ambitions across various cultures. She conveys her fierce artistic desires as a "man's force of genius" because she associates artistic recognition with men and may feel that her talent masculinizes her. In contrast, the patriarchal hegemony across various cultures reduces women's dreams to "a fix for receipt" for domestic tasks like making cakes. Eliot's portrayal of Alcharisi is highly-charged with ambivalence over whether she should rebel against her subjection in Jewish patriarchal culture by choosing her career over her son. Her artistic genius is indicated by the multiple supernatural images surrounding her that figure the dying Alcharisi in ghostly ways.¹⁵² For instance, the narrator describes how "in her dusky flame-coloured garment, she looked like a dreamed visitant from some region of departed mortals" (571). Alcharisi admits to Daniel, "I have been forced to obey my dead father" (541) as a female ghost-seer figuratively haunted by his vengeful spirit until she reveals her son's destiny as a Jewish leader. In Mulholland, Edwards, and Braddon's ghost stories, the female desire for a career over children is subtly approved, rather than condemned. Not only are they confident in their creative ambitions, but the artist heroines are also determined to pursue successful careers with a man's help.

While realism diminishes the gifts, aspirations, and opportunities of aspiring female artists, the heroines in women's ghost stories rely on male spirits whom they later surpass when they

¹⁵² There are other examples of supernatural language related to Alcharisi that underscore her talent as an adept singer and actress. She is described "a sorceress who would stretch forth her wonderful hand and arm to mix youth-potions for others, but scorned to mix them for herself, having had enough of youth" (565). In addition, her "worn beauty had a strangeness in it as if she were not quite a human mother, but a Melusina, who had ties with some world which is independent of ours" as a mermaid who marries a human being (536). As a dying woman, she muses that "events come upon us like evil enchantments: and thoughts, feelings, apparitions in the darkness are events—are they not?" (540-541). Alcharisi reveals to Daniel that "when my strength goes, some other right forces itself upon me like iron in an inexorable hand; and even when I am at ease, it is beginning to make ghosts upon the daylight" (545). Similar to the clairvoyant Latimer from Eliot's supernatural tale "The Lifted Veil" (1859), Alcharisi has a "double consciousness" as a woman who dramatizes her emotions through "sincere acting" (539).

refuse to be contained by their mentors. The artist heroines, Lisa, Katrine, and Barbara, are distinct from most of Eliot's female artists—except for Alcharisi—because they are open about their aspirations and motivated to become great artists. In particular, the supernatural insight that allows them to see male ghosts enhances their ambition and signals their powerful creative abilities. While female ambition is not an issue by itself, the artist heroines suffer when they follow a male model of artistry that confines them in a “tomb of their own.” The male ghosts encourage women to act selfish as they turn inward to create, rather than producing art that they can share as a gift with other aspiring women. Alcharisi's major failing is that her pursuit of the stage isolates her; furthermore, she is unable to overcome her rage against the patriarchy to show love or sympathy for others (Fricke 227; Midler 105-106). The other problem is that the artist heroines are more dependent on the men for their support at the beginning of the ghost stories. This dependence reinforces the male characters' power and gives them more authority than Klesmer wields over Eliot's female artists, until the women artists find alternative ways of being creative or assert themselves artistically.

In women's ghost stories, when the female artists try to rise above male approval using their enhanced creative powers, this change introduces a tension because the male and female artist are now competing. The introduction of female ambition that will not be limited by male constraints turns the male artist into an evil being hostile to the artist heroine's accomplishment. While female characters are represented as more ambitious and imaginative in women's ghost stories, their heightened talent turns them into formidable competition for men. It is only when the female characters refuse to listen to their male mentors that a conflict arises and introduces tension between the two. They use men as a gateway into the arts or inspiration for their work and then turn into rivals when they stop being submissive and grow ambitious. Male characters like Lewis,

Ulrich, and Jack are evil compared to the authoritative but well-meaning Klesmer out of feeling intimidated by women's skills. The sinister aura surrounding these men signals the attractive and repellent nature of male artistry for women who desire professional achievement. Unlike in the realist novel, women artists in supernatural fiction can practice their art on men's terms; however, the moment they decide to realize their artistic dreams independently, the men grow evil. The male characters' representation as malign beings who exploit or waste the women's talents shows how female artists are victimized in various creative industries. Their menacing aspect also underscores the entrenched and insidious power of masculine control, which is why male characters resent that women are invading their space. In their ghost stories, female authors explicitly reflect their own hardships working for a male-dominated literary market in which men looked down on them.

Section One looks at how the muse is reconfigured into the artist heroine in Rosa Mulholland's "The Haunted Organist of Hurly Burly," Amelia Edwards's "Sister Johanna's Story," and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's "Her Last Appearance." In contrast to Elizabeth Bronfen's critical look at the female muse, Catherine Maxwell approves of Rossetti's rendition of the artist-muse relationship, arguing that the beloved is "an iconic figure who serves as the speaker's muse and inspiratrice and helps him, through his love of her, to engender Art..." (51). While she makes a valid point that the female muse may not be a wholly dehumanizing literary convention, her interpretation does not account for the problems that arise when the muse decides she wants to devise her own art. In women's ghost stories from the 1860s and 1870s, the artist heroines draw on their creativity to resist the male artists/love interests who use them as passive muses or endeavor to turn them into Victorian Angels. The three impoverished artist heroines I discuss, Lisa, Katrine, and Barbara, work to support themselves through music instruction, toy carving, and acting, thereby generating commercialized art that caters to the masses. These female characters

are frustrated in their attempts to create high art recognized for its aesthetic value because only men have the privileges necessary for improving their craft, such as the wealth, training, and studios. Lewis, Alois, Ulrich, Jack, and Philip exploit these artist heroines as muses, victims, or sources of income, whereas the Demeter figures of Margaret, Johanna, and the Duchess of Malfi help them to withstand this abuse. This tension between the male and female artistic rivals erupts into violence that leaves the artist heroines depressed or dead as a penalty for their professional striving. Despite all this, these narratives do not simply reinscribe the image of the suffering female artist punished for her ambitions; instead, when faced with limitations, the artist heroines turn to alternative forms of creativity or success.

“The Living Embodiment of My Dream”

Rosa Mulholland’s “The Haunted Organist of Hurley Burly” (1866) envisions a darker version of Eliot’s focus on Klesmer judging three different musical women in the relationship between the male patron Lewis and the female musician Lisa in the. Lisa resembles Eliot’s musical heroines, since she fails to achieve professional success and ends up an artist *manqué*, but her vision of a demonic ghost elevates her skill and enterprise. As Lisa explains to the startled Mr. and Mrs. Hurly, “It was but last week that the handsome signor, your son, came to my little house, where I have lived teaching music since my English father and my Italian mother and brothers and sisters died and left me so lonely” (369). Mulholland reconfigures the hybrid Corinne, an independent woman of fortune who can only pursue her art in Italy, into a poor music teacher who must travel to England to follow her dream of becoming a musician.¹⁵³ From Lisa’s description, we can see how the ghost of Lewis Hurley manipulates her during his visits by appealing to her

¹⁵³ While Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* (1857) would be the most well-known female *kunstlerromane* featuring a hybrid Italian/English heroine for Victorian readers, I am not analyzing these ghost stories with regard to this novel-poem because none of their narrative arcs fit with Aurora’s marriage plot.

isolation, poverty, and musical ambition:

“[H]e often came to see me before that, always in the evening, when the sun was warm and yellow all through my little studio, and the music was swelling my heart, and I could play out grand with all my soul; then he used to come and say, “Hurry, little Lisa, and play better, better still. I will have work for you to do by-and-by.” Sometimes he said, “Brava!” and sometimes he said “Eccellentissima!” but one night last week he came to me and said, “It is enough. Will you swear to do my bidding, whatever it may be?” Here the black eyes fell. And I said, “Yes”. And he said, “Now you are my betrothed”. And I said, “Yes”. And he said, “Pack up your music, little Lisa, and go off to England to my English father and mother, who have an organ in their house which must be played upon.” (369-370)

In Victorian literature and real life, bourgeois women employed the piano within the domestic realm to display their “accomplishments,” to attract a husband, and to convey their sexual desire chastely (Vorachek 27; Lustig 86). Without money or a family to support her, Lisa must put her talents to commercial use teaching others and fostering *their* musical skills, rather than cultivating her own as a performer. While the destitute music teacher was pitied for needing to earn her living, Lisa’s feeling of rapture as she plays indicates her misery is tied to her unfulfilled career ambitions (Gillett 9-13). Unlike the “Eternal Masculine” character who expects the artist heroine to retire on marriage, Lewis makes Lisa’s “work” of performing on his family’s organ a condition of their engagement. He “plays on” her ambitions by complimenting her musical gifts and providing her with an organ in his parents’ country house, instead of the “little studio” where she teaches music. Lewis also takes advantage of her loneliness and poverty as a friendless orphan by promising her a surrogate family, economic security, and a supportive husband. His courtship of Lisa as she plays the piano is a dark satire on all such love scenes in nineteenth-century literature because their engagement signifies a Faustian bargain between a devilish male mesmerist and his female musical proxy. In contrast to the “angelic” middle-class women who learned music in order to acquire female accomplishments, Lisa’s pursuit of it as a career—rather than a domestic activity—turns her into a demonic female musician (Weliver 6, 51).

The fact that male-female duos who make music together struggle for authority in late Victorian fiction can be applied to Lewis and Lisa's conflict over whether she is his surrogate or an independent agent. Lisa's ability to see the invisible Hades who encourages her professional ambitions is linked to her imaginative vision as a female musician, though she clashes with Lewis over her desire to compose her own music. The Hurlys consider Lisa deluded for seeing the ghost of a man who has been dead for two decades; in a funny twist, she thinks Mrs. Hurly is "mad" (371) for believing Lewis deceased. As Persephone, Lisa is viewed as "the little dark-faced stranger, who had arrived, so unwelcome, from beyond the seas, with such wild communication from the dead" (371) that prompts her career change. Lewis embodies the artistic "demon" motivating her to give up teaching for performing and reflects her wish for a long-term career because he has played nonstop for the past twenty years. Therefore, her "madness" could also be interpreted as artistic inspiration, given that she initially plays an imaginary instrument and hears melodies in her head. Mulholland's lyrical image of Lisa as she "gloated upon the moon, her black eyes shining with passionate dreams" (371) evokes the mystical rapture of female creativity, sexual desire, and visionary insight. This representation of Lisa's powerful imagination highlights a crucial difference between her and Lewis—he was cursed to play the organ, while she has chosen to perform on it. Lewis's ex-fiancée Margaret Calderwood observes that Lisa retains her creative autonomy through her invention of "imaginary sonatas" (371) at a time when many doubted women could compose works of genius:

Sweet unearthly music she wrung from the groaning heart of the organ—wild melodies, mounting to rapturous heights and falling to mournful depths. [Lisa] wandered from Mendelssohn to Mozart, and from Mozart to Beethoven. Margaret stood fascinated awhile by the ravishing beauty of the sounds she heard, but, rousing herself quickly, put her arms round the musician and forced her away from the chamber. Lisa returned next day, however, and was not so easily coaxed from her post again. (375)

As I will discuss later, Gaskell and Edwards draw out the supernatural nature of the organ in “The Old Nurse’s Story” and “The Phantom Coach” respectively, but Mulholland replaces their male musicians with a female player instead. Lisa’s performance of the “great masters” illustrates that she is trapped in a masculine artistic tradition, and yet these pieces allow her to assert herself by playing based on her musical training, rather than Lewis’s direction. For her, the invention of original “wild melodies” is the more transgressive act in an era when women could gain renown as talented performers, but were thought to be biologically incapable of producing serious music (Gillett 20-32; Weliver 24-26; Fuller). Her situation and musical selection recall the position of talented female musicians who were overshadowed by their famous brothers, such as Fanny Mendelssohn and Nannerl Mozart.¹⁵⁴ Margaret’s “fascination” with Lisa’s playing testifies to the latter’s skill, even as she must physically carry Lisa away from the organ to defend her against Lewis’s dangerous influence.

This scene exemplifies how Persephone must negotiate between the competing influences of Hades and Demeter, with Lewis ensnaring Lisa in a deadly curse and Margaret attempting to defend her. Mulholland presents three generations of women affected by Lewis’s haunting: Mrs. Hurly as the domesticated wife/grandmother, Margaret as the female intellectual/Demeter, and Lisa as the female artist/Persephone. At eighteen years old, Lisa is caught between “girl or woman” (369) because she acts naïve and childlike while being adult enough to pursue her romantic and professional ambitions. As Lisa’s double, Margaret once occupied the Persephone role of the young fiancée who needed to be rescued from Lewis by Mrs. Hurley/Demeter. The “motherly” (372) Margaret tries to preserve Lisa from Lewis’s evil authority in the same the way that Mrs. Hurly shielded her; in turn, she looks after Mrs. Hurly while the latter lies helplessly in bed. Unlike

¹⁵⁴ I am indebted to Caitlin Conley for informing me about these unappreciated female musicians.

Lisa, Margaret's wealth and independence make her immune to Lewis's seduction now that she is too strong for him to control her, as a "woman who depended for the interest of her life upon resources of intellect and taste" (371). Margaret's maturity allows her to recognize that Lisa is "a victim of a ruse of the Evil One" who must "[b]e warned in time, and place yourself under the protection of God, that you may be saved from the fearful influences that are at work upon you" (374). In contrast to Margaret, the maternal and life-giving presence who offers Lisa a safe refuge, Lewis is a devilish figure (his name resembles Lucifer) who entangles Lisa in a murderous dispute between men. He played the Hades role as a member of the "Devil's Club," confusing life and death when he pretended to bury defenseless people alive and unearthed the dead. After performing a drinking song during a funeral, Lewis incurred "a terrible curse" (373) from the dead man's father that forced him to play the organ to death. Rather than ending with Lewis's passing, the curse extends to innocent victims such as the Hurllys, since his ghost torments his parents by playing the organ. Moreover, Lewis beguiles Lisa into taking his place at the organ after he is banished from his home by a holy man, enslaving her to the curse that will end up killing her in the same way he died.

His banishment places Lewis's ghost in the contradictory position of being dependent and powerful, needing Lisa to play the organ for him and yet exerting mesmeric control over her performance. Lewis compensates for his weakness by punishing Lisa's creative aspirations when she does more than submissively play and expresses herself through her original compositions. Mulholland juxtapose scenes of harmony involving mundane life with scenes of disharmony involving the supernatural. For instance, she highlights the organ's dual nature as a religious instrument often played in churches and as a Gothic device favored by evil male musicians; hence, she sets the scene of Margaret listening to Lisa play with one in which Lewis dominates her at the

organ. One night, Margaret secretly witnesses Lewis tormenting Lisa for placing her identity as a performer above his mission to haunt the living by mangling her hands so that she makes “broken and meaningless” music:

The sounds that came from the organ were broken and meaningless, as if the hands of the player lagged and stumbled on the keys. Between the intermittent chords low moaning cries broke from Lisa, and the dark figure bent towards her with menacing gestures. Trembling with the sickness of supernatural fear, yet strong of will, Margaret Calderwood crept forward within the lurid light, and was drawn into its influence. It grew and intensified upon her, it dazzled and blinded her at first; but presently, by a daring effort of will, she raised her eyes, and beheld Lisa’s face convulsed with torture in the burning glare, and bending over her the figure and the features of Lewis Hurly! Smitten with horror, Margaret did not even then lose her presence of mind. She wound her strong arms around the wretched girl and dragged her from her seat and out of the influence of the lurid light, which immediately paled away and vanished. (376)

In literary scholarship, critics typically discuss how male authors characterize demonic mesmerizers who use music to seduce female musicians, such as Collins’s Count Fosco (1859), Dickens’s John Jasper (1870), and du Maurier’s Svengali (1894).¹⁵⁵ Mary Burgan writes that “[t]he great male virtuoso figures of the Victorian period were often depicted in demonic terms, suggesting a sexual source for sublime musical rapture” (66). In 1778, the eighteen-year-old pianist Maria Theresia von Paradis’s parents forcibly removed her from Franz Mesmer’s home, suspicious of the nature of his mesmeric treatment to cure her blindness. The parallels between Mesmer/Lewis, Lisa/Maria Theresia, and Margaret/the von Paradises in this scene underscore how Lewis’s “torture” of Lisa can be read as a physical or sexual assault on a “blinded” female musician. Lisa becomes caught in the dispute between Demeter and Hades as they fight over whether she should inhabit the world of the living or the dead. Despite the example Margaret offers

¹⁵⁵ For more on the Victorian fear of mesmerizing musicians who use music to enthrall female listeners, see Burgan 66-69, Winter 309-320, Pick 112-126, Weliver 59-97, and Kennaway. As Winter notes, the discourse connecting foreign musicians, mesmerism, and authority was so widespread that it defined the European conductors who introduced the baton to England as an instrument for unifying the orchestra into a harmonious group.

of a strong woman with an independent “will” who can resist Lewis’s power, she fails to save Lisa from the violent subjection that leads to her death.

Margaret and Lewis’s conflict over Lisa’s occupation of the organ room permits Mulholland to explore the darker aspects of Virginia Woolf’s notion that the female artist must have “a room of one’s own” to create. Despite Margaret’s warning, Lisa refuses to cooperate with her rescue attempts, since she is too excited by the prospect of being able to perform on the organ full-time. Lewis appears to support Lisa by providing her with “a room of her own” for her to compose music, but she ends up becoming socially isolated in a “tomb of her own” where she is buried alive. Margaret notices that Lewis draws Lisa into growing so obsessed with doing his “work” that she stops interacting with everyone besides him: “At last [Lisa] announced rapturously that she had had a visit from the brave signor, who had commended her industry, and urged her to work yet harder. After that she ceased to hold any communication with the living” (375). Lisa’s fate raises Elaine Showalter’s critique that “[t]he ultimate room of one’s own is the grave” (297) where the female artist retreats from feminist political engagement. In Italy, Lisa’s poverty and lack of family leaves her with no choice but to remain alone in her “little studio”; the problem arises when she *decides* to sequester herself in the organ room away from human company, including Margaret.

These women’s ghost stories are progressive in their representation of how the artist heroines’ desire to create distances them from those who fail to understand their aspirations. At the same time, rather than withdrawing from an oppressive society that does not appreciate their talents, the artist heroines must find a way to cultivate relationships with others. Both Margaret and Lewis play a role in Lisa’s death when the former accidentally walls her up alive in the organ room while sealing it in a desperate attempt to guard Lisa from the curse. No matter who wins,

either fate will be a negative outcome for Lisa—she must become so devoted to her art that it kills her or suffer a living “death” without the ability to create. The dismantling of the organ by the Hurlys’ successors prevents the ghostly Lisa from playing it, but the continued haunting of the organ room confirms the enduring presence of female creative ambition. The final sentence, which states “Margaret Calderwood was carried to her grave the other day a very aged woman” (378), conveys that only the wealthy female intellectual can survive in Victorian society, not the artist heroine.

In “The Haunted Organist of Hurly Burly,” the subordination of Lisa’s professional ambitions to Lewis’s desires sets a narrative pattern for Mulholland that mirrors how Victorian women’s artistic careers were secondary to men’s. The reoccurrence of this pattern in her work long after she established herself as a respected writer attests to the fact that even successful female artists continued to view their work as unimportant compared to male productions. From the start of her career as a painter and later a writer, Mulholland may have felt inferior in the shadow of male mentors such as John Everett Millais and Charles Dickens (Murphy 181). In her biography of her late husband Sir John Gilbert (1905), she refers to herself in the third person as “the biographer” or “his wife.” She constantly emphasizes the significance of Gilbert’s research on Irish history, whereas she spends one sentence ambiguously referring to their creative exchange when they sit together in the evenings: “Work alternated with playful talk or the reading aloud of something imaginative or humorous, as different as possible from the historic ‘document’” (363). Despite the biography’s focus on her husband, she still minimizes the “something imaginative or humorous” that likely represents her fiction, as though elevating his academic work above her writing. Her *künstlerroman* *Cousin Sara: A Story of Arts and Crafts* (1908) again reworks de Staël’s novel to feature a half-Irish, half-Italian male Corinne named Arno. Sara’s journey to

become an author of “light” feminine literature (fairy tales, Italian folk stories, etc.) assumes minor importance compared to the plots concerning her father’s mechanical invention and Arno’s struggle to be a painter. Mulholland leaves it uncertain whether Sara pursues her career after marriage, but she is praised most for being a dutiful daughter and Arno’s artistic muse: “It was enough that her father and Arno knew that certain scribblings at her desk gave her pleasure, looking on them as feminine amusement; there was no need to tell them that she had actually seen herself in print” (202). Over forty years after publishing “The Haunted Organist of Hurly Burly,” Mulholland conveys how women like Sara and herself must still accept a minimal position in the art world if they want male approval.

Mulholland’s concern with the place of the woman artist is linked to how she recognizes, reworks, and responds to the female ghost story tradition by adapting Elizabeth Gaskell’s classic “The Old Nurse’s Story” as “The Haunted Organist of Hurly Burly.” Just as Gaskell released “The Old Nurse’s Story” in Dickens’s *Household Words* on Christmas day, 1852, Mulholland published her tale in Dickens’s *All the Year Round* on November 10, 1866. The similarities in both stories’ narrative elements and publication history indicate that Mulholland self-consciously rewrote Gaskell’s tale and may have even expected readers of Dickens’s magazines to see the intertextual connections between them. For example, the titles express a shift from the amateur female storyteller (“The Old Nurse’s Story”) to the professional female musician (“The Haunted Organist of Hurly Burly”). The fact that it was the headlining tale of Mulholland’s anthology *The Haunted Organist of Hurly Burly and Other Stories* (1891) confirms its literary strength and appeal to readers. The most obvious aspect Mulholland borrows from Gaskell is the ghostly male organist, though she combines Lord Furnivall (the ghost playing the organ) with the “foreign musician” (the seducer of two women) into Lewis. She also simplifies the Furnivall family’s backstory to focus

on the romance plot, translating the Maud/Grace/foreign musician love triangle into the Lisa/Margaret/Lewis triad. Gaskell's female rivalry narrative of Maud and Grace competing over the foreign musician evolves into a mother-daughter bond that compels Margaret to save Lisa, similar to Hester and Rosamond. Gaskell's "foreign musician" embodies a generalized xenophobia that usually surrounds fictional non-English performers because the music industry in England has been dominated by such marginalized figures for generations. While "Hurly Burly" refers to the story's setting, it also underscores how Lisa ("the haunted organist") raises a tumult in the Hurly household with her performance as a female artist. Though Lisa is a conflation of Gaskell's "foreign musician" and the "spectre child" murdered by Lord Furnivall, Mulholland's addition of a *female* organist to her story signals the changing social context from Gaskell's time as more women became professional musicians. Mulholland reverses the common literary portrayal of the foreign male musician who attempts to seduce upper-class Englishwomen through mesmerism (Weliver 58). Instead, Lewis is the Englishman who must travel to Italy in order to ensnare a foreign female musician so she will play for him, showing that the evil influence is the English gentleman who "hires" her for her services.

While Klesmer is respected as a foreign male musician who becomes integrated into English society through his marriage, the social double standards mean Lisa remains the hired slave of Lewis as a foreign female musician. Given that the English already dismissed creative women for their gender, Mulholland recognized that foreign female artists were especially hard-pressed in trying to create without giving up their artistic integrity. Lisa's status as a hybrid character who performs at the bidding of an affluent Englishman reflects Mulholland's frustration as an Irish author who needed to write for the colonizers of her homeland. Throughout "The Haunted Organist of Hurly Burly," Mulholland refers to Lisa as a "stranger" (369), a "foreigner" (370), and "signora"

(370), words that emphasize her Italian upbringing. However, the fact that Lisa is half-English on her father's side means that she is in a sense "coming home" to England so she can enjoy a rewarding musical career. Mulholland subverts the Corinne narrative of the hybrid female artist discovering artistic freedom in Italy because Lisa struggles there as a poor music teacher; hence, Lewis lures her to England with the false promise of success. Lisa's difficulty in establishing herself as a serious artist and her division between two national identities may parallel Mulholland's mixed feelings as a colonized subject writing for English readers.¹⁵⁶ Mulholland was an upper middle-class Irish Catholic who wanted to replace the Protestant gentry in Ireland with a Catholic elite (Murphy 44). In "Wanted an Irish Novelist" (1891), she attacks Irish authors who give up the local settings of their early fiction and sell out by writing mainstream fiction for the more lucrative English market: "It is a noticeable fact that writers who produce one good Irish novel, giving promise of store to come, almost invariably cease to be Irish at that point, and afterwards cast the tributary stream of their powers into the universal river of English fiction" (369). Just as male editors such as Dickens expected Irish authors to write for English readers, affluent Englishmen like Lewis commissioned foreign musicians such as Lisa to play for the upper classes (Weliver 24).¹⁵⁷ Instead of being respected for her musical talents, Lisa assumes the position of Lewis's slave, since she must rely on his patronage and focus on pleasing him with her music. By commercializing their talents for the privileged English, female artists such as Lisa lose their artistic originality, the chance to promote their culture, and the critical respect they deserve.

Similar to Edwards, Mulholland Edwards exposes how the Italian woodcarving industry maintained a gendered hierarchy during the nineteenth century, since men could design prized

¹⁵⁶ While Lisa is not Irish, she fits with Susan Cahill's observation that Mulholland uses the literary character of the girl developing into maturity to raise social, political, and gendered issues of Irish nationalism in her fiction (168).

¹⁵⁷ The male mesmerist who controls the female artist's creative productions also suggests Dickens in his role as a magazine editor, especially since he practiced mesmerism on women such as Madame de la Rue.

religious figures, while women churned out cheap toys. In “Sister Johanna’s Story” (1873), Edwards critiques the inequality of the Italian toycarving industry by revealing how the artist heroines are violently punished for trying to rise above their lowly status as craftswomen. Her ghost story is based on her 1872 journey through an Italian mountain chain called the Dolomites, which she documents in *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys* (1873).¹⁵⁸ Edwards was so fascinated by the toycarving industry in St. Ulrich that she set her ghost story there, intrigued by a craft outside of her expertise as a versatile female artist. Instead of writing “Sister Johanna’s Story” from her perspective as an English outsider, Edwards presents a first-person account by a local toycarver, Johanna Roederer. Johanna echoes Edwards’s words when she informs readers that she will offer them a behind-the-scenes look at the toymaking industry: “Your rocking-horse, your Noah’s ark, your first doll, came from St. Ulrich—for the Grödner Thal is the children’s paradise, and supplies the little ones of all Europe with toys” (184). Due to the hybrid nature of the natives, who are Italian in name but German in practice, Johanna and her sister Katrine appear to be Corinne figures because they present English readers with a society that *normalizes* women working in handicrafts. However, the wooden animals they fashion for Noah’s arks serve as commodities that supply the huge commercial demand for toys worldwide. Teresa Michaels observes that “the enormous increase in manufactured toys made the pleasure of commercial consumption a key element of child’s play” (32) in England at the time.

¹⁵⁸ Despite its humorous characterization of Edwards as a blundering tourist, *Untrodden Peaks* marked the start of her transition from a successful novelist to a public intellectual (O’Neill 44). As a writer, illustrator, and musician, Edwards depicts herself as a serious female artist by emphasizing her search for Titian’s paintings, picturesque landscapes, and talented fellow artists. Besides her allusions to sketching the local scenery and the people she encounters, her drawings accompany her travel narrative. Edwards calls the Dolomites a new “playground” (ix) for English sightseers because it was relatively untouched by foreign tourism at the time. The theme of child’s play reappears in her early look at the woodcarving industry of St. Ulrich (Urtijëi), since “...all the cheap, familiar, absurd treasures of your earliest childhood and mine—they all came, Reader, from St. Ulrich!” (367). Edwards published “Sister Johanna’s Story” in *Monsieur Maurice and Other Tales* (1876) around the same time as *Untrodden Peaks*, suggesting that she composed her ghost story during or shortly after her tour of the Dolomites.

During her travels, Edwards took particular notice of how the local women of St. Ulrich were trapped in roles as toycarvers that limited their artistic, professional, and economic opportunities. Though she romanticizes St. Ulrich as “the capital of Toyland” (366), later commentators sentimentalize this “Wonderland” for its strong associations with Victorian childhood. In “Sister Johanna’s Story,” Edwards differs from her successors’ idealized depictions by revealing the toy industry’s exploitative aspects.¹⁵⁹ Stäblein and Moroder record the darker realities of St. Ulrich’s toy business: the theft of local wood for carving, artists being poisoned by lead paint, and toy wholesalers underpaying their workers (n.p.). In *Untrodden Peaks*, she juxtaposes two portraits of a male and female neighbor to illustrate the contrast in the expectations governing men and women’s artistic productions. Magdalena Paldauf creates wooden animals with “an ease and an amount of truth to nature that would be clever if it were not so utterly mechanical” (371) due to the machine-like way in which she produces them. Meanwhile, Alois Senoner makes a Christ statue “half tree-trunk, half Deity, with a strange, pathetic beauty already dawning out of the undeveloped features” (372). Edwards’s ghost story fictionalizes this disparity between the “mechanical” female toycarver and the original male “artist” to establish the different value that this society attaches to men and women’s art.

“Sister Johanna’s Story” highlights the wrongful limitation on the woman artist by showing the irony in Katrine carving toys meant to stimulate children’s imaginations without allowing for

¹⁵⁹ Edwards’s description of the “capital of Toyland” (366) proved so popular that she turned St. Ulrich into a tourist destination and inspired later travel narratives, sightseeing guides, and children’s fiction about this area, including works by other female authors. In his article “Toy Town and Toy Lands” (1895), W.D. MacCracken comments, “Ever since the late Amelia B. Edwards passed through this valley, more than twenty years ago, and described its curious industry, in her ‘Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys,’ English-speaking tourists have found their way to St. Ulrich in increasing numbers” (467). The earliest signs of Edwards’s influence appear in periodical articles such as Margaret Howitt’s “A Tribe of Toymakers” (1876) and the anonymously written “Toy-Land” (1878). The travel narratives that discuss St. Ulrich’s toy industry include Clive Holland’s *Tyrol and its People* (1909) (222-225) and Sam Hield Hamer’s *The Dolomites* (1910) (107-111). Constance Cary Harrison’s children’s story “In the Toy Country” (1899) relates how three American travelers visit St. Ulrich to buy a new doll for a young girl.

the “play” of her own fancy in creating them. As a fictionalized Magdalena, Katrine’s protest against her toycarving not only constitutes a challenge to the restrictions on women’s creative pursuits, but also a larger critique of literary realism. Since Mr. Roederer’s death, Johanna, Katrine, and Mrs. Roederer have carved toy animals for a living, a female artistic tradition passed down from mother to daughter. Her position as the older daughter makes Johanna responsible for the housekeeping and for playing a Demeter-like role toward both Mrs. Roederer and Katrine. In contrast, the family coddles Katrine (Persephone) and she shirks her work because “she grew tired, naturally, of cutting nothing but cocks, hens, dogs, cats, cows, and goats; which were all our mother had been taught to make, and consequently, all she could teach to her children” (184). Johanna’s “naturally” implies that she shares Katrine’s frustration at the prospect of carving the same six animals and staying in an inferior role that requires ability, not artistry. While feminist critics often celebrate maternal artistic legacies, Katrine’s comments foreground the *constraints* on what Mrs. Roederer can teach her daughters without receiving additional training or education:

“If I could carve saints and angels, like Ulrich, next door...or if I might invent new beasts out of my own head, or if I might cut caricature nutcrackers of the Herr Pürger and Don Wian, I shouldn’t care if I worked hard all day; but I hate the cocks and hens, and I hate the dogs and cats, and I hate all the birds and beasts that ever went into the ark—and I only wish they had all been drowned in the Deluge, and not one left for a pattern!” (184-185)

By comparing herself to Ulrich Finazzer (Alois Senoner), Katrine expresses her dissatisfaction with carving according to a set “pattern”; instead, her ambitions push her to create Ulrich’s religious subjects or even “invent” imaginary animals. She feels unmotivated to work without the incentives only available to men, such as better projects, more money, and artistic recognition. Her unhappiness with making true-to-life animals raises a larger objection to the tedium, precision, and repetition of mimetic realism. Peter Brooks describes nineteenth-century realism as a “modèle réduit” or a “form of play that uses carefully wrought and detailed toys, ones that attempt as much

as possible to reproduce the look and feel of the real thing” (4). The difference between the mimeticism of children’s toys and the novel lies in language as the medium of transmission, but Brooks’s reading does not take into account the role of the imagination.¹⁶⁰ In “Creative Writers and Day-dreaming” (1907), Freud insists children who engage in imaginative play develop into adults who secretly daydream about professional and sexual success. Like playful children and daydreaming adults, creative writers generate disguised egoistic fantasies that readers accept due to their aesthetic pleasure. Though Freud specifically discusses writing, his ideas can be applied to the way all the artist heroines’ creative activities are linked with childhood play in Section One.

While Katrine and Johanna crave the same things in wishing to marry Ulrich, Johanna cannot articulate her unhappiness at being confined to the role of a housekeeper and lowly toycarver. As Persephone figures, both sisters desire to leave their mother (Demeter) and marry Ulrich (Hades) because he represents the artistic “genius” they wish to be and he could help them overcome the limits on their professionalization. Katrine’s creation of simple toys signifies her entrapment in artistic immaturity, while Ulrich’s design of an adult Christ statue for the local church indicates his creative sophistication. Johanna notes that Ulrich enjoys various privileges as a male artist; for instance, he constructs the Christ statue at his leisure, for sacred use, and without recompense: “He had made innumerable designs for it both in clay and on paper, and separate studies from life for the limbs, hands, and feet. In short, it was to be no ordinary piece of mere conventional Grödner Thal work, but a work of art in the true sense of the word” (186). Even though she does not love Ulrich, Katrine’s artistic pretensions lead her to accept his marriage

¹⁶⁰ In Dickens’s *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), Caleb Plummer is a toymaker who works for an exploitative owner named Tackleton and raises his blind daughter Bertha in poverty. Like Katrina, Caleb creates mass-produced children’s toys to meet the market demand in Victorian England, but invents a world of happy community and financial prosperity for Bertha. While Bertha is initially shocked at her father’s deception, her eventual forgiveness of him reveals the importance of the imagination in creating hope for children, rather than material objects. Dickens’s story shows that instead of favoring realism like Brooks does, the imagination is a powerful tool and Caleb’s narrative can only succeed if something not possible is thought of as possible.

proposal, possibly in the hope that he will help to improve her craft. Johanna recognizes that Katrine chooses Ulrich due to economic and social pressures, since he is well-off and artistically respected: “She was proud of his genius—proud of his preference—proud of the house, and the lands, and the worldly goods that were soon to be hers; but for that far greater wealth of love, she held it all too lightly” (187). Her concern that Katrine will not appropriately value Ulrich’s love suggests Johanna wants to wed him herself in the belief they are more compatible as mature, serious, and conservative people. Despite Johanna’s denial of there being any “root of selfishness” (187) in her misgivings, her sadness confirms that she implicitly wants Ulrich for herself out of her own creative ambitions.

Although Katrine would be more appropriately paired with Ulrich’s younger brother Alois, Johanna feels ambivalent over whether to fight with a man who reduces her sister to a female muse or allow them to marry so she can realize her career ambitions. Johanna perceives that they are well-matched through her storytelling abilities, considering she “used to dream dreams, and weave foolish romances about Alois and my little Katrine” (185). For Katrine, Alois serves as a desirable alternative to Ulrich, since he has received training, money, and awards after attending art school in Venice: “And then he told us that he had just taken the gold medal at the academy, that he had sold his prize picture for two hundred florins, and that he had a pocketful of presents for us all—a necklace for Katrine, a spectacle-case for our mother, and a housewife for myself” (187). While the women cannot have “rooms of their own” in which to create art because Ulrich owns their house, he establishes a workshop for Alois in his studio. Rather than assisting Katrine with her career, Alois employs her as a muse for *his* art by modeling his portrait of Saint Catherine on her for a church altar-piece. He manipulates the sexually-charged nature of the artist-muse relationship to seduce Katrine away from Ulrich while working on a sacred object: “There, day after day, was

Alois painting in his new studio, and Katrine sitting to him for Santa Catarina, while Ulrich, unselfish, faithful, trustful, worked on in the next room, absorbed in his art, and not only unconscious of treachery, but incapable of conceiving it as a possibility” (188). Johanna insists “[f]rom that moment it was a silent, unacknowledged fight between us, and we were always fighting it” (188), but her (Demeter’s) attempts to combat Alois (Hades) over possession of Katrine (Persephone) are halfhearted. Johanna’s failure to stop Katrine and Alois’s marriage reveals Johanna’s conflict over whether she should prevent a union she endorses or allow them to wed so she can have Ulrich.

Katrine’s disappointment with being a “mechanical” craftswoman reflect the views of John Ruskin and William Morris, whose attacks on the English decorative arts led to the reform efforts of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Ruskin’s chapter “The Nature of the Gothic” from *The Stones of Venice* (1853) illuminates how the architecture of Gothic cathedrals expresses the virtues of the workmen who created them. He praises the quality of “Changefulness” in the belief that “...great art, whether expressing itself in words, colours, or stones, does not say the same thing over and over again...” (325). In *Hopes and Fears for Art* (1882), William Morris alludes to this specific chapter from *Stones* when he insists that English craftspeople should enjoy their work. To combat the decline of the decorative arts, he proposes that “the labour which now makes things good and necessary in themselves, merely as counters for the commercial war aforesaid, needs regulating and reforming” (45-46). Morris’s utopia *News from Nowhere* (1890) even features a female head woodcarver named Philippa, who commands so much respect that her coworkers delay their project when she falls ill. Katrine’s complaints about how she hates carving mass-produced toys for profit fits with the Arts and Craft Movement’s goal of obtaining more training, appreciation, and creative autonomy for artisans. Thus, Edwards’s ghost story participates in contemporary

discussions about finding a middle ground between commercial products and high art through the marriage of utility and decoration. Katrine's escape from her restrictive Germanic hometown to Venice through her elopement with Alois evokes the fantasy that she will end up like Corinne and discover artistic freedom by embracing her Italian heritage.¹⁶¹ Despite being different male character types, having "a room of one's own" proves to be dangerous for Ulrich and Alois, since the studio is where Ulrich isolates himself from Katrine and where Alois charms her. No matter what, Katrine's desire to receive instruction from either of them appears futile, since they exclude her from their work or reduce her to a beautiful muse for their own art.

While Ulrich's anger over this betrayal is understandable, his desire for divine revenge hints that he feels as though his holy position as a male artist is threatened by female rivals like Katrine and Johanna. He becomes so absorbed in perfecting his masterpiece that he secludes himself from everyone, later refusing to admit that his neglect makes Katrine easy prey for Alois. As Johanna relates, "having wrought himself up to a certain pitch of religious and artistic excitement, [Ulrich] lived in a world of his own creation, from which even Katrine was for the time excluded" (188). We can infer from Ulrich's obsession with finishing the Christ statue and living "in a world of his own creation" that he views himself as a divine Creator who handcrafts sacred works just as God the Father created Jesus. When Johanna informs him about the elopement, Ulrich sees through her "false" behavior in enabling the lovers to flee and calls for Old Testament "vengeance" to be executed on all three:

"You feared—you were not sure!" he said, slowly. "That is to say, you saw it going on, and let it go on, and would not put out your hand to save us all! False! false! false!—all false together—false love, false brother, false friend!"

"You are not just to me, Ulrich," I said; for to be called false by him was more than I could bear.

"Am I not just? Then I pray that God will be more just to you, and to them,

¹⁶¹ Edwards's tale reworks the Sagro (church festival and fair) that she attends in Chapter Five of *Untrodden Peaks* so that the wedding she witnesses becomes Alois and Katrine's elopement.

than I can ever be; and that His justice may be the justice of vengeance—swift, and terrible, and without mercy.”

And saying this he laid his hand on the veiled Christ, and cursed us all three with a terrible, passionate curse, like the curse of a prophet of old. (191)

Johanna’s guilt at being called “false” and her weak excuses for not stopping Katrine and Alois illustrate her unconscious hope that she and Ulrich could marry now that their siblings are together. Though the woodcarvings are historically accurate, Edwards uses their religious imagery to embed irony in the narrative; for example, Katrine’s creation of animals that neatly pair up contrasts with how the participants in the love square do not neatly couple off. Similarly, Ulrich’s cursing them like “a prophet of old” with the Christ statue’s blessing is ironic, since Jesus ended the Old Law with his call for mercy. In his hubris, Ulrich disregards Christ’s teaching to forgive one’s enemies and employs religion to justify his violent actions, since he assumes a God-like role in exacting retribution by murdering Alois. Ulrich treats his brother as a proxy for Katrine in order to punish her for her sexual and creative ambitions as well as for aspiring to be *like him*.

Edwards further deconstructs the prevalent nineteenth-century image of the male artist as divine Creator by recounting how Ulrich falls short of this Christian ideal due to his pride in his artistic virtuosity. Similar to Demeter, Johanna must wait out the autumn and winter for Katrine to return from Rome because she lacks the resources and independence to track her sister down the way Ulrich does. When he returns a few days before Christmas, Ulrich resembles Lisa in the way he completely isolates himself in the “tomb” (192) of his workshop so he can finish carving the Christ statue. Johanna keeps waiting in the hope that Ulrich will reconcile with her, but his ghostly emergence on Christmas Eve conveys *he* is the one who needs forgiveness for murdering his brother:

I saw him, I tell you, as plainly as I see my own hand at this moment. He was standing close, quite close, under the window, with the moonlight full upon him.

“Ulrich!” I said, and my own voice sounded strange to me, somehow, in the dead waste and silence of the night—“Ulrich, are you come to tell me we are friends again?”

But instead of answering me he pointed to a mark on his forehead—a small dark mark, that looked at this distance and by this light like a bruise—cried aloud with a strange wild cry, less like a human voice than a far-off echo, “The brand of Cain! The brand of Cain!” and so flung up his arms with a despairing gesture, and fled away into the night. (193)

While Johanna hopes Ulrich will confirm they are “friends” again, his ghost reveals that his violent curse has rebounded on Ulrich himself, since he is now marked with “the brand of Cain” that distances him from everyone. There are several important parallels between Ulrich and Jesus, such as their dedication to their religious beliefs and work in hereditary artisanal trades, specifically woodcarving and carpentry. The remorseful Ulrich’s ghost also evokes these similarities by appearing on Christmas Eve and undergoing “resurrection” on the fourth day after being shut up in his “tomb.” However, Ulrich’s human flaws make him a Cain figure because he murders his brother for being favored in the eyes of his god, namely Katrine, rather than taking the Christ-like approach of forgiving his betrayers. He violently punishes both sisters for their creative ambitions, traumatizing Katrine by killing her husband/potential mentor and pointing out his bullet wound to Johanna, as though blaming her for his fate. He must first murder his romantic rival before he can complete his Christ statue and his only concern prior to committing suicide is delivering his artistic masterpiece. Despite this, Johanna’s act of explicitly linking Ulrich, her vision, and her writing by declaring that she “saw” his ghost just like she can examine her “own hand” that is presumably writing this tale shifts our attention from his handiwork to her own.

While Johanna and Katrine fail in their attempts to improve their woodcarving, Johanna’s vision of Ulrich’s spirit allows for her transition from Demeter to Persephone as she finds an alternative to carving toys by writing her ghost story. In the end, Demeter and Persephone are reunited and live together in St. Ulrich, though both are haunted by the ghosts of their respective

Hades figures. Johanna relates how Katrine has suffered a heavy penalty for her ambitions, since she is forced to create the toy animals she despises for the rest of her life: “In the sad, faded woman, prematurely grey, who lives with me, ever working silently, steadily, patiently, from morning till night at our hereditary trade, few who had known her in the freshness of her youth would now recognise my beautiful Katrine” (194). The fact that the artist heroines’ creative ambitions remain unfulfilled and the two gifted male artists die makes it seem like the story tragically ends with the victory of commercialism over artistry. However, the two craftswomen’s survival leaves open the possibility that they could develop their talents in a different art now that the Finazzer brothers are dead. Johanna describes herself being as “quick-sighted” (185) in Katrine’s affairs, which ties into her later speculations about whether she truly observed Ulrich’s ghost. Since “Sister Johanna’s Story” has been realistic up to this point, Johanna’s supernatural encounter with her Hades figure makes it into a ghost story. In turn, her extrasensory perception is linked to her artistic insight because this ghostly vision of Ulrich provokes her to turn her deceased love interest into a source for her literary work: “Did I indeed see Ulrich Finazzer that night of his self-murder? If I did so with my bodily eyes and it was no illusion of the senses, then most surely I saw him not in life, for that dark mark which looked to me in the moonlight like a bruise was the bullet-hole in his brow” (194). Johanna is so traumatized and inspired by the sight of Ulrich’s spirit that she must share her experiences through writing, finding that she can express herself in a different creative field. She is freed from her restricted maternal heritage to pass on a new female artistic tradition that can replace the hereditary woodcarving trade for the childless sisters. Johanna’s questioning of her vision for many years afterward reveals insecurity about her creative powers that later artist-heroines will eschew as they grow more empowered.

Eliot reveals this insecurity in female creativity most vividly through Gwendolen's modification after her critique with Klesmer destroys her hope that she could become a famous actress or singer. She records how Gwendolen "vaguely imagined a future suited to her wishes: it seemed but the affair of a year or so for her to become the most approved Juliet of the time" (Xox) before she learns about the rigors of professional acting. In contrast to Eliot's disapproval of female theatricality, Braddon considers Juliet too amateur a role for the talented actress in her ghost story "Her Last Appearance" (1877). Braddon relates how the artist heroine Barbara resists the commodification of her body onstage by giving a haunting performance as John Webster's titular heroine from *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613-1614). At twenty years old, Barbara is captivated by her Hades, Jack Stowell, a minor actor who entices her into a career as a leading lady during the late eighteenth century. Jack's lack of dedication, hard work, and appreciation for his craft as well as his dissolute lifestyle all contribute to his professional failure. He mistakenly thinks that only the creative inspiration offered by a beautiful muse will allow him to advance in his profession; hence, he marries Barbara to shore up his career and profit off her looks: "He was caught by her somewhat singular beauty, which was rather that of an old Italian picture than of a rustic Englishwoman. Beauty so striking and peculiar would make its mark, he thought. With such a Juliet he could not fail as Romeo" (97). Despite being purely English, Barbara's "singular beauty" illustrates that she is a spiritually hybrid character, since her "foreign" appearance manifests the acting talent that allows her to play Italian women like Juliet and the Duchess. The theater manager at Covent Garden hires her because he "had half a dozen geniuses in his company, but their good looks were on the wane" (98). These men's focus on Barbara succeeding through her youth and beauty—rather than her skill or experience—points to Braddon's critique of the practice of casting actresses for their physical attractiveness. Victorian actresses were associated

with prostitutes for placing themselves on public display, while the commercialized theaters thrived through objectifying these women's bodies (Davis 69-101). There were additional objections to this profession for women as well, including the late hours, association with the lower classes, and practicing "deception" through playing roles. Throughout the story, Braddon draws parallels between Webster's play and her plot, characters, and language: for instance, both heroines are persecuted by male relatives in religious positions for marrying below them. The actress's perceived immorality explains why Barbara's clergyman father disowns her and condemns her to damnation. The maternal figures in Barbara's life also desert her for the sake of male approval, since her aunt cuts her off out of jealousy and her stepmother supports the estrangement between father and daughter.

Although Barbara falls victim to consumption after several years, Braddon goes beyond the cautionary tale of the actress who dies in the pursuit of her career by characterizing her artist heroine as a respectable and hardworking "genius." The couple's marriage collapses not only due to Jack's depraved and abusive behavior, but also because Barbara grows so popular that she outshines him without helping his career. Braddon's juxtaposition of husband and wife shows that Barbara treats acting as a serious form of "play" requiring work and imagination, including the study of her roles, close reading of the plays, and creative interpretation of the heroines:¹⁶²

He lost no time in teaching her all he knew of his art. She had real genius, was fond of study, and soon discovered that he knew very little. She had her own ideas about all those heroines of which he only knew the merest conventionalities and traditions. She sat late into the night studying, while he was drinking and punting in some low tavern. Her sorrows, her disappointments, her disgusts drove her to the study of the drama for consolation, and temporary forgetfulness. These heroines of tragedy, who were all miserable, seemed to sympathize with her own misery. She became passionately fond of her art before ever she had trodden the stage. (98)

¹⁶² In "Psychopathic Characters on Stage" (1905), Freud compares theater to an adult form of child's play in which the spectator can pretend to be a hero without suffering any risks (42).

In a reversal of the artist-muse dynamic, Jack inspires Barbara with the “misery” she needs to perform these tragic heroines and to regard them as Demeter figures who offer the comfort that her older female relatives deny her. Braddon was writing at a time when the actress was transitioning from a disreputable prostitute to a respectable performer of great roles, like Shakespeare’s heroines. As Patricia Zakreski remarks, “[t]o focus on acting as a form of work rather than sexual display, then, meant redeeming the image of the actress in the eyes of the middle class” (147). It is no accident that this was also the time when middle-class women started going to the theater to see respectable dramas. Several critics have noted that Braddon’s fictional depictions of actresses as virtuous and industrious professionals constitute a defense of her early acting career.¹⁶³ The narrative about Barbara dying at the height of her success as a tragedienne fits with the Victorian morality tale of the actress sickening and dying from the strain of her career (Powell 38-43). During her first visit to Covent Garden, Barbara tells Jack the theater has “a ghostly look” that gives her “an awful feeling” she is “standing in my tomb” (98-99). However, Barbara views the haunted space of the theater from an *aesthetic* perspective as she figures out how to play tragic heroines who die onstage, such as Juliet, the Duchess, and Isabella.¹⁶⁴

Barbara’s passion for the stage places her in conflict with the Eternal Masculine character who wants to forbid her from the pursuit of her art after marriage; hence, she would rather die playing a tragic heroine than elope with him. Two years into her stage career, Barbara gains instant

¹⁶³ For more on Braddon’s experience as an actress, see Woolf 40-78 and Carnell. While Woolf situates her acting career from 1857 to 1860, Carnell’s research proves that it lasted for eight years, from 1852 to 1860. For readings of Braddon’s literary actresses as virtuous and dignified figures who convey her fondness for the stage, see Lindemann, Coleman, Holder, and Woolf 54-78. Valerie Pedlar states that while the actresses in Braddon’s fiction are morally upright if untalented characters, she felt ambivalent about the theater being the proper setting for respectable women. In contrast, Kate Mattacks contends that Braddon felt “haunted” by the early acting career that informed her sensation writing; therefore, she contrasts the commercialized theatricality of her fiction with the Christian Spiritualism of true art in *Beyond These Voices* (1910).

¹⁶⁴ Isabella is most likely the tragic heroine from Thomas Southerne’s aptly-named play *The Fatal Marriage* (1694), a dramatic adaption of Aphra Behn’s *The History of the Nun* (1689).

success with the London public and attracts many suitors, among them a “man of cultivated mind and intense feeling” (90), Sir Philip Hazelmere. After learning about her unhappy marriage, Philip decides to win Barbara on the grounds that she would be happier with him than staying with Jack or remaining an actress: “Could she be worse off, he asked himself, than she was now—the slave of a low-born profligate—the darling of an idle, gaping crowd—scorned and neglected at home, where a woman should be paramount?” (99). Philip’s flawed assumption that Barbara’s career is a source of her misery indicates his conservative view that women should be confined to the home, rather than “selling” themselves by performing in public. Braddon highlights the class dimensions of the artist heroine’s conflict between love and work, since a bourgeois woman’s only option is to labor as an actress after marrying a lower-class man. In contrast, Philip is privileged enough that he can “take her to Italy, and live and die there for her sake, content and happy in the blessing of her sweet companionship” (99) as Lady Hazelmere. Philip reverses the *Corinne* narrative by imagining the artist heroine fleeing with him and relinquishing her career for domesticity in Italy. While she appreciates Philip’s love for her, the dying Barbara chooses to spend her final days performing on the stage. In a subversion of Victorian literary conventions, Barbara’s devotion to her craft protects her from sexual temptation and makes her “marble” (100) to her lover’s pleas. This statuesque image of her evokes Gail Marshall’s notion of the “Galatea aesthetic,” which Victorian actresses followed by speaking a male author’s words and functioning as a desirable spectacle (30-31).

When Barbara fails to inspire Jack as his “Juliet,” he acts cruelly toward her out of jealousy of her talent and desire to reassert power over his more successful wife. Braddon’s description of him committing multiple types of abuse against Barbara refracts Victorian concerns about divorce, domestic violence, and women’s finances through the lens of late eighteenth-century England.

Thus, he takes all of her wages, spends them on immoral pursuits (drink, gambling, whoring, etc.), and physically beats her. Despite Jack's wrongs, Barbara acts like a typical battered wife in remaining faithful to him and covering up for his mistreatment. Jack's control over Barbara's money reflects the historical reality of actresses being exploited by husbands who resented their success (Richardson 36-37, 62-65). His legal right to Barbara's earnings deprives her of the financial resources she needs to leave him, though the Married Women's Property Act (1870) mitigated this problem in Braddon's time. Braddon also critiques the double standard of eighteenth-century law and the 1857 Divorce Act, which granted men divorce for adultery but made the same more difficult or impossible for wives. She points out the absurdity of a principled woman like Barbara needing to commit "dishonour" (101) with Philip so that Jack can petition Parliament to divorce her. For Philip, the final provocation comes when he discovers Barbara attempting to hide evidence of Jack's violence against her, but Braddon's language suggests that Philip too is aggressive against her: "One day he found her with an ugly bruise upon her forehead; she had tried to conceal it with the loose ringlets of her dark hair, but his quick eye saw the mark. When pressed hard by his solicitous questioning, she gave a somewhat lame account of the matter" (101). Braddon's desire to provoke indignation against wife beating participates in the contemporary feminist agitation to pass laws protecting domestic abuse victims. Her story was highly topical considering it was published about a year and half before Frances Power Cobbe's "Wife-Torture in England" (1878). Cobbe's call for women to "take to heart the wrongs and agonies of our miserable sisters, and to lift up a cry which must make Parliament [] hasten to deal with the matter..." led to the passage of the Matrimonial Causes Act (1878) (87; Hammerton 63).

Philip's sympathy with Barbara's plight as a battered wife signals he is a different character type than her husband; however, both men's violent actions affect her traumatically because they

try to control her artistic expression through force. Philip expresses outrage that Jack's brutality is "killing" (96) Barbara without knowing about her consumption, but he fails to realize that her suffering is a byproduct of patriarchal marriage and women's inferior social role. Like an actor, he disguises himself in "a heavy fur-bordered coat and a flaxen periwig" (102) so he can steal into Jack's gambling den, accuse him of cheating at cards, and kill him in a duel. Despite Philip's distaste for acting, Jack's theatrical metaphor about how Philip and Barbara have "got up this play" together and the the duel's dramatic nature evoke the conventions of a revenge tragedy:

"I'll wager my wife and you have got up this play between you," he said. "I ought to have known there was mischief on foot. She's too meek and pretty-spoken not to be—"

The word he meant to say never passed his lips, for a sudden thrust in tierce from Philip Hazlemere's sword pierced his left lung and silenced him for ever.

"When I saw the mark of your fist on your wife's forehead this morning, I swore to make her a widow to-night," said Sir Philip, as the actor fell face downward on the sanded floor. (104)

While Philip appears to bring Jack to justice for abusing Barbara, his desire to turn her into a "widow" implies that he kills his rival out of a self-interested desire to have her for himself. The name of Philip's companion, Captain Montagu, connects his duel with Jack to Romeo and Tybalt's fight, which leaves Juliet in grief that her husband has slain her cousin. This literary allusion illustrates that Jack is a proxy for Philip's violence against Barbara, with his expectation that she will retire now that she is free to remarry. If Barbara's father and Jack stand for the Duchess's brothers who slay her with their cruelty, then Philip plays the role of her assassin, Bosola. In Webster's play, Bosola oversees the Duchess's murder and then seeks "Revenge for the Duchess of Malfi" (5.5.79) on her brothers by stabbing them; in both cases, the avenger pities the victim but misguidedly thinks he can help her through violence. Philip's premeditated murder of her husband presumably horrifies Barbara so much that she refrains from speaking to him again because she recognizes that he shares Jack's violent impulses.

While Braddon's portrayal of Barbara playing the Duchess has various thematic resonances, its most important purpose is establishing her tale's unique place in a female ghost story tradition that rejects canonical male writers like Shakespeare and Walpole. For the Victorians, Shakespeare's heroines constituted highly prestigious roles for actresses; likewise, *Hamlet* is one of the most cited literary texts in nineteenth-century ghost stories.¹⁶⁵ Braddon's rebellion against the cult of Shakespeare by choosing Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* as her central intertext makes "Her Last Appearance" singular among Victorian women's supernatural tales. Her focus on this early modern drama is unusual given that it was not staged during Barbara's time, vanishing from English theaters between the late 1730s to 1850 (L. Marcus 99-100). Braddon may have gravitated toward Webster's play because it shares her literary aesthetic and expresses her feminist aims, since it includes a strong heroine, memorable lines, and sensational events. This ghost story is structurally divided into three chapters that correlate with different phases of Barbara/the Duchess's life as well as three "acts" of a play. These chapters include "Her Temptation" (the Duchess marries Antonio/Barbara marries Jack), "Her Avenger" (Bosola avenges her death/Philip duels with Jack), and "Her Farewell Sigh" (the Duchess's ghost echoes Antonio/Philip encounters Barbara's ghost). Barbara's performance as the Duchess rather than Juliet cements her transition from a young girl who commits suicide for a man's love to a mature woman who gets murdered for asserting her independence. Her "dazzling, soul-ensnaring eyes" (96) when she plays tragic roles such as the Duchess catch Horace Walpole's attention and he mentions them in his famous letters. The multiple references to Walpole gossiping about this ghost story's events and characters remind us that he is the father of the Gothic novel with *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) (96, 101, 104). Braddon's description of Walpole getting this realistic ghost story

¹⁶⁵ Jeffrey Kahan discusses the important place that Shakespeare's ghost held in the transatlantic Spiritualist movement.

set in his own time “wrong” when he reduces it to idle gossip makes it clear that she surpasses him and the early Gothic tradition in writing about the supernatural.

As the Duchess, Barbara gives one of her most brilliant performances by combining realistic characterization based on her experience as a victim of the male characters’ abuse and her supernatural insight as a “genius.” A week after Jack’s death, she plays the heroine in an abridged version of Webster’s play that cuts out the final act focusing on Bosola’s revenge and ends with the Duchess’s powerful death scene instead.¹⁶⁶ This change allows the theater to flaunt its star performer, as Barbara gives such an inspired delivery that she dies at the same exact time as her character:

There was a thrilling tragedy in her every look which seemed the very breath and fire of genius. The creature standing there, pouring out her story of suffering, was wronged, oppressed; the innocent, helpless victim of hard and bloody men. The strange story, the strange character, seemed natural as she interpreted it. Sir Philip listened with all his soul in his ears, as if he had never seen the gloomy play before—yet every line was familiar to him. The Duchess was one of Barbara’s greatest creations. (105-106)

Barbara’s “natural” rendition of the Duchess is informed by her real-life misery as a mistreated wife; therefore, her anger with the deceased Jack/Hades inspires her imagining of this “innocent, helpless victim of hard and bloody men.” She moves beyond being a victim of her father’s neglect, her husband’s cruelty, and Philip’s restrictions by giving a final performance that grants her agency onstage. During the death scene, Barbara’s utterance of the heroine’s famous line “I am the Duchess of Malfi still” (4.2.137) to Bosola reinforces her power, identity, and autonomy against the oppressors who bring about her death. At the same time, dialogue such as “I account this world

¹⁶⁶ Before the play begins, Philip thinks about his future happiness with Barbara as he listens to the fiddlers play the overture from Gluck’s opera *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1762). In this Greek myth, the widowed musician Orpheus descends to the underworld and convinces Hades and Persephone to release his wife’s soul through his beautiful music. Nonetheless, he fails because he breaks his promise not to look back at Eurydice before she emerges from the underworld, which foreshadows Philip’s lack of success in bringing Barbara back alive from her “tomb” of Covent Garden. Here, we also see a notable contrast between Armgart singing in the role of Orpheus during her first performance and Barbara transforming into Persephone/Eurydice as she plays the Duchess in her final appearance.

a tedious theater / For I do play my part in't 'gainst my will" (4.1.81-82) exhibits Barbara's spiritual detachment from her mortal existence. Her ethereal vision conveying a sense of "thrilling tragedy" manifests that Barbara must transcend reality in order to turn her performance into art. The divided nature of Barbara's role between her identity/the Duchess, England/Italy, and reality/the supernatural highlights how she contains Persephone and Demeter within herself. As Persephone, the dying Barbara inhabits the world of the living and the dead on the liminal space of the stage while playing the Duchess (Demeter), a role that enables her to project her suffering into her art.

In the final scene, Barbara prevails over the commercialized nature of Covent Garden by changing it into a "tomb of her own" where she delivers such a passionate final performance that her ghostly Duchess becomes immortalized in English cultural memory. Since Jack has perished and Barbara's death is imminent, she is free to play the Duchess in a purely artistic way because she no longer has to worry about earning money. After Barbara dies, Braddon presents a bewildering situation in which three different ghostly images of her appear: the corpse onstage, the Duchess's apparition in Covent Garden, and Barbara's soul ascending to heaven. When Philip meets with the second ghostly image, he mistakes her for Barbara, even though she is wearing the Duchess's costume:

Barbara was standing there, in the dress she had worn in that last scene—the shroud-like drapery which had so painfully reminded him of death. She stretched out her hands to him with a sad, appealing gesture. He leaned eagerly forward, and tried to clasp them in his own, but she withdrew herself from him with a shiver, and stood, shadow-like, in the shadow of the doorway.

"Dearest!" he exclaimed, between surprise and delight, "I was coming round to the stage door. I am most impatient to talk to you, to be assured of your love, now that you are free to make me the most blessed of men. My love, I have a world of sweet words to say to you. I may come, may I not? I may ride home with you in your coach?"

The lights went out suddenly while he was talking to her, breathless in his eagerness. She gave one more faint sigh, half pathetic, half tender, and left him.

She had not blessed him with a word, but he took this gentle silence to mean consent. (106)

Similar to a female medium, Barbara finds herself caught in a male theatrical tradition as a conduit for Webster's heroine; however, she surpasses this limitation by reading the Duchess from her unique personal experience.¹⁶⁷ While Barbara is a medium channeling a male author's writing, she takes an active role in *interpreting* her character and turns the Duchess into one of her "greatest creations." Thus, the ghost Philip sees in the theater is not Barbara but her version of the Duchess, whose presence makes it clear that Covent Garden is "haunted" by her performance. Even the apparition's act of reaching out to her lover recalls Act Five, scene three of Webster's play, when the Duchess's ghost mournfully echoes her husband's words from her tomb. Marvin Carlson discusses how the physical space of licensed theaters such as Covent Garden is haunted by past actors, productions, and performances that live on in local cultural memory (*Haunted Stage* 143-144). Despite the relative scarcity of the audience, Barbara's Duchess will forever remain in Covent Garden by being remembered as one of the greatest dramatic performances of her time. The key to her success in raising the caliber of the London stage turns out to be her hybridity as an Englishwoman playing an Italian character, which will endure in Philip's memory as well as the collective national memory.

As she plays the organ nonstop, Lisa asks Mrs. Hurley, "I work so hard...The signor, your son, is he pleased? Ask him to come and tell me himself if he is pleased" (375). Her desperate craving for male approval of her music explains why the artist heroines hesitate to break out of the

¹⁶⁷ Several critics have analyzed the parallels between the performative aspects of female mediumship and the dramatic techniques of professional actresses during the nineteenth century, including Lehman, Kontou 15-43, M. Luckhurst, and Natale 21-41. In 1863, Henry Direks invented a special effect called "Pepper's Ghost" that can project ghostly images onstage, which accompanied Dickens's supernatural fiction, *Hamlet*, and Goethe's *Faust* (Carlson "Charles Dickens" 40). With the dramatic costume and lighting, Barbara's spectral appearance mimics the effect of Pepper's Ghost, which further emphasizes that the theatre is a haunted space conducive to supernatural activity.

female muse role and claim their position as independent artists. These muse figures are violently punished for rebelling against the jealous male rivals who try to objectify them; the huge risk these women take conveys how driven they are to emerge as artists in their own right. Whether they work in music, acting, or woodcarving, Lisa, Johanna, Katrine, and Barbara struggle with the controlling male characters so they can enjoy professional success. These ghost stories subvert the Corinne fantasy of Italy being the land of creative liberation for women because the artist heroines are relegated to minor roles everywhere in Europe. Unlike their privileged male rivals, these impoverished women's only option is to fashion marketable commodities, since they lack the resources that would help them to improve their craft. The narrative focus on Lisa's hands, Katrine's carving, and Barbara's beauty exhibits how they create commercialized art or are sexually objectified for public consumption. These female authors were drawing from their personal experiences interacting with the real-life Hades figures in charge of the Victorian literary market. For example, Mulholland was commissioned to write for male editors such as Dickens and Braddon released a huge volume of hack work to support her partner, the publisher John Maxwell.

The artist heroines display a willingness to work hard because they know they are talented enough to make high art and harbor ambitions of succeeding in their respective professions. As the ghost stories develop from 1866 to 1877, we see how the artist heroines become famous, marketable, and well-known figures; this change corresponds with women artists' growing prominence in Victorian society. Even when these female characters give up or die, they still find ways of expressing themselves through accessible art forms such as writing and acting. There is a major shift from Lisa dying unknown before she can produce significant compositions to Barbara dying as she gives one of her finest performances on the English stage. While Lisa represents an

artist *manqué* and Johanna explores writing as an alternative to woodcarving, Barbara's narrative arc best matches the plot of the female *künstlerroman*. She advances from an amateur to a professional actress and earns the masculine distinction of being a "genius," which demonstrates how female artists were attaining increasing equality with men. As the narrator relates, "[Barbara] came to London the following winter, and took the town by storm. Her genius, her beauty, her youth, her purity, were on every tongue. She received almost as many letters as a prime minister in that first season of success..." (99). This simile gestures at how Barbara attains the same eminence as the highest political leader in England as well as how these artists heroines evolve into major national figures. Their uncanny vision enables them to achieve prestige through their connection with ghost stories that reach an increasingly larger audience: Lisa appears in a local ghostly legend, Johanna publishes her supernatural tale, and Barbara's Duchess haunts Covent Garden. In Section Two, we will see how artist heroines who dream of pursuing literary careers produce their ghost stories in the hopes that they will motivate female readers to achieve immortality through fashioning a canon of women's supernatural fiction.

Section Two: "Opening Wide Windows into the Light"

Introduction

I have said, that, for myself, I had no impromptu faculty; and perhaps that very deficiency made me marvel the more at one who possessed it in perfection. M. Emanuel was not a man to write books; but I have heard him lavish, with careless, unconscious prodigality, such mental wealth as books seldom boast; his mind was indeed my library, and whenever it was opened to me, I entered bliss. Intellectually imperfect as I was, I could read little; there were few bound and printed volumes that did not weary me—whose perusal did not fag and blind—but his tomes of thought were collyrium to the spirit's eyes; over their contents, inward sight grew clear and strong. I used to think what a delight it would be for one who loved him better than he loved himself, to gather and store up those handfuls of gold-dust, so recklessly flung to heaven's reckless winds.

His story done, he approached the little knoll where I and Ginevra sat apart. In his usual mode of demanding an opinion (he had not reticence to wait till it was voluntarily offered) he asked, "Were you interested?"

According to my wonted undemonstrative fashion, I simply answered—"Yes."

"Was it good?"

“Very good.”

“Yet I could not write that down,” said he.

“Why not, Monsieur?”

“I hate the mechanical labour; I hate to stoop and sit still. I could dictate it, though, with pleasure, to an amanuensis who suited me. Would Mademoiselle Lucy write for me if I asked her?”

“Monsieur would be too quick; he would urge me, and be angry if my pen did not keep pace with his lips.”

“Try some day; let us see the monster I can make of myself under the circumstances...”

-Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* (1852)

Lucy Snowe compares two different styles of authorship in juxtaposing Paul Emanuel as the storyteller too impatient for writing with herself as the painstaking writer who successfully composes her autobiography. Her claim “of the artistic temperament I deny that I am” (60) is belied by her serious interest in painting (Cleopatra’s portrait), theater (the actress Vashti), and music (the concert she attends) throughout *Villette*. Unlike the cultural discourses that pathologized women’s literary activities, Brontë emphasizes the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual pleasure the imagination offers Lucy, since she reveres Paul for being her “library” full of “mental wealth.” Furthermore, scholars have noted that Lucy combines sexuality and textuality when she uses letter writing to mediate her romantic relationships with Graham and Paul (Cheng; Wagner; Jackson; Jacobus). She places Paul in the role of the muse whose creativity enhances her extrasensory perception; therefore, listening to his story strengthens the “inward vision” of her “spirit.” The two even bond over their shared vision because they both experience supernatural “impressions” (367) during their sightings of the ghostly nun. The fact that Lucy admires Paul to the point that she disparages her artistic talents in the very account she has written reveals her inconsistent self-characterization. Lucy deliberately casts herself as Paul’s inferior and projects her abilities onto him so that she can simultaneously assert and disavow her creative faculty.. Paul manifests the tension within Lucy between her desire to follow her artistic pursuits and the pressure she feels to relinquish them, which is why he is supportive *and* critical of her intellect. Lucy recognizes this

tension when she worries that Paul may act like a “monster” inhibiting her from writing, and yet he is also the Hades who inspires her to produce *Villette*. In her position, Lucy benefits from fashioning herself as a ghost to pass undetected and exercise her autonomy until her job as a schoolmistress gives Lucy the freedom she needs to write.

Ironically, while Paul embodies Lucy’s desire for authorship as a literature professor with a gift for storytelling, she channels his spirit without documenting his story to avoid being reduced to a conduit for him. Paul provokes Lucy into studying, working hard, and expressing herself, since he believes in her intellect where she has doubts. For instance, the test he arranges for her to take leads her to produce her inspired composition on human justice. Even his attempts to criticize and govern her consumption of art objects prompt Lucy to voice her opinions about paintings, music, and books. In the role of Persephone, she feels divided between the lives of “reality” and “thought” as she wastes her talents teaching others how to write English, rather than composing works herself. Lucy finds a way to resolve this conflict and fuel her latter creative impulse with the “necromantic joys of fancy” (77) by summoning Paul’s spirit in her writing. Thus, she serves as the prototype of the ghost-seeing female writer whose rival artist lover must be “killed” into her art so that she can be free to pursue a literary career.¹⁶⁸ Brontë’s novel prefigures later Spiritualist authorial practices because Lucy’s communication with a spirit inspires her writing; therefore, she functions as a female medium whose narrative is haunted by Paul’s ghost. During the *fin de siècle* and early twentieth century, female mediums often described themselves as “amanuenses” recording the words of celebrated male authors, a strategy that legitimized their writing and

¹⁶⁸ In a reversal of *Corinne*, *Villette* analyzes how religious and national differences threaten the romance between a Protestant Englishwoman and a Catholic Belgian/Labassecourien. Brontë makes the connection between *Villette* and *Corinne* explicit when Lucy labels Paul “Napoleon” and declares that he quarrels with her in the belief she is a bluestocking: “He would have exiled fifty Madame de Staëls, if, they had annoyed, offended, outrivalled, or opposed him” (348). By extension, Oswald can be read as the “Napoleon” (Paul) figure who argues with Corinne (Lucy) for being a female artist and tries to subdue her into a submissive housewife. Just as Corinne and Oswald cannot be together, Lucy must not marry Paul because she needs her independence in order to pursue writing.

afforded them the professional respect granted to men. The problem with Lucy acting as an “amanuensis” to whom Paul “dictates” his thoughts is that she would become a passive vehicle transcribing a man’s words, rather than an author in her own right. Ivan Kreilkamp’s argument that Lucy must create an “impersonal” style detached from speech as a professional author (332, 343) coincides with the idea of Lucy creating of a meticulously constructed autobiography distinct from Paul’s extemporaneous narratives.

Even though critics do not usually classify *Villette* as a female *künstlerroman*, I argue that Lucy is an artist heroine whose narrative had a huge impact on this literary tradition through her invention of a feminine brand of authorship.¹⁶⁹ Despite Lucy’s appreciation of Paul’s skill as a male storyteller, an important part of developing her interiority is accepting her supernatural vision and moving past his example to cultivate her writing style. Anna Neill points out that Lucy’s extrasensory perception differs from Paul’s in that it “enables episodes of imaginative escape from the restricting circumstances of single, impoverished female lives and the forces that silence and immobilize them” (35). In a sense, Lucy is Paul’s creation no more than she is his, since each provokes, and thus facilitates the other to tell stories. Paul facilitates Lucy’s dreams by leaving her a school to run, serving as the subject of her narrative, and inspiring her to write *Villette* in his memory. However, his absence is necessary for her to pursue her professional aspirations. Brontë’s famously ambiguous ending that leaves Paul’s fate unexplained hints that Persephone/Lucy figuratively dwells with Hades/Paul’s ghost, since death never severed their bond. Thus, I differ from the scholarly interpretations that read the ending as tragic because it does not matter if Paul dies—he has given Lucy a lifetime of love that she needs to sustain herself and inspired her as a

¹⁶⁹ Jane Eyre may seem the more appropriate choice for an artist heroine because she exhibits fascination with the visual and literary arts, shows talent as a painter and a writer, and composes her autobiography. However, Jane differs from the heroines in later female *künstlerromane* in that she enters a successful marriage plot with a man who respects her artistic gifts, though Jane significantly conceals her writing from Rochester.

male muse. She takes Paul's position as a male scholar and artistically reworks it into *Villette* using her supernatural vision, creating a gift that she offers other introverted, dreamy, and artistic women to inspire them with *her* example as a successful woman writer. The artist heroines' sympathy with Lucy in Ella Hepworth Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894), George Paston's *A Writer of Books* (1898), and Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* (1917) show *Villette*'s powerful influence on the female *künstlerroman* tradition.¹⁷⁰ This section examines how the literary artist heroines in women's *fin-de-siècle* and early twentieth-century ghost stories follow Lucy's lead by killing the male artists who inspire them and rendering these men spirits who haunt their narratives.

Although Lucy does not present herself as a professional writer, she is just one of several models of female authorship that later women writers incorporated into their ghost stories: she specifically blends supernatural vision, remote spaces, and creative production. In *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), Gaskell discusses how living in Yorkshire causes Charlotte to develop a special vision that absorbs the outside world and creatively transforms it into her juvenilia:

Life in an isolated village, or a lonely country-house, presents many little occurrences which sink into the mind of childhood, there to be brooded over. No other event may have happened, or be likely to happen, for days, to push one of these aside, before it has assumed a vague and mysterious importance. Thus, children leading a secluded life are often thoughtful and dreamy: the impressions made upon them by the world without—the unusual sights of earth and sky—the accidental meetings with strange faces and figures (rare occurrences in those out-of-the-way places)—are sometimes magnified by them into things so deeply

¹⁷⁰ Similar to Lucy, Dixon's artist heroine Mary Erle is forced by hardship to support herself and ends up becoming a single woman author. In a moment of foreshadowing, the young Mary treasures *Villette* as her favorite book and thinks, "Poor drab, patient, self-contained Miss Snow! [*sic*] How the child's heart ached for you in your bare, dismal, Belgian schoolroom, when Dr. John grew fickle; how she rejoiced when you found your ugly, be-spectacled Fate; how choky she felt at the throat when she read those last pessimistic, despairing words—words full of the sound and fury of angry seas and moaning winds. Why, poor patient hypochondriacal soul, were you destined never to be happy?" (54-55). Likewise, Paston's artist heroine Cosima Chudleigh compares herself to Lucy when she first moves to London to pursue her writing career (19). She meets a Lucy-like character named Lucilla Mallory (nicknamed the "Grey Sister"), a children's writer who "was generally dressed in gray, and looked like a little nun, Cosima thought, who had strayed out of her convent and take to literature when she ought to have been illuminating missal and embroidering altar-cloths in her cell" (117). María F. Llantada Díaz draw attention to the intertextual connections between *Villette* and *Pilgrimage* in her analysis of how the female canonical tradition influences Richardson's work. She notes that Richardson's heroine Miriam also cherishes *Villette* and personally relates to Lucy (449-450).

significant as to be almost supernatural. This peculiarity I perceive very strongly in Charlotte's writings at this time. (70)

In this respect, "seeing" becomes a more dynamic process than "observing." Seeing acts upon what has been observed, enhancing it with a force that contains the affective quality of the viewer, which has been imposed on the perceived objects. Gaskell's representation of the woman writer figures seeing as an act of mental construction that entails an isolated girl taking in the visual "impressions" of the outside world, which intensify until she artistically reworks them into the "supernatural" in her fiction. Her choice of the word "impressions" links Charlotte's vision with Lucy's sightings of the nun, especially apt diction considering her juvenile tales were often ghost stories. As a female author, Gaskell lays claim to this special insight and suggests how it fosters community among women writers because she can "perceive" this quality in Charlotte's writing. In addition, Margaret Oliphant characterizes Charlotte as having "not second sight or any visionary way of regarding the object before her, but that vivid and immediate vision which took in every detail, and was decisive on every act as if it had been the vision of the gods" (34). While Oliphant denies the supernatural nature of Charlotte's perception, she depicts a similar process of Charlotte using the sights she glimpsed in Brussels and fictionalizing them into a supernaturally-charged novel like *Villette*. Gaskell's *Life* exerted a huge sway over Victorian notions of female authorship (Peterson 131; Weber 27, 33), but it offers another conception of the woman writer than just the "parallel currents" notion of being divided between woman and artist. Thanks to female authors such as Gaskell and Oliphant, Charlotte's special creative vision has functioned as an obvious marker of women writers in Victorian fiction and nonfiction. In women's ghost stories, this vision is transmuted into the supernatural perception of artist heroines from secluded environments who imaginatively envision male literary ghosts.

These ghostly female *künstlerromane* subversively turn female characters who would be pathologized for their literary interests, overactive imaginations, and ghost-seeing into role models for women readers. Unlike Victorian medical discourses, these female authors not only redeem the literary woman, but also emphasize the value of her vision by embracing the joys of reading, writing, and creativity for adolescent girls and young women.¹⁷¹ My outlook counters the scholarly view that Brontëan heroines such as Lucy are repressed, neurotic, or hysterical. Instead, I find that their visionary states confirm their mental vibrancy and robustness. In *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings* (1886), the well-known psychiatrist Henry Maudsley contrasts careful observation with uncontrollable imagination because the latter can cause people to believe in the supernatural (116-145). Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1891) registers the medical community's disapproval of the female imagination when the narrator's physician husband puts her on a rest cure prohibiting intellectual activity: "He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try" (46). This thwarted female writer redirects her imagination into "reading" the wallpaper and envisions her ghostly double inside it, which demonstrates that women's fancy becomes pathological if it is not channeled into appropriate activities. While English female authors such as Lee, Oliphant, and Burnett were most likely unaware of Gilman's story, the fact that both parties wrote on identical themes implies a transatlantic frustration with the demonization of female literary creativity. Up until World War I, many people worried that reading was so dangerous for young women that they would uncritically identify with texts they consumed and became corrupted by improper books (Flint 144). Contrary to these fears, the authors make their heroines

¹⁷¹ For more on the pathology of imaginative women observing ghosts, see Schaper, Heilmann, Grimes 106, and Cadwallader *Spirits*.

intelligent “bookworms” erotically attracted to male authors through the texts these men write.¹⁷² We can read all three artist heroines, namely Alice Oke, Honey, and Ysobel Muircarrie, as deranged women hallucinating male ghosts; however, this view traps us in the suspicion of literary women that these authors were trying to combat.

Lee, Oliphant, and Burnett insist that their artist heroines must move past Woolf’s masculine concept of “a room of one’s own” and develop an alternative paradigm of female authorship. I have previously discussed how women writers criticized Woolf’s “room of one’s own” for being a “tomb” where the female artist buries herself alive to create. They reject her notion that a “a woman must have money and room of her own if she is to write fiction” (*Room* 10), instead portraying how this isolated, scholarly, and egotistical model of authorship harms the development of female interiority. In both real life and New Woman fiction, Victorian women and artist heroines were tempted to occupy spaces they saw as a masculine literary privilege, such as libraries and studies (Flint 103; Heilmann 182-189). By the *fin de siècle*, women’s supernatural fiction became more explicit about how the artist heroines want to emulate male authors’ success because men were the ones lionized for their writing. The artist heroines find that prohibited spaces connected to male literary production activate their supernatural visions of male writers, and they become obsessed with these ghosts to the point that their passion blinds them and blocks their literary effort. The artist heroines construct these spaces as an imaginable possibility for aspiring women writers that is not available in reality. However, they must turn away from their visions in order to establish their literary careers based on a healthier authorial practice. In the male

¹⁷² Caroline McAlister traces the history of the “bookworm” girl in children’s fiction from the 1880s through the modern day, starting with Burnett’s heroine in *Editha’s Burglar* (1888). As she explains, “[t]he girl reader first became a stock character of children’s literature with the explosion of female authored and female centered domestic fiction in the late nineteenth century.” McAlister’s reading supports my contention that Victorian women writers such as Burnett offered positive representations of the artist heroine’s literary practices in their ghost stories.

künstlerroman tradition, the artist hero may inhabit the “Ivory Tower, like a monastic cell or Faust’s chambers, [which] is often without windows; and if he looks at all, it is not so much *at* the world as *down* upon it” (Beebe 114). The ghostly male authors manifest the artist heroines’ desires in a society hostile to their ambitions; at the same time, they must progress past their visions of masculine spaces or they will fail to produce their own writing. Therefore, the artist heroines need to outgrow the yellow room, the library window, and the Muircarrie Castle to avoid the dangers of creative isolation and embrace a larger community of women in real life and through their writing.

In late Victorian women’s ghost stories, male artists express consideration for the artist heroines’ career aspirations and ghost-seeing abilities, which gestures at how women enjoyed an increase in professional status and confidence in their creative vision. There are numerous examples of male artists respecting their female colleagues in women’s occult fiction, including Cellini and the female narrator from Marie Corelli’s *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886) and Laurence and Agnes Rivers from Lucas Malet’s *A Gateless Barrier* (1900). The fact that these male characters view female artists as professionals worthy of respect in women’s fiction represents a significant change from Huntington destroying Helen’s art in 1848. For instance, the writer Laurence Rivers fears that he has violated the ghost of his relative Agnes because “in reading her letters—nay, in striving to approach her and establish relations with her at all—he had outraged her delicacy, had, in a sense, assaulted her soul, had been guilty of spiritual insult, as in grosser, material existence a man might assault or insult a woman’s person?” (Malet 184). By comparing the act of reading Agnes’s love letters without her consent to physically attacking her, Laurence accepts that literary women also have an inherent right to creative autonomy. His worry about committing an “assault” on her through reading the written expression of her “soul” shows that

violence is always latent in the relationship between male and female writers due to their inequality. For real and fictional Victorian women writers such as Aurora Leigh, the process of inspiration involves being violently penetrated by masculine powers (Gubar "Blank Page" 256; Houston 232). Dorothy Mermin rightfully points out that the restrictions on women's literary ambitions could supply material for their writing and a productive narrative tension to their works as they struggled to reconcile female propriety and artistic expression (xiv, 36).

Due to the violence embedded in the relationship between male and female writers, the artist heroines must refrain from imitating the male ghosts, who professionally compete with these women and even threaten their lives. In "Professions for Women" (1931), Woolf claims that Modernist female writers such as herself must kill the Victorian Angel in order to pursue a career, treating her apprehension at writing her first review of a male author's book as a secondary concern: "I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse, if I were to be had in court, would be that I acted in self-defence. Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing" (7). The authors of these ghost stories disagree with Woolf—their artist heroines must kill rival male authors, rather than a male-defined concept like the Angel, if they want to preserve their artistic integrity. Using Spiritualist language, Woolf describes how "[t]he consciousness of—what men will say about a woman who speaks the truth about her passions had roused her from her artist's state of unconsciousness. She could write no more. The trance was over. Her imagination could work no longer" (10). While she downplays the pressure men exert on literary women, Woolf's imagery acknowledges that women writers frustrated with the restrictions on their creative and sexual expression may lash out violently in their writing. In these supernatural tales, the ghostly male authors resist the very artist heroines channeling them as mediums, and we see the tension between these characters as they vie

for literary esteem. The male ghosts physically menace or try to kill the artist heroines because the former find the latter a threat to their own recognition. Although the male ghosts in Section One are controlling and destructive toward the artist heroines, those in Section Two are capable of being redeemed by the female characters' appreciation.

We can see these concerns about female self-expression, rivalry with men, and literary violence encoded in women's Spiritualist literary practices, which empower the artist heroines to connect with a wider female literary community. There is extensive scholarship analyzing how Spiritualist writing practices were deeply rooted in literary culture and often involved an entranced female medium recording a deceased male author's words. Bette London explains that women found these activities appealing because "[i]n the 1920s...a position of such (literary) authority was much more readily available to women as mediums who practiced automatic writing than as writers in their own right or literary critics" (*Writing Double* 160). During this period, female mediums performed "ghostwriting" in which they appropriated the voices of canonical male writers out of their Oedipal desire to "kill" their literary forefathers and usurp their place (Sword 39-46). The artist heroines in women's ghost stories go beyond being passive mediums who document famous men's words, since they silence the ghostly male authors and reject their authority. We never learn what the ghosts specifically write, hear them speak, or read excerpts of their works, given that the artist heroines reclaim their voices by turning the men into vehicles to tell their stories. Sarah Wilburn offers a helpful way for thinking about how the artist heroines employ their supernatural insight to develop an alternative female authorship. As Wilburn writes, the notion of "possessive individualism" in Victorian occult works allowed women to shape an interiority based on their mystical visions, rather than the (male) ownership of property. These visions offer women a way of "envisioning the state through imaginative creation and exploration

of ‘extra spheres’ visible to the *inner eye*. Through these visions, community can reside in the imaginary rather than only in the public sphere or the family circle” (2; emphasis added). In keeping with these ideas, the artist heroines’ act of writing about their supernatural visions enables them to address an imaginary community of female readers, envision new professional roles for them, and encourage their literary aspirations.

Section Two argues that Lee’s “Oke of Okehurst,” Oliphant’s “The Library Window,” and Burnett’s “The White People” promote a radically different idea of female authorship that not only advances the artist heroines, but also their female literary successors. In these ghost stories, Alice II, Honey, and Ysobel find that they must stop idealizing the image of the isolated ghostly male author who develops his interiority through his literary work and access to intellectual spaces. Instead, they take their visions of the ghosts and creatively modify them in their literary works as they strive to create distinctly female subjectivities and authorial paradigms. Since the artist heroines’ identities are formed through their relations to other people, they can only be successful if they show compassion for those in need and offer their writing as a service to others. Without reinscribing traditional norms of domesticity, self-sacrifice, or maternity, this style of female authorship calls on them to turn their personal narratives into gifts they offer to other hopeful female writers.¹⁷³ As Rachel Blau DuPlessis explains, in the female *künstlerroman* “the fictional artwork [must] function as a labor of love, a continuation of the artisanal impulse, of a thwarted parent, an emotional gift for family, child, self, or others” (104). These ghost stories are a means for the artist heroines to avoid the pitfalls of being masculine bards who use their “second sight” to speak for the entire nation; instead, they draw on their supernatural visions to enter a community of female supporters and readers. They replace competition with men with compassion for women,

¹⁷³ For more on the domestic or maternal image of female authorship that developed during the mid-Victorian period, see Mermin, Zariski, Fite, and Weber.

building up a female ghost story canon and encouraging other women to construct it alongside them. The artist heroines' need to gain recognition from these ghostly male writers reflects Lee, Oliphant, and Burnett's hope that they would achieve canonical status and lasting fame through their ghost stories. These women's ghost stories challenge the dichotomy that scholars see emerging between high and low literature at this time as artful genre fiction and illustrate that the Victorians and Edwardians regarded supernatural tales as serious works.

“Uncanny for Women of our Blood”

In “Oke of Okehurst” (1886), Lee portrays the tragedy of Alice II becoming an artist *manqué* without a female community to foster her literary imagination and encourage her to produce her own writing. She figures ghost-seeing as a complex interaction between location, the past, and creativity, which reflects the aesthetic principles that she articulates in her fiction, travel writing, and essays. From the start of her literary career, Lee characterized herself as an imaginative woman inspired by places suffused with a sense of the past to see figurative “ghosts.” Her article “In Praise of Old Houses” (1897) urges readers to adopt “the historic habit” (29) of mind that views the past as a living presence because “it is the one free place for our imagination” (39). Similarly, Lee echoes Gaskell in her early aesthetic manifesto on ghost stories, “Faustus and Helena” (1880), when she defines the supernatural as “the imagination wrought upon by certain kinds of physical surroundings” as well as “certain external impressions” (76). While she argues that giving the supernatural artistic form will destroy its effect by arresting it into a definite shape, she tries to solve this problem in the ghost stories collected in *Hauntings* (1890). Vineta Colby identifies the importance of *genius loci* in Lee's supernatural fiction, though she finds this element missing from her only ghost story set in England (236). The fact that Lee published “Okehurst” as the standalone volume *A Phantom Lover: A Fantastic Story* indicates that she regarded it as a

particularly strong work with a setting attractive to English readers. In a short preface, Lee subtly underscores her imaginative powers through her account of how her friend insisted that she publish her “fantastic tale” (105) after hearing it. Her inclusion of the details behind the composition of “Okehurst” suggests that Lee’s ghost story explores her ideas about literary aesthetics, female creativity, and canonical status.

In “Okehurst,” Lee contrasts Alice II’s supernatural vision with the Paterian aesthetic critic who tries to objectify his subject through violence in his quest to capture her “fair personality” on canvas. The unnamed narrator relates to a visitor how he spent the summer of 1880 working on a commission to paint William and Alice Oke’s portraits. The narrator fits the role of Pater’s “aesthetic critic” trying “to distinguish, to analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure...” for the viewer (59). The word “impression” often reoccurs in the narrator’s account of being inspired by the Stuart-era country estate of Okehurst and its mistress’s mysterious personality alike. Critics have observed that Lee uses the narrator’s aesthetic principles to critique *fin-de-siècle* Aestheticism’s masculine orientation as well as his subjection of Alice II to the male gaze.¹⁷⁴ The narrator goes beyond the artist who draws on a female muse’s beauty to inspire his masterpiece; instead, he becomes fascinated with Alice II’s habit of dressing up to resemble her ancestress Alice I’s portrait. He admits that his “whole mind was swallowed up in thinking how I should paint Mrs. Oke, how I could best transport on to canvas that singular and enigmatic personality” (117-118). In keeping with Pater’s ideas, the narrator adopts the role of the critic when he engages in psychological objectification by treating a woman as an art object to critically dissect. He manipulates Alice II “to put her into play” (122) as Alice I so he can fashion

¹⁷⁴ For more on Lee’s critique of Aestheticism, see Zorn, Denisoff 2006, and R. Robbins.

his masterpiece by painting her, even though his actions drive the Okes apart and precipitate her death. At the same time, the narrator knows that his attempts to render the “enigma” of Alice II’s personality in his painting and narration are futile because a real woman is too complex to fully capture through artistic representation: “...and if the pencil and brush, imitating each line and tint, can’t succeed, how is it possible to give even the vaguest notion with mere wretched words—words possessing only a wretched abstract meaning, an impotent conventional association?” (115).

Despite his limited insight into Alice II’s personality, the narrator’s position as an artist makes him realize that she is a creative woman who channels her imagination into seeing a male writer’s ghost after her husband stifles her artistic ambitions. When the narrator first arrives at Okehurst, William tells him that Alice II is “not at all ill, nothing at all serious, you know. Only nervous, the doctors say; mustn’t be worried or excited, the doctors say; requires lots of repose,—that sort of thing” (110). Like the heroine of “The Yellow Wallpaper,” Alice II’s well-meaning but oppressive husband and male doctors pathologize her creativity and place her under a rest cure. The narrator understands that Alice II’s psychological problems arise from her frustration at not being allowed to productively exercise her artistic talents:

She seemed to spend her life—a curious, inactive, half-invalidish life, broken by sudden fits of childish cheerfulness—in an eternal daydream, strolling about the house and grounds, arranging the quantities of flowers that always filled all the rooms, beginning to read and then throwing aside novels and books of poetry, of which she always had a large number; and, I believe, lying for hours, doing nothing, on a couch in that yellow drawing-room, which, with her sole exception, no member of the Oke family had ever been known to stay in alone. (129)

Rather than signaling mental illness, Alice II’s daydreaming, reading, and flower arranging show that she has a restless creative energy, yet lacks the direction necessary to become a successful artist heroine. In addition, Alice II is so impressed with the narrator’s talent that she overlooks his social disgrace and asks William to hire him, actions that attest to her aesthetic taste and impartial

judgement. Since William prevents Alice II from becoming an author, she grows obsessed with the ghost of Alice I's lover, the writer Christopher Lovelock, out of her desire for the male author's elevated status. While most scholars assume that Alice II hallucinates Lovelock's existence, I argue that this male writer is a ghost who plays a central role in "Okehurst" through his revenge plot against the Okes. The narrator's frequent descriptions of Alice II's "absent smile" and "distant look" signify that he fails to decipher her personality because he does not comprehend her supernatural vision. Her powerful imagination, sensitivity to Okehurst's past, and sense of place enable Alice II to develop this insight, while a male artist like the narrator only obtains brief glimpses of the ghostly phenomena there.

Alice II's fixation on the space haunted by Lovelock reveals her conflict between turning it into a shrine to his memory or a "room of her own" where she writes to compete with her literary rival. She is so intrigued by having a fellow artist pay attention to her pursuits that she makes him her confidant and invites him into Alice I's yellow drawing-room. The room is filled with art objects that exhibit Alice I's creative interests, such as "faded allegorical pictures, by some Bolognese master," "a little Italian harpsichord," and "a shelf old books, mainly [by] English and Italian poets of the Elizabethan time" (126). The mix of English and Italian art objects emphasizes that Alice I was a hybrid figure who looked beyond the possibilities of Stuart England in aspiring to become a female artist. Alice I's failure to produce any works or become a successful actress due to the social restrictions on women at the time makes her resemble Woolf's example of an artist *manqué*, Shakespeare's imaginary sister Judith. Instead, Alice I had an affair with a writer because he embodied her desire for authorship and she concealed Lovelock's portrait, poems, and plays inside a secret drawer with "a complicated arrangement of double locks that had to be put into play" (126). The obvious pun on Lovelock's name conveys that the mystery behind Alice II's

psychology can be solved by “unlocking” the truth about her obsession with his ghost. We can see Alice II’s conflict between revering Lovelock as a male writer whose literary legacy she preserves and competing with him by composing her own works because she has both his portrait and her writing desk in this room: “Among the flowers that stood on the upper storey of her writing-table—for I found that Mrs. Oke had a writing-table in the yellow room—stood, as on an altar, a small black carved frame, with a silk curtain drawn over it...” (128).

Despite the male characters’ opposition to her independence, Alice II’s impersonation of her ancestress offers her a limited defense against the violence that William, Lovelock, and the narrator perpetuate against her as well as each other. Though the narrator describes Alice II as “utterly incapable of understanding or sympathising with the feelings of other persons,” she “entered completely and passionately into the feelings of this woman, this Alice, who, at some moments, seemed to be not another woman, but herself” (131). While scholars often map a queer reading onto Alice II’s attraction to Alice I, I want to focus on Alice I’s protective role in Alice II and Lovelock’s heterosexual bond.¹⁷⁵ Emboldened by the narrator’s attention, Alice II “now adopted a perfect policy of teasing and shocking her husband about the murder of Lovelock” to provoke this conservative Tory for suppressing her creativity. However, Alice II discusses Alice I’s shooting of Lovelock to taunt not only William, but also Lovelock and the narrator. The tension between Alice I and Lovelock manifests when Alice II reads Lovelock’s “songs in the style of those of Herrick, Waller, and Drayton, complaining for the most part of the cruelty of a lady called Dryope...” (127). Alice II implies that Alice I killed Lovelock to maintain her independence from the oppressive lover who objectified her as a Renaissance muse in his verse: “She may have loved the poet very much, and yet been indignant with him, hated having to love him. She may have felt

¹⁷⁵ For queer readings of “Okehurst,” see Denisoff 2004 98-120, Vicinus, Gardener, and Vrettos.

that she had a right to rid herself of him, and to call upon her husband to help her to do so” (124). Instead of haunting Alice II out of love, Lovelock takes revenge on Alice I for murdering him by orchestrating Alice II and William’s deaths so that he can eradicate the Oke family. We can build on Patricia Pulham’s reading that Alice I is a dangerous “phallic mother” and identify her as the Demeter who tries to protect Persephone from Hades (130-131). Alice II resists Lovelock’s influence by talking about his death, visiting the crime scene, and cross-dressing in the costume Alice I wore during his murder. Her behavior serves as a warning to the narrator for trying to psychologically objectify her in his art like Lovelock did to Alice I; he, in turn, becomes so afraid of Alice II that he has a brief supernatural vision of the poet’s murder.

Alice II’s conflict between her empathy for Alice I and her narcissistic identification with Lovelock leaves her no space to form the identity she needs to generate her own writing. As Lee defines this term, Alice II “empathizes” with Alice I in the sense that she relates to her ancestress’s portrait based on their shared traits, to the point that she copies her looks and behavior exactly.¹⁷⁶ Besides enabling Alice II to defy the men around her, her adoption of Alice I’s ghostly position gives her the freedom to indulge in her creativity as an eccentric aristocrat. In contrast, Lovelock is a narcissistic reflection of Alice II as the writer she wishes to be, especially since she can understand an author whose literary accomplishments remain unknown to the public. The narrator correctly senses that Alice II’s empathy and narcissism are both facets of her self-absorption that impede her from writing:

Now that I look back upon it, I am tempted to think that the psychological peculiarity of that woman might be summed up in an exorbitant and absorbing interest in herself—a Narcissus attitude—curiously complicated with a fantastic imagination, a sort of morbid day-dreaming, all turned inwards, and with no outer characteristic save a certain restlessness, a perverse desire to surprise and shock, to

¹⁷⁶ Lee notes that the term “empathy” derives from the German word *Einfühlung* and defines it as our body physically mimicking an artwork and assigning it a certain action based on our remembrance of committing that action (*The Beautiful* 61-69).

surprise and shock more particularly her husband, and thus be revenged for the intense boredom which his want of appreciation inflicted upon her. (116)

While women writers were often accused of selfishness in pursuing their careers, Alice II's "fantastic imagination" being "all turned inward" with no outlet for her creativity *causes* her egocentrism. Nicole Fluhr's observation that Lee collapses the dichotomy between empathy and solipsism in *Hauntings* by depicting how the ghost-seer projects her desires onto the spirit applies to Alice II (293). Scholars find that New Women artist heroines often fail when they must choose womanly self-sacrifice over their careers; however, Alice II becomes an artist *manqué* due to being too focused on herself (Broumehla 176; Pykett 143). She is blind to her unique qualities as a nonviolent and idealistic woman, given that she does not replay the Alice I-Nicholas-Lovelock love triangle with William and the narrator. According to Lee, people can never fully sympathize with others because their lives always concern them most, which represents a healthy condition for forming individual subjectivity: "Like Persephone, but contrariwise, we have eaten of the magic pomegranate, only the fruit was grown in reality, its savour is our life, and even as she could not remain on earth, so we, indifferent mortals, cannot, until our own hour comes, tarry in the realms of death" (*Handling of Words* 87). Alice II's identification with Alice I and Lovelock shows that she is fated to be Persephone inhabiting the underworld, since she never develops her own life in the present day by becoming an author who writes for other women's benefit.

While Alice I's supernatural visions allow her to develop an alternative subjectivity to William's, she fails to creatively transmute them into writing that will connect her to other women. Lee sets her ghost story right before the passage of the 1882 Married Women's Property Act, at a time when husbands had control over their wives' possessions. Alice II knows she cannot have a room of her own in Okehurst, given that the yellow room and the objects she claims there belong to William: "I have never hidden [Lovelock's portrait] from any one. If my husband disliked my

having it, he might have taken it away, I suppose. It belongs to him, since it was found in his house” (128). In 1902, Lee recounted how she converted to feminism after reading Gilman’s *Women and Economics* (1898) and learning that women’s “parasitism is in itself the most important factor in the wrongness of all our economic arrangements” (“Economic Parasitism” 7).¹⁷⁷ Lee’s depiction of Alice II living off William with nothing to do while her mental development atrophies in suggests her early awareness of gender inequality in 1886, which Gilman’s book later confirmed for her. The only time Alice II channels Lovelock’s speech is to challenge William’s authority by introducing a different notion of identity based on the supernatural, rather than male property ownership: “[The ghosts] were there, in all probability, long before either of us was born, and are greatly amused by your preposterous notions of privacy” (145). Alice II failed in fulfilling the Victorian Angel’s duty to have a son who will perpetuate the Oke family after her only baby miscarried or died. For an artist heroine, the lost child is a common symbol of her abortive creative efforts, which she often suffers on her journey to become a creator (Stewart 177). The narrator knows that Alice II’s staging of Lovelock’s masque will never be realized because she is wasting her creative talents on a male writer’s work, rather than producing her own.

Due to their hostility, Alice II ends up being victimized by all the men surrounding her and dying before she can pursue her dream, in part because she lacks the encouragement of a strong female community. Alice II is isolated from other women role models at the moment when she needs to join a female group of artists and the New Woman is just beginning to appear. She tries to create an artistic community through writing to her amateur actor relative and inviting the

¹⁷⁷ For more on Lee and Gilman’s relationship, see Pulham “A Transatlantic Alliance.” The two corresponded between 1900 to 1904 after Lee wrote an introduction to the Italian translation of Gilman’s *Women and Economics* (1898). While Pulham finds that Lee’s library included several of Gilman’s works, there is no mention of whether she read “The Yellow Wallpaper,” despite its similarities to “Okehurst” (41).

narrator to Oakhurst, only to find they do not give her the support she requires. After all, the male characters' actions lead to her death: Lovelock violently reclaims Alice II, her husband kills her, and the narrator fails to rescue her. While the narrator is positioned to save her, his anger with her for not acting as the ideal muse who inspires his masterpiece makes him intervene too late to help her. He correctly tells William that Alice II's health would improve if she had "an outlet for her imaginative and theatrical over-energy. I advised him to take her to London and plunge her into some set where every one should be more or less in a similar condition" (149). Instead of fostering Alice II's creativity, the narrator reinforces her inferiority by advising her to read *Vita Nuova* (1295), Dante's collection of love sonnets about his ghostly muse, Beatrice. His advice strengthens Alice II's expectation of being spiritually reunited with Lovelock; however, this outcome prevents her from establishing a writing career. The narrator and Alice II take a romantic view that Lovelock adores the reincarnation of Alice I, but he provokes her mentally unhinged husband into a feud that destroys her. William reacts to the recommendation that Alice should become a writer by killing her, out of jealousy at her affair with Lovelock and fear that she could gain her independence. The narrator observes "Oke was standing in the middle of the [yellow] room, with a faint smoke about him; and at his feet, sunk down from the sofa, with her blond head resting on its seat, lay Mrs. Oke, a pool of red forming in her white dress. Her mouth was convulsed, as if in that automatic shriek, but her wide-open white eyes seemed to smile vaguely and distantly" (152). The fact that the narrator watches through the yellow room window as William commits a murder suicide emphasizes his sense of distance from Alice II dying in "a tomb of her own."

Lee's writing guide *The Handling of Words: Studies in Literary Psychology* (1923) is imbued with supernatural imagery that illuminates the reasons for Alice II's abortive literary career. She draws on contemporary psychological theories and over forty years of professional

experience to explore the ghostly nature of the reading and writing process in a guide implicitly meant to motivate her audience to become authors. As Lee explains, Writers must communicate their personal thoughts and feelings by stirring their Readers' past recollections, which compete with present-day "impressions" for the latter's attention. Lee significantly describes literature as a "phantom-reality" (75) that must inspire Readers' recollections (or "ghosts"); in effect, Writers turn Readers into ghost-seers: "The presentment of the inner eye or ear, however vivid (and otherwise we should be mad and lured to destruction), cannot compete with the testimony of the senses; and if recollections are faint and vacillating, it is because they are blurred and interrupted by present reality" (150). Here, Lee invokes Alice II's dilemma of being so focused on a ghost of the past that she is the "lured to destruction" by Lovelock playing on her literary aspirations. According to Lee's theories about the literary process, she appeals to hopeful women writers through her portrayal of a thwarted artist heroine in "Okehurst," though Alice II's fate reflects their fears of failure. The narrator comments that Alice II's ghost-seeing is due to her feeling "so different, so distant from all women of her own time, that she should try and identify herself with a woman of the past—that she should have a kind of flirtation—" with Lovelock (122-123). Alice II's failing is that she acts so "distant from all women of her own time" she venerates a masculine ideal of authorship, instead of adopting a feminine one. The narrator cannot finish his portrait of Alice II because the yellow room is not where she belongs; instead, she should write her ghost story to motivate other women's authorial ambitions. In characterizing Alice II as an artist *manqué*, Lee may reflect her own lack of confidence as a young author, though she later evinced it when she penned "Lady Tal" (1892) and her writing guide to stimulate women into becoming writers.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ In 1892, Lee rewrote "Okehurst" as her short story "Lady Tal" and adapted Alice II into the eponymous heroine. Her story satirizes late Victorian society in Venice as well as Lee's (Lady Tal) relationship with the writer Henry James (Jervase Marion). In both stories, an eighteen-year-old woman unhappily marries into the upper classes and at age thirty forms a bond with a male artist based on their shared artistic interests. The male artist treats the woman as

While Lee dramatizes how Alice II becomes an artist *manqué* without other women to nurture her talents, the artist heroine of Oliphant's "The Library Window" (1896) must stop romanticizing the male author and develop compassion for "mute and inglorious Jane Austens" (*Woolf Room* 175). Oliphant turned her ghost stories into a literary brand centered on ghost-seeing by titling them "A Story of the Seen and Unseen" late in her career. Her supernatural tales about earthbound apparitions present female characters who are powerless in their position as ghosts or lack the male characters' authority to handle spirits. For instance, in *A Beleaguered City* (1879), the ghost-seer Agnes Dupin is overlooked as an emissary to the dead occupying Semur in favor of her rationalist husband due to her gender: "But perhaps it was better that the messenger should not be a woman; they might have said it was delusion, an attack of the nerves. We are not trusted in these respects, though I find it hard to tell why" (89). There is a major shift from Agnes being forbidden from contact with the supernatural to Honey repeatedly encountering the ghostly male Scholar. In her old age, Honey recalls staying with her aunt, Mary Balcarres, in the Scottish city of St. Rule's (based on St. Andrew's) to recover from sickness.¹⁷⁹ While Alice II does not relate her supernatural vision with her creativity, Honey explicitly links her "second sight" as a teenager to literary practices such as reading, daydreaming, and imagining:

Everybody had said, since ever I learned to speak, that I was fantastic and fanciful and dreamy, and all the other words with which a girl who may happen to like poetry, and to be fond of thinking, is so often made uncomfortable. People don't know what they mean when they say fantastic. It sounds like Madge Wildfire or

a "psychological problem" to figure out and then tries to objectify her by turning her into the muse who will furnish the subject of his next artwork. While Alice ends up an artist *manqué* who fails to leave behind aristocratic life with the male artist's help, Lady Tal succeeds in becoming independent of her late husband's money. She writes a novel called *Christina* that reflects the New Woman's concerns because it details how the young heroine sacrifices her potential to marry for money. Lee makes Lady Tal Scottish as the daughter of Lord Ossian and situates her in the bardic literary tradition, since her maiden name alludes to the hero of James MacPherson's major work (1760).

¹⁷⁹ Since the heroine never reveals her name, scholars typically call her "the narrator" or "Oliphant's narrator." Her anonymity can be read as a gesture toward universalizing her experience for women readers or that she is a fictionalized version of Oliphant. I have chosen to call her "Honey" to avoid this awkward phrasing as well as to highlight a term of endearment that illustrates Aunt Mary and Honey's attachment to each other. Honey remarks that Aunt Mary "said honey as people say darling: and I think it is a prettier word" (220).

something of that sort. My mother thought I should always be busy, to keep nonsense out of my head. But really I was not at all fond of nonsense. I was rather serious than otherwise. I would have been no trouble to anybody if I had been left to myself. It was only that I had a sort of second-sight, and was conscious of things to which I paid no attention. (211)

As a bookish introvert, Honey recognizes how people use language (“fantastic and fanciful and dreamy”) to demean her literary interests, which “so often” happens in a society that discourages intellectual women. However, she insists that her passion for literature and the supernatural insight it gives her makes her different from a fictional madwoman such as Madge Wildfire in Sir Walter Scott’s *The Heart of the Midlothian* (1818). Oliphant sharply differentiates Honey from the fallen woman who combines the creativity of singing and dressing flamboyantly with the ghost-seeing that signals her madness. Scholars have diagnosed Honey with the Victorian malady of adolescent madness (Schaper 7; Cooke 245), but she indicates that this is an extreme example of the stigma against aspiring female authors.

In writing about Honey’s supernatural vision, Oliphant revises the fictional conventions surrounding Scottish second sight to elevate the perceptions of female ghost-seers over male bards/writers. Second sight or *an da shealladh* (“the two sights”) is often an hereditary ability associated with people from the Scottish Highlands and considered unlucky because seers envision the future, death omens, and fairies.¹⁸⁰ Part of the concern about second sight may be a suspicion that the seer can call into being what he or she sees, which means that they can supernaturally change reality to accommodate their creative vision. Oliphant and Burnett were more influenced by literary materials than folkloric ones as they reworked second sight into a source of authority for their artist heroines. During the early nineteenth century, the blind male bard with second sight became emblematic of Romantic poetic vision (Larrissey 37, Richardson 43). Katie Trumpener

¹⁸⁰ For more on the links between male bards, second sight, and poetic vision, see Busst, Trumpener, Karlin, and Larrissey.

remarks that the bard represents “a mouthpiece for a whole society, articulating its values, chronicling its history, and mourning the inconsolable tragedy of its collapse” (6) through his art after British colonization. John MacInnes further asserts “[i]f we allow that an element of creative imagination is an essential component of divination, we might suggest that certain functions of the seer in an older, traditional society have been taken over by the creative writers of modern society” (12-13). By extending MacInnes’s line of thinking, we can argue that the Scottish male bard transformed during the nineteenth century into the celebrity author in Scotland, such as Scott. The female authors I discuss reworked the character type of the male bard or writer who produces an artwork that maintains the integrity of his original vision and is meant to speak for the entire nation. Instead, Oliphant and Burnett’s artist heroines artistically modify their encounters with ghostly male authors into autobiographical accounts that appeal to a female community. Aunt Mary’s elderly friend Lady Carnabee implies that this vision is not unique to Honey when she tells her “[y]ou should mind that there’s things about, uncanny for women of our blood” (218). The fact that multiple women have second sight that allows them to see the Scholar undercuts the male bard’s position and introduces a female community of seers in his place.

As a hybrid artist heroine who cherishes her heritage, Honey is attracted by the prospect of becoming a Scottish bard like the Scholar or her father, but Oliphant undermines this image of the male author through her intertextual allusions to Sir Walter Scott. In revising the prophetic male bard into the clairvoyant artist heroine, she uncovered the female origins of the Scottish supernatural tradition that has been attributed to a man. Scott heavily influenced the early Gothic tradition by writing several ghost stories, “On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition” (1827), and *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830). Honey describes how she “trembled with impatience to see [the Scholar] turn the page, or perhaps throw down his finished sheet on the

floor, as somebody looking into a window like me once saw Sir Walter do, sheet after sheet” (226).¹⁸¹ Her act of comparing the Scholar to Scott writing *Waverley* (1814) signifies that Oliphant was haunted by his ghost in writing “The Library Window.” Besides being well-versed in Scott’s writings, she admired him as the “great enchanter” who has a “magical influence” on readers (*Victorian Age* 61), just as her heroine is fascinated with watching the Scholar write. Oliphant’s revision of Scott highlights how “Aunt” Margaret Swinton and the poet Anna Seward fostered his interest in the supernatural; moreover, his tales feature female characters with second sight or magic powers. Scholars often overlook Scott’s admission that he was ventriloquizing dead female storytellers in writing his foundational ghost stories. For instance, he admits that Margaret was the source of Gothic tales such as “My Aunt Margaret’s Mirror” (1829) and the real account behind *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819). Scott characterizes “My Aunt Margaret’s Mirror” as a “close transcription” of a tale she recounted during his childhood and makes her the narrator in the frame tale (213).¹⁸² Both “My Aunt Margaret’s Mirror” and *The Bride of Lammermoor* contain episodes of female clairvoyance involving Lady Bothwell, Lady Falconer, and Blind Alice. Scott’s account of Aunt Margaret taking care of him when he was an ailing child is reworked into Aunt Mary looking after the sickly Honey. In addition, Oliphant takes Scott’s custom of transmitting the voices of dead women writers or storytellers in his ghost stories about minor female clairvoyants

¹⁸¹ Here, Honey alludes to a famous passage from John Gibson Lockhart’s *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* (1837). Lockhart claims that while attending a dinner party with friends, he saw his future father-in-law writing *Waverley* through the window: “[Our host] pointed out to me this hand which, like the writing on Belshazzar’s wall, disturbed his hour of hilarity. “Since we sat down,” he said, “I have been watching it—it fascinates my eye—it never stops—page after page is finished and thrown down on the heap of MS., and still it goes on unwearied.”... “Some stupid, dogged, engrossing clerk, probably,” exclaimed myself, “or some other giddy youth in our society.” “No, boys,” said our host, “I well know what hand it is—’tis Walter Scott’s” (255).

¹⁸² Similarly, critics overlook how Scott ascribes his seminal ghost story “The Tapestry Chamber” (1828) to Anna Seward, whose collected poems he edited after her death. In the story’s opening, he praises Seward as a “gifted narrator” and explains that he would “not add to or diminish the narrative by any circumstance, whether more or less material, but simply rehearse, as I heard it, a story of supernatural terror” (132). Incidentally, the story’s title emphasizes the location in which the ghost of a Gothic female murderer who emasculates men is found, which is transformed in Oliphant’s story into the library window where Scholar tempts his female onlookers with his writing.

and alters it so that the medium recounts how she channeled the spirit of a silent male author. Oliphant subverts this notion of male authorship by exposing the female influence behind Scott's supernatural tales and turning his peripheral female seers into the main character of "The Library Window."

Honey finds the sight of the isolated male author in a room of his own so intriguing that she initially denies that she is part of a group of female seers who envisioned the Scholar out of a desire to write. The increasing clarity of her vision of the Scholar as he writes in his study reflects her transition from casting herself as a heroine of the books she reads to wanting to create her own stories. The various ways that people interpret the window of the neighboring college library highlight the power of collective imagination. However, Honey admits, "I rather wanted, I believe, to think that there was some particular insight in me which gave clearness to my sight—which was a most impertinent assumption, but really did not mean the harm it seems to mean when it is put down here in black and white" (222). It is ironic that Honey arrogantly believes she has special "insight" considering other women have seen the Scholar, especially since her realization that she belongs to a female community later allows her to write her autobiography. In a self-reflexive moment, she complicates the "black and white" nature of her desire when she refers to her act of writing as an older woman. For the elderly Honey, her wish to compose justifies her possessiveness toward the second sight that permits her to envision a male version of authorship modeled on her father and the study where he writes his bestsellers:

I made up my mind that [the room] must open out of the hall, and that the gentleman must be the Librarian or one of his assistants, perhaps kept busy all the day in his official duties, and only able to get to his desk and do his own private work in the evening. One has heard of so many things like that—a man who had to take up some other kind of work for his living, and then when his leisure-time came, gave it all up to something he really loved—some study or some book he was writing. My father himself at one time had been like that. He had been in the Treasury all day,

and then in the evening wrote his books, which made him famous. His daughter, however little she might know of other things, could not but know that! (231)

Honey constructs a backstory for the Scholar based on her father's career that depicts the life she wants, in which she can pursue her literary passion just like professional men did at the time. The Oedipal associations of Honey figuring the Scholar as her lover, father, and Scott signify multiple levels of desire: to love a fellow bookworm, to succeed her father as a writer, and to become a celebrity author. The prohibition on her from attending the nearby college or working in its library raises many of the same impediments to female authorship that Woolf would address in *A Room of One's Own* over thirty years later. After Mary Seton is barred from Oxbridge's library for being female, she angrily thinks "[v]enerable and calm, with all its treasures safe locked within its breast, it sleeps complacently and will, so far as I am concerned, so sleep for ever" (75).

While Demeters like Aunt Mary and Lady Carnabee try to protect Honey from being victimized by the Hades who once haunted them, she is reluctant to join a female community composed of artists *manqués*. Nina Auerbach's analysis of fictional female communities is highly relevant to these women, since they have suffered from their encounters with the Scholar and matured into old spinsters: "Subsisting precariously at or beyond the boundaries of the reproductive cycle, these groups nevertheless manage to pull life out of death and to endure" (*Communities* 4). Honey's insistence that her superior "insight" over the older generation allows her to observe the Scholar conveys her anxiety about growing up to become Demeter.¹⁸³ After all, Aunt Mary and Lady Carnabee were artist heroines who failed due to the limits on women writers during the early nineteenth century, such as a lack of education and female role models. As a teenage Persephone discovering her sexuality and professional interests, Honey is more attracted to the Scholar because he seriously pursues his writing. While she appears to inherit her desire to

¹⁸³ For a reading that interprets "The Library Window" through the lens of old age, see Chase 127-130.

be a writer from her father and her second sight from her mother, Honey's mother is so scornful of her daughter's literary interests that she assigns domestic tasks "to keep nonsense out of my head" (211). In contrast, Aunt Mary sympathizes with her dreamy nature and permits her to read in the window seat where she first observes the Scholar. Aunt Mary hints that she also used to be an imaginative young woman, but settled for the reality in the newspapers she now reads. Despite Honey's mocking allusion to Madge Wildfire, she similarly characterizes Lady Carnabee as a witch cursing her with a snake ring to see the Scholar. In fact, Lady Carnabee warns Honey to avoid him: "You are just in a dream...I don't know who it is about, but it's bound to be some man that is not worth it. If you were wise you would think of him no more" (227). Unlike the indulgent Aunt Mary, she advises Honey to relinquish her "dream" of emulating the Scholar, given that he models an unhealthy version of authorship.

As Lady Carnabee insinuates, the Scholar turns out to be a sinister ghost who targets the female seers because he wants to sabotage his literary competitors as well as take revenge on them for a male feud. Aunt Mary grows worried when Honey withdraws from everyone and become "so much absorbed in these thoughts and in watching him every evening—for now he never missed an evening, but was always there—that people began to remark that I was looking pale and that I could not be well" (233). Although Aunt Mary consults with doctors, Honey's sickness does not gesture at adolescent female madness so much as the dangers of this isolating paradigm of male authorship. To save her niece, Aunt Mary takes Honey to a party at the library to reveal that the real window is a fake and obliquely discloses that Lady Carnabee was the "light woman" who "still sat at her window and waved and waved—till at last her brothers heard of it, that were stirring men; and then—oh, my honey, let us speak of it no more!" (246). Lady Carnabee's brothers treated the Scholar as a proxy for her by killing him as punishment for her transgressive sexuality and literary interests.

The fact that the curse targets one gender in particular illustrates how the Scholar haunts generations of women to penalize them for his death without understanding that they are victims of patriarchal oppression. Furthermore, the chilling nature of his indifference to these aspiring female authors while they pine away for him is a way of taunting them and turning his literary rivals into artist *manqués*. In a scene that echoes the reunion of Demeter and Persephone, Honey shifts from being self-centered to expressing sympathy for Aunt Mary as a female seer with unsatisfied ambitions: “Aunt Mary watched me, every movement I made, her eyes shining, often wet, with a pity in them that almost made me cry: but I felt as if I were more sorry for her than for myself” (245). Honey seems aware that the Scholar cruelly made Aunt Mary give up her youthful interest in writing and the possibility of love to spend the rest of her life longing to see him again.

Oliphant shows how sympathy can overcome this violence against women when the Scholar and Honey appreciate each other as fellow writers in an important moment of mutual recognition. The fact that Honey attends the party “with my dress so white, and my pearls so white, and my hair all shadowy” (235) in the hopes of meeting the Scholar suggests that they are ghostly doubles. After Honey discovers the false window, Aunt Mary’s male friend and her maid interpret her second sight as a sign of mental instability because she keeps insisting on his presence. Her desire for the Scholar to notice her fervent admiration causes her to appeal to him for a sign by claiming that she understands his desire to become a writer: “Oh...say something to me! I don’t know who you are, or what you are: but you’re lonely and so am I; and I only—feel for you. Say something to me!” (240). The Scholar is so moved by her expression of belief in his work that rather than leaving her distraught, he returns to affirm her vision and awaken her from her “dream” state:

And then he leaned forward out of the window, looking out. There was not one in the street but must have seen him. He looked at me first, with a little wave of his

hand, as if it were a salutation—yet not exactly that either, for I thought he waved me away; and then he looked up and down in the dim shining of the ending day, first to the east, then to the old Abbey towers, and then to the west, along the broad line of the street where so many people were coming and going, but so little noise, all like enchanted folk in an enchanted place. I watched him with such a melting heart, with such a deep satisfaction as words could not say; for nobody could tell me now that he was not there,—nobody could say I was dreaming any more. (241)

While Lee's narrator remains so distant from Alice II that he watches her die through the yellow room window, the Scholar's act of opening the library window and waving to Honey highlights the male artist's growing acceptance of the artist heroine. The Scholar appears to blame these female seers for him becoming an artist *manqué*, since he was killed before he could finish writing and keeps working as a ghost without completing his book. Hence, his waving represents a turning point in his perspective when he acknowledges Honey's literary interests as well as warns her away from his lifestyle. Honey breaks the curse created by male violence through her sympathy for the ghost, redeeming him and sparing other women from suffering. After the Scholar fails to appear after three days, she stays up all night waiting "cold and trembling, with despair in my heart" (246) out of fear that her dream of being a writer has disappeared with him.

Although the Scholar gives Honey the crucial push she needs for embarking on her career, she writes her autobiography in order to express compassion for past artists *manqués* and to offer herself as a role model for future creative women. Ironically, Honey's mother is the Demeter who rescues her from Hades by taking her abroad; however, she gives up her youthful dreams and becomes a Victorian Angel. Realizing that he has unfairly punished the female seers, the Scholar later manifests before Honey to support her when she desperately needs help as a widow: "But who can tell what happens in a heart that often, often, and so long as that, comes back to do its errand? If it was he whom I have seen again, the anger is gone from him, and he means good and no longer harm to the house of the woman that loved him" (247). While Honey glosses over her

adult life, the Scholar may have inspired her to work as an author so she could provide for her young children. Aunt Mary defines the Scholar as “a longing all your life after—it is a looking—for what never comes” (244) out of sadness that her gender prohibited her from a literary career. Honey’s change from declaring her second sight unique to sympathizing with artists *manqués* allows her to finally break the tragic cycle of failed literary women. Rachel Blau DuPlessis explains that the Victorian female *künstlerromane*’s love versus work conflict changes into the daughter trying to carry out her mother’s frustrated artistic dreams in twentieth-century narratives (91, 94). By writing “The Library Window,” Honey fulfills the ambitions of her thwarted maternal figures because she takes her visions of the Scholar and transforms them into a ghost story. Instead of being the male bard/celebrity writer who speaks *for* everyone, Honey uses her second sight to enter a new imaginary female community in which she speaks *to* other women. Honey expresses ambivalence about carrying on Lady Carnabee’s legacy after inheriting the snake ring that the former uses against the Scholar to nullify his influence on Honey: “I am afraid of it still. It is locked up in an old sandal-wood box in the lumber-room in the little old country-house which belongs to me, but where I never live. If any one would steal it, it would be a relief to my mind” (248). Scholars tend to see the ending as either triumphant or defeatist, but I agree with Elizabeth Jay that the ring signifies “the double-edged gift of a woman writer’s imagination” (265). While Honey hesitates to give up this masculine ideal, she hints that she no longer believes in it by leaving the ring locked up in a home she avoids and not specifying where she has composed her narrative.

“The Library Window” expresses Oliphant’s ideal of female authorship as a self-sacrificial act in which women show compassion for other women’s weaknesses and help build their confidence. Tamar Heller goes so far as to argue that “The Library Window” fictionalizes the disappointment in her secondary canonical status that Oliphant articulates throughout her

Autobiography (24). Jenny Calder observes that Honey looks through an illusory “glass ceiling” of opportunity that remains impenetrable for artistic women like her (500).¹⁸⁴ In R. H. Hutton’s review of the story, he claims that Oliphant’s ghost stories exhibit how spiritual interactions have declined into triviality: “It appears to us that their chief end is to convince us that they are meddling with a world with which they ought to have completed their relations before they passed into the world of spirits, and are only displaying their inability to let their own mangled career alone” (131). Oliphant was so irritated that she responded in a letter, refuting Hutton’s criticisms point-by-point and rhetorically asking if meddling spirits are comparable to “[t]he experience of manhood looking back to boyhood, of old age looking back to manhood?” (335) (much like Honey’s narrative). Significantly, she calls herself “A Medium” (335) to imply her intimate knowledge of the occult gives her the authority to explore the afterlife, futility, and regret in her ghost stories. Oliphant identifies herself with Honey’s position as a woman author who uses her second sight to channel the dead so she can write “The Library Window” as a gift for her female readers. Besides indicating her pride in her ghost stories, Oliphant’s defensive response springs from her anger that a fellow writer did not understand that the Scholar’s appearances signal the female longing for literary esteem. For her, self-sacrifice was an integral if sometimes bleak reality of women’s lives and an important part of her definition of female authorship in “The Library Window” (Jay 55). In her overview of the Brontë sisters’ works, Oliphant was critical of Charlotte’s creative vision for being so unforgiving and self-centered. She characterizes Charlotte’s imagination as “inspired by the remorseless lights of that keen outward vision which is unmitigated by any softening love for the

¹⁸⁴ For the extensive scholarship on “The Library Window,” see M. Williams, Colby and Colby, Calder, Fielding, Jay, Heller, Armitt, Schaper, Cooke, Grace, and Cadwallader *Spirits*. In their readings of the story, modern critics praise Oliphant’s creativity and beautiful style. In addition, they explore her analysis of female perception, the imagination’s transformative power, and aspects of her literary career. They tend to read Honey as a fictionalized Oliphant: the widowed young Scotchwoman who writes to support her family (M. Williams 178; Colby and Colby 228; Jay 266).

race, any embarrassing toleration as to feelings and motives” (“The Sisters Brontë” 41-42). Honey develops from casting a critical eye on people to sympathizing with other women’s failures, which allows her to bestow her story on an imaginary community of women and support their ambitions.

While Lee and Oliphant emphasize the female artistic failure of the past and present, Frances Hodgson Burnett’s artist heroine Ysobel Muircarrie mounts a strong defense of future women writers in “The White People” (1916). As critics have remarked, female creativity, autonomy, and solidarity play a crucial role in her fiction for children, especially *A Little Princess* (1905) and *The Secret Garden* (1911).¹⁸⁵ Burnett rewrote *Wuthering Heights* as *The Secret Garden* by turning Cathy I into Lillias Craven, the ghostly mother who uses Magic to resurrect the garden and heal her son (Koppes; Silver; James). Susan James observes that the setting is based on fiction because “unlike Emily Brontë, Burnett had only a limited working knowledge of the Yorkshire moors” (61) that offer a healing space for Mary, Colin, and Dickon. Burnett also adapts Cathy I and Heathcliff’s romance in a ghost story that closely resembles her children’s novels while being intended for older readers. Phyllis Bixler notes that “*The White People*, with its ghostly visitors on the Scottish moors, [has] the eerie atmosphere usually admired in fiction portraying alternative dimensions of human existence” (82). Ysobel’s surname encodes how her surroundings shape her identity, since Muir/carrie is composed of the Scottish words for “moor” and “from the fortress.” Ysobel links her second sight, isolated existence, and dreamy nature when she describes how she watches the fog that conceals the ghosts inhabiting the moors from the window of her home, Muircarrie Castle (“the fortress”):

How young was I that afternoon when I sat in the deep window and watched the low, soft whiteness creeping out and hovering over the heather as if the moor had breathed it? I do not remember. It was such a low little mist at first; and it crept and crept until its creeping grew into something heavier and whiter, and it began to hide

¹⁸⁵For readings on the heroine’s storytelling abilities in *A Little Princess*, see Koppes, Keyser, Gruner, M. Moran, Parsons, and Sutliff. For the same in *The Secret Garden*, see D. Price, Parsons, and Moran.

the heather and the gorse and broom, and then the low young fir-trees. It mounted and mounted, and sometimes a breath of wind twisted it into weird shapes, almost like human creatures. It opened and closed again, and then it dragged and crept and grew thicker. And as I pressed my face against the window-pane, it mounted still higher and got hold of the moor and hid it, hanging heavy and white—and waiting. That was what came into my child mind: that it had done what the moor had told it to do; had hidden things which wanted to be hidden, and then it *waited*. (10-11)

While the yellow room and the library window are imbued with the supernatural presence of male ghosts, the moors are more powerful as a sentient character that controls Ysobel's access to the spirits she calls The White People.¹⁸⁶ The moors even take a maternal role toward the orphan by supplying her with a ghostly playmate named Wee Brown Elspeth to relieve the loneliness Ysobel feels without her mother.

While Ysobel's second sight is a maternal legacy, she must resist following her mother's example of being a devoted Victorian Angel and at the same time fulfill the thwarted mother-artist's untapped potential. As her clan's chieftainess, Ysobel is more powerful than Alice II or Honey because she possesses money, property, and status; however, she grows up a shy and bookish "ghost" without her mother's nurturance. She characterizes herself as "an unattractive child and I was a plain, uninteresting sort of girl. I was shy and could not talk to people, so of course I bored them" (23). A crucial part of Ysobel reaching maturity is adapting to the role of Persephone as an intermediary between the living and the dead, without prioritizing submission to male authority over forming a female community at Muircarrie, like her mother did. After Ysobel's father died in a hunting accident, her pregnant mother was so shocked that she fell into a coma and developed the supernatural ability to "see" his ghost. Ysobel's governess Jean relates how "soon

¹⁸⁶ Burnett wrote a letter to the editor Elizabeth Jordan the day after she started composing "The White People" in which she admitted that this scene had a powerful hold on her imagination. She emphasizes the association between the moors, the supernatural, and female insight when she envisions this incident through Ysobel's perspective: "I am now—the Other part of me—looking out of the deep window of a darkly frowning feudal castle, facing a great climbing moor, haunted by heavy white mists, which rise and fall as if they moved with some unearthly life—to cover or uncover things which are not always seen. The moor will not leave me until I told its story—which is the story of a child who felt as if she had been born looking at it" (qtd. in V. Burnett 364).

he had begun to *call* to her that was like his own heart to him. And she had heard. And then, being half away from earth herself, she had *seen* him and known he was waiting, and that he would not leave for any far place without her” (9). Ysobel secretly resents the fact that her Persephone mother followed her Hades father’s telepathic call to join him in the underworld, rather than living for her daughter. During a train ride to London, Ysobel projects her anger at her mother onto a grieving woman who remains unaware that her dead child’s ghost is still present: “It was a little, lily-fair creature not more than five or six years old and perhaps too young to express what it wanted to say. It could only cling to her and kiss her black dress, and seemed to beg her to remember that it, at least, was a living thing. But she was too absorbed in her anguish to know that it was in the world” (32). Although she identifies with the child ghost based on her own feelings of abandonment, it is significant that Ysobel inherits her second sight and her love of reading from her mother.

As a hybrid artist heroine, Ysobel discovers that both her English and Scottish identities are integral to her career because it is only by leaving her seclusion in Muircarrie and traveling to London that she conceives of a possible future in writing. Ysobel’s librarian Angus gives her “a strange education for a girl” (23) by instructing her in the classics, even though this knowledge was typically reserved for privileged Englishmen. Jean insists that Ysobel must go beyond a masculine education devoted to the past by studying modern books; in this way, she comes to admire Hector MacNairn as the bestselling author who she aspires to be:

Mr. MacNairn wrote essays and poems, and marvelous stories which were always real though they were called fiction. Wheresoever his story was placed—howsoever remote and unknown the scene—it was a real place, and the people who lived in it were real, as if he had some magic power to call up human things to breathe and live and set one’s heart beating. I read everything he wrote. I read every word of his again and again. I always kept some book of his near enough to be able to touch it with my hand; and often I sat by the fire in the library holding one open on my lap for an hour or more, only because it meant a warm, close companionship. It

seemed at those times as if he sat near me in the dim glow and we understood each other's thoughts without using words (27)

The sexualized “warm, close companionship” mediated through his writing evinces that Ysobel's attraction to Hector is bound up with his books, which create a supernatural link between the lovers before they even meet. As a major fan of his work, Ysobel's fantasy of attracting her favorite author comes true when they meet at a dinner party and Hector treats her as a muse by recording her answers about Muircarrie. Phyllis Bixler argues that Burnett modeled Hector on Scottish celebrity authors such as George MacDonald (80-81). Hence, he is the modern-day bard who speaks for his early twentieth-century readers. Hector helps Ysobel to move past admiring the male image of authorship he embodies, since she realizes she is a seer through their conversations. The fact that Hector “seemed to be so interested, as if the little story quite fascinated him” (46) is her first inkling that her visions could furnish material for her literary works. Burnett contrasts Ysobel's Scotland (superstitious, primitive, feminine) with her guardian's London (rational, modern, and masculine) in exploring her artist heroine's dual identity as a colonized Scottish subject. While Ysobel's isolated existence in Scotland fosters her second sight, literary interests, and creative talents, her gifts are so naturalized in her homeland that she can only discover their significance in England.

In learning about her second sight, Ysobel discerns that her supernatural perception can inspire her special creativity, and yet she must share the truth with others through her writing because everyone has the potential to cultivate this vision. After watching Ysobel interact with the ghostly child, Hector expresses interest in hearing her story about how it tries to comfort its grieving mother out of his sense of identification with the spirit. The knowledge that he is dying makes Hector desperate to discover if there is an afterlife, out of his Fear of being separated from his widowed mother, Mrs. MacNairn. Ysobel's compassion for the two moves her to assure them,

“That is what I call The Dream to myself, ‘Out on the Hillside,’ as if it were a kind of unearthly poem. But it wasn’t. It was more real than anything I have ever felt. It was real—real! I wish that I could tell it so that you would know how real it was” (67). By packaging her vision of heaven as a literary work with a title, Ysobel takes the first step to transforming her second sight into a ghost story that reassures people about their Fear of death. Her caretakers concealed her ghost-seeing from her English relatives, who would treat it as a symptom of mental illness: “Angus had fears of what they might do with doctors and severe efforts to obliterate from my mind my ‘nonsense,’ as they would have been sure to call it ” (104). In contrast, two male literary figures—the librarian and the celebrity author—admire her special insight and the imaginative gifts it heralds. Angus proclaims, “Man has not learned all the laws of nature yet. Nature’s a grand, rich, endless thing, always unrolling her scroll with writings that seem new on it. They’re not new. They were always written there. But they were not unrolled. Never a law broken, never a new law, only laws read with stronger eyes” (105). As an artist heroine, not only is Ysobel a privileged reader of Nature’s scrolls, but she will also follow this female author’s example by writing down her observations and sharing these spiritual truths. Hector qualifies Angus’s claim by asking, “How do we know that there does not lie in each of us a natural but, so far, dormant power of sight—a power to see what has been called The Unseen through all the Ages whose sightlessness has made them Dark?” (106). While she has superior eyesight to everyone else, Ysobel’s occult knowledge is not exclusive to her and anyone can develop it, especially women.

Ironically, Burnett promotes the healing power of the female narrative Ysobel can produce using her second sight over the masculine bardic tradition that glorifies violence, competition, and warfare by killing male artists like Hector and Feargus. Mrs. MacNairn and Hector’s relationship reflects Burnett’s sadness over losing her son Lionel in 1890, a connection she makes explicit by

dedicating “The White People” to him. After his death, Burnett began crafting her version of heaven in “A Far, Far Country” and ended up representing her spiritual beliefs in “The White People” (Gerzina *Frances Hodgson Burnett* 148-149; V. Burnett 363-364). Ysobel’s “Out on a Hillside” vision was inspired by Burnett’s interest in spiritual movements such as New Thought and Christian Science (McCarthy; Stiles 303; Bixler 17). While the Scottish bardic tales that Ysobel recites about selkies and Dark Malcolm affirm her occult beliefs, they involve brutal feuds between different groups of men: “I knew why men had died or were killed or had borne black horror. I *knew* because I had read old books and manuscripts and had heard the stories which had come down through centuries by word of mouth, passed from father to son” (26). For instance, she researches how Wee Brown Elspeth was an innocent victim of the clan war between her father, Dark Malcolm, and Ian Red Hand. The scene in which the ghostly Malcolm and his fallen warriors deliver Wee Brown Elspeth to play with Ysobel illustrates how care for children must replace the male feud that killed her. This multi-generational clan war also evokes the deaths of the millions of soldiers fighting in World War I at the time Burnett wrote “The White People.” Burnett indirectly addresses the grief of many families mourning their love ones through Hector’s death, especially since his alias alludes to the great Trojan warrior who Achilles killed in battle. The passing of Ysobel’s bardic bagpiper Feargus and the celebrity author Hector emblemizes the “death” of a male literary heritage that promotes violence in favor of a feminine tradition that advocates compassion. Burnett most likely understood her story this way because she comforted soldiers through writing them letters, encouraging them to read her works, and telling them to believe in Magic (V. Burnett 368-370, 372-373). Feargus helps Ysobel understand she has second sight when she sees him crossing the moors and playing his bagpipes as a White Person: “His head was held high, and his face had a sort of elation in it as if he were enjoying himself and the morning

and the music in a new way” (96). Burnett rewrites Scottish folklore as well as Scott’s “Wandering Willie’s Tale” (1824) so that the bagpiper wandering through hell becomes an angelic ghost. Like Scott’s bagpiper, Steenie, Feargus performs in honor of an upper-class family during social gatherings; however, his joy at being liberated as a ghost confirms Ysobel’s second sight and inspires her creative development.

Ultimately, Ysobel chooses to “kill” Hector in her narrative so that he can continue to inspire her while she maintains her autonomy and inhabits a female-oriented community with Mrs. MacNairn at Muircarrie. The relationships between Ysobel/Persephone, Hector/Hades, and Mrs. MacNairn/Demeter allow the artist heroine to gain a mother, remain close to her ghostly lover, and become a professional author. Ysobel declares “[t]hose two marvelous people cared for me in that way—in a way that made me feel as if I were a real girl, not merely a queer little awkward ghost in a far-away castle which nobody wanted to visit because it was so dull and desolate and far from London” (59). Contrary to Woolf’s ideas, Ysobel’s position as “a queer little awkward ghost” at Muircarrie isolates her from the “family” she needs to gain confidence in her literary talents. Unlike Ysobel’s mother, Mrs. MacNairn makes Ysobel feel wanted, inspires her as a female muse, and introduces her to London’s artistic circles: “She did not let me drift away and sit in a corner looking on, as I usually did among strangers. She kept me near her, and in some subtle, gentle way made me a part of all that was happening...” (54). As Demeter and Persephone, Mrs. MacNairn becomes the loving mother Ysobel has always desired, while Ysobel transforms into her surrogate daughter after Hector dies. Hector’s love of Ysobel for being an intelligent young woman with serious literary interests suggests that he would have supported her career. Nevertheless, Hector may have unwittingly overshadowed her as a famous author and inhibited her development as a writer, since she would never be able to shine on her own merits if they were to marry. Hence,

they can only maintain their egalitarian relationship through his death. Ysobel imitates her mother's actions when she looks over the balcony and sees her dead beloved, but she refuses to follow him into the underworld. Instead, she relates how she has "seen him many times since. I shall see him many times again. And when I see him he always stands—and smiles" (112). Like Lucy Snowe, Ysobel negates the threat of the ghostly male author because Hector will remain with her as a devoted lover without restricting her independence.

Ysobel draws on the literary associations surrounding female mediumship as she takes her sightings of the White People and imaginatively transforms them into a ghost story that supports aspiring women writers. At several points, she makes self-reflexive comments that highlight her awareness of her readers' responses to her autobiography. In relating her first meeting with Wee Brown Elspeth, Ysobel remarks, "Of course I know how strange this will seem to people who read it, but that cannot be helped and does not really matter" (17). Her defensive attitude toward skeptics who view her account as "strange" implies that she is anticipating their criticisms of her as a *woman* writer. Jen Cadwallader notes that Ysobel urges her readers to discuss death openly, since The Fear ruins their lives and tarnishes the bond between the living and the dead ("The Three Veils" 126). Ysobel is inspired by the way Hector uplifts people through his writings to offer her narrative as a gift for those in mourning and thereby give them spiritual hope. Employing Spiritualist language, Ysobel describes how she "would just say the first thing which came into my mind, because it would be put there for me by some power which could dictate to me" (66) her vision of heaven. However, Ysobel does more than confirm the existence of the afterlife as a female medium; she advocates for women writers when she insists that "Out on a Hillside" is genuine:

What does it matter if this seems a strange story? To some it will mean something; to some it will mean nothing. To those it has a meaning for it will open wide

windows into the light and lift heavy loads. That would be quite enough, even if the rest thought it only the weird fancy of a queer girl who had lived alone and given rein to her silliest imaginings. I wanted to tell it, howsoever poorly and ineffectively it was done. Since I *knew* I have dropped the load of ages—the black burden. Out on the hillside my feet did not even feel the grass, and yet I was standing, not floating. I had no wings or crown. I was only Ysobel out on the hillside, free! (109-110)

Ysobel takes a stand against people who unfairly critiqued the work of female authors such as her for being “poor and ineffective” and their “silliest imaginings” to combat the literary market’s misogyny. Instead, her narrative will “mean something” to other hopeful women writers wanting to discard the role of the Victorian Angel and “free” themselves through professional writing. While Alice II is trapped behind the yellow room window and Honey watches the Scholar open the library window, Ysobel “open[s] wide windows into the light” for other prospective women writers.

In her portrayal of Ysobel, Burnett reflects her ideal that writing is a service female authors perform to make their readers happy, without capitulating to the Victorian Angel role in their lives or careers. When she expresses her belief in fate, Ysobel remarks, “I dare say it sounds audacious for an ordinary girl to say such things in an ordinary way; but perhaps I have said them in spite of myself, because it is not a bad thing that they should be said by an every-day sort of person in simple words which other every-day people can understand” (75-76). Her emphasis on her accessible writing style signals Burnett’s rejection of Modernist experimentation. Critics argue that Virginia Woolf and May Sinclair use the supernatural to explore mystical states and extra dimensions of being as well as to introduce Modernist techniques into the short story.¹⁸⁷ Despite

¹⁸⁷ For more on Sinclair and Woolf’s treatment of the supernatural, see Ingman, Drewery, and Seed. Melissa Edmundson Makala takes a different approach by considering the popular ghost stories by H.D. (Henrietta Dorothy) Everett in the context of World War I. Makala argues, “[t]hrough these stories, Everett gives her readers fictional renderings of troubled remembrance, as her use of the supernatural becomes a unique form of memorial and a statement on the lasting effects of war trauma” (“Cataclysm” 54). I agree with her that ghost stories such as Burnett’s reflect the traumatic loss of life during the war, though “The White People” takes an indirect approach that makes its message about the fear of death more universal and timeless.

her popular appeal, Burnett's depiction of how "ordinary girls" such as Sara, Mary, and Ysobel form their subjectivity and comfort others through their storytelling was highly influential in sanctioning women's literary activities. Burnett's son Vivian calls her a "Happifier" because she acted as a fairy godmother to other people; she similarly claims that "[w]ith the best that was in me I have tried to write more happiness into the world" (qtd. in Bixler 18). Like Oliphant, Burnett feared that she was nothing more than a "pen-driving machine" churning out popular fiction to support her children and various family members. After her friend Emma Meadenhall's sons died, Burnett sympathized by explaining how Lionel's death had shaped her spiritual beliefs. She recommended, "I think if there is comfort for you in the story of 'The White People,' you need it now. It is a strange story perhaps, but it says things which will perhaps make love seem near, even when, to mortal sense, it is far away" (qtd. in V. Burnett 378). Burnett's admission "Out on the Hillside" represents her version of the afterlife confirms that she wrote her ghost story to console the bereaved, especially during the War. The fact that "The White People" circulated among the editor Elizabeth Jordan and an artist like Meadenhall exhibits how the imaginary female community of artists reading these ghost stories had become a reality.

Conclusion: Envisioning a Ghostly Female Canon

The artist heroines' competition with the ghostly male artists and their desire for literary recognition parallels how the female writers desired to achieve canonical status for writing their supernatural tales. In women's *fin-de-siècle* and early twentieth-century ghost stories, the male writers sympathize with the artist heroines and understand their need for creative autonomy. Just as the heroines want the deceased writers to acknowledge their talent, Lee, Oliphant, and Burnett expected critical acclaim for their ghost stories. Toward the end of the century, supernatural fiction was consolidating into a serious genre and people insisted that these stories could be literary art.

Authors, reviewers, and scholars tried to establish and study a canon of English supernatural fiction written by both men and women. As literary genre fiction, women's ghost stories challenge the current scholarly perception that a sharp divide formed between high and low literature. Critics point out that the late Victorian separation between celebrity and canonical status often excluded women writers (L. Peterson 167; Easley 12, 198). For instance, Alexis Easley asserts that female authors "were increasingly associated with the ephemerality of the popular press and were often excluded from emerging narratives of British literary history, which defined great literature as having timeless appeal" (12). However, Brenda Weber explains that transatlantic Victorian women writers invent author-characters who take advantage of their fame to extend notions of gender and professional success (Weber 11).

Recent scholarship has investigated how Spiritualist writings and occult tales have broken the perceived split between high and low literature by revealing they are deeply entwined. As Betty London remarks, mediumship involving two female collaborators forces us to rethink the model of the solitary author as well as allows us to see writing as a communal activity among women (23). Helen Sword explains that during the early twentieth century Modernist writers found Spiritualist narratives fascinating because they trespassed the divide between "low" and "high" literature (Sword 8-9). Similarly, popular fictional occult works positioned themselves counter to the commercial literary market intrinsic to their circulation (McCann 19-20). Lee, Oliphant, and Burnett's ghost stories created a new model of female authorship that cuts through the dichotomy between high/literary/masculine and low/popular/feminine. Critics have given many different reasons for why women wrote ghost stories: the need for money, the perceived association of women and the supernatural, the desire to make subversive critiques, and women's status as

ghostly outsiders. However, I find that female authors wrote their ghost stories in the expectation that these serious works would bring them literary renown for future generations.

Throughout the twentieth century, academics have created the impression that the English ghost story was a masculine tradition by excluding women from their studies or focusing on them in one token chapter. At the time, Victorian women writers were not only aware of a female ghost story canon but also contributed to it and used their tales to motivate other women to build this tradition with them. Toward the end of the century, we see efforts to build and critically examine the canon of English supernatural fiction, which often appreciated women's important offerings to this genre. Vernon Lee, Andrew Lang, Lafcadio Hearn, and others argued that the supernatural is a distinct genre with works of literary merit and aesthetic beauty. In the 1910s and 20s, Dorothy Scarborough, Edith Birkhead, Mario Praz, Eino Railo, and Montague Summers published academic studies of supernatural fiction. In the first psychoanalytic readings, Ernst Jentsch and Freud explored the artistic effects of the uncanny in ghost stories, while Sinclair penned supernatural tales influenced by Freudian psychology. Critics such as S. M. Ellis, Scarborough, and Summers drew attention to women's supernatural fiction in scholarship that mostly appeared in overlooked genres, including articles, book reviews, and prefaces to supernatural anthologies. Lee, Oliphant, and Burnett wrote female *künstlerromane* with ghost-seeing artist heroines to secure their fame and to offer role models for other inspiring women writers. At the same time that Alice, Honey, and Ysobel desire recognition from male authors, the fact that they are ghosts confirms the "death" of a masculine standard of literary success. These writers promote a different type of female authorship that is not based on professionalism, celebrity, or maternity. Instead, it involves using women's creative insight to craft a ghost story that will inspire the imaginary female community through a sense of compassion for their professional hardships.

During the *fin de siècle* and early twentieth century, the appreciation of women's ghost stories radiated from book reviews, which praised the writers for their artistry, imagination, and vision. Claire Stewart finds that reviewers valued Lee's ghost stories for their aesthetic beauty and romantic qualities, rather than for being scary (118). While Lee's supernatural tales received mixed reviews, critics agreed that they were written in a unique Aesthetic style and admired Lee's artistic writing. One reviewer lauds her powerful vision in *The Phantom Lover* for being "a divination that sees the possible hidden undercurrents of the tragedy of life" (*Literary News* 299). He further writes that "[i]t may not improbably be the verdict of the future that Vernon Lee at the present time is not receiving anything like the recognition due to her marvelous power" (300). Critics found that the ghost story was an appropriate genre for women to display their creative power and build their literary prestige. In his review essay "Ghosts," Julian Hawthorne—the son of the respected Gothic writer—argues that the ghost story is one of the most artistically demanding genres before turning to Lee's *Hauntings*. Not only does he take Lee's argument about the ghost story's aesthetics seriously, but he also judges her tales positively according to her own standards: "But the method Vernon Lee has chosen has the quality of aesthetic beauty, which possesses a value of its own, as none too common in contemporary literature" (282). Since Lee believes that literary ghosts originate in the storyteller's imagination, her potent representation of spirits such as Lovelock is the ultimate testament to her creativity.

Similarly, Oliphant agreed with the book reviewers who evaluated her ghost stories that her fame would rest on her "Stories of the Seen and Unseen" due to their originality and imagination. In her old age, Oliphant's choice of projects reveals that she was pondering her canonical status: *The Victorian Age of English Literature* (1892), *Annals of a Publishing House* (1897-1898), and her *Autobiography* (1899). In addition, she contributed a short study called "The

Sisters Brontë” for *Women Novelists of Queen Victoria’s Reign* (1897), which considers the work of deceased female authors. Her *Autobiography* and *The Victorian Age* are haunted by the ghosts of her deceased literary contemporaries and the children she had futilely supported through writing. In her *Autobiography*, Oliphant expresses her desire for literary immortality and competition with other women writers by comparing herself to Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot (43-44; 48-52). She asks, “Should I have done better if I had been kept, like [Eliot], in a mental greenhouse and taken care of?” (50), but her critique of masculine authorship in “The Library Window” makes this question rhetorical. Oliphant uses sarcasm to defend herself from the charge that she was too industrious when she admits that she wants to be remembered for *A Beleaguered City*:

Now, I am quite willing that people like Mr Hutton should speak of the ‘Beleaguered City’ as of the one little thing among my productions that is worth remembering (no, Mr Hutton does nothing of the kind—he is not that kind of person), but I felt inclined to say to the other, “The Beleaguered City,’ indeed, my young woman! I should think something a good deal less than that might be good enough for you.” By which it may perhaps be suspected that I don’t always think such small beer of myself as I say, but this is a pure matter of comparison. (184-185)

Ironically, Hutton had reviewed all of her supernatural tales and praised *A Beleaguered City* for displaying “proofs of genius and originality” and success in a “new field of imagination” (178). Oliphant’s reference to his critical admiration conveys that she based her literary status on her ghost stories, in part to counteract hostile readers who judged her by her “inferior” realist novels.

As her letter to Emma Meadenhall indicates, Burnett knew her ghost-seeing artist heroine and spiritual message were both gifts she was offering to female writers and people bereaved by the War. In a number of interviews right before War, Burnett discussed how occult forces beyond her control inspired her writing, using language that echoes Ysobel’s version of female authorship: “I have often called upon this Unknown thing to help me in my work. It seems to smooth obstacles

and almost to dictate to me what to write” (253). Many reviewers praised the pathos, artistic style, and comforting spirituality that Ysobel’s (and by extension, Burnett’s) creative vision affords to others. Several notice that Ysobel acts on her compassion for Hector by using her second sight to reassure him that heaven exists: “Yet she brings to the man she loves the inspiration of her dreams and the happiness and content with regard to the future life that her visions of the white people have given to her” (“Harper’s Bookshelf” 938). In celebrating her originality, this reviewer further declares “Ysobel is one of the most artistic achievements in recent fiction” (“Harper’s Bookshelf” 938), while another predicts this “finest china” will “set a new pattern for many years” (“Immortality” 414). Winifred Margareta Kirkland examines how the War had changed the way people read ghost stories because they wanted reassurance of an afterlife, though she insists that “The White People” did not provide this solace (107-108). Another reviewer sees that Burnett wrote “The White People” as a “gift” to console her readers with its profound healing power: “The story should form a treasured gift book in days of war and of dying and of sorrow” (“Immortality” 414). One could argue that “The White People” only sparked this reaction in the War context. The fact remains that reviewers paid Burnett the highest compliment by embracing her artist heroine and regarding her supernatural tale as a literary classic.

The reviewers’ accolades for these women’s ghost stories prove that their work was well-regarded and that readers appreciated their project of promoting a positive image of women authors in a serious literary genre. These ghostly female *künstlerromane* normalize women’s reading, writing, and creative work at a time when the female imagination was associated with everything from laziness to madness. While Honey and Ysobel’s families view their second sight as “nonsense,” their narratives celebrate women’s literary activities and highlight how they can be successful writers without a room of their own. The male ghosts shift from feeling threatened by

the heroines' talent to legitimizing their vision, but these female characters do not just court the favor of male authorities. Ysobel speaks on behalf of other women when she claims that her vision is not "only the weird fancy of a queer girl" in her defense against gendered critiques of female authors.

We can also trace women writers' growing professional status from the 1880s to World War I, since there is a notable transition from Alice II as an artist *manqué* to the ambivalent Honey to the confident Ysobel. These ghost stories represent male oppression as a latent violence against the heroines that must be combated through a feminine model of authorship based on compassion. The authors open the window of opportunity for other women with a wish-fulfillment fantasy of female authorship that was often at odds with the authors' reality of needing to support their families through writing. This fantasy became popular at a time when women who gained professional freedom during the world wars resisted the expectation that they would return home and surrender their jobs to men. Just as Burnett wrote "The White People" during World War I, R. A. Dick (the Irish writer Josephine Leslie) released *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* (1945) during World War II.¹⁸⁸ Evoking Lucy Snowe and Ysobel Muircarrie, the meek widow Lucy Muir learns to become independent and support her children by composing a work based on the life of the ghost haunting Gull Cottage, Captain Daniel Gregg. The popularity of the ghostly female *künstlerroman* during the wars reflects how the loss of millions of men made room for women in the professions, including writing. These authors' powerful creative insight gave them the vision to foresee that

¹⁸⁸ According to Margaret Stetz, "Leslie's original work also had a more subversive intent: to urge her audience to use their ghosts as inspirations for creativity and as allies in rebellion against social forces that were acting to regulate and circumscribe women's lives" (94) by forcing them to become housewives in the post-war era. When Lucy first meets Captain Gregg, she visits a psychoanalyst who tells her that the ghost represents her subconscious longing for the ideal lover (40). Despite Dick's mockery of this interpretation, Captain Gregg proves to be the male muse "killed" into Lucy's writing, since his life supplies the material for her book. Dick's novel was so well-received that it was adapted into a classic romance film in 1947 and a TV show (1968-1970).

they could build a female literary tradition that will forever haunt future generations of prospective women writers.

Conclusion: The Declining Popularity of Victorian Women's Ghost Stories

We lived thus—I entirely worshipping, [Anastasius] guiding, fondling, watching, and ruling by turns, for two whole years. I was mistress of a large fortune, and though not beautiful, had, I believe, tolerable intellect, and a keen wit which he used to play with, as a boy plays with fireworks, amusing himself with their glitter—sometimes directing them against others, and smiling as they flashed and scorched—knowing that against himself they were utterly powerless and harmless knowing, too, perhaps, that were it otherwise, he had only to tread them out underfoot, and step aside from the ashes, with the same unmoved, easy smile.

I never knew—nor know I to this day, whether I was dear to him or not. Useful I was, I think, and pleasant, I believe. Possibly he liked me a little—as the potter likes his clay, and he skilful mechanic likes his tools—until the clay hardened, and the fine tools refused to obey the master's hand.

– Dinah Mulock Craik, “A Ghost Story,” (a.k.a. “M. Anastasius” 1855)

During the late nineteenth century, both casual readers and serious academics began to consider the ghost story an important literary tradition with a well-known canon that included works by both men and women. Between the turn of the century and the interwar years, dozens of American, British, and Canadian critics and scholars examined the latest trends, collections, and studies of ghost stories. Andrew Lang, Lafcadio Hearn, and others recognized that supernatural fiction is an artistic genre with works of aesthetic beauty and literary distinction. For instance, Hearn asserts in his university lecture “The Value of the Supernatural in Fiction” (1898) that “you will see that the subject is not altogether trifling. Certainly it is of very great moment in relation to great literature. The poet or the story-teller who can not give the reader a little ghostly pleasure at times never can be either a really great writer or a great thinker” (269). Similarly, Lang's article “The Supernatural in Fiction” (1905) insists that the expanding influence of science will stimulate the reading public's desire for ghost stories.¹⁸⁹ Both Hearn and Lang correctly foresaw that ghost stories would become increasingly acclaimed and accepted as part of the literary canon during the twentieth century.

¹⁸⁹ Lang specifically writes that “as the visible world is measured, mapped, tested, weighed, we seem to hope more and more that a world of invisible romance may not be far from us, or, at least, we care more and more to follow fancy into these areas and regions, *et inania regnia*” (341).

Throughout the interwar years, scholars focused on establishing, historicizing, and promoting English supernatural fiction in dissertations and monographs, but they heavily emphasized the early Gothic rather than contemporary works.¹⁹⁰ Recent critics have found that Spiritualist discussions of Shakespeare and the SPR's research into the cross-correspondences preempted the techniques of early literary criticism (Kahan 5; Wilson 110). These findings suggest that the study of literature during the early twentieth century was imbricated with real and fictional supernatural practices. The enormous amount of material addressing Victorian and early twentieth-century ghost stories produced at this time demonstrates this tradition's pervasive influence on British society. In the symposium "Dreams, Ghosts, and Fairies" (1923), the editor of the *Bookman* notes the contemporary obsession with anthologies, collections, and periodicals featuring ghost stories and asks various authors to comment on this perceived trend. It is significant that the editor urged prominent female authors of ghost stories to submit their opinions, including Marie Corelli, May Sinclair, and Maria Belloc Lowndes. They all affirmed their personal interest in or the public's fascination with these tales, as evinced by the fact that all of them found a ready market for their supernatural fiction. Sinclair offers the most enthusiastic response, writing, "My 'attitude' toward ghost stories is one of enthralling interest and admiration if they are well told. I regard the ghost story as a perfectly legitimate form of art and at the same time as the most difficult" (144). Like Sinclair, other renowned writers of supernatural fiction expressed surprise that readers and academics overlooked the artistic merits of ghost stories. In *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, Lovecraft notes that what he calls "the weird tale" has been attacked by those who object to its frightening nature and grim endings. He insists "in spite of all this opposition the weird tale has

¹⁹⁰ These studies include Dorothy Scarborough's *The Supernatural in English Fiction* (1917), Edith Birkhead's *The Tale of Terror* (1921), Eino Reilo's *The Haunted Castle* (1927), H.P. Lovecraft's *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1925-1927), Mario Praz's *The Romantic Agony* (1933), and Montague Summers's *The Gothic Quest* (1938). For a study that situates these critics within the critical reception of early Gothic literature, see Brewster.

survived, developed, and attained remarkable heights of perfection” and it “must necessarily be poignant and permanent to minds of the requisite sensitiveness” (n.p.).

As previously noted, Victorian and Edwardian female authors wrote these works in order to win fame by joining a recognized tradition of British supernatural fiction during the Golden Age of the ghost story. In light of the popularity of Victorian women’s contributions to this genre, we may wonder why their fame declined and they have been practically forgotten today. During the interwar era, there were several factors that led to the decrease of general and scholarly interest in women’s ghost stories. By trying to sustain and preserve a genre they admired, these female authors played an unwitting role in shaping the conditions that would lead to the obscurity of their ghost stories for nearly a century. Victorian and early twentieth-century female scholars, book reviewers, and writers critically examined this genre and treated it as worthy of serious consideration. Notable assessments by American and Canadian women include Marjory MacMurchy’s “The Development of the Modern Ghost Story” (1902), Olivia Howard Dunbar’s “The Decay of the Ghost Story” (1905), and Mary Hunter Austin’s “Supernaturals in Fiction” (1920).

In England, however, critics such as Dorothy Scarborough, Edith Birkhead, and Virginia Woolf produced the current scholarly narrative that male authors crafted the best Victorian ghost stories. Scarborough’s *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (1917), the first academic study of this genre, argues that the portrayal of monsters became more humanized from the early Gothic to the modern day. Scarborough remarks, “[t]he spook of to-day has acquire latchkey and asserted his independence. He may have local habitation but he isn’t obliged to stay there. Now-a-days even the spectral women are setting up to be feminists and have privileges that would have caused the Gothic wraiths to swoon with horror” (104). Even though she links the increasing power

of female ghosts in recent works with the latest feminist advances, Scarborough focuses more on supernatural fiction by male authors. Woolf played a key role in this critical conversation through her reviews of Scarborough's book, Birkhead's *The Tale of Terror* (1921), and Henry James's ghost stories. In her review of *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*, Woolf characterizes Anne Radcliffe's Gothic fiction as limited, disposable, and humorous, while Scott and James's ghost stories are timeless, immortal, and terrifying: "If you wish to guess what our ancestors felt when they read *The Mysteries of Udolpho* you cannot do better than read *The Turn of the Screw*" (63). It may appear surprising that Woolf elevates male authors' ghost stories, considering that she champions female literary traditions in *A Room of One's Own* (1928). Suzanne Raitt notes that Woolf belittled women writers such as Sinclair because she felt threatened by their talent (*Modern Victorian* 236), despite the modern scholarly tendency to compare their treatment of the mystical and uncanny. We can see how jealousy created competition between women such as Sinclair and Woolf, who wanted her own place in the literary canon as the writer of the Modernist ghost story "A Haunted House" (1911).

In contrast to Scarborough, Birkhead, and Woolf, male scholars such as S. M. Ellis, M. R. James, and Montague Summers highlighted the literary merits of women's ghost stories and saw that men and women wrote from different perspectives. James's "Remarks on Ghost Stories" (1929) pays equal attention to ghost stories by men and women, though he discusses the two traditions separately and judges them by gendered criteria:

Rhoda Broughton, Mrs Riddell, Mrs Henry Wood, Mrs Oliphant—all these have some sufficiently absorbing stories to their credit. I own to reading not infrequently 'Featherston's Story' in the fifth series of Johnny Ludlow, to delighting in its domestic flavour and finding its ghost very convincing. (Johnny Ludlow, some young persons may not know, is by Mrs Henry Wood.) The religious ghost story, as it may be called, was never done better than by Mrs Oliphant in 'The Open Door' and 'A Beleaguered City'; though there is a competitor, and a strong one, in Le Fanu's 'Mysterious Lodger.'" (431)

Here, James appears to qualify his praise of women's ghost stories by calling these works "sufficiently absorbing" and assuming that they are most talented at writing about traditionally feminine matters like religion and domesticity. His accolades are even further qualified when he places Oliphant's ghost stories in competition with his favorite writer of supernatural fiction, Sheridan Le Fanu. In contrast to these women writers, men must strike the perfect balance between withholding information and evoking terror in their readers. At the same time, James acknowledges that women write about the supernatural in distinctive ways because they invite readers to feel compassion for the ghosts, rather than fear:

Must there be horror? you ask. I think so. There are but two really good ghost stories I know in the language wherein the elements of beauty and pity dominate terror. They are Lanoe Falconer's 'Cecilia de Noel' and Mrs Oliphant's 'The Open Door'. In both there are moments of horror; but in both we end by saying with Hamlet: 'Alas, poor ghost!' Perhaps my limit of two stories is overstrict; but that these two are by very much the best of their kind I do not doubt. (435)

Instead of reinforcing the stereotypical idea that women's sensitivity makes them better at representing softer emotions like "pity," M. R. James highlights how both authors depict male and female investigators helping ghosts by approaching them with kindness.

In "The Ghost Story and its Exponents" (1923) S. M. Ellis traces the "art" of the ghost story from the early Gothic to the 1930s before ending with a review of James's collection of Le Fanu's ghost stories and Sinclair's *Uncanny Tales* (1923). Ellis notes that Dickens's interest in fostering literary talent without regard to gender produced a model of editorship that benefited women, since he encouraged them to compose some of their most accomplished ghost stories:

In *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, both under Dickens's editorship, are to be found some of the best ghost stories ever written, including *The Old Nurse's Story*, by Mrs. Gaskell—another triumph in the presentation of scenic "atmosphere"; *The Phantom Coach* by Amelia B. Edwards; the very fine [Frazer's] *A Ghost Story*; *The Haunted Organist of Hurly Burly*, by Rosa Mulholland; and many other tales of the supernatural and horror such as *The Spare Bed*, by Wilkie

Collins, who was also author of a very successful full-length ghost story, *The Haunted Hotel*. (325)

Ellis lists several female-authored ghost stories published by Dickens that are still recognized as classics, while indicating those by male authors such as Collins with the vague phrase “many other tales.” He ends with an analysis of Sinclair’s works in which he praises her and includes her in this “notable band of men and women who have written ghost stories and tales of terror” (327). In his review of Scarborough’s study, Montague Summers criticizes her for omitting several important female authors who wrote ghost stories and extensively records them as well as their distinctive qualities.¹⁹¹ Contrary to Scarborough and Woolf, he would devote much space to female authors when he traced the history of supernatural fiction in his introduction to *The Supernatural Omnibus* (1947). Summers praises Ellis and James’s assessments of this tradition before cataloguing the best ghost stories by female authors and positively evaluating their literary qualities:

Other full-length ghost stories to be placed in the first class are Mrs. Riddell’s *The Haunted River*, whose pages are dank with a mist that is not wholly material, with shadows and doom; Lanoe Falconer’s *Cecilia de Noel*, a book of real genius, in which the effect of an apparition on varying individuals is shown; Lucas Malet’s *The Gateless Barrier* and *The Tall Villa*; Mrs. Oliphant’s *The Beleaguered City*; *The White People* by Francis [*sic*] Hodgson Burnett.

All these are works of great beauty, and this they owe to their apprehension of the supernatural. In other phrase, to produce a flawless piece of work the writer must believe in the motive of the tale. This indeed I have emphasised before, and I will not enlarge upon the point now. I would merely add that if a ghost story has not a note of spirituality which may be beauty—a beauty not without awe—or may be horror, it will fail because of its insincerity and untruth. (30)

¹⁹¹ According to Summers, “Miss Scarborough again has no mention of Mrs. Nesbit’s somber little collection, *Grim Tales*, one of the stories in which for share gruesome horror it would be hard to beat. Vernon Lee’s *Hauntings*, four weirdly fantastic studies of extraordinary power and great literary beauty in a scholarly setting, cannot be forgotten, and Lucas Malet’s *The Gateless Barrier* is a novel full of delicate charm, and one which presents no shallow philosophy of the supernatural. *Cecilia de Noël* is famous for its clever characterization and has long since taken its place as a little classic gem of ghost lore. *Raw Edges* by Perceval Landon has several uncanny, and one supremely terrible story, *Thurnley Abbey*, which tells of a building hideously haunted by a foul and carious skeleton. All of these, which are prime importance, and others of lesser note, Miss Scarborough has unwisely omitted to describe in her recent study” (*Review* 352).

Although Summers includes ghost stories by male authors like James's *The Turn of the Screw* as "works of great beauty," he celebrates these women for producing tales that combine the qualities of excellent genre fiction and literary masterpieces. They take the supernatural seriously not in the sense of believing in it, but by showing this possibility as a reality in their tales. These female authors are sincere about the "motive" of their ghost stories because they use the supernatural phenomena to shadow forth various cultural anxieties of the time. While James, Ellis, and Summers praise women's ghost stories, their commentary went unnoticed for decades and the male-dominated scholarly narrative prevailed instead. The reason male critics felt comfortable recommending ghost stories by women is that they did not feel the same sense of competition with women that female authors may have experienced with each other.

Victorian women's ghost stories also declined in popularity as the conventions of the genre transformed, due to the impact of Freudian theory, literary Modernism, and the World Wars. In her reviews of *Birkhead* and *Scarborough*, Woolf realized that the ghost story must change in order to catch the public's attention; furthermore, it would reflect the latest psychological research, emerging technologies, and psychoanalytic theories (45). She declares that for contemporary readers these ghost stories inspire fear by making them "realize the power that our minds possess for such excursions into the darkness; once certain lights sink or certain barriers are lower, the ghost of the mind, untracked desires, indistinct intimations, are seen to be a large company" (46). In agreement with Woolf, modern-day critics such as Emma Liggins and Clare Drewery have inspected how these historical factors influenced Sinclair and Woolf's ghost stories. Liggins finds that "[d]isrupted temporal sequences, ghosts who never materialise, unspectral settings, and a troubled disjunction between past and future all characterise uncanny modernist short fiction by women, showing how notions of apparitionality have shifted from the Victorian to reflect anxieties about

modernity, suburbia and the frontiers of memory” (47).¹⁹² Woolf’s focus on the aesthetics of fear proved to be clairvoyant because the loosening moral restrictions on literature allowed authors to include explicit depictions of violence and sexuality in their ghost stories.

As Woolf and Scarborough realized, female authors began to shape their ghost stories in keeping with recent advances in psychoanalytic theory and psychical research, as both fields became increasingly well-known throughout the 1920s and 1930s. F. W. Myers is now seen as a pioneering figure in both fields for his concept of “the subliminal consciousness,” or an underlying second self that could be responsible for supernatural phenomena. Many scholars have written about the overlapping concerns of the SPR and psychoanalytic theorists such as Freud and Jung. As David Seed notes, Sinclair and Woolf “privilege the perceiving self over the given data of reality and both were drawn to psychical research as a means of criticising contemporary materialism and also as a medium for promoting the emerging discipline of psychology” (44). In one of the first psychoanalytic readings to consider Victorian ghost stories, Freud explores the real mental effects and artistic characteristics of the uncanny in his eponymous essay (1919). He writes that the author “can increase his effect and multiply [the uncanny] far beyond what could happen in reality, by bringing about events which never or very rarely happen in fact” (48). Freud’s speculations on dreams, telepathy, and the uncanny reveal a fascination with the supernatural that made his ideas easily adaptable to ghost stories. Female authors integrated psychoanalysis and psychical research into their works in order to explore the dark side of human psychology and negative interpersonal dynamics. These ghost stories reveal that women found these fields threatening for assessing them according to theories created by men based on perceived female

¹⁹² Drewery similarly observes that “[t]he uncanny stories of Sinclair and Woolf reconcile this apparently contradictory relationship in drawing on the popular Gothic convention in order increasingly to introduce ‘high’ modernist themes into their short fiction: timelessness, transcendence, and intensity of meaning as conveyed through experimental, elliptical prose and the depiction of fragmented, elusive identities” (69).

weaknesses (such as hysteria, mediumistic sensitivity, repressed sexuality, etc.). In Asquith's "The Follower" (1935), Mrs. Meade dies after a hideous monster that has been stalking her impersonates the "famous psychoanalyst, Dr. Stone" (239). The monster plays this role by engaging in a talking cure with her; Mrs. Meade admits that one of their meetings "is still too unbearable. There are things one can't speak about. It was then, oh, God! That I understood why he had pointed at the dead child and leered at me out of his vile little eyes" (244). It is implied that she fears the monster because he physically or sexually abuses the young and may target her child, a gruesome parody of Freud's research into his female patients' claims of being molested as girls.

The publication of women's ghost stories in ephemeral forms such as supernatural anthologies and short story collections limited the appreciation of these works to fans, since they were not easily available to succeeding generations. Liggins notes that "[t]he evolution of supernatural fiction and the characteristics of the 'spook of today' were addressed in the 1910s and 1920s, when the popularity of the ghost story was signaled by the appearance of the first anthologies" (34). For instance, Christine Campbell Thomson's *Not at Night* horror anthology series released eleven volumes between 1925 and 1937 and most famously featured works by Lovecraft. Lady Cynthia Asquith compiled many anthologies of contemporary ghost stories that feature a wide range of male and female authors, including *Shudders* (1929), *When Churchyards Yawn* (1931), and three volumes of *The Ghost Book*.¹⁹³ Asquith wielded enormous power to solicit tales from other authors and to shape the canon of ghost stories, and she used it to promote the work of Elizabeth Bowen, Rose Macaulay, and Rosemary Timperley. Ironically, she and other anthologists striving to make these tales easily obtainable actually restricted access to women's supernatural fiction. The works of male authors, such as Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843) or

¹⁹³ For more on Asquith's role as an editor of various anthologies and a writer of ghost stories, see Beauman 285-288.

James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), remained available for popular consumption, adaptations, and criticism throughout the twentieth century. In contrast, women's ghost stories stayed buried in specialized anthologies or went out of print, which made them inaccessible to everyone except avid collectors. While women's ghost stories were considered literary works worthy of attention between 1850 to 1930, this tradition later fell into disrepute due to its status as genre fiction. Jason Colavito explains that "horror stories moved down-market into the so-called 'pulp' magazines, those low-cost publications aimed at a lower-class mass audience, where horror became a genre in the worst sense of the word, competing with (and losing to) such rivals as the detective genre, the Western genre, and the railroad genre" (7). Although Colavito asserts that male authors such as Lovecraft suffered from the decreasing respect for horror fiction, Victorian and Edwardian women appear to have been the biggest casualties of this shift. The decline in the ritual of telling ghost stories during Christmas negatively affected women who relied on this tradition to market their stories. The literary ghost story also had to compete for the public's attention with rival forms of entertainment that emerged as a result of technological advances, such as the radio, cinema, and TV.¹⁹⁴ Derek Johnston's study *Haunted Seasons* details the history of the British ghost story being adapted to radio, film, and TV in England as part of annual Christmas broadcasting that continues to the present day. These women's works survived in the memories of amateur enthusiasts who collected these volumes out of a personal fascination with the genre.

¹⁹⁴ In the Preface to *The Collected Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton*, Wharton observes, "But in a few years more perhaps there may be; for, deep within us as the ghost instinct lurks, I seem to see it being gradually atrophied by those two world-wide enemies of the imagination, the wireless and the cinema. To a generation for whom everything which used to nourish the imagination because it had to be won by an effort, and then slowly assimilated, is now served up cooked, seasoned, and chopped into little bits, the creative faculty (for reading should be a creative act as well as writing) is rapidly withering, together with the power of sustained attention; and the world which used to be so *grand à la charté des lampes* is diminishing in inverse ratio to the new means of spanning it; so that the more we add to its surface the smaller it becomes" (8-9).

It is a paradox that the growth of female independence in England during the early twentieth century also contributed to the declining popularity of Victorian and Edwardian women's ghost stories. The progress women made in obtaining more financial, educational, and professional autonomy meant that they no longer had to rely on the ghost story as a medium to voice their concerns. A short survey of ghost stories by British women writers during the early twentieth century, namely May Sinclair, H. D. Everett, Cynthia Asquith, and Elizabeth Bowen, reveals a surprising increase in fictional depictions of female hostility. The three recurring narratives in these women's ghost stories are female rivalry over a man, women focusing on their ties to men, and women violently hurting each other. These narratives show how the feminist hope that equality would foster sisterhood between women proved to be false, particularly after the passage of universal female suffrage in 1928. While Victorian women emphasize the need for female solidarity, representations of competition between women dominate early twentieth-century women's ghost stories. The female characters strive to gain love, money, or male approval that will win them independence, but they often empower themselves at the expense of other women, including relatives, friends, and children. Elizabeth Bowen's "Pink May" (1945) articulates the female hostility that pervades these women's ghost stories when the narrator tells her friend she was haunted by spirit who sabotaged her adulterous affair: "There's something exciting, I mean, some sort of a challenge about knowing someone's *trying* to get you down. And when that someone's another woman you soon get a line on her technique. She was jealous, that was what was the matter with her" (715). These narratives reflect how the first wave of feminism created the antithesis of what feminists expected: women hamper each other's progress, rather than helping each other. The female characters' misery reflects British women's frustration that despite their growing liberation they were still not treated with the same respect as men, were expected to

play the role of traditional housewives, and continued to be defined by their relationships to men. After the emancipation of women during the World Wars, the post-war changes confined them to limited gender roles as English society reverted back to patriarchy.

The representations of female spite, competition, and homicide in these ghost stories suggest that British society may have kept women from achieving equality by pitting them against each other to compete for status. In the epigraph, Isbel's elaborate simile comparing her male guardian, Anastasius, to a boy manipulating a firework captures the way Victorian men treated women as toys to advance their interests. The fact that women consist of combustible materials and eventually "refuse to obey the master's hand" presents a radical image of female rebellion that foreshadows Isbel's successful escape from Anastasius's supernatural control after death. In "The Playfellow" (1929), Asquith portrays how women's newfound right to inherit the country house can spark female competition, revenge, and murder. Claud Halyard murders his niece, Hyacinth, by refusing to save her from a fire so that he and his daughter Daphne can inherit the family mansion. The ghostly Hyacinth indirectly takes revenge on her murderer by targeting her female cousin; hence, she tempts Daphne to steal a box of fireworks, which later set the conflagration that kills Daphne. In this tale, the fireworks represents the vengeful ghost child whose anger makes her explode into violence against the innocent girl who will usurp her place. For Craik, the firework represents a mid-Victorian teenager with the potential to burn her male oppressor in the name of maintaining her religious, sexual, and economic independence. While Asquith's story also features a young girl rebelling against a harmful male authority, Hyacinth uses the fireworks as a weapon to destroy another girl in the process of reasserting her right to the house. The shifting meaning of the firework imagery traces a depressing change from women wanting to assert themselves against men to women empowering themselves through the sacrifice of other women.

These ghost stories present female characters specifically competing with each other in terms of their writing and other creative practices, which signals that the authors faced conflict with other women writers. Hilary Grimes discusses how *fin de siècle* women's supernatural fiction that presents female writing reflects the authors' sense of abjection. They simultaneously identify with ghosts as invisible presences in Victorian society and hate the figures that symbolize their thwarted craving for literary recognition (103).¹⁹⁵ This observation appears to be true of early twentieth-century women's ghost stories, except that the writers portray female rivals who must compete for notice, especially from men. While Elizabeth Bowen befriended Cynthia Asquith and wrote the introduction to *The Second Ghost Book* (1956), her entry "Hand in Glove" features antipathy between Edwardian women who engage in the feminine art of dressmaking. In 1904, two impoverished Irish sisters named Elsie and Ethel live with their invalid aunt Mrs. Varley. Bowen's description of the sisters' creative work highlights how they benefit from the older generation by altering their aunt's old clothes:

Nor did their fingers lag behind their wits—they constructed lampshades, crêpe paper flowers and picturesque hats; and, above all, varied their dresses marvellously—no one could beat them for ideas, nipping, slashing or fitting. Once more allowing nothing to go to waste, they had remodelled the trousseau out of their aunt's trunks, causing sad old tulles and tarlatans, satins and *moiré* taffetas, to appear to have come from Paris only today. They re-stitched spangles, pressed ruffles crisp, and revived many a corsage of squashed silk roses. (768)

Despite being indebted to their aunt, the sisters abuse Mrs. Varley by refusing to get her medical treatment and lying to her about retrofitting her clothing in order to attend social events where they hope to attract husbands. After Mrs. Varley suffers a seizure, Ethel abandons her aunt to die so that she can attend a ball, in the expectation that her suitor will propose. Ethel is punished for

¹⁹⁵ Similarly, Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock notes, "Given this cognitive dissonance felt by women moving into the professional sphere in a culture that continued to insist that a woman's place was in the home, fulfilling her primary duties as wife and mother, it is not surprising to see writing frequently thematized in uncanny fiction by American women as simultaneously a source of anxiety and of potential liberation" (186).

choosing the attentions of a man over her aunt's welfare when she tries to wear Mrs. Varley's gloves. Mrs. Varley's ghost takes revenge on her niece in the form of a spectral hand encased in a glove that chokes Ethel to death: "It was a marvel that anything so dainty should be so strong. So great, so convulsive was the swell of the force that, during the strangling of Ethel, the seams of the glove split" (775). Throughout the story, Bowen's descriptions emphasize the female characters' hands and fingers because they use them to work creatively. Ethel's death conveys Mrs. Varley's rage against her selfish niece for failing to appreciate the older female seamstress who provides the sisters with the necessary material to create. The irony of Ethel's fate—dying by the very gloves she wanted to use to win a husband—critiques the sisters for wearing their inventions to advance their romantic aspirations, rather than valuing fashion as an art form. The story ends with a striking image of artistic conflict: the "force" of female hatred is so powerful that it destroys Mrs. Varley's handiwork and kills the next generation of creative women.

Finally, women's ghost stories may not have been as widely recognized as men's because female authors remained invisible until the feminist recovery project of the 1970s sought to restore them to the literary canon. Scholars such as Peter Penzoldt, Julia Briggs, and Jack Sullivan maintained the scholarly narrative that the English ghost story was male-dominated by overlooking or marginalizing female authors. The appreciation for their works stayed restricted to amateur enthusiasts until anthologists began compiling their supernatural fiction during the 1980s, with exceptions appearing such as Peter Haining's anthology *Gentlewomen of Evil* (1967).¹⁹⁶ Richard

¹⁹⁶ In the Introduction, Haining states, "[t]here were a few [Victorian Angels], however, who beneath their demure appearances nurtured the most fiendish imaginations and produced a brand of thriller story which still takes some beating even today. They were the *Gentlewomen of Evil*. And it is the best of their works which are collected here" (13). While Haining's aim in creating this anthology is not explicitly feminist, he notes that Victorian women's "skills screamed for some kind of release, but society was steadfast in its resolve that they should do nothing which could jeopardise their position as 'ladies'" (13). Furthermore, he acknowledges that women's supernatural tales share certain common features, such as inspiring fear through atmosphere rather than terror and presenting ghosts that elicit pity, not horror.

Dalby played a key role in recovering women's ghost stories by publishing three volumes of American and British women's works: *The Virago Book of Ghost Stories, Volumes 1 and 2* (1987; 1991) and *Victorian Ghost Stories by Eminent Women Writers* (1989). These pioneering anthologies contain many of the ghost stories that James, Ellis, and Summers praised as classics of the female tradition. Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert's *Victorian Ghost Stories: An Oxford Anthology* (1991) offers a roughly equal range of ghost stories by Victorian male and female authors. In addition, the first feminist anthologies were compiled by Jessica Amanda Salmonson and A. Susan Williams in their respective volumes *What Did Miss Darrington See?* (1991) and *The Lifted Veil: The Book of Fantastic Literature by Women, 1800-World War II* (1992). In her introduction to *Victorian Ghost Stories by Eminent Women Writers*, Jenny Uglow insists that these ghost stories "grant an insight into women's longings, women's fears, suppressed resentments, buried angers and firmly held beliefs" (ix). The rising availability of these women's ghost stories as well as the "spectral turn" that Roger Luckhurst identified in the humanities has spurred critics to rediscover this tradition. Critics such as Diana Basham, Vanessa Dickerson, and Hilary Grimes have published groundbreaking critical studies of Victorian women's ghost stories. Today, Melissa Edmundson Makala, Victoria Margree, and Emma Liggins continue to participate in the critical and popular revival of these spooky tales. These signs of awakening interest offer hope that we may rediscover how Victorian and Edwardian women writers wielded the "fine tools" of supernatural fiction to invent a haunting female literary tradition.

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