



# Charlotte Riddell's City Novels and Victorian Business: Narrating Capitalism

*Silvana Colella*

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## **Charlotte Riddell's City Novels and Victorian Business: Narrating Capitalism** Silvana Colella

In spite of the popularity she enjoyed during her lifetime, Charlotte Riddell (1832-1906) has received little attention from scholars. Silvana Colella makes a strong case for the relevance of Riddell's novels as narrative experiments that shed new light on the troubled experience of Victorian capitalism. Drawing on her impressive knowledge of commerce and finance, Riddell produced several novels that narrate the fate of individuals - manufacturers, accountants, entrepreneurs, City men and their female companions - who pursue the liberal dream of self-determination in the unstable world of London business. Colella situates novels such as *Too Much Alone*, *George Geith*, *The Race for Wealth*, *Austin Friars* and *The Senior Partner* in the broader cultural context, examining business manuals, commercial biographies, and essays to highlight Victorian constructions of the business ideal and the changing cultural status of the City of London. Combining historicist and formalist readings, Colella charts the progression of Riddell's imaginative commitment to the business world, focusing on the author's gendered awareness of the promises and disenchantments associated with the changing dynamics of capitalist modernisation. Her book enriches our understanding of Victorian business culture, the literary history of capitalism, and the intersections of gender, genre and economics.

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