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Recommendations for Ghost Stories – from the Victorians to now

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Early examples of Gothic novels which include the ‘explained supernatural’ are Clara Reeves’ *The Old English Baron* (1778) and Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797).

Classic Victorian and Edwardian ghost stories include:

- Charles Dickens, ‘A Christmas Carol’ (1843) and ‘The Signalman’ (1866)
- Wilkie Collins, ‘The Dream Woman’ (1859)
- Mary Elizabeth Braddon, ‘A Cold Embrace’ and ‘The Shadow in the Corner’ (1860s/1870s)
- Sheridan Le Fanu, ‘Squire Toby’s Will’ and ‘Madam Crowl’s Ghost’
- Vernon Lee, ‘A Wicked Voice’ and ‘Oke of Okehurst’ in *Hauntings* (1890) (with many stories set in an Italy obsessed with its own dark past)
- Lettice Galbraith, ‘In the Séance Room’ (1893) and ‘The Blue Room’ (1897)
- Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (1897-8) (filmed as *The Innocents* (1961) or *The Others* (2001))
- E. Nesbit, ‘The Mystery of the Semi-Detached’ (1893) and ‘The Violet Car’ (1910)
- Bram Stoker, ‘The Judge’s House’ (1891)
- Algernon Blackwood, ‘The Willows’ (1907) and ‘Transition’ (1913)
- Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘How it Happened’ (1917) and ‘Lot no 249’ (1892) [about a cursed mummy!]
- Alice Perron, *East of Suez* (a collection from 1901 about her experiences as an Anglo-Indian wife)
- Anything by M.R. James, including ‘Whistle and I’ll come to you, my Lad’ (1904)

For **early twentieth-century writing**, look out for stories by Elizabeth Bowen, May Sinclair, Edith Wharton, Violet Hunt – all writers who were drawing on ideas of psychology, mysticism, haunted architecture and the declining servant classes. Or try Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959).

For **neo-Victorian fiction** about the ghostly, try anything by Laura Purcell or Emma Hinds. Purcell’s 2022 novel *The Whispering Muse* is set in a haunted London theatre. Emma Hinds’ *The Knowing* (2023) is about the dark powers of a tattooist’s model. You also can’t beat Susan Hill’s *The Woman in Black* (1981) or any of her short stories; try her collections *The Small Hand* or *The Man in the Picture* (2012).

I’d really recommend any story collections published by the **British Library: Tales of the Weird** series. There are collections on dark Christmas stories, weird woods, Scottish ghost stories, Cornish horrors, tales of the London fog (one of my favourites). Or try the new collections by **Handheld Press**, such as collections of ‘women’s weird’ and their recent edition of E. Nesbit’s *The House of Silence*.

For **historical context**, I like Susan Owens, *Ghosts: A Cultural History* (2019) or Edward Parnell’s memoir and history of 20C ghost stories, folklore and film, *Ghostland: In Search of a Haunted Country* (2019).

From **my own work**, I recommend *The Haunted House in Women’s Ghost Stories: Gender, Space and Modernity, 1850-1945* (2020), plus chapters on the Edwardian Supernatural in *Twentieth-Century Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* (2023) and on neo-Edwardian cemetery fiction in *Graveyard Gothic* (2024).