



<https://manchestergothic.mmu.ac.uk/>

Gothic Fiction and the Female Writer

Resources list relating to SEED TALKS, 2025-2026

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).

"Terrorist Novel Writing," an anonymous essay that appeared in *The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1797* (Volume 1),

Victorian Gothic fiction by women includes:

- Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre* (1847)
- Anne Bronte, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848)
- Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* (1847)
- Elizabeth Gaskell, 'The Old Nurse's Story', 'The Poor Clare' and 'The Grey Woman'
- Mary Elizabeth Braddon, 'A Cold Embrace' and 'The Shadow in the Corner' (1860s/1870s)
- 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)
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 'The Yellow Wallpaper' (1893) and *Herland* (1911)
- E. Nesbit, *Man-Size in Marble* (1893), 'The Mystery of the Semi-Detached' (1893) and 'The Violet Car' (1910)
- Alice Perron, *East of Suez* (a collection of ghost stories from 1901 about her experiences as an Anglo-Indian wife)

Slave narratives and historical fiction about enslavement and colonialism

African American women writers published their narratives of the journey from enslavement to emancipation and the horrors of slavery with the help of white patrons. They also published novels and stories which drew on Gothic conventions.

- Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian slave* (1831)
- Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave-Girl* (1861)
- Hannah Crofts, *The Bondwoman's Narrative* (1859-60)
- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1967)
- Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)

Early twentieth-century Gothic fiction

Look out for ghost 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.

I recommend Violet Hunt's collection *Tales of the Uneasy* (1911), Edith Wharton's 'The Lady's Maid's Bell' and Elizabeth Bowen's 'The Happy Autumn Fields'.

Or try Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and her *Dark Tales*, including 'The Lottery'.

Neo-Victorian fiction by women 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*.

Historical context on Female Gothic, the ghostly and the rise of feminism:

Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1957)

Fred Botting, *Gothic* (1992)

E. J. Clery, *Women's Gothic: from Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* (1997)

Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919)

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Women Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979)

Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siecle* (1997)

Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (1976)

Susan Owens, *Ghosts: A Cultural History* (2019)

Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (1992)

Maisha Wester, *African American Gothic: Screams from Shadowed Places* (2012)

Films, TV, Netflix

Crimson Peak (2015), dir. Guillermo del Toro

The Haunting (1960), dir. Robert Wise

The Haunting of Hill House (2018), Netflix series, dir. Mike Flanagan

The Others (2001), dir. Alejandro Amenabar

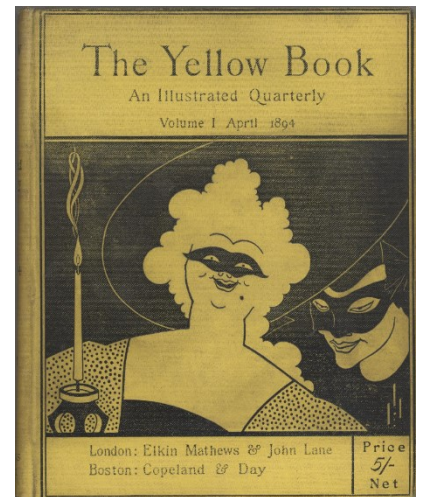
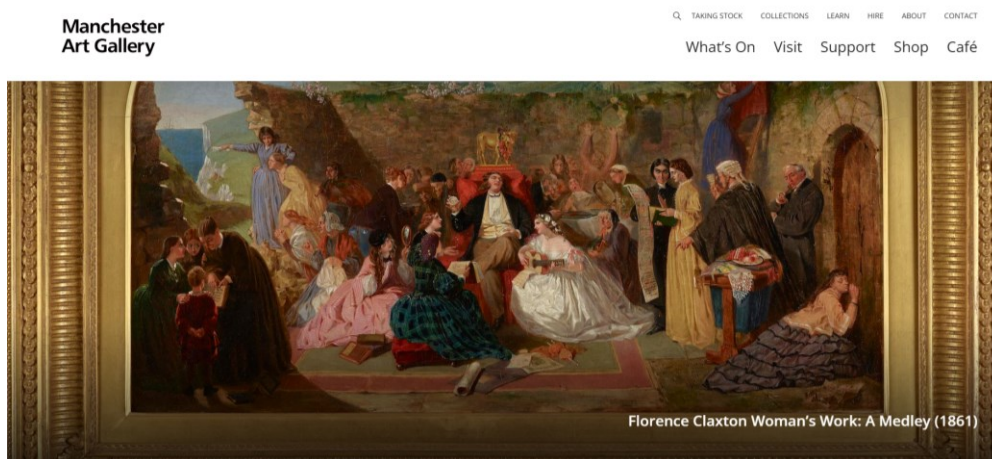
The Woman in Black (1989), dir. Hubert Wise (TV film and stage show)

Woman of Stone (2025), dir. Mark Gattiss

Wuthering Heights (2026), dir. Emerald Fennell

Artwork

Florence Claxton, *Woman's Work: A Medley* (1861) <https://manchesterartgallery.org/womans-work-a-medley-fundraising-appeal/>



Frederick Walker, 'The Lost Path' (1863)

George Watts, 'Found Drowned' (c.1850)

G. Cruikshank, 'A Destitute girl throws herself from a

bridge, her life ruined by alcoholism' (1848)

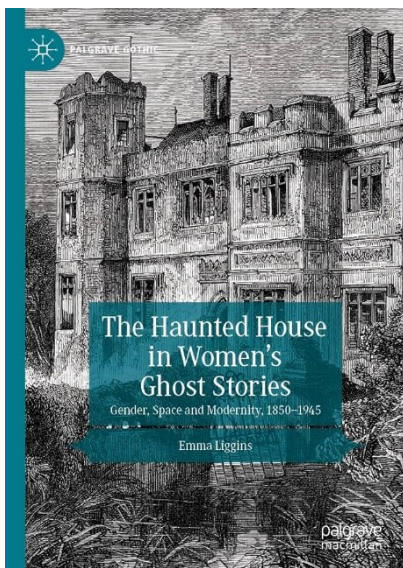
Useful websites

<https://rs4vp.org/is-our-memory-of-the-great-marriage-debate-a-failure-by-emma-burris-janssen-university-of-connecticut/>

[Victorian Voices website](#) – with links to stories, magazine articles, images, recipes and more:

[Punch historical archive](#) – for cartoons and satire about gender, class, politics, fashion and much more

[The Yellow Nineties](#) magazine database of 1890s magazines, including *The Yellow Book*



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), on neo-Edwardian cemetery fiction in *Graveyard Gothic* (2024) and on modernist women writers in London in *Ghosts and the Gothic* (due out 2025).

Happy reading!

Dr Emma Liggins e.liggins@mmu.ac.uk