



## Tales of Men and Ghosts

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## Tales of Men and Ghosts Edith Wharton

EDITH WHARTON (1862-1937) was one of the most remarkable women of her time, and her immense commercial and critical success-most notably with her novel "The Age of Innocence" (1920), which won a Pulitzer Prize-have long overshadowed her small but distinguished body of supernatural fiction. Some of her finest fantastic and detective work (which oft times overlap) was first collected in 1909 in "Tales of Men and Ghosts." The psychological horror is as important as the literal one here, and subtle ambiguities characterized by the best of Henry James's work (such as "The Turn of the Screw") are also present in Wharton's character studies, such as "The Bolted Door." Is the protagonist a murderer, or is he mad? In the end it may not matter, for it is his descent into madness and obsession that gives the story its chilling frisson. Other tales present men (or ghosts, or what men believe to be ghosts) in a variety of lights, from misunderstood monsters to vengeful spirits to insecure artists. If you have never read Edith Wharton's fantasy work before, you will be captivated and delighted. Without a doubt, this is a landmark book, and an important addition to the Wildside Fantasy Classics line.

## Tales of Men and Ghosts Details

Date : Published November 11th 2002 by Borgo Press (first published 1910)

ISBN : 9781592240449

Author : Edith Wharton

Format : Hardcover 208 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Classics, Horror, Fiction, Literature, 20th Century, American

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## From Reader Review Tales of Men and Ghosts for online ebook

### **Bridget says**

I've been saving this one to read during October, the time of ghosts and odd happenings. Being a big Edith Wharton fan, I was really looking forward to reading these stories.

I liked them well enough. Some more than others, as is usually the case for me whenever I read short stories. For the most part, they were just tales of the frailties of the human condition - conceit, ignorance to name a couple - and what happened to the people who experienced these events or were the victims of them. Some were actually ghost stories, and were genuinely creepy.

Not my favorite Edith Wharton, but worth reading.

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### **Tara says**

I read this collection in bits and pieces over a couple of months, and found it a solid mix of classic Wharton. Most of the tales are of men, and not literal ghosts (although a couple are), but I love what she's implying by naming the collection as she does. As with any short story collection, some stood out more than others, but it's perfect as a quick read during spare moments.

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### **Perry Whitford says**

Plenty of men, plenty of twists, not many ghosts.

'The Bolted Door' established Wharton's fondness for a twist in the tale. She introduces us to a failed writer on the cusp of suicide who can't pull the trigger so decides to confess to a murder. I think part of her purpose here was to ridicule the efficacy of psychiatrists, or 'alienists' as they were then called.

Indeed a good number of these stories involve salutary lessons for various professional men. 'The Debt' is a case study in how necessarily ruthless and impersonal the true scientist needs to be. In 'The Legend' an influential philosopher thought to be dead suddenly reappears incognito. Wharton has some wicked fun at the expense of misunderstanding critics and socialites. 'Full Circle' derided the fondness popular novelists acquire for praise.

There is only really one bonafide ghost story, maybe two at a stretch. Of those 'The Eyes' is less supernatural than it first appears, despite the dry old host startling his guests by admitting that if he won't admit to having seen a ghost "*it's only because I've seen two!*"

'The Letters' is the genuine article and absolutely the best of Wharton, how love deceives and a life can unravel in a single moment. Few writers can deliver a well-timed jab to the solar plexus quite as well as Wharton.

And then there's her impeccable character description, necessarily more succinct in the short story form.

Here's one example from many I could have quoted:

*'I mean Mrs. Lanfear, the Professor's wife, poor Mrs. Lanfear, with her tight hair and her loose figure, her blameless brow and earnest eye-glasses, and her perpetual attitude of mild misapprehension.'*

The name Edith Wharton is byword for quality in my house.

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### **DeAnna Knippling says**

A couple of good tales, lots of really insightful writing...And endings that just cut off. "Wait, this isn't even an ending." The actual ghost stories were the best of the lot.

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### **J. Lynn says**

i love me some wharton, but this wasn't one of her works of genius.

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### **Sem says**

I'm ambivalent about this collection. On the one hand - acute observations about human nature, fine descriptive passages, interesting characters. On the other hand - endings so abrupt that the doorbell must have rung just as the author was putting together the final paragraphs. The closing sentence of one story left me baffled as to its meaning, and the protagonist of the last story - after reams of dithering introspection - ought to have disengaged from her useless wastrel of a husband. 'Afterwards' was a fine ghost story but would have been more effective if it had ended once the penny had dropped for the reader. As for 'The Eyes' - too obvious by far. Even so, I've committed myself to 4 stars and I'll stick by them.

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### **Mimi says**

DNF

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### **Bettie? says**

Read here Hattip to Karen: "thankee ma'am"

Description: *Tales of Men and Ghosts* (1910) consists of ten stories that had previously been printed in *Scribner's Magazine* and *Century Magazine*. They are listed here in chronological order of their original publication dates:

The Bolted Door  
His Father's Son  
The Daunt Diana  
The Debt  
Full Circle  
The Legend  
The Eyes  
The Blond Beast  
Afterward and the Letters

#### **A month of Halloween 2015 reads:**

#1: 3\* Nobody True by James Herbert: fraudio  
#2: 4\* The Horror Stories of Robert E. Howard: fraudio  
#3: 1\* Brain Child by John Saul: fraudio  
#4: 3\* Domain (Rats #3) by James Herbert: fraudio  
#5: 3\* The Mourning Vessels by Peter Luther: paperback  
#6: 2\* The Doom of the Great City: ebook short-story  
#7: 5\* Long After Midnight by Ray Bradbury: fraudio  
#8: 5\* The Dead Zone by Stephen King: fraudio  
#9: CR The Chalice by Phil Rickman: hardback  
#10: WL Seven Gothic Tales  
#11: 4\* Tales of Men and Ghosts by Edith Wharton: gutenberg  
#12: 2\* Shattered by Dean Koontz: fraudio  
#13: 5\* The Dunwich Horror - Lovecraft: e-book: gutenberg  
#14: TR Death At Intervals by Saramago: paperback  
#15: 3\* Alone: gutenberg  
#16: CR The Shunned House: gutenberg  
#17: 4\* The Thing on the Doorstep: ebook  
#18: 2\* Shadows by Saul: fraudio  
#19: CR Precious Cargo: paperback  
#20: 2\* The Magicians of the Golden Dawn: ebook  
#21: 2\* The Book of Black Magic: ebook  
#22: 4\* Beyond the Wall of Sleep: ebook  
#23: CR The Haunting of Hill House

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#### **Jennifer Shaiman says**

More tales of men than of ghosts--the two ghost stories here are also collected in *Ghosts*. Many of the stories hinge on some psychological feature specific to one of the characters, which makes this an interesting collection of observations on how the quirks of the mind play out in our lives.

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## **Jennifer says**

A set of character studies--and character studies cleverly disguised as ghost stories--that has some fascinating pieces. The two most overt ghost stories are probably my favorites, as they use the supernatural to explore the hearts of two different men. Sometimes witty, sometimes heartbreaking, always rather remote and inquisitive rather than passionate.

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## **Elise Barker says**

I read "Afterwards" a few years ago and was incredibly impressed but that was the only Wharton short story I'd read before now. I'm a huge fan of her novels. Her short stories didn't disappoint. I would get to the end of each one and just say "wow, that's my favorite." And then of course I'd read another and learn I was wrong, because the next was as good or better. They're all my favorite!

Although in a way the stories are undoubtably products of their time, I found that while reading a number of them, I was able to imagine the characters in modern dress, thinking, speaking, and behaving just as they do in the stories. It is amazing how fresh they feel. Her insight into human character - flaws, joys, fears, obsessions - is so honest and compelling.

The one I've been thinking about the most is "The Full Circle" because it is a tangle of ironies and explores the ego of authorship in a memorably humorous way. But they are all equally ironic in their own way.

Another Goodreads reviewer suggested a revision to the title of the collection: Tales of Men and THEIR Ghosts. I love that because all these characters are haunted in some way, but only a few encounter literal ghosts. Normally I don't like tampering with author's decisions but I thought that was a clever and simple revision.

ETA 6/27/2016: "His Father's Son" keeps recurring to me today. Twists within twists. I like the idea that parents have these unconsidered inner lives and private secrets that can influence their children.

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## **Isabel (kittiwake) says**

*And then his success began to submerge him: he gasped under the thickening shower of letters. His admirers were really unappeasable. And they wanted him to do such preposterous things—to give lectures, to head movements, to be tendered receptions, to speak at banquets, to address mothers, to plead for orphans, to go up in balloons, to lead the struggle for sterilized milk. They wanted his photograph for literary supplements, his autograph for charity bazaars, his name on committees, literary, educational, and social; above all, they wanted his opinion on everything: on Christianity, Buddhism, tight lacing, the drug-habit, democratic government, female suffrage and love.*

By the half-way point there had been lots of men but no ghosts, although some of the men could be said to be haunted metaphorically rather than literally. There were, however, some actual ghosts in the second half of the book.

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### **Scott Harris says**

This is a small collection of Wharton's short stories, many of which are quite good. I found that some of them were rather predictable and many of them lacked the social critique and wit that I've noticed in her other pieces. Quite readable though.

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### **Lauren says**

Edith Wharton's stories are masterful in that they aren't often plot-driven but manage to be enthralling to read anyway. I don't think there was a single story in this collection I didn't love. The writing is beautiful, the characters real and alternately hilarious and tragic. They may have been written a long time ago, but there are echoes of them in people you know, love, and despise.

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### **Frank says**

Ik werk me door al Whartons verhalen heen, min of meer in omgekeerd chronologische volgorde, en dit vind ik tot nu toe een van haar meest geslaagde bundels. Hoogste aantal interessante verhalen, weinig rommel.

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### **Jenny Clark says**

Edith Wharton is a master story teller. She writes from male and female perspectives quite well, she dissects the mind of her characters so well when she wants to you feel like you are them and when she doesn't, it's because the story is served without it. Her short fiction is great, and I may have to re-read *The Age Of Innocence* which I hated in high school, seeing as how I like her so much more now.

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### **Jacquelyn Smith says**

This was the age of innocence (1920) a psychological bone chilling horror, that would make you check your doors at night. This is a must read.....

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### **Faye says**

Read: October-November 2016

Overall rating: 3/5 stars

This was a real mix of good, bad and mediocre. The standout stories for me were *The Bolted Door* and *Afterward* while *His Father's Son* and *Full Circle* were also worth a read. I wouldn't recommend this

collection unless you are already a fan of Edith Wharton.

The individual ratings for each tale is as follows:

The Bolted Door - 4/5 stars  
His Father's Son - 3.5/5 stars  
The Daunt Diana - 2.5/5 stars  
The Debt - 1/5 stars  
Full Circle- 3/5 stars  
The Legend- 1.5/5 stars  
The Eyes- 1/5 stars  
The Blond Beast - DNF  
Afterward - 4/5 stars  
The Letters - 2/5 stars

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### **Asyoulikeit says**

some worthy ones for revisiting: The Bolted Door(a successful variation on a subject that many great writers are obsessed with); His Father's Son; The Letters (seems to me that this whole intrigue was written solely for that sweet punch line of the end); Afterward. So,Mrs. Wharton is, as usual, a delight.

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### **Umi says**

'His attempts at self-destruction were as futile as his snatches as fame!'

Oh Edith, just as I was beginning to grow weary of your strivings at short stories, somehow how you get it. There are some nice ones in this collection.

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