



The Woman in White

Wilkie Collins , Matthew Sweet (Annotations)

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

The Woman in White

Wilkie Collins , Matthew Sweet (Annotations)

The Woman in White Wilkie Collins , Matthew Sweet (Annotations)

'In one moment, every drop of blood in my body was brought to a stop... There, as if it had that moment sprung out of the earth, stood the figure of a solitary Woman, dressed from head to foot in white'

The Woman in White famously opens with Walter Hartright's eerie encounter on a moonlit London road. Engaged as a drawing master to the beautiful Laura Fairlie, Walter becomes embroiled in the sinister intrigues of Sir Percival Glyde and his 'charming' friend Count Fosco, who has a taste for white mice, vanilla bonbons, and poison. Pursuing questions of identity and insanity along the paths and corridors of English country houses and the madhouse, *The Woman in White* is the first and most influential of the Victorian genre that combined Gothic horror with psychological realism.

Matthew Sweet's introduction explores the phenomenon of Victorian 'sensation' fiction, and discusses Wilkie Collins's biographical and societal influences. Included in this edition are appendices on theatrical adaptations of the novel and its serialisation history.

The Woman in White Details

Date : Published February 27th 2003 by Penguin Classics (first published November 26th 1859)

ISBN : 9780141439617

Author : Wilkie Collins , Matthew Sweet (Annotations)

Format : Paperback 672 pages

Genre : Classics, Mystery, Fiction, Gothic, Literature, 19th Century, Horror, Historical, Victorian, Historical Fiction, European Literature, British Literature

 [Download The Woman in White ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Woman in White ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Woman in White Wilkie Collins , Matthew Sweet (Annotations)

From Reader Review The Woman in White for online ebook

Fabian says

This is an obvious precursor to myriad crime dramas & the "sensationalist novel."

I found it long but very rewarding. 600+ pages of different POV's (a novel concept then, but now widely utilized); two concrete settings; only five main characters (perhaps not more than 15 in all)... and it is all choreographed so beautifully. The settings are spooky; the motives of characters, although well known from the very start and from the intense descriptions throughout, still manage to surprise. No matter that The Secret deals with money & family skeletons-in-the-closet... and a bunch of classicist stuff. All the elements I adore are here. It's Gothic, & the writer is like some British N. Hawthorne (Well at least I think so: and less like his peer, Charles Dickens*).

No matter that bad guys get what they deserve in the end... they arrive at oh so unconventional ends. Really! And the pacing is exactly what a serial novel of this magnitude would require it to endure. I kept at it... found it invigorating, elegant, and haunting.

*This was published in the middle of the 19th century, and along with one of Dicken's serialized masterpieces, this one also ran! Lucky short-living Londoners.

Bill Kerwin says

The only real flaw in this densely plotted page-turner of a novel is that in the end it slightly disappoints because it promises more than it delivers. It makes the reader fall in love with its plain but resourceful heroine Marian Halcombe, and teases us with the delightful prospect that she will become the principal agent bringing the villains to justice. When, in the middle of the novel, Marian tells her half-sister Laura that "our endurance must end, and our resistance begin," it seems like a groundbreaking feminist principle, and a little later Collins gives us the perfect metaphor for liberation when Marian divests herself of much of her cumbersome Victorian clothing so that she may safely climb out on a roof to eavesdrop on her enemies.

But--alas!--she is soaked by the rain, becomes ill, and--after having been removed to the ancient Gothic wing of the estate to recuperate--she returns to the plain woman's typical Victorian role of loyal sister and adoring aunt, allowing the returning hero Walter Hartwright to tie up the loose ends of the plot. Nevertheless, the intricate resolution is absorbing (even if the last hundred pages seem too crowded and rushed) and the ending (although perhaps too pat) is satisfying.

Oh, I almost forgot to mention Count Fosco! He is--particularly in Marian's grudgingly admiring description--one of the most fascinating and dangerous villains of all mystery fiction.

TJ says

This book is an amazing teaching tool. Not because it conveys any great lessons in life or exhibits profound

understanding and insight but because it so clearly delineates the beauty and differences in 19th century writing and 21st century writing.

The story is definitely very gothic and one of the best mysteries available. It is in the length of the story - most especially the length of the *writing* that will probably cause many readers to balk. The descriptions, the conversations, the ideas... virtually everything is pondered at length. Reading this in today's society, where TV, the internet, pictures, videos etc. etc. grant us instant understanding and gratification, can be a tedious and boring job. In order to truly appreciate Collins writing, one must put themselves in the shoes of a reader amid 19th century standards. Most people knew little of life outside their small communities. Few traveled or had experience with people and places beyond the immediate. Thus the *need* for long explanations and descriptions. It was the only door open for a reader to experience life beyond.

A perfect example would be the description of Count Fosco, a very large Italian man. His description was so intricate and detailed as to take pages (not paragraphs - *pages*.) To us, that description might seem never-ending. To one who had probably never seen, let alone known an Italian man - good or bad - it described one so perfectly that the reader (without our modern day photography) could picture him with ease.

Therefore, any accurate review of this book must allow for those differences. Readers who enjoy the beauty of the written word just for itself will absolutely revel in this story. Those who are more story driven will need to put on their patience caps to get through it. The story itself is immaculately well-done, it is dark without being terrifying, riveting without being graphic. It is just couched within a style long forgotten and truly appreciated.

Bookdragon Sean says

The Woman in White promises so much and delivers very little.

The first hundred pages of the book are gripping and intense. Wilkie Collins begins with an atmospheric mystery that is exciting and almost haunting. I really wanted to know all the secrets the story had to offer.

So even when the book began to grow a little dull around the middle I carried on reading because I hoped that the dryness would be worth it, my patience was bound to be rewarded. (I was so terribly mistaken.) The big reveal at the end is so ridiculously anti-climactic that I actually laughed. That's what I had been waiting for all this time?

For a book like this, one that is driven by the plot rather than the characters, it is such a major downfall. The real problem this story had is its pacing. There is simply too much middle where the story just doesn't go anywhere and the characters fret over the same facts but get no closer to understanding what any of it means. I grew bored of the endless speculation and marriage politics. I wanted something to happen beyond the seemingly endless conversation that held no substance.

And the entire situation was agony. It was just so frustrating! It simply did not need to happen whatsoever and was predictable to a fault. When you get into bed with a nasty person it's hardly surprising that your life turns to shit; yet, for the characters it came as a drastic shock. Wake up! Look at the real world! Surely, surely, nobody would be that stupid?

I gave up caring. It was a relief to finish.

°°°.°..°-°. _ . ????? Ροζουλ? Εωσφ?ρος . _ . °-°.° . °°° ★.· ^ .· ★ ?????? ???????
??????? Ταμετο?ρο Αμ says

«Η γυνά?κα με τα ?σπρα» γρ?φτηκε το 1850 και θεωρε?ται το πρ?το βαθι? αισθηματικ? λογοτεχνικ?
?ργο μυστηρ?ου και αγων?ας.

Ε?ναι ?νας θησαυρ?ς Βικτωριαν?ς κουλτο?ρας με ?ψογη και πρωτ?τυπη τεχνοτροπ?α γραφ?ς.

?ριστα δομημ?νοι χαρακτ?ρες, κοινωνικ?ς συνθ?κες και τρ?ποι συμπεριφορ?ς, κρυμμ?να κ?νητρα,
?θλιοι ?ρωες, ηθικ?ς, εκκεντρικ?ς και καθ?λου αφελε?ς ηρω?δες.

Αυτ? ε?ναι τα κ?ρια συστατικ? με τα οπο?α ο συγγραφ?ας ξεκιν?ει να διαμορφ?νει τη δημιουργ?α
του.

Η μεγαλοφυ?α και η ικαν?τητα του συντελο?ν στην εκπληκτικ? εξ?λιξη και πλοκ? προσ?πων και
γεγον?των για ?να αποτ?λεσμα που ανατρ?πεται συμπερασματικ? ως την τελευτα?α σελ?δα.

Δεν χρει?ζεται να φανταστε?ς τους χαρακτ?ρες, την οπτικ? τους παρουσ?α, τα ενδ?τερα
πνευματικ? και ψυχικ? τους στοιχε?α, ο?τε καν τους τ?πους, τα μ?ρη, τους χ?ρους που
διαδραματ?ζονται ?λα.

Η περιγραφικ? του π?να σου αποκαλ?πτει εξαιρετικ? και σε πραγματικ? χρ?νο ?,τι μπορε?ς ? δεν
μπορε?ς να φανταστε?ς.

Το στυλ του ξεκ?θαρο, σαφ?ς, συνοπτικ?, χωρ?ς υπερβολικ?ς καταγραφ?ς, ε?κολο και τρομερ?
ενδιαφ?ρον.

Προσελκ?ει εθιστικ? την αν?γνωση και τραβ?ει ?λο και πιο βαθι? σε αγων?α και απρ?σμενες
αποκαλ?ψεις απο το ?να κεφ?λαιο στο ?λλο.

Διατηρ?ντας παρ?λληλα χαρακτ?ρες και πλοκ? σε μια ουσιαστικ? ρο? χωρ?ς σ?γχυση.

Τα βικτωριαν? μυθιστορ?ματα φημ?ζονται για την εξ?λιξη των χαρακτ?ρων τους και το
συγκεκριμ?νο δεν αποτελε? εξε?ρεση, αποτελε? μια εκπληκτικ? πορε?α δρ?σης ?που τα φαιν?μενα
π?ντα απατο?ν και ανατρ?πουν δεδομ?να που ?σως να ?ταν αυτον?ητα.

Πολλο? αφηγητ?ς που π?ραν μ?ρος στην ιστορ?α μυστηρ?ου και αγ?πης εξιστορο?ν ο καθ?νας
απο την δικ? του οπτικ? γων?α πως β?ωσαν τις καταστ?σεις σε προσωπικ? και κοινωνικ? επ?πεδο.

Οι αφηγ?σεις τους δεν ε?ναι σε σωστ? χρονικ? σειρ? π?νω στην πραγματικ? ιστορ?α, μα ειναι
διαδοχικ?ς απο πρ?σωπο σε πρ?σωπο κι αυτ? ειναι ενα ακ?μη στοιχε?ο μη αναρρωτικ?ς αγων?ας.

?χουν περ?σει 168 χρ?νια απο τη στιγμ? που δημοσιε?τηκε κι ?μως, αυτ? το τερ?στιο χρονικ?
δι?στημα δεν ε?ναι πουθεν? αποτρεπικ?.

Η βικτωριαν? εποχ? ενισχ?ει τους σπουδα?ους χαρακτ?ρες οι οπο?οι με τη σειρ? τους ε?ναι τ?σο
πραγματικο? που μπα?νουν σε συγκριτικ? με ανθρ?πους της σημεριν?ς εποχ?ς.

Δεν θα αναφερθ? στην ιστορ?α του βιβλ?ου, αυτ? πρ?πει να το βι?σει ο κ?θε αναγν?στης ως
προσωπικ? εμπειρ?α.

Ωστ?σο απο τους ?ρωες ξεχ?ρισα και θα?μασα την προσωπικ?τητα του Κ?μη Φ?σκο.

Π?σο ιδιοφυ?ς πρ?πει να ε?σαι για να χτ?σεις ?ναν τ?τοιο πρωταγωνιστ?.

Ο Φ?σκο ε?ναι ?νας κακοποι?ς που αποτελε? μια απο τις πιο θαυμ?σιες λογοτεχνικ?ς δημιουργ?ες.

Μια μ?ζα αντιφ?σεων ουσιαστικ? και μεταφορικ?.

?νας ?ψογος ραδιο?ργος, αριστοκρατικ? τοποθετημ?νος στην αστικ? τ?ξη που τον ενισχ?ει σε κ?θε επιδ?ωξη του.

Ο Κ?μης Φ?σκο, ?νας ?νδρας με αξ?χαστη φυσιογνωμ?α, οξυμ?νη αντ?ληψη, πνευματ?δης, καταρτισμ?νος, θ?της ανηλε?ς και θ?μα ερωτικ?ς κρ?σης.

Βρ?σκεται π?ντα ενα β?μα μπροστ? απο τις εν?ργειες των ηρ?ων και φαινομενικ? μπορε? να ειναι δισυπ?στατος σε ψυχ? και σ?μα.

Ε?ναι ο κακ?ς που αγ?πησα, ο αδυσ?πητος και σκληρ?ς τυχοδι?κτης που λ?τρεψα. Πραγματικ? μ?χρι το τ?λος δεν κατ?φερα να τον μισ?σω ?σο κι αν προσπ?θησα.

Σε αντ?θεση με τους καλο?ς χαρακτ?ρες που με ?φησαν συναισθηματικ? αδι?φορη.

Σε ολ?κληρο το βιβλ?ο - δεν πα?ζει κανεναν απολ?τως ρ?λο ο ?γκος των σελ?δων - ξ?ρουμε πως συμβα?νει κ?τι πολ? κακ?... μα σε αντ?θεση με τα παραδοσιακ? μυστ?ρια των βιβλ?ων που αναζητ?με τον ?νοχο, εδ? ?ως το τ?λος ψ?χνουμε ?χι μ?νο το ποιος το ?κανε, μα και το «τι ?κανε».

?να διαβολικ? παραμ?θι με τραγικ?ς εξελ?ξεις που ακο?γεται απο δι?φορες και διαφορετικ?ς φων?ς.

Μια κλασικ? αναγνωστικ? εμπειρ?α, μια μαρτυρ?α χτισμ?νη με αγ?πη, φιλ?α, καλ?ς και κακ?ς οικογενειακ?ς σχ?σεις, τρ?μο, μυστ?ριο, προδοσ?α, ψυχολογικ? παιχν?δια, π?στη, συμπ?νοια και ?ντονη γοθικ? α?σθηση. Απ?λυτα ισορροπημ?να και εναλλασσ?μενα ?στε να μη φθε?ρονται μ?χρι τ?λους.

Το απ?λαυσα, το θα?μασα. Με αντ?μειψε, χαρ?ζοντας μου πολλ? περισσ?τερα απο ?,τι μπορε? να υποσχεθε? ?να μυθιστορημα.

Χρ?νια Πολλ?!!!

Καλ? αν?γνωση.

Πολλο?ς ασπασμο?ς.

Hannah Greendale says

[Click here to watch a video review of this book on my channel, *From Beginning to Bookend*.](#)

A mysterious tale spun by a writer with a penchant for drama and a lawyer's practicality. *The Woman in White* will tickle readers who enjoy books where the truth lies hidden beneath the biases of characters who deliver their version of the story through a first-person narrative.

Henry Avila says

Walter Hartright a struggling drawing teacher, is walking at midnight back to Victorian London after visiting his widowed mother and sister, at their cottage, in the suburbs to say goodbye, a quiet trip nobody around, the road empty everything's still, not even the leaves on the trees flicker in the blackness, nothing, only his moving steps are heard, thinking about a lucrative job in a faraway county of England, that he reluctantly took, (he has a bad feeling about) because his friend Professor Pesca, a dwarf from Italy arranged it. Shock, something touches him out of the darkness... a ghostly, sick looking woman, dressed all in white appears from the shadows, impossible, this creature cannot be real... it speaks. A story unfolds, a young woman with a secret put in an insane asylum, without being insane , a conspiracy to steal not only wealth but identity. Anne Catherick (*The Woman in White*), strangely resembles Laura Fairlie, one of two young ladies, Mr.Hartright has been hired by her rich, unsocial, invalid uncle Fredrick Fairlie, to teach watercolor painting, never mind that she and her half-sister Marian Halcombe, have no talent, they need something to pass the time. Laura is very pretty, her sister is very intelligent but plain, but both are devoted to each other, a lonely life at Limmeridge House, in Cumberland by the sea. Their uncle rarely sees them, quite fearful of his health, a sick hypochondriac, (kind of funny) not a man of feelings. A sudden love between Walter and Laura, ensues, the teacher and the student, but her older wiser sister Marian, doesn't approve, Laura is engaged to Sir Percival Glyde, 25 years her senior, a gentleman of seemingly good manners and taste, a baronet, who her late father insisted she marry (men could do that then). Mr.Hartright is forced to leave the premises early, later traveling to the jungles of Central America to forget, but doesn't, by Marian (a event that she greatly regrets soon, and Laura more so), his three month employment shortened to two, Mr.Fairlie is not happy, why the puzzled man thinks, can't people keep their promises anymore? The extremely obese, brilliant, and mysterious Count Fosco, an Italian nobleman he says, and good friend of Sir Percival, arrives with his wife, Eleanor, she is the icy aunt of Laura and sister of Uncle Frederick, without any family affections. The Count loves animals but isn't fond of people, his pets are his best friends, birds and white mice, he plays with, they adore him too. The Woman in White, sends an anonymous letter to the miserable, Miss Fairlie, the future bride , warning her that Glyde is not a good person. Anne is creeping about in the neighborhood, the Count and the Baronet are nervous , why? But the unhappy wedding day comes, between Laura and Percival, that nobody wants but Sir Percival, he has a motive, not love but wealth, she has money, he has none. Predictably the couple travel across Europe, see many fascinating things on their long honeymoon, and hate each other...Back in sweet England at the home of Sir Percival's, Blackwater Park, an appropriate name, for the estate, in need of repairs, the conspiracy goes forward, Laura and Marian are alone, to battle him and the Count and his faithful wife, Eleanor, the lurking Anne is still floating about, by the dismal lake, nearby, something has to give soon. A wonderful novel from long ago, quite a mystery to be unraveled and one of the first written, still a superb read for fans of the genre, make that great literature.

Jason says

DON'T READ THIS BOOK, unless you've got the patience, stamina, and requisite taste for a quintessential mid-Victorian novel. If you don't, you'll think *The Woman in White* is terribly overwrought and 500 pages too long. If you like Victorian writing, you'll think this is a well-drawn, balanced novel with characters to root for, characters to despise, a twisting plot that rolls up seamlessly, and narrated ingeniously from multiple points of view. If you're unsure whether you like or dislike Victorian writing, this book is an outstanding introductory choice, and it's one that I recommend unreservedly, to you and to my friends. Some facts in its

favor: it was considered the first English sensation novel of the psychological mystery genre, has been continuously in print for 150 years, has a 4+ star rating from over 5700 Goodread reviews, and was written by a guy named Wilkie.

The most prominent, intrinsic hurdle of *The Woman in White* is the writing. If you haven't had exposure to authors such as Charles Dickens, Henry James, Victor Hugo, the Bronte sisters, Oliver Wendell Holmes, then you haven't been tested by fire with the length and circuitousness of Victorian writing. It could take a page or paragraph to describe how a character moved. It's at once beautiful, savory, complete, and exact. However, readers may complain that it's simply unnecessary verbiage. I'll give you an example:

I waited where I was, to ascertain whether his object was to come to close quarters and speak, on this occasion. To my surprise, he passed on rapidly, without saying a word, without even looking up in my face as he went by. This was such a complete inversion of the course of proceeding which I had every reason to expect on his part, that my curiosity, or rather my suspicion, was aroused, and I determined, on my side, to keep him cautiously in view, and to discover what the business might be on which he was now employed. (p. 503)

This could be easily rewritten as: *I waited, but he passed me without a glance. His action surprised me, so I followed him to discover what his intentions were.* If this was, in fact, how it was written, then the story would be 200 pages and selling as a cheap, mass-market paperback best read on a beach vacation. No, we read novels like *The Woman in White* first and foremost because of the writing--the convoluted but balanced thought, the investigation of intent from multiple sides, the uber-descriptive narrative that doesn't rest. If your thoughts tend to regurgitate and grind on situations that occur to you throughout the day, then you understand and enjoy this type of lilted writing that revisits a topic over and over again.

I find myself rereading with amazement and pleasure the skill of word and sentence placement. I think with a smirk what it'd be like today if we talked like this to each other: *"Madame, may I question with all appropriate respect, &c, &c, if this book held betwixt my thumb and finger is, surely, the same novel as that penned by the indefatigable Wilkie Collins, esq., for if it is the veritable same, I intend with diligence, and without delay, at least delay on my part, not counting that which I may encounter on my ambulation home, to read immediately the book for which I inquire now, pray tell?* Fantastic--not my writing--but the idea that we English speakers once talked like this, and could again if we read nothing but Victorian novels. I'd like to try a couple months with language like this around and about town today.

My favorite character, by a whimper, was Mr. Fairlie. What a pansy. But, written so humorously, each time he entered a scene my reaction was, "Oh geez, what ailment now." Mr. Hartwright was a sleuthing superstar, and since he predates Sherlock Holmes, I see a lot of similarity between the two, and can't help but wonder if Sir Arthur Conan Doyle based his character on Mr Hartwright. The team of Count Fosco and Percival Glyde were deeply written and their greed, bombast, and evil were delectable to the last. If anyone has read *Pillars of the Earth* by Ken Follet, tell me if I'm wrong to see a striking similarity between Follet's evil duo and Collins' team of Fosco and Glyde. Follet's portrayal of greed and evil fell flat, whereas Collins left you silently rooting for Fosco's escape. There's a few small problems with *The Woman in White*, but they're perfectly Victorian, yet personal peeves. For example, can a woman swoon from bad news and take months to recover? Can a person die from a broken heart? Small issues in a such a tightly woven story.

The Woman in White is a great mystery that kept me turning pages. I award 5 stars to less than 10% of the books I read, and Wilkie Collins' met that rarified degree. I liked the good characters, disliked the bad ones,

and couldn't predict the ending until I got there; it's as simple as that.

Best lines about women:

1. *Women can resist a man's love, a man's fame, a man's personal appearance, and a man's money; but they cannot resist a man's tongue, when he knows how to talk to them.* Miriam's diary (p. 258)
2. *"Human ingenuity, my friend, has hitherto only discovered two ways in which a man can manage a woman. One way is to knock her down--a method largely adopted by the brutal lower orders of the people, but utterly abhorrent to the refined and educated classes above them. The other way (much longer, much more difficult, but, in the end, not less certain) is never to accept a provocation at a woman's hands. It holds with animals, it holds with children, and it holds with women, who are nothing but children grown up."* Evil Fosco (p.327)
3. *"Where, in the history of the world, has a man of my order ever been found without a woman in the background, self-immolated on the altar of his life?"* Evil Fosco (p. 629)

New words: frouzy, trumpery, glutinous

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

"Why are we to stop her, sir? What has she done?"

"Done! She has escaped from my Asylum. Don't forget: a woman in white. Drive on."

I loved, loved, loved the first bits of the book!

Oh yeah, there will be **SPOILERS** so stop right there!

.
. .
.

I loved Walter! I thought he was going to be in the whole book and that's where I started to get a might irritated. Anyhoo, so Walter gets a job instructing Miss Laura Fairlie and Miss Halcombe. I might mention that his employer, Mr. Fairlie, was a complete twat!

Oh well duh, on the road to his destination, Walter meets the woman in white. She's scared out of her wits but Walter does his best to calm her and they walk together.

We don't see much of the woman in white in the book. She puts in an appearance here and there.

So Walter gets to his place of employment where he is to live and teach the girls and other odd bits. And of course, he falls in love with the delicate Miss Fairlie. BUT. She is to be married to this twat named Sir Percival Glyde. Miss Halcombe tries to get her to end the engagement when they get an ominous letter from the woman in white warning about him. And then their solicitor is unhappy with the arrangement when said

hubby to be refuses for Miss Fairlie's (Laura) money to be willed to Marian (Miss Halcombe) and friends. And her twat father doesn't care. I swear I wanted to smack the hell out of people. And alas, she marries the jerk! Are you serious right now? You know he's going to kill you honey if you don't sign it over.

In the meantime, Walter was sent away by Marian which sucked. Laura had fallen in love with him too but went on with the other marriage. She was an idiot too. But I liked how it turned out in the end so there!

So here we go with the ladies at Laura's new home with a couple of other twats hanging around. The count and his wife. They needed a bullet to the head too.

We have a few more scenes with the woman in white, some more people needed smacking, a death, Walter back in the picture to take care of the twats, take care of the ladies, another death and some babies ?

I enjoyed the book even though I thought it could be shorter.

Happy Reading!

Mel ♥?

karen says

this is a weighty relic of a book. it's pretty enjoyable, just don't expect any surprises, unless you have missed the last 20 years of police procedurals on the television set. i'm sure in its day it was chock full of surprises, but i have to shudder at the contrivance of characters talking aloud to themselves while unknown to them, people hide in cupboards or whatnot, overhearing exactly the information they are most desirous of. it does make me yearn for these times when it seems pulling a con was child's play: no paper trails, no integrity of the postal service... so much trust.. so much weakness... in this society, i would be some kind of pirate queen, stealing identities at will, capturing heiresses, forging signatures.. and i would never, ever, make private, compromising, confessions in my chamber.

come to my blog!

Jeffrey Keeten says

“This is the story of what a Woman's patience can endure, and what a Man's resolution can achieve.”

Walter Hartright, his name is a tip off regarding his character, is walking down the street, his mind absorbed with his own problems, when suddenly:

”In one moment, every drop of blood in my body was brought to a stop by the touch of a hand laid lightly and suddenly on my shoulder from behind me. I turned on the instant, with my fingers tightening round the handle of my stick. There, in the middle of the broad, bright high-road – there, as if it had that moment sprung out of the earth or dropped from the heaven – stood the figure of a

solitary woman, dressed from head to foot in white garments, her face bent in grave inquiry on mine, her hand pointing to the dark cloud over London, as I faced her. I was far too seriously startled by the suddenness with which this extraordinary apparition stood before me, in the dead of night and in that lonely place, to ask what she wanted. The strange woman spoke first.

‘Is that the road to London?’”

A damsel in distress is irresistible to most men, but impossible to ignore for men of good character. Hartright is still reeling from her ghostly appearance out of the gloom and dark of night, made more dramatic by her pale apparel. Before he can assemble his thoughts, she is in a carriage being spirited away. Men appear quickly behind her, whom he soon learns are chasing her. Hartright makes every effort to catch up with her to offer her further assistance, but does not find her.

”She has escaped from my asylum.”

Hartright is left with a mystery, but will soon discover that this mystery will become an obsession as the woman in white proves inexplicably to be tied to the woman he will fall in love with. He takes a job as a drawing master, instructing two half sisters as different as night and day. One is fair, and one is dark. One is pretty, and one is...well...unattractive. The word ugly is actually used, but once I learn of Marian Halcombe’s character, it is impossible to associate such a hideous word to such a lovely person.

Marian is brave, brilliant, and resourceful. In my opinion, one of the most interesting and fascinating women to appear in a Victorian novel. She becomes the pillar of strength for her sister, as well as for Hartright, as they are inescapably bound together against the machinations of men intent upon their destruction. Marian, we soon learn, can hold her own. **“Any woman who is sure of her own wits, is a match, at any time, for a man who is not sure of his own temper.”**

Hartright, of course, falls in love with Laura Fairlie, the fair and beautiful one, an heiress, an orphan, a woman in need of protecting. Unfortunately, fate has conspired against them. She is promised to another one, the odious Sir Percival Glyde. Glyde is in serious financial trouble and needs her fortune to keep his creditors from dismantling his estate brick by brick. His closest friend is an Italian named Count Fosco, who conspires with him in a most insidious plot to take everything from Laura including, quite possibly, her own life.

Count “Never Missed a Meal” Fosco

I am a bit disappointed in Hartright. Laura is certainly in need of a white knight, but Marian would have been a woman to build a life with. He does love and respect Marian, but never sees her as a potential mate, even after he discovers that Laura will soon be unattainable. It is only a small disappointment. We all see ourselves from a very young age married to someone beautiful or handsome. Hartright, whose heart is always in the right place, is attracted to Laura’s beauty, but also to her vulnerability. Marian is neither pretty nor is she helpless.

The twist and turns to the plot are wonderfully revealed. This is considered one of the first detective novels as Hartright does apply investigative methods to his research while attempting to thwart the plans of Glyde and Fosco. Wilkie Collins’s background in studying the law also becomes readily apparent at different stages of the novel. The writing style is true Victorian style. I must caution you: if you are not a fan of Charles Dickens or Anthony Trollope, you might find this novel difficult.

I read the book mostly late at night with the fireplace crackling and popping next to me. The wind has been blowing steadily the last few days, and as it moved along the gutters and through the bushes outside my window, it created sounds that made me snuggle deeper into my reading chair and feel as much as possible as if I were in England in the 1850s.

Collins does explore the idea of women's rights. The law does not protect their rights in near the same fashion that it protects a man's rights. A woman truly had to live by her wits to keep from being marginalized by the complete and nearly unassailable power of her husband or her father. Marian was a match for any man, but she needed much more than her intelligence to outflank the injustice and the discrimination under which she was forced to live.

Collins was a bohemian who did not believe in marriage. He had no qualms about living with more than one lover at once. I'm sure Dickens marvelled at his ability to pull off this feat in such a conservative time period. They were good friends, Dickens and Collins, but there was a break in their friendship towards the end of Dickens' life when he was working on the novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, "his last and unfinished novel, with its running and hostile allusion to Collins' *The Moonstone*." I can't think that Dickens was jealous. He was the champion among writers at the time. Collins fell out of favor over time while Dickens' books soared. Only recently has Collins started to be regarded as one of the important Victorian writers.

The Dickens Family (and friends) in 1864 - (l-r) Charles Dickens, Jr., Kate Dickens, Charles Dickens, Miss Hogarth, Mary Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Georgina Hogarth

The Woman in White, as promised, does return to the plot, but you'll have to read the book to discover exactly who she is, why she dresses in white, and what she has to do with the goings on at Limmeridge House? It is a chilling tale that must have elicited more than one gasp from the lips of Victorian women, young and old, as they discovered the truth behind the lies.

I must go now: **"My hour for tea is half-past five, and my buttered toast waits for nobody."**

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

Dem says

What took me so long to read this wonderful suspenseful and well written classic? I rarely read mysteries and I was really surprised to find that a book first published in 1859 could be so chilling and mysterious and be as fresh and exciting today as it was in 1859

I started reading the book as part of a group read and the idea was to read the novel as it was originally published in weekly serial format and while I did try to stick with the rules I am afraid my curiosity and willpower got the better of me and I just could not put down this compelling and extremely well written mystery. So my apologies to the group for not sticking with the format of reading but grateful for the push to read a book that I might otherwise have missed out on.

" *A mysterious figure, a woman in white, appears out of nowhere on a London street at midnight running*

away from someone or something and in a distressed state, she meets Walter Hartright, an a teacher of Art and little does he know but this mysterious lady will haunt him and change the course of his life.

Manor Houses, ghostly figures by gravesides, mysterious letters and asylums and devious characters are what make this such a compelling read. The story is narrated by several different characters, all portraying their their own experiences. The book is just under 700 pages and is quite a read and yet the pacing and plot development is extremely well thought out. I downloaded the book on my kindle but was informed by a friend that there existed an absolutely amazing audio version narrated by Josephine Bailey and Simon Prebble and while I was skeptical that my interest could be sustained for over 25 hours decided to download the Audio as well and was pleasantly surprised by how much I enjoyed the production and the fact that I was able to read and listen really added to the the overall enjoyment of this book. My only regret is my lack of discipline to read this one over the period of weeks as per the reading groups instructions.

A great book for readers who enjoy classics or Victorian mysteries with terrific plot lines with well developed characters and a little romance with good old fashioned twists and turns.

Jeff says

A buddy read on the side with the Non-crunchers – hold the pants.

Hark! This book is over 150 years old, but, still, spoilers be us.

- Selling English by the pound.

This book has a lot going for it – a well-wrought plot, humor, some of literatures more enduring characters (Marian, Fosco, crazy Uncle Frederick), but it could have been cut down by a third and been one fine-tuned literary machine. I understand the book was serialized and that Wilkie Collins was probably being paid a tuppence-per-word and was best buds with the great Charles Dickens, who was a prodigious author in his own write (heh!), but, sir, you are no Stephen King, you should have trimmed this puppy down.

- The woman in white

Although Collins doesn't give her a lot of page time, her presence permeates the book like that uncle of yours that slathers on Brut. He might be in another room, but you know he's still on the premises – somewhere.

This book was written as a series of first person entries by a number of characters and divided into three epochs.

- Epoch the first

Walter Hartright, is a sieve as a character and an artist, who lands a gig teaching art (of all things) to a pair of sisters. He falls in love with the cute, vapid one and despite some of the most achingly emo-boy prose you'll ever read, has to keep it in his pants, because the cute, vapid one is betrothed to another. So he runs away to Central America where he sends her lots of sketches of what looks like a Honduran anaconda jumping out of a bush.

- Epoch the second

I love Marian Halcombe, she's smart, she's got spunk, she'll stand up for her family and friends, she's got a fine bod, but Collins went ahead and gave her a face only a depraved, corpulent, balding, old, sociopathic, Italian Count (Fosco) would love. Plus, she apologizes for being a woman in Victorian society about 1.5 times for page:

If I wasn't a woman, I'd cut that bitch, Countess Fosco.

If I wasn't a woman, I'd kick Sir Perceval in the family jewels.

If I wasn't a woman, I'd get stinking drunk and jump the gardener (or the maid).

- Epoch the third

This is an olde type book so you won't find a trail of bodies or Walter Hartright going ninja or a gangsta turf war, but it plays out in satisfactory way. So if you love the classics and haven't gotten around to this one, I'd recommend it.

Grace Tjan says

Beware of spoilers!

What I learned from this book (in no particular order) :

1. Italians are excitable, dedicated to the opera, and most likely to be involved with organized crime.
2. Beware of fat, jolly Italian counts with submissive wives and fondness of white mice and canaries.
3. Watch out if your newly wed husband lives in a stately pile with an abandoned wing full of creepy Elizabethan furniture. If the said ancestral house is surrounded by dark ponds and eerie woods, expect the worst.
4. A Baronet is not always noble, and his impressive manor and estate might be mortgaged to the hilt. Instead of being the lady of the house, you might be forced to pay HIS debts. Make sure that the marriage

settlement is settled in your favor before marrying.

5. Never marry for convenience or enter into any legal agreement when you are:

- a. under age;
- b. sentimental and easily persuadable;
- c. prone to swooning and fainting.

6. Intelligent, resourceful women are likely to be mannish, and even actually HAVE a mustache, but are strong and have good figures. They can also be relied on to provide intelligent conversation when your beautiful but fragile wives are too busy swooning.

7. Shutting yourself up in a medieval vestry full of combustible materials with a candle for lighting is NOT advisable. Always have your minions do the dirty work.

8. Being 'feeble in mind' is enough reason to get you committed into an asylum for the mentally ill. So is knowing some secret that you might accidentally blurt out to strangers.

9. You CAN marry someone who is legally dead. Nobody bothered to check the civil registry records in those good old days.

10. A ménage a trois is fun, but you have to marry at least ONE of them first to preserve Victorian propriety.

Postscript

Lately, I have received several personal messages that accused me, based on point#1 in my review above, of being prejudiced toward Italians --- something which couldn't be further from the truth. For those who hold such view, I would like to point out that my review is a parody which involves humorous, satiric or ironic imitations of the plot, characters or point of views set forth in the novel. The "This is what I learned" heading is a part of the whole exercise, and does not mean that I personally subscribe to the points enumerated therein. Obviously, I don't believe that "intelligent, resourceful women are likely to be mannish, and even actually HAVE a mustache" (point 6) or that "being 'feeble in mind' is enough reason to get you committed into an asylum for the mentally ill" (point 8) --- just as I don't believe that "Italians are excitable, dedicated to the opera, and most likely to be involved with organized crime".

I'm aware that my sense of humor is not to everyone's taste, but it has never been my intention to denigrate Italians or any other ethnic groups in this review (or any other review of mine).

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

"I am thinking," he remarked quietly, "whether I shall add to the disorder in this room by scattering your brains about the fireplace."

Written in 1859-60 by William "Wilkie" Collins and originally published in serial form in Charles Dickens' magazine (Wilkie and Charles were good friends), *The Woman in White* is considered one of the earliest

examples of detective fiction, though it's really just the better part of the second half of this book that has any real detecting going on. Before that you have to wade through star-crossed love and the heroine acting all self-sacrificing (<---very bad idea, at least in this case). There's quite a bit of Victorian melodrama and some eyebrow-raising coincidences, but also some unforgettable characters and some intense suspense in the second half.

Walter Hartright -- note the noble name -- is a young art teacher. One night he helps a distressed lady dressed in white, who was wandering down the street, find a cab.

After she's gone, a couple of men chasing her tell Walter that she's escaped from an asylum. Oops! But the lady in white will soon affect his life more than he can know...

Walter takes a job for a few months teaching art to a couple of gently bred young ladies, Laura Fairlie and Marian Halcombe. Laura is lovely, quiet and timid (and also, BTW, bears a startling resemblance to the mysterious woman in white); Marian has a singularly unattractive face but a charming, outgoing personality. Guess which one Walter falls for? And Laura loves him too, though they never speak of it, except to Marian.

some spoilers below for the first half of the book

But Laura is an heiress, out of Walter's class, and she's also engaged to a older baronet, as arranged by her family, so she and Walter sadly part ways. He goes on an expedition to South America to let time, distance and adventure heal his wounded heart. She marries her baronet, Sir Percival Glyde, figuring, I guess, that she might as well, and he's always been kind to her.

After the marriage -- which quickly goes south since Glyde only married Laura for her money, and has no interest in being nice to her once they're married -- strange things start to happen. Glyde wants Laura to sign papers (she still has control of her fortune) but won't show her what she's signing, hiding everything except the line where she's supposed to sign. Even in Victorian times, that's pretty alarming for the lady involved.

Marian, who's living with Laura and Sir Percival, is very concerned for the fragile Laura's wellbeing. And she deeply mistrusts Percival and his other houseguests, the huge, urbane Count Fosco, who acts all affable but has a dangerous glint in his eyes, and his subservient wife, who stands to inherit a chunk of money if Laura dies.

Count Fosco

Things get more complicated from there, but I don't want to spoil it. The actual mystery is a little unlikely but it's an intriguing read. The novel had a few parts that were long-winded and/or sentimental in that distinctively Victorian kind of way, and (also typical of older books) there are a lot of stereotypes. For instance, the women tend to faint or get ill rather than be tough and useful, although Marian is generally an exception to that rule. But the story really sucked me in the further I got into it. Marian and Count Fosco are truly unique and memorable characters. Identity is a recurring theme, for the villains as well as some of the main characters, as are hidden secrets.

I especially liked the quasi-investigative structure of the novel, with narration by multiple characters, each with his or her own distinctive voice and point of view. The kind-hearted, loyal Walter; Marian, writing in her diary; Laura's whiny invalid uncle, who just wants to be left alone and is of no help to Laura in her trials; the prideful Count Fosco, weaving his plans; a couple of servants: all of them get their turn explaining their part of the events in this book. I thought that was really well done. As a lawyer, I found the lawyer's description of marriage settlements particularly interesting, along with the negotiations between him (acting for Laura) and Sir Percival's lawyer. And when he says, and then repeats, "No daughter of mine should have been married to any man alive under such a settlement as I was compelled to make for Laura Fairlie," it was a chilling moment.

Another Uncle Fairlie fail

Wilkie also has a sense of humor, which pops out occasionally. Walter describes Mrs. Vesey, Laura's former governess, so:

Some of us rush through life, and some of us saunter through life. Mrs. Vesey sat through life... A mild, a compliant, an unutterably tranquil and harmless old lady, who never by any chance suggested the idea that she had been actually alive since the hour of her birth. Nature has so much to do in this world, and is engaged in generating such a vast variety of co-existent productions, that she must surely be now and then too flurried and confused to distinguish between the different processes that she is carrying on at the same time. Starting from this point of view, it will always remain my private persuasion that Nature was absorbed in making cabbages when Mrs. Vesey was born, and that the good lady suffered the consequences of a vegetable preoccupation in the mind of the Mother of us all.

March 2016 buddy read with the Non-crunchy Cool Classics Pantsless group. Most of the group begged off - they seem to have some sort of aversion to 600+ page Victorian mysteries -- but Evgeny, Jeff, Stepheny and maybe one or two others made it through the whole thing with me. Yay team!

Period illustrations are from early editions of *The Woman in White*.
