<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Text</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two</td>
<td>Without being actually a dwarf…</td>
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<td>Chapter Three</td>
<td>‘I said,’ persisted Pesca…</td>
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<td>We declared that we were deeply interested.</td>
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<td>My mother rose the moment he had done…</td>
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<td>Neither my mother’s evident astonishment…</td>
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<td>Chapter Four</td>
<td>‘Did you hear me?’ she said…</td>
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<td>We set our faces towards London…</td>
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<td>She seemed about to say more…</td>
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<td>Chapter Five</td>
<td>These odd words of welcome…</td>
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<td>She had run on thus far…</td>
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<td>Chapter Seven</td>
<td>On approaching nearer to him…</td>
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<td>I rang; and a new servant noiselessly…</td>
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<td></td>
<td>He pointed to the picture of the Madonna…</td>
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Chapter Eight
She took up a parasol lying on a chair…
Does my poor portrait of her…
She made the confession very prettily…
We had been out nearly three hours…
We all sat silent in the places we had chosen…
As the last sentence fell from the reader’s lips…
Miss Halcombe paused, and looked at me…

Chapter Nine
The evenings which followed the sketching…
I shrank then – I shrink still…

Chapter Ten
Mr. Hartright,’ she said…
The pang passed, and nothing but the dull…
Before I could assure her that she might…

Chapter Eleven
She gave me the letter.
There the extraordinary letter ended…
‘If we are to find out anything,’ I said…

Chapter Twelve
She then put the same question…

Although Miss Halcombe did not seem…

‘I need go no farther with you…’

Just as she was leaving me again…

Chapter Thirteen

While these ideas were passing…

I shuddered at the thought.

‘Yes, yes, you did help me indeed…’

‘I don’t understand you,’ she said…

‘Oh, if I could die, and be hidden…’

The scream had reached other ears…

Chapter Fourteen

The servant returned with a message…

I had fully expected to be left alone…

‘I should like to account first, Miss Halcombe…’

Chapter Fifteen

I turned instinctively to the walk…

‘So far as it is possible to decide…’

We got through the dinner…

The rest of the evening passed…
She left the room.

**THE STORY CONTINUED BY VINCENT GILMORE**

I might, perhaps, have been a little…

I was the first to speak in answer…

‘Certainly not,’ replied Miss Halcombe.

**Chapter Two**

‘No man could say more than that…’

The next morning, as soon as breakfast…

Under other circumstances I might…

I led her at once into speaking…

**Chapter Three**

So much for the landed property…

At the time when Miss Halcombe’s letter…

I threw the letter away in disgust.

In the case of any other client…

**Chapter Four**

Mr. Fairlie shook the silver smelling-bottle…

**THE STORY CONTINUED BY MARIAN HALCOMBE**

‘I shall lower myself, indeed…’

November 9th. The first event…
His attentive face relaxed a little.

I was determined to make him declare…

‘May she not give it in the future…’

I tried vainly to soothe her…

Before I close my diary for to-night…

November 13th. A sleepless night…

Chapter Two

But I did say more.

It is burnt. The ashes of his farewell letter…

December 1st. A sad, sad day…

Sir Percival is to arrive to-morrow.

‘You found, of course, that they had heard…’

My pen is running away into…

The rest of the day is indescribable.

THE SECOND EPOCH – THE STORY CONTINUED

BY MARIAN HALCOMBE

Reading is out of the question…

So much for the persons and events…

Twelve o’clock has struck…

Daylight confirmed the impression…

Finding no one in the hall…
‘I am rather interested about Mrs. Catherick…’

Chapter Two

Oh, Marian!’ she said…

Most men show something…

And the magician who has wrought this…

His manner and his command…

‘Mind that dog, sir,’ said the groom…

Sir Percival either knows little…

Chapter Three

On leaving the house we directed…

There was no mistaking his manner…

‘And why not,’ asked the Count…

‘It is truly wonderful,’ he said…

‘Miss Halcombe is unanswerable…’

Sir Percival had paid no attention…

The motive of the Count’s interference…

Chapter Four

Sir Percival looked at me sharply…

I had not spoken hitherto…

This unfortunate, yet most natural…
Sir Percival hesitated and looked…
She sighed bitterly. I saw in her face…
‘Afraid of him, after his interference…’
Chapter Five
What answer could I make?
As she said those melancholy words…
I had caught her in my arms…
I waited a moment to give her…
Chapter Six
‘I beg your pardon,’ I said…
‘Surely. But my little feathered children…’
I was just composing myself…
I saw him for the third time in a wrecked…
Her voice rose as the tumult of her…
‘I am afraid she was hurt by it.’
‘You tried to make her go on?’
‘Are you quite sure you have told me…’
When I joined Laura again…
While the aspect under which Sir Percival…
Chapter Seven
After skirting round by the back…

After soothing the poor girl…

Sir Percival crumpled up the paper in his hand…

‘You dropped this downstairs…’

‘After reading it once through,’ she replied…

‘What can we do, Marian?’

Chapter Eight

‘Most assuredly,’ said the Count’s quiet voice…

The letter to Mr. Fairlie occupied me next.

I was a little doubtful how she would meet…

When I got back to the house I had only…

These considerations occurred to me…

He had detained me in the drawing-room…

Chapter Nine

I had heard the Count say…

No sound reached my ears…

That sentence of the Count’s…

It was well for me that the Count’s…

The Count moved from the verandah…

‘Look here, Fosco, you and I have known…’
The light disappeared again…

‘Yes. I have been to her mother…’

How short a time, and yet how long to me…

POSTSCRIPT BY A SINCERE FRIEND

THE STORY CONTINUED BY FREDERICK FAIRLIE

Let me do the girl justice.

I must really rest a little before…

‘I should feel very much obliged to you, sir…’

I have mentioned that my usual course…

Is it necessary to say what my first…

I thought this very convincing and attentive…

When I heard the word fever, and when I…

He had said so much already…

He waved his horrid hand at me…

THE STORY CONTINUED BY ELIZA MICHELSON

Sir Percival was not civil enough…

To resume. The night passed as usual…

At the Count’s particular suggestion…

Remembering Mr. Dawson’s caution to me…

In the course of the next few days…
Before Mr. Dawson could answer…

On the tenth day it pleased a merciful…

I listened to him, perfectly aghast…

**Chapter Two**

Before I left I took care to satisfy myself…

I found that her ladyship had certainly…

His manner all through this strange…

‘Pray don’t write to Count Fosco…’

I thought it right, at this point…

At the time named the chaise drew up…

On turning the corner of the house…

Mrs Rubelle, whom I had indicated…

I had hardly walked half-way towards…

He came punctually, and I found cause…

I need write no particulars…

**THE STORY CONTINUED IN SEVERAL NARRATIVES –**

**Chapter One – THE NARRATIVE OF HESTER PINHORN**

Towards night-time the lady roused up…

‘Your master is a foreigner…’

**Chapter Two – THE NARRATIVE OF THE DOCTOR**

**Chapter Three – THE NARRATIVE OF JANE GOULD**
Chapter Four – THE NARRATIVE OF THE TOMBSTONE

It was the morning of the third day…

Time had flowed on, and silence had fallen…

THE THIRD EPOCH – THE STORY CONTINUED
BY WALTER HARTRIGHT

In the eye of reason and of law…

Chapter Two
On the day of the funeral…

Although Count Fosco’s letter to Mr. Fairlie…

On inquiry, it turned out that the supposed…

The nurse was there.

Lady Glyde’s recollection of the events…

From this point her recollections were found…

The scene that followed…

Chapter Three
The house-work, which, if we had dared…

The only events of former days…

The first source of information to which…

There was time enough in the morning…

Chapter Four
‘Do you believe that I have spoken the truth…’
I was obliged to wait and collect myself…
I considered. The housekeeper could not…
I looked at the letter while he was speaking…
The note contained these lines…
‘You mean,’ said Marian, ‘the discovery…’

Chapter Five
While we were speaking together…
The first difficulty then was to find…

Chapter Six
Mrs. Clements did all in her power…
Anne was asleep when they got there.

Chapter Seven
‘With Catherick, sir – not with his wife.’
‘So we thought at first, sir.’
‘What became of Sir Percival?’ I inquired.
Reasoning on these assumptions…
I noted down Major Donthorne’s name…
The time was passing, the morning was…

Chapter Eight
Am I trifling, here, with the necessities… 5:09
‘Remember what anxious hearts you leave…’ 5:16
‘Say, if you please, that my business…’ 5:01
She searched in the pocket of her gown… 6:46
She started up with the activity of a… 4:05
She started to her feet, and came close… 5:17

Chapter Nine
The vestry of Old Welmingham church… 5:43
As I moved away from the back of the church… 0:34
Neither he nor his companion attempted… 5:33
‘We might be tidier, mightn’t we, sir?’ 6:08
The clerk put on his spectacles… 4:20
‘Did you not tell me your former master…’ 4:19

Chapter Ten
My indignation, I may almost say… 5:09
He was a jovial, red-faced, easy-looking man… 5:19
The paltry means by which the fraud… 5:32
The two unhurt men pursued me. 5:04
With that answer he retraced his steps. 5:54
The thought half maddened me. 5:19
Chapter Eleven

The course that I was myself bound to take...

The inquest was adjourned over one day...

As I left the place, my thoughts turned...

THE STORY CONTINUED BY MRS CATHERICK

But for one consideration he might have...

The first words I said to him...

Now and then I got away and changed...

His first words, and the tone in which...

She may have said the same thing to you...

THE STORY CONTINUED BY WALTER HARTRIGHT

The London solicitor of the deceased...

Chapter Two

‘No, they were talking together as if…’

‘It is hard to acknowledge it, Walter..’

I saw that she was thinking of him now...

His name was mentioned among us no more.

After a lapse of two days proof came...

The mention here of Mrs. Fairlie’s name...
Chapter Three

281 The more I thought of our position...
282 ‘No. I have thought about it too…’
283 ‘Do you fear failure yourself, Walter?’

Chapter Four

286 The considerations thus presented to me...
287 Before I summoned Pesca to my assistance...
288 I crossed the road, and looked...
289 The curtain fell on the first act...
290 The moment he showed himself...
291 I saw that the effort of expressing himself...
292 ‘So far,’ he resumed, ‘you think the society…’
293 ‘I promised you that this confidence…’

Chapter Six

295 I signed and dated these lines...
296 Marian was at the stairhead waiting for me.

Chapter Seven

298 ‘I can do better than that,’ I replied.
299 ‘I decline to tell you.’
300 ‘Good! You have mentioned your terms…’
‘I accept your conditions,’ I said.  
He dipped his pen in the ink…  
Knowing as well as he did…  
‘Mr. Hartright – Monsieur Rubelle.’  
THE STORY CONTINUED BY ISIDOR OTTAVIO BALDASSARE FOSCO  
The situation at this period was emphatically…  
The best years of my life have been…  
Having suggested to Mrs. Clement…  
I had myself previously recommended…  
The next morning my wife and I…  
I had written a note in the morning…  
I took my visitor upstairs into a back room…  
At the ripe age of sixty, I make this…  
THE STORY CONCLUDED BY WALTER HARTRIGHT  
I now had in my possession all the papers…  
I occupied the interval day at the farm…  
Mr. Kyrle rose when I resumed my seat…  
Chapter Two  
Approaching Notre Dame by the river-side…  
Chapter Three

Total time: 28:01:31
Wilkie Collins

The Woman in White

A dark and humid night on a London highway... a hand on a shoulder... a ghostly woman asking directions... and the reader is away on a tale of deceit, murder, nightmares, bigamy, madness, stolen identities and scheming cads, elaborate plots and outrageous coincidences, lost love and redemptive happiness, in the company of some of the most extraordinary characters in fiction.

The Woman in White is regarded as one of the first (and probably the best) of the ‘Sensation’ novels of the mid-nineteenth century, books which told stories that were inspired by a combination of the reassuringly believable and the terrifyingly unlikely. For Wilkie Collins (1824–1829), the combination was ideal – it gave him a chance to discuss some of his particular concerns in a manner that had the audience almost literally baying for more when it was serialised; and it allowed him the licence to sensationalise a matter that was a genuine concern at the time.

There had been a case in France some fifty years earlier, and reported in a book that Collins picked up in Paris in 1856, that formed the basis for much of the plot of The Woman in White; but there was also a scare in England at the time about the possibility that husbands would lock their wives away in asylums for the financial gain their incarceration would bring about. The issue was so much of a concern that Parliament established a committee to look into it, and given the atmosphere of the time – which was much the same as it always is; the public ever on the look-out for the latest reason to be scared out of its wits and keen to be terrified and intrigued by fictional variations – it was no surprise that writers thought there was mileage in it. Collins was also in the position of knowing someone who, after a very public falling out, had actually had his wife forcibly incarcerated (Bulwer-Lytton, the writer and politician who coined two phrases that writers everywhere recognise
as ennobling their profession – ‘The pen is mightier than the sword’ – and deflating any pretension that believing it might entail – ‘It was a dark and stormy night’. The wife was released and spent much of the rest of her life continuing her attacks upon him. So while the newspapers and novels of the time were alive with this paranoia, depending as it does on the impossible definitions of sanity and who determines them, Collins was personally involved in it. As a result, when he was asked for a new story to be serialised in Charles Dickens’s magazine *All the Year Round*, he realised he could use the Parisian case he had read about, his personal experience, and the growing desire for freakish insanity-based thrills that seemed to be taking over the nation at the time to create a sensation. And he did. The serial was wildly popular, the book followed shortly afterwards, and there were pirated and legitimate theatrical versions almost immediately, as well as a satisfyingly wide range of associated merchandise (you could get *Woman in White* shawls, perfumes, hats and even dances) that just goes to prove how little tastes have changed.

Collins was a typical figure of his time in some ways, unconventional in others. He was fired by an energy that created nearly thirty novels, fifty short stories, a dozen plays, non-fiction work and more. He was a good friend of Charles Dickens, who published his works in serial form and almost certainly helped him develop his style. He never married, but had an extraordinarily complex life with a widow, Caroline Graves, with whom he lived until she married someone else. At that point he began having children with his mistress, Martha Rudd, until Caroline Graves returned two years later. The three of them seem to have reached some sort of accommodation, with Caroline Graves being effectively his wife, and Martha remaining the mistress and mother of his children. Caroline Graves is buried beside him. Collins also suffered acute pains that he treated with laudanum (a mixture of alcohol and opium, readily available over the counter with such trade names as ‘Mother’s Quietness’). As a result, he became quite well-versed in narcotics and their effects; and he became an addict, suffering paranoid delusions and
being convinced he was being followed by a ghostly double. It seems hardly coincidental that so many of his works feature delusions or apparitions or drugs and their effects – works such as *The Woman in White*.

The book is a Gothic thriller, a detective story and a romance, and in many ways the forerunner of current detective fiction. Rather than set the tale in an imaginary or distant country, it places the action – and the threat – firmly in suburbia, bringing the horror-show of the Gothic into the back-gardens of the readers. This is one of the ways that Collins makes the story more immediate to his readers; but the other is in the narrative style. Rather than have an omniscient narrator telling the tale from an objective position above the action, Collins lets each of the major players have his or her say in their own narrative. In one sense this was a technique as old as the novel in Europe (which had grown out of the epistolary style, in which the action is described in letters from the protagonists), but it was a fresh variation, and the directness of the first-person narrative takes the reader straight into the heart of the teller’s story. What was more, Collins’s great inspiration was not just for elaborate plots but for memorable characters. *The Woman in White* is peopled with brilliant creations and wonderful names: the sly and evil Sir Percival Glyde; the preposterously magnificent Count Fosco; the effete invalid Frederick Fairlie; the supremely self-righteous Mrs Catherick; even the tiny character of Hester Pinhorn seems to be more fully realised than the heroes of smaller imaginations. And in Marian Halcombe he created someone forthright, strong, self-willed – and ugly, with a moustache. This is something rather beyond what might be expected of a typical Victorian heroine, and she comes out of it rather better than the passive, wilting Laura, who boasts all the usual womanly charms.

But there is also – beyond the concerns about locking perfectly sane people up for the money – a quietly serious undertow throughout the book. At almost every turn, the hero is presented with a certainty that there has been a grievous wrong done; and each time even the
most sympathetic of lawyers is incapable of helping him. He is faced with a choice: follow the law and fail for lack of funds or evidence; or follow his instinct – even to the point of criminality – in order to reveal the truth. Collins had trained as a lawyer, and while he was by no means alone in feeling that the system needed reform, he pointedly explains on several occasions how the legal profession is unable to help those who clearly deserve it. This was not his only attempt at reform – many of his later works would include similar concerns, and he began to lose his enormous popular appeal as the issues became more important to him than the stories (Swinburne said: ‘What brought good Wilkie’s genius nigh perdition?/ Some demon whispered – ‘Wilkie! have a mission’). But in 1860, although social concerns were prompting public interest in the themes of The Woman in White, it was Wilkie Collins’s acute ear for a thrilling tale that made it into one of the most popular novels of its time and since.

Notes by Roy McMillan

Cast in order of appearance

**Glen McCready:** Walter Hartright  
**Hugh Dickson:** Vincent Gilmore and Frederick Fairlie  
**Rachel Bavidge:** Marian Halcombe  
**Marie Collett:** Eliza Michelson and The Tombstone  
**Teresa Gallagher:** Hester Pinhorn, Mrs Catherick and Jane Gould  
**Allan Corduner:** Count Fosco and The Doctor

Rachel Bavidge was born in North Shields in Tyneside and moved to Oxford in her early teens. She has narrated numerous audio books and has just completed six months as a member of the BBC Radio Drama Company. Theatre credits include Mrs Boyle in *Whose Life is it Anyway?* (West End) and Margaret in *Much Ado* (Theatre Royal, Bath) both directed by Peter Hall. TV includes *The Bill, Casualty, Doctors, The IT Crowd, Inspector Lynley, Wire in the Blood*, and *Bad Girls*. 
Hugh Dickson is a former member of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the BBC Radio Drama Company. He has specialised in verse-speaking, working with many leading poets on radio, platform and recordings. Stage appearances include Escalus in Measure for Measure and Prof Riley in Shadowlands. Radio work includes Camillo in The Winter’s Tale and Guy Crouchback in Sword of Honour. He has also read the part of the Archbishop in Henry V and the part of Lucretius in The Rape of Lucrece for Naxos AudioBooks.

Teresa Gallagher has performed in many leading roles in both plays and musicals across the country, London’s West End and Broadway. In addition, she is a well-known voice to listeners of BBC Radio Drama. Her work on film includes The Misadventures of Margaret and Mike Leigh’s Topsy Turvy. For Naxos AudioBooks she has recorded the Biography of Jane Austen and selections from The Decameron by Boccaccio. She has also read Classic Women’s Short Stories, Heidi, The Treasure Seekers, The Wouldbegoods, The Story of Jesus, Thailand from after the quake, and Little Lord Fauntleroy.
Allan Corduner’s distinguished acting career spans over 30 years. He is currently filming Defiance with Daniel Craig, directed by Edward Zwick. His theatre work includes the critically acclaimed Two Thousand Years at the National Theatre, The Comedians at the Acorn Theatre in New York, Fucking Games at the Royal Court, and Caryl Churchill’s Serious Money at the Royal Court, which later transferred to Broadway. Radio credits include Insignificance, Dr Freud Will See You Now, The Irresistible Rise of Arturo Ui (all for BBC Radio 4) and The Night Listener by Armistead Maupin.

Marie Collett was born in New Zealand but has lived in England for many years. Her theatre work has included productions at Manchester’s Royal Exchange Theatre, The Count of Monte Cristo, Lady Windermere’s Fan, (which transferred to London’s Theatre Royal, Haymarket), and The Happiest Days of Your Life. She was in Mr Heracles at the West Yorkshire Playhouse and Lindsay Anderson’s production of Holiday at the Old Vic. Audio work includes Dr Who and several Talking Books for the Royal National Institute of the Blind.
Credits

Produced by Roy McMillan
Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London
Edited by Nigel Palmer

Cover picture: Apparition in the Woods / Moritz von Schwind / 1858
Courtesy AKG Images

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Wilkie Collins

The Woman in White

Read by Allan Corduner, Glen McCready, Rachel Bavidge, Hugh Dickson, Teresa Gallagher and Marie Collett

A dark and humid night on a London highway… a ghostly woman asking directions… and the reader is away on a tale of deceit, murder, madness, stolen identities and scheming cads, elaborate plots and outrageous coincidences, in the company of some of the most extraordinary characters in fiction.

Hailed as a classic the moment it was written in 1859, The Woman in White uses eleven different narrators to tell the tale of a man’s determination to save the woman he loves, in the face of the worst intentions of the sly Sir Percival Glyde and the magnificent Count Fosco.