***Woman in White***

***Part 2***

***Section 1***

***Chapter 2***

***Summary:***

* Marian is happy to be with Laura again, but Laura seems a bit different now.
* The two women never discuss her marriage, and Laura tries to pretend it's just like old times when she's with Marian.
* Marian is less than impressed with the Foscos.
* Eleanor Fosco is really changed. She used to be vivacious, but now she's stonily silent and scary.
* Count Fosco is pompous, fat, and totally full of it. He's also infuriatingly charming.
* Marian is bizarrely drawn to him and spends pages describing his complex character.
* After all this set-up, we get back to the action.
* Mr. Merriman, the lawyer, arrives, alarming Fosco and Percival.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) takes up her dairy again two days after [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) and [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) arrive back at Blackwater after their honeymoon. Marian finds Laura changed; both in appearance and in temperament. She finds that she is not as innocent, warm, or girlish as she used to be. Although Marian acknowledges that society will probably think Laura is changed for the better, Marian is sad to see Laura lose these qualities. Marian also finds that Laura will tell her nothing about her marriage—out of respect for her husband—and the subject is forbidden between them. Laura does ask Marian if she has heard from [Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright), however, but Marian answers—truthfully—that she has not. Despite her new reserve and secretiveness, Laura is delighted to see Marian and teases her for bringing her old bookcase and her “man’s umbrella” with her.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Laura’s marriage has introduced her to the world of adult womanhood, and she seems less innocent and more cynical than she used to be. According to nineteenth-century conventions, she also now has a duty to manage her household and represent her husband in society by behaving properly. Laura’s old personality comes out when she is alone with Marian and they are playful together. Laura teases Marian because Marian is so unfeminine and chooses to travel with ugly, practical things, like books and an umbrella, rather than pretty or decorative feminine things.

***Summary Part 2:***

With little more to say about the changes in [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie), [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) observes how the honeymoon has changed [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde). She remarks that he is terse, surly, and much ruder and more irritable than before. Marian feels that people show their real personalities in their own homes and she notes that Sir Percival is rigid about the order of his things at Blackwater and obnoxious towards his servants.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Marian now suspects that Sir Percival’s polite and charming personality, which he presented to them at Limmeridge, is an act and that, now that he has persuaded Laura to marry him, he is able to show his true, unpleasant character.

***Summary Part 3:***

Although [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) dislikes [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde), she is willing to acknowledge that his bad mood seems to have started after their arrival home when the housekeeper told him of the unnamed man who called at the house and asked after him—although why this should upset Sir Percival so much she couldn’t say.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Although Marian has long had suspicions about Sir Percival’s intentions, she still tries to give him the benefit of the doubt and believe that his bad mood is caused by something specific that has upset him.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) then begins to describe her impressions of the [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) and [Madame Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/madame-fosco). Madame Fosco, Marian notices, has drastically changed since her marriage. In fact, Marian has never before seen such a huge shift in someone’s personality. While Madame Fosco used to be vain, mischievous, and opinionated, she is now silent and utterly submissive to the Count. She spends all her time listening to him and rolling his cigarettes, and now dresses in a modest fashion, whereas she used to show off her figure. She is also intensely jealous of other women talking to her husband. Marian gets the feeling that the Countess is now hemmed in and bitter, and that her expressive, lively personality used to protect her from becoming like this.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Madame Fosco has been transformed by her marriage. As a young woman, she was the opposite of an ideal nineteenth-century woman; vocal, rebellious, and independent. Through her marriage, she has turned into the opposite: she is submissive, silent, and modest, relies on her husband for everything, and does everything in her power to please him. Although this was commonly thought of as a perfect set of qualities in a wife, Collins undermines this idea by implying that this suppression of her outgoing nature has made Madame Fosco bitter and unpleasant. She is now totally focused on her marriage to the point of caring nothing for anyone else around her.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) believes that [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) is a man who “could tame anything.” She even believes that, if she were married to him, she would be as obedient as his wife is now. At the same time, she admits that he attracts and fascinates her. She finds that characteristics which she dislikes or finds ridiculous in others, she respects and admires in Count Fosco.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Marian believes that it is Count Fosco’s influence which has changed Madame Fosco and molded her into the “ideal” Victorian wife. Count Fosco has not done this to his wife out of love, however, but because he wishes to control her. Marian finds this idea both repulsive and slightly fascinating. Marian is adventurous and attracted to danger because of the challenge it presents. She does not believe she would be a match for the Count, however, and is afraid of him.

***Summary Part 6:***

For example, [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) is extremely overweight. [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) admits that she distrusts overweight people and dislikes the common stereotype that overweight people are happy or jolly. However, despite this, she trusts the Count. She thinks perhaps she likes him because of his resemblance to Napoleon and the fact that he looks very strange and not at all ordinary or common. She is also impressed by how well he speaks English for a foreigner and is fascinated by the way he moves so quietly and delicately despite his size.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Collins plays with stereotypes here and suggests that just because fat people are often portrayed as jolly and benevolent, does not mean that they are. Napoleon was a French General who tried to conquer all of Europe and who went to war with Britain in the later 1700s. Like Count Fosco, he is associated in the British Victorian imagination with power, control, and foreign forces invading Britain. Count Fosco also confounds expectations because he is light on his feet despite his size.

***Summary Part 7:***

[Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) is extremely fond of animals and keeps a family of white mice and several birds, which he kisses, pets, and trains to do tricks. At the same time, he is fearless with larger animals. [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) has seen him approach a fierce dog in the kennels, lay his hand on its head and laugh at the dog for being a coward and only attacking things that are afraid of it.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Count Fosco’s treatment of his pets seems to imply that he has a sensitive nature and is kind to vulnerable things. However, his attitude towards the fierce dog suggests that he is also totally fearless and is confident in his ability to tame anything, as Marian has already discerned. Overall, the Count seems to have a special connection to animals, which adds to his intriguing character.

***Summary Part 8:***

[Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) describes the way that [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) ingratiates himself with the people around him. He senses that [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) dislikes him and so frequently appears with her favorite bunch of flowers and is simpering and attentive with her. “In public” he is extraordinarily kind to [Madame Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/madame-fosco). Marian notes that with herself, he “flatters her” by talking to her about serious subjects as though she is a man. Marian even feels that the Count “manages” [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) and maintains an air of superiority over him, dismissing comments that Sir Percival makes about the Count’s odd, “effeminate” habits.

***Analysis Part 8:***

Marian can see that Count Fosco is an extremely powerful personality and is able to manipulate and control everyone around him. He attempts to neutralize Laura’s dislike of him by making it impossible for her to say anything unkind about him. He also seems aware that Marian prefers to be treated as an equal and, therefore, does so accordingly. Marian stresses that he is kind to his wife “in public” because she does not know how he treats her in private, and possibly suspects that the Count has used force or violence to change Madame Fosco’s personality.

***Summary Part 9:***

[Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) confesses she is confused about [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco)’s history and past with [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde). She thinks that he may be a political exile, but this seems to be contradicted by the fact that he often receives “official looking” letters from abroad.

***Analysis Part 9:***

There was a great deal of political unrest in Italy during this period, as Italy was not a united country and there was much opposition to unifying the different states. As a result, political exiles from Italy were common.

***Summary Part 10:***

Although [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) is intimidated by [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco), she cannot help but admire him. She notices that he has this effect on everyone and that [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) even seems afraid of him. Regardless of his past or true nature, Marian observes that it would be very dangerous to make an enemy of the Count.

***Analysis Part 10:***

Marian can tell that the Count is an extremely dominant personality and that he is able to control people around him to get his own way. Therefore, she feels that he would be ruthless if someone tried to prevent him from doing as he pleases. In all, he is a fascinating character and one of Collins’s most interesting creations.

***Summary Part 11:***

The next day, a visitor arrives at lunchtime and demands to see [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde). [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) tells [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) that this is [Mr. Merriman](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-merriman), Sir Percival’s lawyer, and Marian suspects that something important has happened. Before she has voiced this out loud, however, the Count agrees with her, that something has happened and [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie), speaking to Marian later, says she suspects this too.

***Analysis Part 11:***

Count Fosco does not seem to know about Sir Percival’s private affairs in detail but, like Laura and Marian, is curious about them. However, unlike Laura and Marian, the Count is in a position of power and seems to have some sway over Sir Percival.