Reflections on Closure, Identity, the Past and the Law, in Michael Cox's *The Meaning of Night* and *The Glass of Time* and Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*

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Abstract

This paper is focused on the subjects identity and closure in two novels by Michael Cox, *The Meaning of Night* (2006) and *The Glass of Time* (2008), and Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860). Both author's have similar themes in their novels: stolen identities, rightful place in society, obsession with the past and the functioning of the law. The law is often helpless with cases of stolen identities, and the protagonists Walter Hartright in *The Woman in White* and Edward Glyver in *The Meaning of Night* take it upon themselves to find retribution and restore identities to their rightful owners. The mentioned themes are examined through a close-reading of all texts and related to narrative closure and identity.

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1. Introduction

Michael Cox wrote *The Meaning of Night* (2006) as a pastiche of a Victorian sensation novel. Cox was an editor at Oxford University Press and a singer-songwriter before he started his writing career. He edited titles such as *The Oxford Book of Victorian Detective Stories* and *The Oxford Book of English Ghost Stories* and his expertise in this field helped him to place the story of *The Meaning of Night* in the Victorian era. After Cox was diagnosed with cancer he finally found the incentive and creative outburst that he needed to finish the manuscript of *The Meaning of Night*, a story he had been imagining for approximately 30 years. In *The Meaning of Night*, the reader follows Edward Glyver's account of his quest to restore his identity. During his time at Eton College, Glyver befriends Phoebus Daunt, but after a falling out between the two, Daunt frames his friend for theft and Glyver is consequently expelled. Fate links Glyver and Daunt's lives again when Daunt is made Lord Tansor's heir shortly after Glyver learns that he is Lord Tansor's legitimate son. Lord Tansor's son had died as a child and he did not know that his first wife had borne another child without his knowledge. Glyver then begins to look for evidence of his birth in order to claim back his rightful identity. He falls in love with Emily Carteret who becomes the instrument of his downfall. Glyver thinks that he and Emily have mutual feelings for each other and that she will help him claim his place as heir to the Tansor title and fortune. However, it is eventually revealed that she has loved Daunt all along and has given all the evidence of Glyver's birth to his rival and enemy. *The Meaning of Night* ends when Glyver murders Daunt and flees Britain and questions remain regarding Glyver's fate.

Cox addresses these questions in the sequel *The Glass of Time*, published in 2008. Cox had originally intended to write a trilogy (Cox, "Letter"). However, his disease and early death resulted in only one published follow-up novel. The novel continues to relate the fate of

the Duport family, the holders of the Tansor estate, twenty-two years after Glyver murdered Daunt and fled the country. Emily Carteret is now Emily Duport, the 26th Baroness Tansor. The nineteen-year old Esperanza Gorst comes to Evenwood in the guise of Emily's lady's maid, but in reality she is placed there to carry out The Great Task. Esperanza is the daughter of Edward Glyver and is tasked to marry Perseus Duport, Emily's son, to restore the original Duport bloodline. Glyver was deprived of his true identity and rightful inheritance in *The Meaning of Night*, but works in the shadows as Basil Thornhaugh in the sequel to ensure Esperanza will inherit the Tansor barony. It comes to light that Perseus is actually the bastard son of Emily Duport and Phoebus Daunt before Daunt was murdered by Glyver. Esperanza also finds proof that Emily and Daunt conspired to deprive Glyver of his true identity. This combined causes the downfall of Emily and leads to her suicide. After legal procedures to verify Esperanza's claim to the Duport inheritance, she becomes the 27th Baroness Tansor. Closure is postponed in *The Meaning of Night*, but achieved after reading *The Glass of Time*.

Cox's novels are both historical crime novels set in the mid nineteenth century and he was influenced by writers of that time, notably Wilkie Collins. Collins was one of the first writer's to use the middle-class society's interest in crime to build plots. After training to be a lawyer, Collins became a writer for Charles Dickens's magazines, first *Household Words*, then *All the Year Round* from 1860 onwards. The novel *The Woman in White* was Collins's first success and he was much indebted to the stories of real crimes that appeared in the newspapers every day. As a journalist, Collins saw how fascinated people were with the evils of humanity and, thus, appealed to this fascination when writing his novels. Sensation novels were novels read by a middle-class audience that used crime within a domestic middle-class household as the main plot of the story. According to Mangham, Collins's *The Woman in White*, published in 1860, was the first sensation novel (382). The popularity of the sensation novel rose in the 1860s and then diminished again in the 1870s (Costantini 15). The

popularity of crime fiction as a genre, however, has not declined since. The sensation novels that Wilkie Collins wrote are still read in the present day and many authors take their inspiration from this genre.

The Woman in White features two aristocratic criminals, Sir Percival Glyde and Count Fosco, who deprive Glyde's wife, Laura Fairlie Glyde, of her identity. They switch Laura with Anne Catherick, a psychiatric patient and the woman in white who claims to know about Glyde's sordid past. The two accomplices exploit Anne's death as Lady Glyde to obtain Laura's money. Walter Hartright, first a drawing-master and then a self-proclaimed detective, and Marian Halcombe, Laura's half-sister, then work together to uncover the truth, catch the criminal and restore Laura's identity. A subplot involves Glyde and Mrs Catherick, Anne's mother, who had previously conspired to forge evidence of Glyde's legitimate birth. He is actually a bastard son and, thus, not entitled to inherit his father's title and estate. Hartright is the protagonist of the story. He collects several accounts of the story that provide evidence that the woman believed to be the patient Anne Catherick is in fact Laura Fairlie Glyde who is being held in an asylum against her will. Each of these stories is written in first-person and at the beginning of every account a motivation is given to justify the narrative.

The Meaning of Night and *The Woman in White* examine similar themes such as the past, identity and the position of the law. The ending of *The Meaning of Night* differs from the ending in *The Woman in White*, as closure is postponed in Cox's novel. Only after reading *The Glass of Time* are readers fully informed of the consequences of Glyver's actions. Both protagonists, Hartright and Glyver, succeed in their respective missions, but Hartright has a happy ending and Glyver's happy ending eludes him. Although Glyver does indeed defeat his nemesis, he will never recover his rightful place in society. Although the novels resemble each other in plot, the stolen identities and search for retribution, and time period, the endings are different. This paper will reflect on closure and identity in *The Woman in White* and *The*

Meaning of Night. The concept of closure will be researched, using theories by Friedman, Hühn, and Torgovnick. The chapters following the literary theory chapter will focus on the link between closure and identity in the two novels. The past and the law will also be discussed, as they are relevant to the identity theme as well.

2. Changing Views of Narrative Closure

The Woman in White is a Victorian thriller novel with elements of mystery and *The Meaning of Night* is a pastiche of a Victorian novel that has many similarities with Collins's novel. Both stories offer a narrative mainly recounted by the protagonist. Narration and plot are closely interwoven in crime fiction as there are two separate stories to be told: one is the story of the crime and the other is the process of the investigation (Hühn 452). Closure occurs when the two story lines converge and form one coherent narrative end. The curiosity of the reader is satisfied when the workings of the crime have been revealed, thereafter, the story ends and loses its appeal (Hühn 458). The mystery of a story motivates the reader to keep on reading. Seldom will a detective story be read more than once, because the story offers no more mysteries, the cat is out of the bag. If the end of a story provides closure, there will be no need to reread a novel.

Nineteenth century novels provide a closed experience (Friedman 15). The end of the story was literally the end for the characters in the story too, there was no more room for them to learn and mature after the last page. *Jane Eyre* is an example of a Victorian novel which provides narrative closure. This implies that the end of the story also offers closure for the reader, as the crisis is resolved and the curiosity of the reader is satisfied. At the turn of the century, however, a rising number of novels, for example, work by James Joyce or Virginia Woolf, were published that contained a more open ending. The open nature of these "reflected and conveyed a new attitude toward the process and goals of experience in life" (Friedman 15). Many modern novels, written from the twentieth century onwards, allow the reader to learn and become more experienced through the ending of a story (Friedman 188). The novel offers the reader a journey from innocence to experience and open endings provide omissions that allow the reader to advance their own thoughts on life. These open endings seem to

reflect the changing views regarding life and the rationale that 'you never stop learning'. Life itself does not always provide answers like those provided in the often happy endings of nineteenth century novels. Modern novels seem to reflect the unknown and unpredictable future in their open endings. Ambiguity and the feeling of unfinished business adds to the mystery of life and this concept is reflected in contemporary novels. Closed narrative endings allow people the illusion of understanding the mysterious future and open endings seem to provide more food for thought.

After finishing a novel, readers often look back and reflect on the development of the story. This retrospective moment can provide closure for the reader. Torgovnick defines closure as "[the ending] which the author hopes and believes is an adequate and appropriate conclusion" (6). This definition is rather broad and offers no insight into the reception of the novel by readers. The author's and the reader's concept of closure may differ from each other, but the reader expects no loose ends (Forster 72). However, as the writer can never anticipate the reader's reaction to a story, Torgovnick's definition is applicable for the close-reading of a text. There is no more to the story than the words published, so the reader must assume that the narrative offers a completed whole. In the following chapters narrative closure will be examined in relation to identity and various other themes repeated throughout *The Woman in White* and *The Meaning of Night*.

3. Stolen Identities, Position in Society and Legitimacy

The Woman in White and *The Meaning of Night* were written and published in different times, though both novels take place in the mid nineteenth century. The plot and narrative of the stories are also different, but stolen identity is the main theme in both novels. In *The Woman in White*, Laura Glyde and Anne Catherick's identities are switched by Percival Glyde and Count Fosco, but because the two men are of high social standing no one suspects that they have committed a crime. Hartright, on the other hand, belongs to "a mobile segment of middle-class society" (Costantini 164). As a individual belonging to the middle-class you are in between the lower- and upper-classes and, thus, shift between the two and have "an unstable identity" that allows social mobility (Costantini 164). Hartright starts out as a drawing master who interacts with the higher social classes, but never really belongs amongst them. Then he becomes an illustrator, therefore, breaking free of his dependence on upper-class employment and patronage. Concluding Hartright's social climb is his marriage to Laura and the fact that his child is the heir to Limmeridge house. This rise in Hartright's social status can be explained by his actions throughout the novel. Hartright always acts like a gentleman and when he helps Laura to recover her identity he explicitly states that there is "no idea of personal advantage", he helps her to right an injustice, not for personal gain (496). This selflessness is rewarded when his child becomes the heir to the Fairlie family estate and, thus, becomes part of the upper class. Laura's identity is restored and this action provides closure in the novel.

Unlike Hartright in *The Woman in White*, Glyver in *The Meaning of Night* strives to find evidence of his true identity for selfish reasons. He wants to be recognized as Lord Tansor's heir and wants to inherit everything that comes with that title, for example, the Evenwood estate and the immense library it houses. At the same time, Glyver wants to rob his

nemesis Daunt of all that he holds dear. Halfway through the novel it becomes clear that the two goals can be achieved simultaneously, namely, if Glyver becomes heir, Daunt will be stripped of his favourable position with Lord Tansor. Furthermore, Glyver wants to expose his enemy's true nature. Daunt seems the perfect gentleman on the outside, but has a dark side as well. Daunt has various criminal associates and obtained his money not via sound investments, but via extortion and money laundering. Glyver was born of noble stock, he is the legitimate son of Lord Tansor and his wife Laura Duport, but raised in middle-class society. Daunt was born in a middle-class family, but through his connection to Lord Tansor was brought up in very privileged circles. From the start Glyver and Daunt's fates are intertwined. Daunt's role in Glyver's expulsion has a great effect on Glyver's character. His last words to Daunt before leaving Eton College are "revenge has a long memory", and these words are repeated when Glyver murders Daunt over twenty years later (117, 579).

The crisis is averted in *The Woman in White* and there is a happy ending. The criminals are punished, as Glyde dies in the fire in the church and Fosco's criminal past catches up with him, and Laura Fairlie's true identity is restored. Furthermore, Hartright is rewarded for his efforts and becomes the father of the new heir of Limmeridge. In *The Meaning of Night*, the crisis exists of two elements: the revenge on Daunt and the search for evidence to prove Glyver's identity. Both are resolved, but the evidence is destroyed and Glyver murders Daunt. This is not the ending that Glyver envisaged for himself when he started out on his quest. Glyver flees from Britain, his future remains unknown and this endings leaves the reader with questions regarding his fate. Glyver is the protagonist of the story and readers hope he will regain his true name and will be recognized by Lord Tansor as his son. However, the murder of the innocent red-haired man, Lucas Trendle, and Daunt, brands Glyver as an outlaw and he remains a fugitive for the rest of his life. Glyver commits a sin and therefore loses his chance of paradise, of inheriting the noble title and the Evenwood

estate, and is instead condemned to hell. The last letter in the postscript of the manuscript confirms this image when Glyver mentions that he is in a place that is a "blackened and shattered landscape of extraordinary otherness, carved by a furious god, and fanned by hot African winds" (Cox, *Meaning* 590). Hell indeed for a born and bred Englishmen. There is no happy ending for Glyver as he committed a sin, but he escapes justice as the protagonist of the story.

In *The Glass of Time*, Glyver helps his daughter to regain her true identity and the Tansor estate. However, Glyver himself keeps switching identities and even faked his own death to serve this cause. Near the end of the novel Esperanza states to the reader that "Basil Thornhaugh was—is—my father. Basil Thornhaugh was—is— Edward Glyver, who murdered Phoebus Daunt. Duport—Glyver—Glapthorn—Gorst—Thornhaugh. Five names. One man. One living man. One living father" (Cox, *Glass* 506). Throughout the two novels Glyver cannot hold on to one single identity and instead regularly adopts a new name. This seems to indicate that Glyver does not know who he truly is and therefore does not find closure in his life. At the end of *The Glass of Time*, when Esperanza has claimed the Tansor title, Glyver is still roaming the earth as Thornhaugh. The Duport bloodline can be traced back to its roots and Glyver's obsession with this ancient bloodline cumulates in Esperanza's task to "bring the Tansor succession back to the blood of the direct line" (Cox, *Glass* 300). Blood and family are an indicator of one's identity and Esperanza regains her true identity. Glyver has restored the original bloodline to the Duport family, but still cannot settle down and it seems he never will. The restoration of the Duport bloodline seems to come at the cost of Glyver's own identity. Cox usage of identity in the two novels indicates that peace can only be found when you know who you are.

Glyver is imbued with a dichotomy of characteristics. On the one hand he is described as a gentleman, but on the other hand Glyver is well acquainted with the dark side of city life

and is capable of performing coldblooded murder. This dichotomy is explored in the novel and culminates in the murder of Daunt, the solution Glyver finds in order to resolve his crisis. This seems to reflect the idea that humans will do anything to fulfil their desire, without consideration of the consequences. Cox makes the reader think about whether the end justifies the means. When Laura Tansor, Glyver's real mother, removes herself from her newborn son, she does leave him with the tools to prove his real heritage. However, in a letter enclosed with his birth certificate she conveys the following wish: "as Edward Glyver, you must find your own way through life, using the strengths and talents that God has given you, and nothing else" (Cox, *Meaning* 509). She continues on to warn Glyver that inherited wealth and power will offer no real contentment, however, Glyver continues on his path of revenge and does not heed his mother's warning. After obtaining all the evidence of his birth Glyver conveys his feelings that "the keys to the kingdom were now in my possession, and I was free at last to face the world as Edward Duport, to marry my dearest girl, and to lay my enemy low at last" (Cox, *Meaning* 513). He thinks he has already won and subsequently loses everything when he trusts the wrong person. Emily Carteret loves Daunt so much that she is willing to pretend to love Glyver to win his trust and, thus, acquire the evidence of his heritage and destroy it. In the end, Glyver resorts to violence to avenge himself.

Hartright's selfless deeds are rewarded in *The Woman in White*. Laura's true identity is restored and there is closure for Hartright, Laura and Marian. Collins's novel ends on a happy note with the introduction of the new heir of Limmeridge. Glyver, on the other hand, started out on his quest to right a wrong as he had been deprived of his identity by his own mother. However, once this desire intertwined with the desire to destroy his enemy Daunt, Glyver lost himself to his own thirst for revenge. Disregarding his mother's warning, Glyver continues on his quest to claim back his birthright, but when this becomes impossible he resorts to the most basic human instinct. Kill the enemy. After Glyver commits this sin, the gates to Paradise will

forever be closed for him and he is sentenced to a life in exile. Laura Tansor prayed that Glyver would find his own way in life, but he ignores her desire and goes through life like a chameleon, unable to find his true identity. Subsequently there is no closure for Glyver, not even after his own daughter regains her true identity as the 27th Baroness Tansor in *The Glass of Time*. Compared to Collins, Cox's novels are more personal concerning the stolen identity theme, as the protagonists, Glyver and Esperanza, have to fight to regain their own true identity.

4. Narrative and the Past

The Meaning of Night is a novel that does not offer closure like *The Woman in White*. Segal argues that most detective novels provide "strong closure" with plot, narration and closure closely related to each other (163). The ending of Cox's novel defies this strong closure. The narrator of the story, Glyver himself, also mentions an unresolved ending; just after killing Daunt he wonders "but *how* had it ended?" (Cox, *Meaning* 579). Glyver's unhappy ending and his uncertain future leave the reader with questions. *The Meaning of Night* remains unresolved in many areas and closure is postponed until the sequel *The Glass of Time*. In both Collins's and Cox's novels, the narratives disclose past events, they describe affairs that have already come to pass. The past is a recurring theme in their novels and both protagonists investigate the past in order to right an injustice in the present. The fact that past events continuously reappear is related to closure as well. In order to find closure Hartright and Glyver dive into the past to find means to deliver retribution.

In Collins's novel, Vincent Gilmore is an old friend of the Fairlie family and also their family lawyer. When Gilmore discusses Laura's will with her to decide how to divide up her fortune after her death, he notices that Laura is not her usual happy self, she is disheartened by the prospect of her marriage. Gilmore remarks that Laura Fairlie is "still clinging to the past" (155). It seems Laura is reluctant to let go of her happy childhood at Limmeridge House. The past and the sense of nostalgia offers safety for many people. The future is uncertain and therefore Laura seeks refuge in her past, the good old days where life seemed simple. Hartright's narrative also keeps referring to the past, for example, when Hartright leaves Limmeridge House because his love for Laura pains her as she is engaged to be married to Glyde, his last look at Laura is described as "the image of Laura Fairlie was a memory of the past already" (134). This moment provides a sense of foreboding for

Hartright's next meeting with Laura. When Hartright returns from his self-imposed exile he is shocked to hear Laura has died and resolves to visit her grave to say his goodbyes. However, once at the grave two figures approach him and the last line of the second part of the book runs as follows "Laura, Lady Glyde, was standing by the inscription, and was looking at me over the grave" (Collins 456). In this manner Laura was dead to all, a past memory, except to Hartright and Marian.

Anne Catherick, the woman in white, first appears as a ghost, all dressed in white, upon the road which Hartright walks. She appears out of nowhere and Hartright is astonished by her sudden apparition. When he helps her to reach London and they walk side by side Hartright remarks that "it was like a dream" (Collins 21). It is almost as if Anne was present, yet, absent at the same time, a fleeting image. Anne's existence actually haunts Glyde; he is desperate to find her and shut her up in the asylum again, as he fears Anne will reveal his true and illegitimate identity. He is afraid of what Anne will do with the knowledge of his past, as she claims to know his secret: the fact that he added his own name to the register of births in Old Welmingham. Anne's whereabouts remain a mystery throughout most of the novel, but in the end Count Fosco finds her and together with Glyde they succeed in switching her identity with Laura's. The last secret that Marian and Hartright discover about Anne is about her parentage. They deduce from certain facts concerning Mrs Catherick and Philip Fairlie that Philip Fairlie is the father of Anne, and she is, thus, Laura's half-sister. This explains the physical similarities between Anne and Laura which made it possible for Glyde and Fosco to switch their identities. Anne was very fond of Mrs Fairlie, Laura's mother, and Hartright remembers her desire to be buried with Mrs Fairlie. Through the identity switch this had come to pass, as Anne is buried next to Laura's mother. The narrative concerning Anne Catherick ends with the following passage: "so the ghostly figure which has haunted these pages as it haunted my life, goes down into the impenetrable Gloom. Like a Shadow she first came to

me, in the loneliness of the night. Like a Shadow she passes away, in the loneliness of the dead" (Collins 622). Ghosts are memories of the past that come back to haunt you. They are the embodiment of the past that cannot be forgotten. Now that Anne rests in peace, Hartright can close Anne's chapter of the story and focus on the future.

The past is also an important aspect in *The Meaning of Night*. In the same way that Percival Glyde and Hartright in *The Woman in White* are haunted by Anne Catherick in some way, Glyver is haunted by his memories of Daunt and his need for revenge. He cannot let go of the grudge he bears Daunt as he considers Daunt's villainous actions to be the cause of his failed academic ambitions. Furthermore, he cannot let go of his real identity as Lord Tansor's heir, which might be a future hope, but the answers to the mystery of his birth lie in the past. To uncover the secret of his birth Glyver even has to desecrate his mother's tomb, in order to obtain the last clue to finding his birth certificate. Death symbolises the past, because there is no more future for the deceased. Shiller argues that Neo-Victorian novels have a "desire for knowledge of the past, a desire not extinguished by doubts as to how accessible it really is" (557). This is reflected in Glyver's desperate search for answers about the past. He holds on to the smallest pieces of tangible evidence that he can find in order to solve the mystery and prove his identity. Cox explains the drive behind *The Meaning of Night* as follows "What I really wanted to do was replicate what I, as a reader, value most: the unravelling of a well-crafted story" ("Michael"). This resulted in a story in which layer upon layer of secrets are revealed in a sequence that keeps the reader continually in suspense. The question at the back of every reader's mind is: what happened in the past and why?

As closure is postponed in *The Meaning of Night*, the sequel *The Glass of Time* still deals with questions of the past, as Esperanza Gorst is determined to reveal Emily Duport's secrets and past crimes. Concerning Edward Glyver, Madame de l'Orme states that he is obsessed with the restoration of the Duport bloodline and that "it is his curse, and we must all

suffer for it, as he does" (Cox, *Glass* 508). Glyver could not let go of his past failures and therefore tries to make amends by sending Esperanza to Evenwood. In the same way Emily suffers from her love for Phoebus Daunt, although he is long dead. Even though Emily had married Colonel Zaluski after Daunt's death, she cannot forget Daunt and still mourns his death after more than twenty years. Emily's past actions come back to trouble her and after her suicide her son Perseus blames her anxieties on "her blind passion for his father, Phoebus Daunt" (Cox, *Glass* 525). Esperanza and Perseus then bury the feud that had started between Glyver and Daunt and marry each other. Their union gives birth to Petrus Duport: "the precious rock on which all his parents' hopes for the future and of the ancient house of Duport now rest" (Cox, *Glass* 527). *The Glass of Time* ends with the happy ending that Glyver could not have in *The Meaning of Night*.

Past and closure are closely related to each other and in both novels events from the past catch up with the present. In *The Woman in White* all mysteries of the past are resolved. Sir Percival had falsified his entry in the birth register and Hartright uncovers Glyde's bastard status through Mrs Catherick. The injustice proclaiming Laura Fairlie a memory of the past is also resolved by Hartright. In *The Meaning of Night*, Glyver succeeds in settling his past accounts, but still finds no closure in his actions. The manner in which Glyver resolves his problems is problematic as he resorts to the assassination of Daunt. Glyver's identity and purpose were focused on the destruction of Daunt and after finishing this task it seems Glyver loses his determination to prove his identity and, thus, runs away. Without Daunt, Glyver has to rebuild his life and find a new aim in life, but Cox leaves the reader in the dark as to how Glyver will try to accomplish this. Only in the sequel do readers find out what became of Glyver after his flight. As protagonist of the story, Glyver deserves a happy ending, and the reader is manipulated by the narrative to support Glyver's effort to regain his true identity. The reader is pulled in by Glyver's charismatic character and storytelling, even after this

ominous opening line: “after killing the red-haired man, I took myself off to Quinn’s for an oyster supper” (Cox, *Meaning* 9). Demonstrating the heartlessness of Glyver to attain his goal, Cox makes readers reflect on whether Glyver is justified to act this way to restore his true identity. Esperanza is left dealing with the consequences of Glyver’s deeds twenty years after he had fled Britain. Glyver paves the way for her succession to the Tansor estate and there is closure when Esperanza becomes the 27th Baroness Tansor. *The Glass of Time* then ends with the Latin proverb “quieta non movere” which is translated as “let sleeping dogs lie” (Cox, *Glass* 531). Let go of the past and there will be closure.

5. Position of Law

As an example of a nineteenth century detective novel, Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* offers "plots of suspense" with the identity theft of the sweet naive Laura Fairlie (Brooks 169). Hartright takes upon himself the task to right the wrongs done to Laura with the help of Marian, Laura's half-sister. They cannot use Laura's recollections or memories of her past life because her mental faculties were severely shaken after her captivity in the asylum. To build his case Hartright makes use of multiple narratives that he obtained while searching for the truth and the evidence that would prove Laura's true identity. These narratives form the basis of Hartright's argument and just as in court "the keeping of a record is the necessary way to the eventual unveiling of the obdurate mysteries" (Brooks 169).

At the start of Hartright's narrative he explains how he will set up the case of Laura's identity as if for a court, with multiple witness narratives that all relate to the issue at hand. He states that "the story here presented will be told by more than one pen, as the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness" (Collins 1). Ironically, however, he subsequently states that he could never have obtained his evidence through legal means and, thus, leaves the reader to judge the story (Costantini 220). The solicitors Vincent Gilmore and his partner Mr Kyrle represent the official law. When Hartright meets with the latter to request legal help, he confirms that the law is helpless in a case of stolen identities and states that "there is really no case" (Collins 494). Nonetheless, after this discouraging message, Hartright decides to continue to search for evidence to solve the crime, even without legal help. In this novel the main characters' selfish lawless actions are punished, whereas Hartright is rewarded for acting outside the law in order to help Laura. Sir Percival Glyde dies in the fire in the vestry of the church when he tries to destroy the register that proves the falsification of his birth. He tries to cover up his crimes and is subsequently punished. Count

Fosco also receives his deserved end when his criminal past in Italy catches up with him in Paris; he is murdered by the secret Italian organisation that he had deserted. The motivation for lawless deeds seem to dictate the appropriate endings for the characters of the story.

Glyver in *The Meaning of Night* also has dealings with the law, as he works for Christopher Tredgold, the senior partner of Tredgold, Tredgold, & Orr. Glyver does various odd jobs as a confidential assistant to Mr Tredgold and mostly has to solve problems to ensure that the firm's clients' reputations are not damaged. Tredgold never asks how Glyver solves the problems as they both know that the means Glyver resorts to are outside the law. Glyver seeks substantial proof to prove his identity. He becomes the detective and expert in Daunt's life and claims that "the scholar, like, the lawyer, requires corroboration, verification, and firm documentary evidence" (Cox, *Meaning* 79). No one will believe him without proof and when Emily Carteret steals and presumably destroys the evidence he has gathered he has no more case to stand on, he will never be recognized as Lord Tansor's heir. He also resolves to measures outside the law in order to exact his revenge. Because Glyver acts outside the law, he is not rewarded and thus does not regain his birthright. Glyver is aware of his crimes and in his last letter to Tredgold he says "I have not escaped punishment, as some may imagine; I am punished every hour I live for the folly of my life, and what it drove me to do" (Cox, *Meaning* 590). Although Glyver had fled Britian and, thus, escaped retribution for his deeds, he is tormented by his own crimes every day for the rest of his life. Daunt, however, is also punished for ruining Glyver's scholastic opportunities and destroying his evidence. Emily Carteret is likewise culpable, and, thus, loses the thing that she loves most: Daunt.

In both novels the law cannot be trusted. Hartright cannot rely on the law to help him prove Laura's identity and Glyver works outside the law to solve problems for clients. On the one hand, both men try to right an injustice, but on the other hand they have to resort to illegal actions sometimes to obtain their evidence. Both Hartright and Glyver occasionally behave as

spies and act outside the law, but Glyver goes one step further and actually kills an innocent man: the red-haired man Glyver murders in preparation for Daunt's assassination. Glyver justifies this murder to himself, because he had to test whether he could kill, whether he had the courage to take a life. All actions will have consequences, good or bad, and Cox makes the reader reflect on whether the end justifies the means. As Glyver takes justice in his own hands to punish Daunt, he reflects how he is similar to his mother as they both "were destroyed by believing it was in our own hands to punish those who had done wrong to us" (Cox, *Meaning* 590). To resort to means outside of the law was Glyver's mistake. Revenge and killing can never be condoned. Although Hartright, in *The Woman in White* wishes for revenge and maybe even the death of, Sir Percival Glyde, he gives his all in trying to save Glyde from the fire in the vestry of the church. There is no blood on his hands. Glyver kills Daunt and satisfies his revenge, but he will never have the happy ending that he envisaged for himself when he started on his quest to recover what was rightfully his.

6. Conclusion

The end of *The Meaning of Night* leaves questions unanswered concerning the further fate of Glyver and the consequences of his sinful deed are mostly left out of the story. Focusing on *The Woman in White* and *The Meaning of Night*, the author's each have a different approach to similar themes. Collins's plot is concerned with the switching of identities between Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick, while in the background the ominous past of Sir Percival Glyde threatens to catch up to him. Hartright is the righteous self-proclaimed detective who gives his all to rectify this gross injustice without any thoughts about personal gain. Glyver on the other hand, in a novel published at the start of the twenty-first century, but set in the Victorian age, goes on a quest to unearth the evidence of his birth. He takes this quite literally and desecrates his mother's tomb in order to obtain his proof. Cox continues to portray Glyver's selfish deeds when Glyver resorts to killing Daunt when all other hopes of recovering his true identity are extinguished. Both Hartright and Glyver act outside the law while attempting to solve the different identity problems, however, Glyver commits the ultimate sin, murder, and is unable to claim his true identity. In the sequel to *The Meaning of Night* Glyver then makes it possible for his daughter Esperanza to claim her true identity and the Tansor estate. Glyver frequently switches identity and cannot hold unto only one name, but Esperanza only sheds the name Gorst to claim her true identity as a Duport. Identity and closure are closely linked in both Collins and Cox's novels and closure can be found when problems of the past are resolved and identities are restored.

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