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Effectively Structuring Rising Action in Fiction: Using "Fichte's Curve" to Build a Sturdy Story Toward a Worthy Climax

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Abstract

The most recognizable chart used for mapping the narrative structure for writers is Freytag's Pyramid, which generalizes the five parts of the narrative structure mapping the exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement, but excludes what John Gardner specifically pens as "Fichte's Curve". By mapping on the Fichtean Curve, authors are offered guidance in charting the internal and the external forces working for and against the character with the character's deciding action plotted where the star is centered. Fichte's Curve doesn't only help the writer structure the rising action in his or her narrative plot, but also aids the writer by being able to graph on the hypotenuse triangle the forces working for and against the main character. The assured method of applying Fichte's Curve doesn't only structure the writer's rising action mapping each crisis surpassed but also enables the writer with the ability to track the internal and external conflicts as the author decides his character's next course of action before the culmination of events is reached.

Keywords: Fichte's Curve, John Gardner, Freytag's Pyramid, Mary Shelly, John Connolly, Patricia Highsmith

Many writers of fiction struggle to find the best way to plot their narratives in order to utilize the most reliable structure in their goal to write an interesting story, develop characters along with the plot, and pace the intensifying crises reaching the dramatically intense climax every author aims to craft. The most recognizable chart used for mapping the realization of this goal for writers is Freytag's Pyramid, which generalizes the five parts of the narrative structure mapping the exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement (Writers.com), but excludes what John Gardner specifically pens as "Fichte's Curve" in his craft book titled "The Art of Fiction" (187).

Gardner expands on the plot diagram detailing the rising action by incorporating Fichte's algorithm representing the crises with internal conflicts and external conflicts charted (The Art., 187). Gardner calls this the "Fichtean Curve", which illustrates how story and characters can be most effectively formed, presenting an author with a character map as well as a plot diagram showing the patterning through rising action to climax and falling action to resolution. Freytag's Pyramid not only omits the intensifying incidents that occur during the rising action but also neglects to identify the internal emotions of the character and the external conflicts working to support and/or antagonize the main character as the story unfolds. Fichte's Curve helps writers develop character through the plot and helps pace intensifying crises in the rising action until the highest point of tension reaches the climax. The Fichtean curve, actually a right triangle, not only maps — through its lines and angles — the rising action in line B, which serves as the hypotenuse of the triangle, but also charts the intensifying crises as each arc reveals the internal and external conflicts influencing the main character's next decision. These forces are plotted in the center of the two directional arrows, as noted below as the star representing the final decision the character makes to overcome each obstacle. Through the plotting of each "crisis" and the character's final act to overcome the challenge that each given situation presents, the actual shaping of the story begins allowing the reader to empathize with the characters introduced and become invested in the developing plot.

In fact, following the etymology of the word "fiction," brings us to the verb "to shape," (Online Dictionary) and one such shape is the right triangle used in the general plotting of any given story. While the Fichtean Curve can apply to, and be applied to almost any story, it is particularly suited to commercial fiction and genres such as mystery, thriller, and fantasy" (Hamilton, 9), because of the distinct connection between character development and its relationship to plot. Aristotle says it best when he writes that the plot of a good story is "the actualization of the potential that exists in character and situation. What Aristotle calls energeia" (The Art., 47). Just as the rising action, climax, and falling action are plotted in Fichte's Curve, so in fact are those character choices plotted on the same rising action in the center of the two arrows facing inward as the star, noted on line B in the below diagram, with internal and external forces influencing the character's decision-making as each crisis is unveiled.

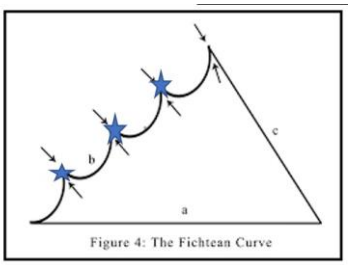

Figure 4: The Fichtean Curve

https://study.com/learn/lesson/structure-types-examples.html

The first crisis, or first arc, is plotted on the Fichtean Curve and will continue following a number of intensified crises until the climax is reached. A more detailed plot design with forces working for and against the characters in the rising action is noted in the Fichtean Curve above. Note the additional stars between the two arrows pointing inward on line B. These represent the choices made by the main character when the character wrestles with the internal and external conflicts and decides how he will overcome the crisis taking into account his own personal feelings and the external forces surrounding him. The internal and external conflicts will have some impact on the character's final decision about how he will hurdle the next crisis, which is why charting on the Fichtean Curve is one way to organize the elements developing character and advancing plot.

According to Spark in her essay titled "Getting In and Getting Out", it's the "opening that entices a reader into a work" (Spark, 106) but according to Gardner, it's "character that is the emotional core of great fiction" (The Art., 56). "It doesn't matter how great the middle and end are if the reader never gets there", argues Spark (106). It's the author's ability to develop characters during each crisis and create empathy within the reader before the reader closes the book and places it back on the shelf. 'In Gardner's conception of the beginning of a story, something happens to the main character making him respond to the event and reveal an aspect of his personality' (The Art., 187). Picture a right triangle with its base side down (line A) "representing the 'normal course of action; that is, the course the character would take if he cared only for safety and stability, and so did not assert his independent will, trying the difficult or impossible in the hope of effecting change" (The Art., 187). This change occurring internally and/or externally to the character has to 'emerge from the narrative allowing the reader to connect his knowledge in the physical world to that of the character's existence in the fictional reality created by the author' (Hribal, 149). According to Hribal in his essay *The Scene Beast is Hungry*, 'some truisms, then about plotting character development in the rising action include: First, in a story, something has to happen to make the character act. Second, that scenes are where things happen to propel character development and lastly, that good scenes' (149) as well as great characters "are the least controllable aspects of a story" (149) such as in the classic novel *Frankenstein*.

In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and John Connolly's *The Black Angel*'s opening scenes, both protagonists intend to succeed in their endeavors, but both are terribly mistaken as the fate of their quests will leave them questioning their life choices and future decisions. In *Frankenstein*, Victor believes that bringing a being to life will result in positive change, so Victor studies medical books and devises a plan to create what he trusts will become the perfect human being. In *The Black Angel*'s opening scene, Connolly's main character, Charlie Parker, is a detective who agrees to take a case to find a missing girl. At first, just as Victor believes he will effect change, so does Parker

believe he will find the missing girl and reunite her with her Uncle Louis. "As in the universe every atom has an effect, however minuscule, on every other atom, so that to pinch the fabric of Time and Space at any point is to shake the whole length and breadth of it, so in fiction, every element has effect on every other" (The Art, 46). The belief that Parker will take the case of the missing girl and bring her home or as in Victor's case, a person is even capable of performing creates energeia. The etymology of the word energeia is "activity" and it is this activity, or intensifying crises, that propels the narrative forward. The author "must shape simultaneously (in an expanding creative moment) his characters, plot, and setting, each inextricably connected to the other; he must make his whole world in a single, coherent gesture" (The Art., 46). "The power of the story, the strength of its reversal, the revelations the reader comes to understand that the narrator does not (consciously) admit, is derived from its structure; opening with a scene then holding that scene in suspension until all the exposition is given" (Hribal, 157) and the readers have a chance to connect with the characters early in the novel, as in Highsmith's novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley*.

In *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Tom Ripley is out of work and living with friends when Mr. Greenleaf, the father of Dickie Greenleaf, approaches Tom to bring his son back home. Even though Tom doesn't personally know Dickie, he tells Mr. Greenleaf he will do his best to convince his son to return home. Mr. Greenleaf is the supporting force working to help Dickie find a purpose and does so by offering to pay for all of Tom's expenses. Tom then, must decide to refuse Mr. Greenleaf because he really doesn't know his son, Dickie, or stretch the truth and tell Mr. Greenleaf that he and his son are good friends. Tom makes his decision, as charted as the center star of the ascending and descending arrows on the Fichtean curve working for and against the main character, and agrees to embark on the quest to find Dickie. The events that unfold next are also plotted in line B as multiple arcs rising in the hypotenuse of the right triangle to the climax, "representing the course of action our character does take, struggling against odds and braving conflict" (The Art, 187) such as Tom accepting the monumental task of trying to convince Dickie to return home to his father. Rising up (Line B) are arrows pointing upward that support the character and arrows pointing down that represent the forces working against the character's will such as enemies, customs, or natural law such as in Shelly's novel, *Frankenstein*, when Victor goes against natural law and must face the consequences for his belief that he can create the perfect human.

In *Frankenstein*, Victor works against the forces of natural law and creates a creature, who isn't born into this world, and must suffer the consequences of his actions externally and internally battling with the demons inflicted upon his soul as the plot progresses and his creation acts of his own free will. When Victor gazes upon the being he has brought to life, he gasps at what he has done. His emotional state is the internal force working against what he has created and he makes the decision to abandon the

monster in his laboratory. Victor didn't have to decide to abandon the creature. He could have accepted his creation and raised him within his home teaching the creature how to be a member of society, but Victor is repulsed by what he has created and must battle internally with his emotions deciding to abandon his creation. Even though he has created this being, Victor has no empathy for the creature and thus, leaves the reader feeling what Victor should be feeling himself, compassion. "Techniques that communicate can stir our interest in their special subject matter, since at heart all fiction treats, directly or indirectly, the same thing: our love for people and the world, our aspirations and fears" (The Art., 42) and to Victor, he fears that to which he brought to life. By regretting his creation and casting the creature out into the village alone, Shelley adheres to Gardner's notion that in order 'to have interest in what happens to the character, the writer and reader needs to have empathy and care what happens if the outcome is to matter' (The Art., 42). At this juncture, the creature must decide to remain in the laboratory or escape to the outside world where he might be accepted. The creature's choice to leave is wrought with the internal conflict of his father, Victor, abandoning him and the external conflict of his father feeling repulsed by his appearance and the unknowing of what exists on the outside of the laboratory. The creature makes a decision, which is plotted as the star in the center of the inward-pointing arrows. The creature decides to leave Victor's laboratory and hide near a farmer's cottage where he observes what it's like to be a human with family connections. The creature then faces his next obstacle as mapped on line B and must take into account his internal state, which wants to become a member of society and his external reality that his father has already abandoned him for his appearance. The creature must act and his decision is then plotted in the center of the ascending and descending forces to learn how to read and hopefully, gain the acceptance of the farmers he's been observing.

Those conflicts are established through Shelley's unique approach to connecting her characters through relationships and association, as is the example of the creature spying on the farmer's family and learning how to read, write and speak while the farmer's family teach the Arabian girl. When the creature learns faster than the Arabian girl, the reader sympathizes with the creature's ability to feel like he accomplished a mighty task, "My days were spent in close attention, that I might more speedily master the language; and I may boast that I improved more rapidly than the Arabian" (Shelley, 123). Shelley writes this surprising twist into her novel when the creature learns to communicate better than the Arabian girl because the creature is a monster and should be too infantile for such a learned task. According to Highsmith, "The ideal is an unexpected turn of events, reasonably consistent with the character of the protagonist. The writer stretches the reader's credulity, his sense of logic, to the utmost" (Plotting., 60). By placing the creature at the farmer's cottage, Shelley adds to the authenticity that the creature does learn to read and write and further creates verisimilitude, or

credibility, because the forces working to support the creature's learning will in turn create the next crisis plotted on Fichte's curve. It is at this point in line B that the creature must decide his next course of action and fights with his internal struggle of why he was ever born. "Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?" (Shelley, 135). As the creature advances in knowledge, another arc on Fichte's curve is plotted as the next crisis is established when the creature realizes he's alone and will be alone forever, but the creature is not the only character questioning why God allowed the monster to be created.

Shelley writes Victor into his own hellish array of circumstances each obstacle plotted on his own Fichte diagram with internal and external forces working for and against Victor as he decides how he will overcome the impeding event. Victor has a choice to make. Internally, Victor struggles with the fact that he created a being so repulsive that he can't even look at him. Let alone be around him, but Victor didn't have to act as he did. When Victor sinks into his own demise, he says, "I shunned the face of man; all sound of joy or complacency was torture to me; solitude was my only consolation – deep, dark, deathlike solitude" (Shelley, 90). Victor could have kept the creature with him but decided he couldn't bear witness to a creature so repulsive. Victor makes a choice and his choice is to sink into a deep depression and refuse to escape it even when his own father comes to Victor's home to console him. "Do you think, Victor, that I do not suffer also? No one could love a child more than I loved your brother, but is it not a duty to the survivors that we should refrain from augmenting their unhappiness by an appearance of immoderate grief?" (Shelley, 91). Even though Victor's father tries to pull him out of his hell, Victor surmises that his father has no idea that it was Victor who created the monster that took the life of a young boy and that the boy's death was because of his decision to create a being not of natural order. "Nothing in human shape could have destroyed the fair child. He was the murderer! I could not doubt it." (Shelley, 75). Victor decides to ignore his father's consoling and hides himself from his father's opinion about who was the true murderer of young William, even his letters to and from Elizabeth offer him no consolation as Victor believes that no one can understand what he has brought into this world.

What Shelley succeeded in doing when she allowed her characters to partake in writing letters back and forth to each other was to incorporate the deep interconnected thoughts that exist between loved ones and family. "The first lie of fiction is that it is the truth" (165), argues Turchi in his craft essay *The Writer as Cartographer*. "And a great deal of a novel or story's authority results from its availability to convince us of its authority. But as writers, and as careful readers, we must not confuse authority with objectivity or dedication to "reality" (Turchi, 165). These letters create verisimilitude, or the believability that what the characters are feeling and experiencing are valid as the characters encounter the first and second crises plotted in the rising action. As each arc

is plotted on Fichte's curve, verisimilitude is created when the characters admit to each other their innermost thoughts and must decide their next course of action as they attempt to overcome the obstacles in front of them.

In Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the creature's decision to learn how to communicate heightens the belief that the creature might be able to persuade the farmers at the cottage to accept him and allow him to become a member of their family. The creature's choice to build a relationship with the family leads him to his next crisis, or arc plotted on Fichte's curve when he decides to persuade the farmers of his value. The creature believes that by showing them how helpful he can be around the farm he will convince them that he is worthy to be a member of their family. So, the creature chops wood and stacks it neatly outside. He learns to read, write, and speak believing in his ability to convince the farmers just how human he really is. This hope creates energeia and propels the plot forward to the next crisis plotted in line B, or the next arc on Fichte's Curve. Shelley has placed increased pressure on the anticipation of the monster becoming a part of the farmer's family and creates energeia, energy that moves the plot forward as the reader now has emotional stakes in whether or not the creature will ever be accepted by farmers. The energeia created by the increased pressure of the "sequence of ideas provides some threat, the reader's involvement may be almost as great as it is in the well-built energeic plot" (The Art., 166). Another author capable of writing a well-built energeic plot besides Shelley, is John Gardner in his novel, Grendel.

In Gardner's *Grendel*, Gardner starts his story at the precise moment *Beowulf* begins, but from the monster's perspective allowing the reader to glimpse another viewpoint as Shelley has done in *Frankenstein* creating verisimilitude, or credibility in the narration by providing proof through Grendel over hearing the plans of Hrothgar. Grendel at this point can decide to turn around and go back to his lair with his mother or murder the Thanes in the mead-hall. His final decision is to feel his hunger pains and let those hunger pains decide his future actions, which in Fichte's curve, is mapped in line B and creates the first arc. Grendel makes his decision after learning of Hrothgar's plan to have him slain and with hunger in his stomach, takes on the mead-hall murdering everyone in his path. Grendel remarks, "I laugh, crumple over; I can't help myself. In the darkness, I alone see clear as day. While they squeal and screech and bump into each other, I silently sack up my dead and withdraw to the woods" (Grendel, 12). The next arc plotted in line B, or crises 2, rising toward the climax is when Grendel hangs trapped five feet up in the air, weak and unable free himself. In this crisis, Grendel cries out for his mother to come and rescue him, but the only creature stirring beside the calf in front of him is the bull he taunted on page 1. With external forces working against Grendel to escape the bull's charge, he puffs his chest and decides to take the bull head-on. The bull charges once and then charges again. "I laughed… I understood the world was nothing: a mechanical chaos of casual, brute enmity on which we stupidly impose our hope and

fears. I understood that, finally and absolutely, I alone exist" (Grendel, 21). Gardner writes drawing upon our empathy through the second crisis and reveals the strength and fortitude in Grendel as he decides to take each blow with stride, but what if the monster is not against natural law, but created within it?

In *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Highsmith creates a character, Tom Ripley, who lies, cheats, and scams his way through life taking advantage of any opportunity presented to him to get what he wants. Ripley is the monster that Shelley and Gardner create, but Ripley lacks one character trait that Grendel and the creature possess, guilt. When Grendel attempts to become a member of society, he tries to become friends with the Thanes and even vows not to murder anyone else until the dragon convinces him otherwise, but Ripley continues to murder and lie without any remorse for what he has done to the lives who've crossed his path and are now dead because of his actions, even when he is questioned by the detectives. The choice for Grendel to remain a good monster doesn't last long because external forces work to convince Grendel to change his valiant ways. The external force at work is the dragon, who is very convincing and succeeds in showing Grendel another point of view for why monsters are necessary in the lives of humans. So, Grendel takes the advice of the dragon convincing himself that he needs to accept who and what he is if he is to create battles for heroes to be born. In *Frankenstein*, the internal force, plotted as an ascending arrow on line B working to support the creature, is that he has learned to read and write and believes he can become a member of the farmer's family. The external force, plotted in a descending arrow on line B working against the creature, is the undeniable fact that he is a monster and can't be a member of society. The creature must act and act he does. He decides to introduce himself to the grandfather inside the family's cottage and befriends him. However, the forces are still working against him and the grandson returns home and defends his grandfather by beating the creature with a stick. The creature now has another choice to make. He can murder the farmer and his family fighting the external conflict with outward aggression or internally accept that he will never be received into the family, or society, and return to hiding in the forest. The creature makes his decision based on the love he feels for the family, which is plotted as an ascending arrow with the external force from the boy's decision to defend his grandfather working against the creature. According to Turchi in his *Writing as a Cartographer*, he states that "as writers, we need to project ourselves, so we can re-create what we have never seen or experienced" (172). The ability to project ourselves into each of our characters and allow them freewill to choose their next course of action is the writer's goal, even if our characters are monsters and their actions involve murder.

In *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Tom's decisions bring the reader deeper inside the mind of a serial murderer, who should not only have an ethical standard but a moral code, which Marge, Dickie's friend, calls into question when Tom is found trying on Dickie's suit in

Dickie's bedroom. Tom didn't have to decide to go into Tom's closet and try his suit on, but internally, he wanted to feel what it was like to be Tom. This is plotted on the Fichtean curve in an ascending arrow representing Tom's internal forces helping him make decisions, which through his actions, now reveals to Tom that he bears a striking resemblance to Dickie. The external forces working against Tom are first and foremost, Tom is not Dickie, and when Dickie and Marge find him trying on the suit, Tom needs to respond to his actions. Tom can tell the truth from what he's realized and tell Marge and Dickie how he looks like Dickie and now he questions murdering him. He can apologize and concoct a lie that suppresses the truth that he wanted to feel what it was like to be Dickie. The tension Highsmith creates in this one scene propels the narrative to the next crises on the Fichtean curve and the reader begins to detect that Dickie is feeling uneasy around Tom, especially because Marge suggests that Tom might be gay. That in itself is another snag in Tom's plan and Tom must decide his next course of action. Taking into account that soon Marge will convince Dickie to kick Tom out, Tom devises a plan to murder Dickie and take over his financial trust and ignore Marge while doing it. This choice is then mapped with a star between the internal and external conflicts working for and against Tom's decision to overtake Dickie's life. Highsmith writes that to her "suspense is when there is a threat of violent physical action and danger, or the danger and action itself" (Plotting., 3). She manages to create this suspense when Marge grows suspicious and Mr. Greenleaf hires a detective to find his missing son. This not only creates tension but also energeia when Ripley's character has to forego his identity of Dickie Greenleaf, allowing another crises point in Fichte's curve to be revealed.

Highsmith writes a chapter on plot development in her craft novel titled *Thickening the Plot*. In this writing, Highsmith notes that "the improvement or thickening of a plot is the piling on complications on the hero, or perhaps for his enemies. These complications are most effective in the form of surprise events. If the writer can thicken the plot and surprise the reader, the plot is logically improved" (Plotting., 38). Turchi agrees with Highsmith when he writes "good art, like an image, evokes more than it represents; it draws the imagination outward" (172). Like Turchi, Highsmith states in her craft book that by "thinking herself into the inside the skin of such a character, (her) own prose became more self-assured than it logically should have been. It became more entertaining. A reader likes to feel that the writer is quite in command of his material and has strength to spare" (Plotting., 75). To further strengthen the impact of the climax, the writer needs to develop internal and external forces working for and against the character as charted in line B of Fichte's Curve with an increased use of tension as the obstacles are surpassed as demonstrated in Connolly's, *The Black Angel*.

In *The Black Angel* as tension increases, Parker seeks to discover the whereabouts of a young woman bringing the reader on an investigative journey that leaves the reader

wondering if the young woman is dead or alive. Energeia is created when Aunt Martha blames Louis for not looking after Alice. This increased tension felt within Louis about what he should have done leads him to his current action of trying to convince Charlie Parker to find Alice and bring her home. The tension, or energeia, is heightened when Martha emotionally turns to Louis in front of Parker and scolds Louis making him guilty for his former lifestyle.

> "You should have looked out for her," Martha again told Louis.
> "I tried," he said. He looked old and tired.
> "She didn't want help, not the kind I could offer her." Martha's eyes ignited.
> "How can you say that? She was lost. She was a lost soul. She needed someone to bring her back. That should have been you" (Connelly, 53).

The reader is pulled directly into the narrative through emotionally connecting with Alice's Aunt Martha and Uncle Louis creating verisimilitude, or credibility, in the family's hopes that Alice will be found and returned home. In the opening scenes, Connolly writes the reader into the life of a young prostitute, Alice, who goes missing and can't be found, but he doesn't just write that she goes missing. He shows us her life in his narrative, so the reader can relate or not relate to Alice. "Alice rebelled against them and all that they represented; love, security, the bonds of family. She was drawn to a bad crowd, and left the safety of her mother's home" (Connolly, 49). The reader or listener at this point in the novel needs to make a moral decision as to whether Alice deserves to live or die and wait for the remaining pieces of Connolly's puzzle to be jig-sawed together.

As the internal and external conflicts are revealed in each arc in line B and verisimilitude is created, the plot thickens as Parker uncovers a Satanic and ancient order of men, who collect bone sculptures and could be responsible for the disappearance of Alice. This order of men believed Alice had no family ties and was expendable because Alice never spoke of her family. Her Uncle Louis, according to Alice's Aunt was supposed to take care of Alice and watch out for her, but he didn't because he was not considered a reputable man, which adds to the tension creating the verisimilitude, or the credibility, of why Louis would even feel responsible for finding her after abandoning her. This responsibility is also noted by the murderers when they reasoned Alice had no known relatives and why the bad men would suggest her as bones for satanic sculptures, which also creates credibility in the narrative arcs leading to the climax. After the character surpasses the last obstacle charted on line B in Fichte's curve, the story's climax marks the peak of the ascending line B marking "the crisis to end all others. It's the tipping point" (Hamilton, 3) before the falling action. At the top of line B and the descending line C, the tip of the triangle is formed. This is the pinnacle moment in the story when the main character has one more final decision to make that will change the course of

life for better or worse. After reaching the climax in the story, "the declining (Line C) descends back to the base and is called the falling action, or denouement" (The Art., 187). At this point in the narrative, "the conflict is now resolved, or in the process of resolving, either because the will of the central character has been overwhelmed or because he has won and his situation is once more stabilizing" (The Art., 188) as is Parker's decision to remain outside the order.

In Connelly's *The Black Angel*, the climax of the novel is not at the discovery that Alice is dead and the Order of the Black Angels are revealed to Parker, but that Parker is the fallen Black Angel. Parker has to decide whether or not he wants to remain separated from the order and live with the repercussions of his decision taking into account that he separated from the order for a higher purpose. Externally, the order will accept him once again and grant him privilege he doesn't currently have. The external forces are thus plotted descending inward on line B of Fichte's curve while Parker's internal emotions are thus plotted ascending upward supporting his decision to remain outside the order. Parker again must face external pressures as the order confronts him with the curse he will endure if he continues to remain outside the order. The order warns that every love he will ever have will be cursed and all that he longs for will become a dreaded nightmare, but to Parker, this is something he can live with. Parker makes the choice to remain outside of the order, as plotted as the star on Fichte's curve as his final decision to the order's offer. This is depicted when "the base of line C connects with line A and reverts back to the base of line A with the conflict resolved" (The Art., 189). Spark argues, "In short, our ends have to have meaning, or, if that sounds too grand, we want our endings to make some sense of what has come before. The convention is that a closing will tie together the body of the story by offering an image or thought or final piece of information that gives one last, perspective" (112) as is the example in Frankenstein in the final scenes leading up to the climax of the narration.

In *Frankenstein*, the last rising crisis plotted in line B of Fichte's curve is when the creature decides to requests a female companion and Victor must decide his next course of action. Internally, Victor must take into account committing the same sin against natural order and facing the consequences for his actions. The external force working to persuade Victor is that the creature threatens to murder Elizabeth, Victor's one true love. Gardner refers to a novel with two energeic plots, the so-called architectonic novel, each focused on a central character or group of characters" (The Art., 189). In Shelley's novel, all character plots merge into each other when Victor's father tries to console him after the murders, but it is of no use since Victor's father doesn't believe Victor is responsible. Since Shelley wrote from multiple viewpoints, the creature waits impatiently for Victor to create a female monster for him to love and when Victor doesn't decide, the creature must "act" in response to Victor's indecisiveness. Gardner believes if the "thematic connection between the various episodes is too neat, the novel

will seem contrived and unlifelike; and if the connections are too vague, the novel may lack focus" (The Art., 191). The monster can walk away, choose not to destroy Victor's love, and grant Victor what he cannot have himself. This would reveal the creature's understanding in the importance of love and relationships, but what the creature decides upon is revenge. He then decides his next course of action, the final course of action, to end all other actions, leading to the climax, which is to take the life of Elizabeth. The monster sneaks into Victor's house to kill Elizabeth on their wedding night refusing Victor what Victor refuses to create for him. The climatic moment is when Victor finds Elizabeth murdered and the creature, whom he had brought to life, stands staring at him with eyes wide open and a smile upon his face. From Victor's standpoint he recalls "a grin was on the face of the monster; he seemed to jeer, as with his fiendish finger he pointed towards the corpse of my wife. I rushed towards the window, and drawing a pistol from my bosom, fired; but he alluded me" (Shelley, 207) and escaped through the opened window. In the denouement or plotted on the Fichtean Curve as line A reverting back to line B, the creature and Victor will live alone and with the unimaginable consequences of their actions. For Victor, he will suffer the consequences for creating a monster against natural order and the creature for murdering Victor's family. With the monster floating away on a raft from Victor to continue his life in peace, he promises not to cause any more destruction because to him, his revenge is complete with the murder of Elizabeth. "What rings and resounds at the end of a novel is not just physical, however. What moves us is not just that characters, images, and events get some form of recapitulation or recall: We are moved by the increasing connectedness of things, ultimately a connectedness of values" (The Art., 191), according to Gardner. This is when the base of line C connects with line A and reverts back to the corner of line B creating a triangle that brings the narrative structure back to the starting point. By the end of Shelley's novel, Victor and the creature will continue to live out their lives without their hopes of love ever coming true. This is not the same when taking into account the ending Highsmith writes in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* because by the end of the novel, Ripley has acquired all that he has aspired to become and has no remorse for the crimes he has committed.

To further graph Fichte's curve from the final crisis before the climax, Ripley takes on the identify of Dickie after murdering him and must evade the detectives hired by Mr. Greenleaf to solve his son's murder. Tom must make a decision. He can either turn himself in and tell the truth or lie his way out of it. The internal forces working in favor of Ripley is his ability to lie and scheme intricate plans that no one will be able to figure, not even the detectives hired by Mr. Greenleaf. The external forces working against Tom are Dickie's best friend, Marge, and Dickie's father, who are providing information to the detectives to solve Dickie's murder. Ripley makes a decision, which is then plotted as the star in the center of the ascending and descending forces on line B, and Ripley decides to weave his way in and out of the questions posed to him by the detectives.

According to Hamilton and his essay on *Fichte's Curve*, "while the rising action makes up the bulk of the story, the climax is equally important. An action-based genre might make this a huge fight, but it could also be something more cerebral, such as a big reveal, a plot twist, or a huge loss" (6). The last and pinnacle moment occurs when Ripley figures that he can assume Dickie's inheritance and writes a last will, a will that Ripley says Dickie wrote before passing. Ripley could have decided to leave well enough alone and be happy that he wasn't being brought up on murder charges but Ripley takes another bold action and plans to secure Dickie's financial trust. "The falling action is basically every loose end that needs to be tied up before the book ends, after the climax" (Hamilton, 3). This is when Mr. Greenleaf agrees to his son's false wishes and Ripley secures his future through Dickie's financial trust. The falling action "relieves the tension, and bring the story to a satisfying conclusion" (Hamilton, 3) but in the case of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, the ending only brings more questions in the reader's mind. According to Searle, "the ending has to hit you. She means, the end is a matter of inspiration. It has to come to you. You can't fake it. It's like a title in that way; it is, more than other parts of the story, something that is less worked for than received. But she adds, once you've been hit, you can write toward the end" (Spark, 115).

A number of authors imagine the ending of their stories before their stories are even written, Poe for one and Steve Stern another. "Stern admits that he gets the image that resolves a story before he gets the story itself. Everything else is a retroactive process, a story that culminates in that image" (Spark, 115). Spark agrees with Stern and writes, 'knowing the ending of a story may enhance your writing skills because every detail, character trait and decision will lead up to the final line in your story' (115). In *Grendel*, Gardner writes intense final words for Grendel to say as he lays dying in the woods.

> "Is it joy I feel? They watch on, evil, incredibly stupid, enjoying my destruction. 'Poor Grendel's had an accident,' I whisper. 'So may you all" (Grendel, 174).

Those last lines in Gardner's novel, hit with the bang that Searle discusses because "So may you all" is Grendel's last wish that destruction and demise may befall every animal, who watches on as he succumbs to death. The last few sentences of a novel, just as the beginning lines of a novel, should resonate with readers long after the book ends. Gardner believes that "a novel is like a symphony in that its closing movement echoes and resounds with all that has gone before…. Toward the close of a novel, the writer brings back directly or in the form of his characters' recollections – images, characters, events, and intellectual motifs encountered earlier" (The Art., 184) such as in *The Talented Mr. Ripley*.

Highsmith believes that evil acts of violence not punished leave the reader feeling slighted and also admits that she "finds the public passion for justice quite boring and

artificial, for neither life nor nature cares if justice is ever done or not. The public wants to see the law triumph, or at least the general public does, though at the same time the public likes brutality" (Plotting., 56). According to Gardner, "even at the end of a short story, the power of an organized return of images, events, and characters can be considerable. In the closing moments of a novel the effect can be overwhelming" (The Art., 193). The reoccurring motifs add the final pieces to the puzzle connecting the return of images that leave an emotional impact on the reader, as line C connects with line A and reverts back to line B.

In the denouement of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Highsmith takes a different approach and writes Ripley succeeding in his plot to assume the financial trust Mr. Greenleaf has set up for his son, Dickie. Highsmith admits that even though "censorship has eased, a book is altogether more eligible for television and movie sales if the hero-criminal is caught, punished, and made to feel awful at the end. It is almost preferable to kill him in the course of the story, if the law is not going to" (Plotting., 55). Highsmith does this tactic well by ending her character's journey with yet another journey that provides the necessary profluence needed for the audience to buy her next Ripley novel. Another author who sets up the final scenes for a next book is Connolly in *The Black Angel*.

In Connolly's novel unlike Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Parker finds out he is a fallen angel and decides to turn his back on the order even though misery is destined to befall him. Connolly ends the novel there and sets up his next Parker story leaving the audience wondering if Parker will remain outside the order or return to it. In *Frankenstein*, Victor tries to punish the creature for his crimes but is unable to shoot and kill him in the final scene as the creature escapes knowing that he is doomed to live in his own hellish nightmare alone. Gardner states that "the novel's denouement, is not the end of the story but the story's fulfillment. Here at last, emotionally if not intellectually, the reader understands everything and everything is symbolic" (The Art., 194). Even though the creature escapes, he will still be punished by society for being different and this, according to Highsmith, is justice served. Many authors including Shelley and Connolly allow their characters freewill to make mistakes, but as Highsmith contents, the author shouldn't let his character take over the narration. The author needs to always remain in control of the characters and the situations the author places them in. Gardner suggests for writers to "leave nothing- no slightest detail unexamined; and when you discover implication in some image or event, inch those implications toward the surface. This may be done in a variety of ways; by introducing subtle repetitions of the image, so that it catches the reader's subliminal attention; by slipping the image into a metaphor that helps to fix and clarity the meaning you have found in it; or by placing the image or event in closer proximity to related symbols" (The Art, 194) as Gardner does in the denouement of his novel *Grendel*.

By mapping on the Fichtean Curve, authors are offered sure and sound guidance in charting the internal and the external forces working for and against the character with the character's deciding action plotted where the star is centered as demonstrated in the figure on page 2. Fichte's Curve doesn't only help the writer structure the rising action in his or her narrative plot, but also aids the writer by being able to graph on the hypotenuse triangle the forces working for and against the main character. By charting the intensifying crises, the author can question whether or not he has included obstacles sufficient enough for the character to reveal himself or herself by allowing the author to map those crises on the hypotenuse triangle with the ascending and descending arrow representing those said forces. The assured method of applying Fichte's Curve doesn't only structure the writer's rising action mapping each crisis surpassed but also enables the writer with the ability to track the internal and external conflicts as the author decides his character's next course of action before the culmination of events is reached. The force that propels the narrative toward the climax is the energeia created by the author's ability to create chaos and present order.

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