

An Introduction to the Narrative Structure of the “Awakening Arc”

by
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This thesis attempts to identify and develop a new narrative structure that has not yet been identified. This structure, which traces a character’s internal process of change throughout a work of literature, is known as the Awakening Arc. The Awakening Arc has seven stages that loosely correspond to Freytag’s external plot structure. If a character successfully completes all seven stages in the correct order, they have experienced a complete awakening. Should a character fail to fully complete all stages, their awakening arc is incomplete. This thesis will articulate the arc by providing a thorough explanation of each stage; I will then identify these stages in three works of literature. Two of these works express a complete awakening arc, while the remaining text expresses an incomplete arc. Through this, I argue for the viability of the Awakening Arc as a narrative structure.

Key Words: Narrative, narrative structure, character arc, literature, fiction, Ray Bradbury, Thomas Pynchon, Leo Tolstoy

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Alexa Joy Tawzer, Author

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Introduction

Narrative, in all its many forms, has been an integral part of human society and culture throughout time. As Roland Barthes wrote, “There are countless forms of narrative in the world... Moreover, in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative” (237). Though Barthes’s school of thought has been modified and challenged, I return to his understanding that narrative is everywhere, “[l]ike life itself...international, transhistorical, transcultural” (237). Narratives and stories surround us and are often used as tools to communicate our lives, experiences, and emotions. These narratives are not only present through works of literature, but through various other mediums such as advertisements, films, or even the recollections that we laughingly tell our family and friends. Some narratives, in the form of great works of literature, even transcend time and culture when they are read and studied today.

As narratives are such a fundamental part of human life and experience, many scholars have rightly been devoted to their study and examination. This thesis is similarly grounded in Barthes’s idea that narratives share “common structures” (238) that can be identified, analyzed, and articulated. In studying these common structures, we can learn more about not only narratives, but the roles they play in our lives and societies. Through the analysis of great works of literature, I have developed my own model of one such common structure: the Awakening Arc. The development of this narrative structure is grounded in centuries of discourse involving narrative and literary theory, but I will focus that argument onto a few modes of thought from the last century to today.

The early twentieth century saw the birth of structuralism, advanced by such scholars and theorists as Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes, and Claude Lévi-Strauss. The theory of structuralism is grounded in the study of linguistics; it posits that modes and forms of narrative can be dissected and understood in the same way as language. First, it argues that language, and by extension narrative, is constructed of a series of signs, signifiers, and signifieds. A “sign” is a unit of meaning made up of the signifier and the signified. The “signifier” is a word or sound (such as “dog” or “tree”), while the “signified” would be the subjective, interpretive meaning associated with that signifier (the image in one’s head, for example, of a specific kind of tree, or the definition of a “tree” as a plant with a trunk, leaves, and branches). There is no fixed link between signifier and signified, only the context in which they are rooted. Thus, words in a language are only mutually intelligible when set within the known context of the rest of that language.

Similarly, words of a language are understood based on their differences from other words or sounds. For example, the ability to understand and interpret the word “book” hinges on one’s ability to tell the difference between the sounds that make up this word and those that make up other, similar words like “boot.” Therefore, words exist and derive meaning from “webs of difference” between one another, and they are only understood within the context of their differences or oppositions. Similarly, structuralists argue that narratives have “common structures” that are understood mainly through contrasts with other structures. Narratives, like language, have loose, contextual meanings that are only understood insofar as the overall context in which they are placed is understood. In studying narrative structure, structuralists seek to identify and understand the overall systems in which narratives exist and take their meaning, just as individual words derive meaning from the structure of their language as a whole.

By the late 1960s, a new theory had emerged that arose out of opposition to the structuralist viewpoint. A major proponent of this new way of thought was Jacques Derrida, who “deconstructed” structuralist thought by pointing out its inherent flaws and contradictions. At the core of structuralism, Derrida argued, was a vast contradiction that limited the theory’s applicability and relevance. First, structuralism insists not only that narratives are set within common structures, but that these structures are anchored by a fixed point, or “center,” that determines their interpretation. However, Derrida pointed out that, given structuralism’s argument that there is no fixed point that links signifier and signified, only context and contrast, such a center cannot logically exist either. Instead, by forcing a false center into a structure where none exists, Derrida argues that structuralists severely limit the function of that structure. In other words, they limit the possibilities of “the play of substitutions” (289). Instead, Derrida contends that structuralists should embrace the fact that there is no fixed center of meaning. By accepting “this movement of play, permitted by the lack or absence of a center or origin” (289), numerous new possibilities of study emerge.

Derrida’s argument in favor of an unstable center of meaning became part of a vast number of poststructuralist theories in the latter half of the twentieth century, including deconstructionism, postmodernism, and feminist critical theory, among others. These theories all operate on the idea that there is no fixed center of meaning, that meaning can lie anywhere and in anything, and that established structures and modes of thinking should be critically examined and “deconstructed” to expose their flaws and contradictions. This movement greatly influenced the art and literature of the time, and these postmodern works, such as Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*, dominated the literary and popular landscape. As Jean-Francois Lyotard concisely expresses, postmodernism can be defined as “an incredulity toward metanarratives”

(xxiv). In other words, postmodernism is a vast questioning of all widely accepted narratives of culture, art, society, and thought, or any other sort of “metadiscourse” that makes “an explicit appeal to some grand narrative” (xxiii). This is clearly rooted in poststructuralist thought as articulated by Derrida; for without a fixed center of meaning, all structures that claim to have such a center are immediately suspect. In response, these metanarratives must be deconstructed, or exposed, questioned, and criticized in light of the lack of a center of meaning.

Currently, the direction of the next major theory remains somewhat open. While other literary theories have been developed and are used today, there have been none that have dominated literary thought as theories such as structuralism and poststructuralism have in the past. This leaves many scholars questioning if theory has run its course, or if the very idea of theory must in itself be called into question. Terry Eagleton has vocalized this as a compelling question: What comes now, after theory? There is some sense that the era of poststructuralism and its related parts has passed; now, perhaps, something must be reconstructed from what has been deconstructed. In considering this, I see fresh value in the structuralist idea that narratives share “common structures” that can be analyzed and identified for greater understanding. As Barthes contends, we are surrounded by and are fluent in narratives. In examining the structures and codes that storytellers use to express these narratives, perhaps we should return to some structuralist ways of thinking. In other words, we can return to an objectivity, or a renewed sense of the “center” of narrative. In doing so, we can move beyond a strictly structuralist way of thinking and extend the study of narratives into various disciplines and aspects of public life. I believe that the key to this lies in Martha Nussbaum’s construction of the literary imagination.

Nussbaum contends that the study of narratives, and novels in particular, can have an immensely beneficial effect on public life. This is because they foster what she calls “the literary

imagination,” which allows us to see our fellow human beings as they are presented in novels—with individual worth, rich inner emotional lives, and complex stories and histories that must not be reduced to mass statistics. Most of all, the literary imagination is fueled by the use of “fancy,” which, according to Nussbaum, is “the ability to see one thing as another, to see one thing in another. We might also call it the metaphorical imagination. It...endows perceived patterns with a significance that is not present in the bare sense perception itself” (235). This narrative-derived ability to see “a perception...as pointing to something beyond itself” (235) is perhaps the logical counterpoint to both structuralism’s system of signs and Derrida’s sense of infinite play. Instead, the concept of fancy grounds the study of narrative in metaphor, empathy, and imagination.

By presenting itself as a metaphor, narrative gives us “not just a concrete set of images in terms of which to imagine this particular world [of the narrative], but also, and more significantly, a general cast of mind with which to approach our own” (43-44). This “general cast of mind,” or the literary imagination, is “an essential part of both the theory and the practice of citizenship” (52) and is in turn “a crucial agent of democratic equality” (119) that extends at least as far back as Walt Whitman. It fosters a democratic sense of equality through narrative, which functions as the vehicle that implies the tenor of democratic vision. This grounds narrative in a new kind of center, which is a metaphor that reveals the humanity of others. Studying the forms of narrative is therefore essential, because only the imagination embedded in and taught by these forms leads us to see in others’ “unequal treatment a degradation of oneself” (119). By teaching us to see and understand the complex and meaningful lives of others, narrative is an essential proponent of empathy and equality; these narrative forms therefore come to embody “a certain sort of moral/political vision—democratic, compassionate, committed to complexity, choice and qualitative differences” (36). I believe this is an essential concept for modern literary theory. By

approaching narrative as something that can positively affect public life, literary theory becomes a vehicle for outward change. In this way, theory can be concretely tied to and used to affect the world around us, and the study of narrative structure can become a vehicle for positive change.

This, therefore, is the theoretical background in which my thesis is grounded. I argue, first, for a return to the structuralist idea that narratives share common structures that can be identified, analyzed, studied, and articulated, and second, to the need to reconstruct what has already been thoroughly deconstructed. To this end, I am aligning with Nussbaum's contention that narrative fosters the literary imagination and the fancy that positively influences our actions and views of one another. In this way, narrative becomes a way of viewing and approaching the world that lends itself to democratic, compassionate, and empathetic treatment of those around us. Because of this, my return to the idea of a common structure and a center of meaning is grounded in the belief that narrative can positively affect our lives and societies, allowing us to use both theory and narrative to turn outward to positively impact the world around us.

To this end, my thesis will present a common narrative structure that I have identified by studying several works of literature. This narrative structure is called the Awakening Arc, a form of character arc that tracks a character's internal process of change throughout a work of literature. The arc is made up of seven stages that loosely correspond to Freytag's external plot structure. In undergoing this arc, characters move from stagnation and ignorance to a discovery and understanding of their identity, purpose, and community. This process of internal change is called awakening.

I will identify and articulate the Awakening Arc by first outlining its seven stages, then by tracing the arc through three different works of literature: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, *The Crying of Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon, and *The Death of Ivan Ilych* by Leo Tolstoy. These

works differ in many ways, including in date of publication, country of origin, length, genre, and literary period; nevertheless, they all display characteristics of the Awakening Arc. Through this, I argue for the viability of the Awakening Arc as a narrative structure.

Overview of the Awakening Arc

Great literature depicts characters moving through an internal process that ultimately impacts their external world. This internal process can be traced through a plot structure known as the Awakening Arc. For a character to move fully through this Awakening Arc, he must ask and answer key questions about purpose, identity, and community. He must come to a full realization of the world around him, his place in it, and the best way to move forward within that world. This process of becoming aware of one's world, self, and purpose is known as the process of awakening. The character moves forward on his internal journey as he seeks answers to these key questions. In a completed arc, the character's purpose and identity will work together to serve and better his community.

The Awakening Arc is made up of seven stages that loosely parallel Freytag's dramatic external plot structure: Sleepwalking, the Quickening, Discovery, Rebellion, Recognition, Choice, and Continuing.

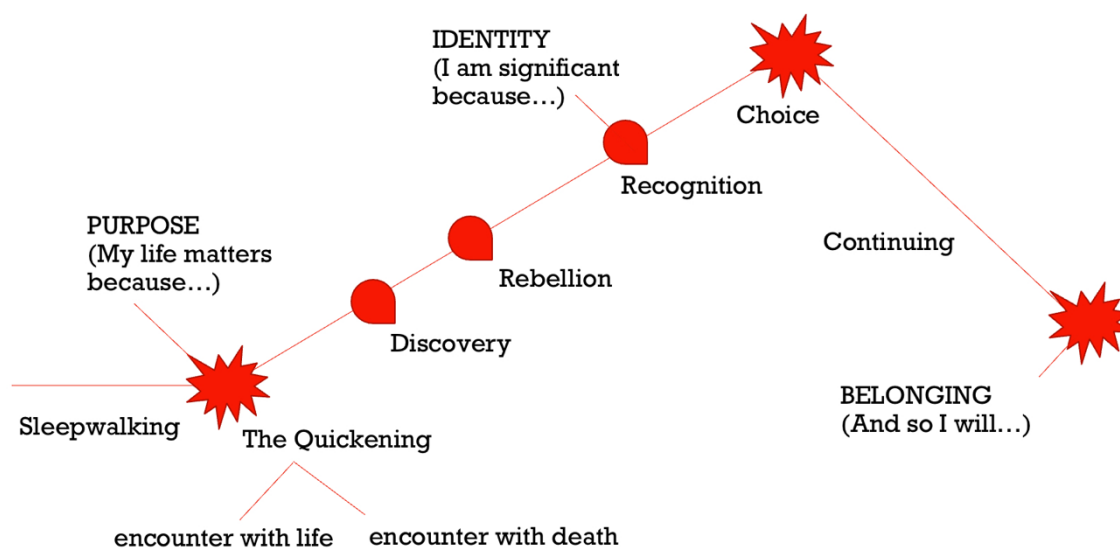


Fig. 1 Structure of the Awakening Arc

Characters will begin their stories sleepwalking. This means they are like children, with no real understanding of who they are, the nature of their world, or the people around them. As a sleepwalker, the character is ignorant because she is blind, unable to see the flaws in herself or in the world around her. This blindness causes her to be stuck and stagnant, and this exposition sets the stage for the awakening to come.

The character's inciting incident is called the quickening. The quickening serves to move the character out of his fixed position, jarring him out of complacency so that he can experience change. It is the first moment of true awakening and therefore jumpstarts the character's entire awakening arc. The quickening is furthermore made up of two parts that work together to awaken the character. When experienced together, these two parts force the character out of his sleepwalking life and into change. To experience a full quickening, the character must first experience the encounter with life and then the encounter with death.

The encounter with life is a moment that allows the character to see her potential. In this moment, the character catches a glimpse of what her life could be. This stirs the character's heart with hope because she sees the possibility of meaning, fulfillment, and true satisfaction that will come through finding her purpose. This initial part of the quickening offers the character insight that brings a longing to pursue the purpose that will give her life meaning. Often this encounter comes in the form of a person or personified thing who represents who the character could become if she chooses to change. This person is the promise of new life for the character.

Part two of the quickening, on the other hand, often feels like a moment of death. This encounter with death is the moment when the character encounters his "old world" through the new perspective of his encounter with life. The character realizes that currently his life is not this hopeful possibility, but he cannot see how to move from his current reality to where he now

wants to go. In this part of the quickening, the character will feel sorrow that causes deep pain, but it is this very pain that will push the character onto the path of awakening.

The combination of the encounters with life and death push the character into the third stage, discovery. In this stage, both parts of the quickening have made the character dissatisfied with her current life. She wants to move forward and achieve her purpose, but she does not know how. The character begins to realize how everything in the surrounding world is all so different from the ideal she saw in the encounter with life. Through this process, she realizes that the world is deeply flawed in a multitude of ways. This causes the contrast between the potential that she saw and the world that currently exists around her to come sharply into focus. The discovery of these flaws will make the character angry, and she will misdirect that anger at the people around her. She will at this point misidentify the flaw's source, and so will blame other people for the flaw's existence. However, this recognition of the flaws of her world is actually the next step forward.

The character's discovery of the world's flaws will lead him into the rebellion stage. Here, the character's search for meaning will continue to raise awareness of the many flaws of his world. He will begin to see these flaws made manifest in a number of ways. He will also continue to misdirect his anger at this flaw at the people around him that he blames for the problem. As a result of his growing resentment, he will lash out at the people he blames for the flaws. Initially, anger and blame will feel like action that will fix the problem, but in reality it will only make the problem worse. This emotionally-based attempt to fix the problem will inevitably fail and backfire, because the character is not addressing the real source of the problem or his own complicity in it. His actions, however, will result in consequences that will

make it harder, if not impossible, to return to life “as normal” later. Nevertheless, this rebellion will eventually lead to true possibility and understanding.

The failure of the character’s rebellion will force the character into the recognition stage. In this stage, the character is forced to acknowledge her own complicity in the problems of her world. She has begun to “look the monster in the eyes” by acknowledging the flaws of her world, and now she must look it in the eyes fully by recognizing that she is part of the problem. She must accept that the people she lashed out at are no different, really, than she. This recognition will inevitably lead to compassion. By recognizing that she is complicit, the character is moved to pity or compassion for the people around her for the first time. In doing so, she looks inward at the state of her own heart. When she does, she begins to recognize her identity, first revealed to her during the encounter with life. This recognition spurs her out of reaction into action, as she begins to desire to help others rather than lashing out at them.

The character’s search, discoveries, and actions lead him to a final, climactic Choice: Will the character lash out to protect himself, or will he choose to protect others over himself? In this moment, the character can choose to learn from the purpose and identity he has begun to discover, embracing compassion over self-protection. If he chooses to take action out of compassion for others, especially if it is at great risk to himself, he has hit the peak of his awakening.

Once the character chooses compassion at the climax of the story, she is left with one final choice: Will she continue to choose compassion, or will she reject it and attempt to revert to her old self? In the falling action of the arc, or the Continuing, the character again has the opportunity to choose compassion and in doing so continue to pursue her own purpose and identity. If she continues to choose compassion, she will display this through her choices. She

will begin to turn outward, seeking the good of others over herself. In short, she will choose others before herself. These choices will reaffirm the initial choice she made at the climax and will solidify her awakening. Most importantly, in this stage the character will seek out a community. She will try to find the people and place where she belongs. This is the group that will most benefit from her purpose in action. If she finds this community, where she chooses to put her purpose and identity into practice out of compassion for its people, the awakening arc is truly complete.

In a fully complete awakening arc, the character's purpose and identity will work together to serve his community. He will positively impact his world, and his awakening will bring life to those around him. For this to happen, all seven stages of the arc must be hit fully and in the correct order. Alternatively, the arc can be considered complete if the first six stages, up through the Choice, are hit fully. Only the encounter with life, the encounter with death, and the choice need be single moments or scenes; the remaining stages can take place through any number of scenes, and these stages can be any length as long as the character experiences their truth completely. Because of this, there are no length constraints to the awakening arc, and this allows it to be found in both novels and short stories. Furthermore, as an internal character arc, the awakening arc can accompany any type of external plot, plot structure, or genre. As long as the character goes through an internal process that meets each stage of the awakening arc, his arc will be considered complete. If a stage is skipped or not fully formed, however, the arc is considered incomplete.

It is important to note that some characters may go through a partial or incomplete awakening arc, engaging only with some of the stages or not fully engaging in certain stages. If a character does not fully encounter each stage in the correct order, she has undergone an

incomplete awakening arc. Many incomplete awakening arcs are characterized by two components: an incomplete encounter with life, along with a skipped recognition. These characters may still reach the Choice stage, and often do, but they cannot make the choice that leads to awakening without encountering all previous stages in their entirety. One example of this will be explored later in this thesis. First, however, I will look at an example of a complete awakening arc in the form of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*.

Example #1: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury*Complete Awakening Arc*

Fahrenheit 451 is, in many ways, an archetypal example of the complete awakening arc. Its protagonist, Guy Montag, is a futuristic fireman who burns books instead of saving them. As the novel progresses, he is forced out of his slumber, gradually transforming into a refugee who protects and preserves not only books but the knowledge they contain. Each character in the novel is drawn in broad strokes that reveal clearly the different stages of awakening. Some, like Montag, begin to see clearly the terrifying reality of their world, while others, like Captain Beatty and Mildred, are content in the falsity of the prevailing narrative. Montag's internal struggle becomes especially stark when set against the dystopian backdrop of his society, and his fight against the oppressive nature of that society mirrors the awakening he begins to experience within. Because of this, I believe *Fahrenheit 451* is the best introduction to the concept of a complete awakening arc. Each stage in the arc is hit clearly and unambiguously, and Montag's external society throws these internal events into greater focus. In this way, Montag's journey from fireman to rebel showcases clearly the entirety of the complete awakening arc.

Montag's sleepwalking stage is cast clearly from the opening line: "It was a pleasure to burn" (1). It quickly becomes clear that his job as a fireman is more than an obligation; it is a source of pleasure and excitement. By burning books, he contributes to the oppressive nature of his society, and he enjoys doing so. Furthermore, as Montag returns to the firehouse and then back to his own home, Bradbury skillfully shows how the excitement of book burning stems from the fact that Montag is essentially oblivious to the world around him. Like most others in his society, he thinks shallowly, doesn't ask questions, and pursues only simple, meaningless

pleasures. These pleasures are often dangerous and destructive, but excitement and pleasure are mistaken for the pursuit of happiness.

There is a shift in the narrative when Montag meets his new neighbor, the seventeen-year-old and crazy Clarisse. As they engage in conversation, Clarisse notes that ““You laugh when I haven’t been funny and you answer right off. You never stop to think what I’ve asked you”” (6). Though most are fearful of Montag’s occupation, Clarisse is not; she begins to engage him in the world around him, pointing out simple parts of his world that he never knew existed:

“Did you know that once billboards were only twenty feet long? But cars started rushing by so quickly they had to stretch the advertising out so it would last.”

“I didn’t know that!” Montag laughed abruptly.

“But I know something else you don’t. There’s dew on the grass in the morning. ...And if you look”—she nodded at the sky—“there’s a man in the moon.”

He hadn’t looked for a long time. (7)

Montag’s ignorance of the world around him is characteristic of a society that lives only for fast-paced pleasure. As this conversation shows, he walks through the world as if in a dream. The book later shows that this is typical of most everyone in Montag’s world, which is characterized by thoughtlessness, recklessness, and the endless pursuit of pleasure. However, in this same conversation, Clarisse provokes Montag to truly look at the world around him for the first time.

This is Montag’s encounter with life. The narrative makes clear that Clarisse embodies life, light, and warmth. She is the antithesis of the mindless destruction of the rest of their society, for she is described as intelligent, curious, gentle, kind, and above all intensely aware of the world around her. She is shown to embody life, for her very presence causes the temperature to rise, and nature seems to come alive around her: “They walked...and there was the faintest

breath of fresh apricots and strawberries in the air, and he looked around and realized this was quite impossible, so late in the year” (4). Even though Montag is a fireman, Clarisse is not afraid of him. She engages him in an easy, gentle conversation, asking questions, expressing herself openly, and inviting Montag to experience the world around them. She reminds him of the power of emotional connection, engaging him in honest conversation and stirring in him memories of closeness with his mother. Most importantly, however, Clarisse shows Montag what he could become.

Something about the vibrancy of Clarisse’s life touches Montag, showing him possibility where before there was only emptiness. As a representation of life and possibility, Clarisse also gives Montag a glimpse of the best parts of himself, reflecting back at him his own possibility and potential: “How like a mirror, too, her face. Impossible; for how many people did you know that refracted your own light to you? ...How rarely did other people’s faces take of you and throw back to you your own expression, your own innermost trembling thought?” (8). Clarisse’s “incredible power of identification” (9) comes through her deep sense of care and compassion. By engaging with Montag without fear and showing him his own potential, she makes him desire something more in his life. Her sharp, but deeply compassionate, question, ““Are you happy?”” (7), pierces Montag on a deeper level and sets him on his path to awakening. With that question, she points him towards the areas of his life that need to change. With compassion, she shows Montag a glimpse of his purpose: He could become like her, compassionate and deeply aware, using books to inspire others to awaken to the world around them.

Immediately after meeting Clarisse, Montag returns home and has his encounter with death. There, he listens for his sleeping wife, Mildred, who is made doubly oblivious to the world by the audio-playing “seashells” she wears constantly in her ears. Whereas Clarisse was

described using imagery that evoked life, light, and warmth, Montag's home is described with imagery soaked in death, darkness, and coldness: "It was like coming into the cold marbled room of a mausoleum after the moon has set. Complete darkness, not a hint of the silver world outside, the windows tightly shut, the chamber a tomb-world where no sound from the great city could penetrate" (9). Because he had his encounter with life, Montag is able to see his normal life in a completely different light. Thus, at the prospect of coming home to a dark, cold house and a distant wife, Montag becomes deeply unhappy. Then, Montag discovers that his wife has overdosed on sleeping pills. It is only when he is confronted in this way with the reality of his life as it is that he recognizes, for the first time, how distant that life is from what Clarisse showed him it could be: "He felt his smile slide away, melt... He was not happy. He was not happy. He said the words to himself. He recognized this as the true state of affairs. He wore his happiness like a mask and the girl had run off across the lawn with the mask and there was no way of going to knock on her door and ask for it back" (9). This realization makes Mildred's overdose even more shocking and upsetting to Montag. In contrast with the encounter with life, this literal encounter with death forces Montag to recognize and accept that he is not happy with his life as it is; he recognizes that in fact he lives a deeply unhappy and meaningless existence. This realization shocks him out of the complacency that marked his sleepwalking stage and forces him into the first steps of awakening.

After these twin encounters, Montag enters into his Discovery stage. In this stage, a series of scenes shows Montag how his world is truly flawed. First, Montag realizes how distanced Mildred is from her near-death experience. She awakens with no memory of the previous night; when Montag asks her about taking all of her sleeping pills, she denies it: "I wouldn't do a thing like that. Why would I do a thing like that?" (17). She refuses to acknowledge that anything out

of the ordinary even happened, and she is instead wholly consumed with her “TV parlor”: three wall-to-wall television screens. Mildred shows far more concern for the parlor and the TV “family” than she does for anything else. Meanwhile, Montag continues to visit with Clarisse, who shares with him all her observations about the world. These observations include all the flaws of the world around them: ““Do you notice how people hurt each other nowadays? ...I’m afraid of children my own age. They kill each other. Did it always use to be that way? ...Six of my friends have been shot in the last year alone. Ten of them died in car wrecks”” (27). However, just as Montag gets used to having her around, she disappears.

After Clarisse disappears, Montag begins to question the purpose of the firemen. He asks his captain if, as Clarisse said, firemen used to prevent fires rather than start them, which his captain denies. Montag’s questions only intensify, however, when the firemen are called off by an “alarm.” They discover an old woman who has been hoarding books in her home, and they prepare to burn the home and all the books inside. Montag steals a book from her house, then is further shaken when the woman chooses to burn along with her books. The experience affects him deeply, forcing him to question what could be in books that could make the woman give up her life. When he returns home, this experience prompts him to realize even more clearly just how distant he is from his wife. Mildred, absorbed in her TV parlor by day and her audio-Seashells at night, is both mentally and physically distant from her husband and the world around her. Montag realizes that he has no true emotional connection with her: “And suddenly she was so strange he couldn’t believe he knew her at all” (39). He asks her how they met, and neither of them can remember. Montag sees that he is so disconnected from her that “if she died, he was certain he wouldn’t cry. For it would be the dying of an unknown...and it was suddenly so very wrong that he had begun to cry, not at death but at the thought of *not crying* at death, a silly

empty man near a silly empty woman... How do you get so empty? He wondered. Who takes it out of you?" (41). At the peak of Montag's discontent, he asks Mildred if she knows where Clarisse McClellan is, and Mildred tells him that Clarisse was hit by a car and killed.

These things all force Montag to confront everything that is wrong with his world. He begins to see the disconnect, recklessness, thoughtlessness, and selfishness that define his world; most of all, he sees these traits in the people and things closest to him. He realizes there are no good answers to the questions he is beginning to ask, questions that are beginning to uncover deep flaws and fractures in the society he once took for granted. The death that has begun to surround him allows him to see these flaws clearly for the first time. Unable to process these flaws or understand their source, Montag begins to misdirect his anger at Mildred, blaming her for the things that he sees that are wrong. She begins to represent and epitomize for him all of the flaws he is beginning to uncover. Because of his mounting anger, frustration, and despondency, Montag moves into his Rebellion stage.

In his Rebellion stage. Montag continues to search for meaning in his life. He also begins to lash out at Mildred:

"Let me alone," said Mildred. "I didn't do anything."

"Let you alone! That's all very well, but... We need to be really bothered once in a while. How long is it since you were *really* bothered? About something important, about something real?" (49)

Clarisse and the old woman's deaths have shaken Montag to his core. He recognizes here that he is being shaken out of complacency and sleepwalking, and he senses that this "bothering" is important. However, he also grows more angry with Mildred because she has come to represent that state of complacency. The shock of all these things impacts him to such a degree that he

calls in sick from work. However, his captain, Beatty, suspects that the cause of Montag's "illness" is Montag's growing discontent with his society. In an attempt to restore that obedience, Beatty visits Montag at his home and gives him a long speech on the history of the firemen and the state of their society. In this, he tries to convince Montag to reject his questions and return to his former complacent state:

“We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone *made* equal. Each man the image of every other; then all are happy... And so when houses were finally fireproofed completely, all over the world... [Firemen] were given the new job, as custodians of our peace of mind, the focus of our understandable and rightful dread of being inferior; official censors, judges, and executors. That's you, Montag, and that's me.” (55-56)

Though Beatty tries to convince Montag to “hold steady” (59) and continue to work to keep the world uncomplicated and happy, it has the opposite effect. Rather than putting Montag's fears to rest, Beatty's speech spurs Montag to further action and rebellion. He begins to read the book he stole, the Bible, and reveals a stash of other stolen books he has kept hidden in his house. This in itself is evidence of rebellion, as Montag knows that his house could be burned down by the firemen for possessing and reading books at all. Even so, Montag not only reads the illicit books, but convinces Mildred to read them with him. In the midst of his rebellion, Clarisse continues to serve as a guiding light that urges him forward: “He lifted the two books. ‘These men have been dead a long time, but I know their words point, one way or another, to Clarisse’” (68). Even so, Mildred tries to convince Montag to burn the books, and Montag continues to lash out through verbal diatribes, expressing his newfound fear and anger over the state of their world.

Montag also rebels against his world by reaching out to an old man, Faber, that he believes can teach him more about books and why they are important. Faber tells him that what is missing in his life is not the books themselves, but “some of the things that once were in books” (78). He explains to Montag that some of the flaws in their world stem from missing three things, all of which can be found in books: “Number one...quality of information. Number two: leisure to digest it. And number three: the right to carry out actions based on what we learn from the interaction of the first two” (81). In this way, Faber begins to give Montag information not only on how to understand the books he reads, but on how to rebel against the system that constrains them. Faber even suggests that they should work to bring down “the fireman structure itself” (81) by planting books in firemen’s houses. Faber, who is presumably in the Rebellion stage himself, advocates fighting against the society in order to reshape it; he considers lashing out against the system with “anger” and “honest rage” (83). However, unlike Montag, Faber is unwilling to take any real action. Nevertheless, Montag spurs him in some small way out of his inertia, and he gives Montag an earpiece through which he can continue to give Montag teachings and advice. This is another step in Montag’s rebellion.

Montag’s rebellion finally comes to a peak when Mildred’s friends visit their home to watch the TV parlor. Up to this point, Montag has been exposed in many different ways to the many flaws of his world, making him more and more angry at what he finds. His anger, though at times unbeknownst to him, has been steadily misdirected towards Mildred as the embodiment of these flaws. When her friends visit, he sees these same flaws in all of them. As Montag listens to their conversation, he recognizes everything that he has come to find wrong with his world, and his anger builds against them. At last, the anger that has been mounting in Montag throughout his Discovery and Rebellion stages explodes. He confronts the women and forces

them to listen to him recite a poem from one of his stolen books. One of the women begins sobbing, and another woman lashes back at Montag: “You’re nasty, Mr. Montag, you’re *nasty!*”

(97) In response, Montag turns his rebellious anger on her:

“Go home.” Montag fixed his eyes upon her, quietly. “Go home and think of your first husband divorced and your second husband killed in a jet and your third husband blowing his brains out, go home and think of the dozen abortions you’ve had, go home and think of that and your damn Caesarean sections, too, and your children who hate your guts! Go home and think how it all happened and what did you ever do to stop it? Go home, go home!” he yelled. “Before I knock you down and kick you out the door!” (98)

Montag’s explosion here is not truly directed at these women, but at the deep, serious flaws he has uncovered in the world around him. He sees the women as a representation, rather than a product, of these flaws, and he misdirects his deep hurt and anger at them. While Montag is trying to fix the wrongs he sees, he is still going about it the wrong way. His rebellion is a natural reaction to these wrongs, but his attempt to fix these problems fails and backfires immensely. He doesn’t yet recognize his own complicity in or contributions to the problems of his world, and so his rebellion is misdirected and unsuccessful. Instead, it will result in consequences that will make it impossible to return to life as normal from this moment on.

With the help of Faber, Montag immediately begins to enter into his Recognition stage. As he heads downtown, he begins to feel guilty for his outburst and recognizes “his terrible error” (99). In the same moment, he recognizes the necessity of this stage of his awakening: “And one day he would look back upon the fool and know the fool. Even now he could feel the start of the long journey, the leave taking, the going away from the self he had been” (99). Faber also seems to recognize the necessity of the Recognition stage to Montag’s awakening; though

he soothes Montag, he also reminds him that he is really no different from the women he yelled at: “Pity, Montag, pity. Don’t haggle and nag them; you were so recently *of* them yourself” (99). This sentence is key to Montag’s growing understanding of his own place in his world. If he is to make any real progress in solving his world’s flaws, he must recognize that he is, at heart, no different from the women he rebelled against. He too is a product of the flaws of his world, and he once acted and thought no differently from them.

This point continues to be driven home when Montag returns to the firehouse. There, Beatty confronts him and engages him in a repartee, using quotes from books to baffle and rebut Montag on every point. Montag begins to realize that, though he has grown in awareness, his rebellion is ultimately futile: “How like trying to put out fires with water pistols, how senseless and insane. One rage turned in for another. One anger displacing another. When would he stop being entirely mad and be quiet, be very quiet indeed?” (106) Furthermore, his reckless actions with the women catch up with him when the firemen receive an alarm. Montag is forced to accept his own complicity when he realizes that the alarm was called on his own house, and that it was Mildred who called in the alarm. In this moment, Montag realizes, finally, that:

“This is happening to *me*,” said Montag.

“What a dreadful surprise,” said Beatty. “For everyone nowadays knows, absolutely is *certain*, that nothing will ever happen to *me*. Others die, *I* go on. There are no consequences and no responsibilities. Except that there *are*.” (108-109)

As Montag faces the consequences of his actions, he must also accept that he is part of the problems he has witnessed. As Beatty notes, Montag has never examined himself or considered the consequences of his actions and rebellion. Now, his rebellion is resulting in the loss of his wife and home. The shock is enough to force Montag to accept his own complicity in the flaws

of his world. As Faber noted, he did not consider that he was once just like the women he rebelled against; now it takes the destruction of his old way of life, symbolized by the burning of his house, to force Montag to self-examine for the first time. He is pushed outside of himself and given a chance to choose his true identity as someone who protects books and people, rather than burning them. In doing so, he is also given a chance to take the fire he had once used to destroy and use it instead to help others. This is Montag's Choice.

Montag's Choice comes when Beatty discovers that Faber has been speaking to Montag through the "bullet" in his ear. Before this moment, Montag was too shocked to take any sort of action against Beatty. He willingly burned down his own house and would likely have submitted to his arrest. However, the possibility of danger towards Faber thrusts Montag into action:

Beatty switched the green bullet off and thrust it in his pocket. "Well—so there's more here than I thought... when you turned clever later, I wondered. We'll trace this and drop in on your friend."

"No!" said Montag.

He twitched the safety catch on the flame thrower. (112)

In this moment, Montag is faced with a choice. He is facing Fire Captain Beatty, a dangerous opponent who represents the wrath of the law. Montag can now choose to continue to obey the mandates of Beatty and his society by submitting to his arrest. He can even choose to fight back out of self-protection or preservation. However, when Faber is placed in danger, he has a new choice: protect himself or sacrifice for the sake of another. Having fully gone through the stages of the awakening arc up to this point, Montag is able to see and perceive the choice in front of him. Having experienced his Recognition stage in full, he is immediately moved to compassion

for Faber, and he feels the almost unconscious desire to protect Faber. Montag ultimately chooses to protect Faber by killing Beatty with the fireman's flame thrower:

Montag only said, "We never burned *right*...."

"Hand it over, Guy," said Beatty with a fixed smile.

And then he was a shrieking blaze...all writhing flame on the lawn as Montag shot one continuous pulse of liquid fire on him. (113)

It is important to note that Montag does not kill Beatty out of a desire to protect himself, out of revenge, or to avoid arrest. Montag ultimately kills Beatty to save Faber's life. In killing Beatty, he is protecting Faber from harm. He takes action out of compassion for another, even though this makes him a wanted criminal and puts him at risk of losing his own life. This choice to protect Faber over himself shows that he is truly awakening, and it solidifies his progress through the awakening arc.

Montag's choice is the final act that divorces him both physically and emotionally from his society. As a wanted criminal, he is now being hunted down by the robotic "Mechanical Hound," which is programmed to kill him if it captures him. Now that Montag has lost both his house and his wife, this is the final piece that drives him out of society and forces him to take real action against it. However, now that he has awakened by choosing Faber's needs over his own, he has the ability to continue to choose that awakening in the events that follow. This is Montag's Continuing stage, and it is the falling action of the book. By making choices that continue to solidify his awakening, Montag is able to find both mental and physical freedom from his oppressive society.

In this stage, Montag must continue to choose compassion in order to fully awaken. At first, however, he acts in rebellion by hiding stolen books in a fellow fireman's house, then

calling in an alarm. This is in line with the rebellious plan of sabotage that Faber had suggested to him earlier. In some ways, this can be seen as a reversion to an older, rebellious state. However, even though his first choice in this stage hearkens back to that earlier self, it is not in itself a sign that Montag is rejecting his awakening. Rather, it is a natural fumble by a person who is newly becoming aware of who he is and what his world is like. The struggle, the mistake, does not mean that Montag is not awakening; it means that he is human. As the Continuing stage progresses, the sign that a character is choosing awakening is the overall impact of his or her choices, not one or two stumbles or mistakes. Montag does in fact continue to choose his awakening. He begins to make choices that reflect his original Choice, and he even comes to regret his former rebellious actions.

This next choice in Montag's Continuing comes when he visits Faber's house, where he hopes to take refuge from the Mechanical Hound and the police forces hunting him down. Montag can now choose to protect himself by staying with Faber, but it would come at the risk that the police would follow Montag and capture both of them. He could also choose to stay with Faber as a form of giving up, waiting there until the Hound found both of them: "If he wished, he could linger here, in comfort, and follow the entire hunt on through its swift phases... Would he have time for a speech? ... What could he say in a single word, a few words, that would sear all their faces and wake them up?" (128) As shown here, Montag could even choose to stay with Faber as a sort of last stand, giving himself up in spectacular fashion. Even so, these choices would put not only him, but Faber in danger as well. Instead, Montag chooses again to protect Faber over himself by giving him a hundred dollars and then leaving right away, putting himself back in danger.

Montag manages to escape by swimming across the river at the edge of town. The land and woods around him here remind him of the same life, light, and warmth that Clarisse gave him: “He stood breathing, and the more he breathed the land in, the more he was filled up with all the details of the land. He was not empty. There was more than enough here to fill him. There would always be more than enough” (138). In this place of vibrant life and comfort, Montag discovers a group of men living in the woods beyond the city. In them, he discovers the community where he can put his purpose and identity into practice. The first clue that Montag belongs with them is in their use of fire: “He hadn’t known fire could look this way. He had never thought in his life that it could give as well as take. Even its smell was different” (139). Montag soon discovers that the group of men, like Clarisse, have a “continual stir of curiosity and wonder in them” (140). They are living on the fringes of society, preserving books, knowledge, and awareness by memorizing the content of books. They welcome Montag with warmth; though Montag is drawn to them, he begins to regret his old, rebellious actions:

“I don’t belong with you,” said Montag, at last, slowly. “I’ve been an idiot all the way.”

“We’re used to that. We’ve all made the *right* kind of mistakes, or we wouldn’t be here.

When we were separate individuals, all we had was rage... You want to join us,

Montag?”

“Yes.” (143)

In choosing to join these men, Montag makes another important choice by choosing to belong to something bigger than himself. He shows that he has begun to awaken by how differently he thinks about his Rebellion stage. The men note, however, how important that mistaken rebellion was to his awakening; they recognize that this stage needed to be experienced in order for Montag to reach where he is now. They show him that not only is he on the other

side of that rebellion, but they also offer him a place where he belongs. Montag makes a significant choice when he agrees to join them. Immediately, the men accept him into their community and make him a vital part of that community. Montag “becomes” the Book of Ecclesiastes, which he had memorized by reading the stolen Bible. In doing this, he begins to contribute to the preservation of knowledge that may one day help to rebuild society: ““We’re going to meet a lot of lonely people in the next week and the next month and the next year. And when they ask us what we’re doing, you can say, We’re remembering”” (156-157). In joining these men, Montag is beginning to fulfill the promise that Clarisse showed to him so long ago: He can use books to help other people to awaken. Because Montag hit every stage of the awakening arc in full, and because he continues to put that awakening into practice for the good of others, his awakening arc is complete.

Example #2: *The Crying of Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon*Incomplete Awakening Arc*

Some works of literature contain elements of the Awakening Arc but do not complete it in full. In these works, characters begin the process of awakening but are unable to fully awaken. Such incomplete awakenings are not evidence of moral failure, but they are instead often the result of oppressive external forces or the lack of a role model to guide the character out of sleep. They may even be the result of authors purposefully thwarting the narrative structure. Such authorial choices can speak to the author's personal beliefs, the culture in which the story takes place, the dominant theory of the time, or the use of other modes of literary thought. These theories may mean the difference between a character who can choose the path of awakening and a character who is continually prevented from awakening by external forces. As such, these incomplete arcs must be examined in order to better understand the Awakening Arc and its place in literature.

Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* contains an incomplete awakening arc that clearly displays all of these elements. It differs from the other two examples in this thesis in length and time period, and it provides a clear example of an incomplete awakening arc to counter the complete awakenings of the other texts. *The Crying of Lot 49* is also valuable to study in the context of the Awakening Arc because of its status as a key example of postmodernist thought. This is important because Pynchon uses the beliefs and tenets of postmodernism to interrupt the awakening arc and prevent his protagonist from experiencing a full awakening. In this way, the novella demonstrates how authorial choices and external constraints may purposefully disrupt an awakening arc so that it cannot be completed.

As a narrative structure, the Awakening Arc can be seen as a form of metanarrative. However, as an example of a postmodern text, *The Crying of Lot 49* is incredulous to all such metanarratives, including the Awakening Arc. Therefore, while the novel's protagonist, Oedipa Maas, interacts with some of the arc's stages, the novel itself displays incredulity towards the very structure of the arc. This incredulity works by trapping its protagonist in various "knowledge loops" that prevent her from progressing fully through the arc. Therefore, *The Crying of Lot 49* is a strong example of an incomplete awakening arc because of the way that the postmodern narrative itself disrupts the awakening arc and precludes its completion.

The sleepwalking stage of the awakening arc corresponds with the exposition of Freytag's plot structure. In this stage, the protagonist is functioning in a sort of unawareness, blind in some way to the true nature of themselves or his world, and as a consequence he is trapped in the flaws of that world. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, the sleepwalking stage is shown through implication as Oedipa faces the second stage, the quickening. As the novel opens, Oedipa Maas is slowly becoming aware of her trapped, oppressive existence. She is living as a suburban housewife in Kinneret-Among-The-Pines, California, keeping house for her disc jockey husband, Mucho Maas. The narrative immediately implies that Oedipa is fundamentally unhappy with her situation as it exists: "Oedipa stood in the living room, stared at by the greenish dead eye of the TV tube, spoke the name of God, tried to feel as drunk as possible. But this did not work" (1). As she thinks back through her day, she notes that she is only "shuffling back through a fat deck full of days which seemed...more or less identical..." (2). Finally, it is revealed that Oedipa regularly attends therapy sessions with her psychiatrist, Dr. Hilarius, for an unknown reason. "But it was easier to stay" with Dr. Hilarius, she reflects, "Who'd know the day she was cured? Not him, he'd admitted that himself" (8). Oedipa is reluctant to continue her

sessions with Dr. Hilarius but at the same time finds herself unable to leave. She needs to be “cured,” but the reader does not know of what. Oedipa longs for something more, but she is stuck in a rut of habits, identical days, and a marriage to an oversensitive disk jockey who seems to bring her no real sense of closeness. This self-reflection leads to a powerful metaphor about Oedipa’s sleepwalking state. She envisions herself as a “Rapunzel-like” character trapped in a tower, “prisoner...looking for somebody to say hey, let down your hair” (10). She notes that in this tower hangs “the sense of buffering, insulation...the absence of an intensity” (10) and longs, desperately, for escape. This ability to recognize her own unhappiness is prompted by the announcement that she has been named co-executor of her ex-boyfriend, Pierce Inverarity’s, estate. This news prompts the aforementioned reflection on her own lifestyle.

This announcement and subsequent self-reflection constitute the inciting incident of the awakening arc, known as the quickening. In this novel, both the sleepwalking and quickening stages are introduced at the same time; in fact, the presence of the quickening is what prompts Oedipa’s reflection on the sleepwalking nature of her life. In this text, the quickening takes the form of Oedipa’s naming as co-executor. It is the event that propels Oedipa into the rest of the arc, setting her on her journey of self-discovery and revelation.

The quickening is made up of two parts: the encounter with life and the encounter with death. Both of these encounters must be present, and in this order, in order to truly form the catalyst of the awakening arc as a whole. The encounter of life is a glimpse of the character’s true purpose; it is an encounter with another character, object, or personification that represents the possibility of the character’s life. It is a promise of purpose, fulfillment, satisfaction and, ultimately, of hope. This encounter allows for the encounter with death, which is simply the character encountering their “old world” through the new perspective of the encounter with life.

In this moment, the character sees the gap between the hope of possibility and their life as it currently exists. Though they long to reach the possibility of their purpose, they are unable to see how to move from their life as it is to their life as it could be. The sorrow, anger, and pain caused by this revelation is part of what spurs them into the rest of the awakening arc.

As an instance of incredulity towards metanarratives, *The Crying of Lot 49* forgoes a complete quickening. Oedipa is indeed catalyzed into the plot by the letter that names her co-executor, which forces her to physically and emotionally move into the plot. The new role brought on by this letter gives her a glimpse into a possibility of a different way of life, one that is not bound by domestic Californian suburbia. However, the letter gives neither Oedipa nor the reader a clear glimpse into Oedipa's true purpose. It does not suggest to her the sort of life she is truly meant to live, nor any possibility of getting there. It does not, in short, give her the hope of possibility for change. The encounter with death, on the other hand, is implied throughout the first chapter. As Oedipa's sleepwalking is described, so is her growing realization of her own unhappiness. She becomes more fully aware of the monotony and meaninglessness of her life. This, in addition to the call of the letter, is what spurs her to physically move out of her current life and seek to reconcile her current dissatisfaction with what her life could potentially be.

Oedipa's journey to San Narciso marks the beginning of the Discovery stage of her arc. At this stage, both parts of the quickening have worked together to create a dissatisfaction with life as it is and, consequently, a nascent longing to change. During the Discovery stage, the character does not yet know how to achieve the possibility she saw in the encounter with life, so she searches for movement in any way possible. This movement, and the new mindset caused by the quickening, leads her through a series of scenes in which the character discovers the many different aspects of her world's flaws. She discovers these flaws manifesting themselves in a

variety of ways. As she goes through this process, the contrast between the life that the character saw and her world as it is comes sharply into focus. The character will become angry as a result. She will misidentify the source of the flaws and begin to blame the people around her, seeing them in some way as responsible for these flaws. Even though this anger is misdirected, the character's recognition of the flaws around her is key to moving forward in the arc.

When Oedipa arrives in San Narciso, she senses both the possibility for change and the inherent flaws of the world around her. She thinks that "in her first minute of San Narciso, a revelation also trembled just past the threshold of her understanding" (14). However, this feeling breaks quickly, and Oedipa realizes that her physical escape from home does not equate to true escape from her "tower":

...stillness and four walls [had]...become preferable to this illusion of speed, freedom, wind in your hair, unreeling landscape—it wasn't. What the road really was...was this hypodermic needle, inserted somewhere ahead into the vein of a freeway, a vein nourishing the mainliner L.A., keeping it happy, coherent, protected from pain... But were Oedipa some single melted crystal of urban horse, L.A., really, would be no less turned on for her absence. (15)

One of the flaws that Oedipa begins to recognize in her world is the endless desire to escape pain, even at the cost of true human connection. Oedipa's home life, happy but not fulfilling, reflects this flaw, which she has not left behind by leaving her home. She then has an absurd sexual encounter with her lawyer, Metzger, but experiences no emotional connection with him. The Paranoids song that is played during this scene also, indirectly, speaks to Oedipa's tower-like sense of isolation, even among other people: "And you lie alone tonight, / As alone as I; / Lonely girl in your lonely flat, well, that's where it's at, / So hush your lonely cry" (27).

Oedipa later refers to this scene as the beginning of her “sensitization,” which “got seriously under way” when Oedipa and Metzger visit a bar called The Scope (32). While they are there, Oedipa witnesses a strange mail run and discovers the WASTE symbol written on the bathroom wall. The symbol of the muted horn, perhaps, also speaks to Oedipa’s unutterable sense of loneliness and unhappiness. This is also the first, indirect glimpse of a postal service that opposes the “government monopoly,” in Mike Fallopian’s words (38). Later, a discussion about the use of old bones in Beaconsfield cigarette filters prompts Oedipa and Metzger to attend a Jacobean revenge play called *The Courier’s Tragedy*. The play introduces Oedipa to the concept of Tristero, the search for which will drive the rest of the novel. When Oedipa goes backstage to speak to the director of the play, Randolph Driblette, and ends up asking him about the Tristero, she is moved into the Rebellion stage of her arc.

Oedipa’s Discovery stage was outwardly marked by her slow entry into the mystery of the WASTE symbol and the Tristero, but it is internally marked by her endless drive to find answers and meaning. Her longing for some sort of meaning is manifested through her interest in the mystery of the Tristero; as she enters into this search, she is coming to a slow realization of the flaws of her world. This is primarily shown through the lack of meaning and connection in Oedipa’s world and her continued feelings of entrapment, even though she has left her old life in Kinneret. Her arc shifts, however, in the moment she speaks with Randolph Driblette. This scene is significant because it is the moment where Oedipa commits fully to uncovering the secret of the Tristero. She moves from *reaction* (simply following her new duties as co-executor of Pierce’s will) to *action* (choosing to investigate the Tristero).

The Rebellion stage is an advanced version of the Discovery stage. The character continues to see the flaws in their world, but he also continues to misdirect his anger, building

resentment towards the people he blames for these flaws. Eventually, this resentment builds until the character lashes out at the people around him. This anger and blame will feel like action, movement towards fixing the problem, but this emotionally-based attempt to fix the problem will eventually backfire, creating consequences that will ultimately prevent the character from returning to life “as normal.”

For Oedipa, the Rebellion stage is marked by her constant misidentification of the sources of the fractures of her world. She reacts with anger and determination, mistaking movement and the acquiring of new knowledge as progress. She mistakes uncovering pieces of the mystery with progress towards fixing the true problem of her own tower-like imprisonment. Her rebellion is against the Tristero itself. While this is the core of the mystery, it is also the very thing that will distract her from finding true answers and meaning. Instead, it leads only to new permutations of the mystery and endless loops of knowledge, rather than any true self-reflection or self-knowledge.

One of the first things that Oedipa does in this stage is search out the actual text of *The Courier's Tragedy*, which leads her to a few other coincidental revelations about the muted horn symbol and the text of the play. Pierce's stamp collection leads her to the revelation that the group who operated under the muted horn symbol were opposed to the Thurn and Taxis mail couriers. The revelations after this point will all tie into the idea of uncovering the secrets of the Tristero group and the depth of their resistance to government-controlled mail delivery. Then, when Oedipa meets John Nefastis, she introduces into the narrative the idea of entropy, or the gradual degradation of a system into disorder and randomness. This becomes a symbol for the rest of the novel, as Oedipa's quest for meaning continues to deteriorate into randomness rather than into genuine revelation. Even when Oedipa wanders through the city in hopes of escaping

the horn symbol, she cannot do so. She continues to see it all around her, even in ways seemingly unrelated to her quest. Oedipa, as a result, feels overwhelmed and desperate. She feels “as alone as she ever had” (94), then becomes convinced that she is “meant to remember” the “clues” she continues to encounter (95). Then, however, she wonders if “the gemlike ‘clues’ were only some kind of compensation. To make up for her having lost the direct, epileptic Word, the cry that might abolish the night” (95). Here, Oedipa senses that she is missing true meaning (“the direct, epileptic Word”) in her search for the meaning behind the Tristero. This moment signals that Oedipa is coming near the end of her Rebellion stage.

Oedipa’s Rebellion stage was marked by her mistaken belief that uncovering the secrets of the Tristero would bring her some sort of fulfillment. She rebels by striking out in search of clues, believing that each new piece of knowledge will help her move out of the tower. However, by the end of this dizzying search, Oedipa feels just as lost and alone as she did before. In a complete awakening arc, this moment of frustration and brokenness, brought on by a lashing out that accomplished nothing, is what propels the character into the Recognition stage. Oedipa, likewise, is given the opportunity to enter into this stage for the same reason. However, Oedipa ultimately fails to enter this stage because she is caught in postmodern loops of knowledge; her hyperfocus on the Tristero prevents her from seeing the real meaning behind her search.

In a true Recognition stage, the character will recognize that she too is complicit in the flaws of her world. She has seen and accepted the flaws of her world, but now she must acknowledge that she is part of the problem. She recognizes that the people she lashed out at are no different from her, and this realization sparks pity or compassion for the people around her for the first time. Oedipa is presented with this opportunity when she runs into the old man sitting on the stairs of a rooming house. Oedipa notes that he is “shaking with grief she couldn’t hear”

(101) and is overcome with a desire to help him: “She was overcome all at once by a need to touch him, as if she could not believe in him, or would not remember him, without it” (102). She holds him while he cries and offers him ten dollars, and she even agrees to mail a letter by WASTE to the man’s wife. The encounter is a moment of profound importance to Oedipa, and it inspires some brief self-reflection: “The act of metaphor then was a thrust at truth and a lie, depending on where you were: inside, safe, or outside, lost. Oedipa did not know where she was” (105). However, the novel’s postmodern construction prevents Oedipa from fully breaking through into the Recognition stage. While she begins to self-reflect, she fails to self-examine. She cannot break past the veneer of Tristero and its endless permutations of knowledge. She recognizes the man’s need for comfort but fails to recognize its source. Rather than breaking through to true compassion brought on by self-recognition, Oedipa loses herself in a daydream: “But with a sigh he had released her hand, while she was so lost in the fantasy that she hadn’t felt it go away, as if he’d known the best moment to let go” (103).

In this scene, as in others, Oedipa is unable to see that the true core of her mystery is not the Tristero itself, but the reason the group was formed in the first place. The novel, and Oedipa herself, merely graze over the fact that WASTE was formed in opposition to the governmental mail system, as a result of people losing their faith in and ability to trust the U.S. government.

Oedipa only briefly notes this fact:

For here were God knew how many citizens, deliberately choosing not to communicate by U. S. Mail. It was not an act of treason, nor possibly even of defiance. But it was a calculated withdrawal, from the life of the Republic, from its machinery. Whatever else was being denied them out of haste, indifference to the power of their vote, loopholes, simple ignorance, this withdrawal was their own, unpublicized, private. (101)

Oedipa has the ability to recognize the pain, fear, and loneliness that drive the use of the WASTE system, the desperation of which is echoed in the old man on the stairs. In confronting the human agony that drives the private mail system, Oedipa must also recognize and confront her own participation in this agony, her own status as a middle-class suburbanite housewife belonging to a privileged class, an older era, living completely unaware of and uninvolved with the human pain living on the periphery of her existence. Her encounter with the old man is her chance to confront the very real face of this pain, but the endless permutations of the conspiracy itself prevent her from doing so. Instead, Oedipa's encounter with the old man only leads her to another search for the WASTE mailbox itself, and from there further along in her pursuit of answers. In this moment, Oedipa chooses to chase the endless, answerless Tristero, which continues to capture her in an endless loop of postmodern searching. As a result, she never looks inward at herself to see how she has contributed to the WASTE culture, never has compassion on the people involved, and never leaves the Tristero rabbit trail to help the very real people around her.

Because Oedipa skips the Recognition stage of the arc, she is stuck in an endless loop of Discovery and Rebellion. Chasing the Tristero only leads to endless loops of madness and seeming self-knowledge that can never have a resolution. This loop of endless knowledge is dizzying, trapping Oedipa and driving her towards anxiety and madness. She herself is lost in the endless quest for knowledge. This is seen in how Oedipa slowly becomes distanced from everyone around her. After her encounter with the old man, Oedipa runs into both Dr. Hilarius and her husband, Mucho. Both are crying for help in their own way, but Oedipa cannot see a way to help them or escape the loop. She lets Mucho, now hooked on LSD and unrecognizable to her, go. Afterwards, she continues to chase the Tristero conspiracy and uncovers a more complete

picture of their history. When she then runs into Mike Fallopian, he serves as yet another example of the way that Oedipa is caught in the postmodern loop that isolates her, traps her, and prevents her from hitting the Recognition stage in full. Mike asks Oedipa to consider that the entire conspiracy is a fabrication created by Pierce to trick her, but Oedipa is so deep in the loop that the very idea angers her. This is the beginning of Oedipa's Choice.

Even though Oedipa passed the Recognition stage, she still manages to claw her way to the Choice stage. In this stage, the character is faced with one final, climactic choice: will the character lash out to protect himself, or will he use what he has learned to choose to protect others over himself? The character has the opportunity to use what he has learned in the rest of the arc to embrace compassion over self-preservation. If he chooses to take action out of compassion for others, especially if it is at great risk to himself, he has hit the peak of his awakening. Because it is the climax of the awakening arc, the Choice must be built upon every stage that came before it. Because Oedipa did not fully engage with the Recognition stage, she cannot fully perceive this final choice for what it is. This lack of perception, founded on recognition, prevents her from making the choice that will truly lead to her awakening.

Arguably, Oedipa's choice begins with Mike Fallopian. She has already been presented with several opportunities to reach the Recognition and then the Choice stage through the old man, Dr. Hilarius, and Mucho. Oedipa's final opportunity to choose awakening seems to come in the form of Mike Fallopian. Fallopian does this by encouraging Oedipa to rethink her pursuit of the conspiracy, encouraging her to take a new, jarring mindset that might allow her to break out of her loops of knowledge. Oedipa, however, reacts with anger, attempting to preserve her involvement with the conspiracy, which she has come to rely on for a sense of meaning:

“Go ahead,” she said, cold, “at least that. What else, after that?”

He smiled, perhaps now trying to salvage whatever was going soundlessly smash, its net of invisible cracks propagating leisurely through the air between them. “Please don’t be mad.”

...She stood up, wondering if her hair was in place, if she looked rejected or hysterical, if they’d been causing a scene. “I knew you’d be different,” she said, “Mike, because everybody’s been changing on me. But it hadn’t gone as far as hating me.

“...If you need any armbands or more weapons, do try Winthrop Tremaine, over by the freeway. Tremaine’s Swastika Shoppe. Mention my name.”

...She left him...watching the floor, waiting for his broads to come back. (138-139)

Oedipa not only has a chance to act out of compassion, but she has a chance to be jarred out of the postmodern knowledge loop and free herself from the conspiracy, or at least examine the conspiracy from a new angle. Mike Fallopian asks Oedipa difficult questions presumably out of care and compassion, not, as Oedipa suggests, out of hate for her. It is the very difficulty, the pain, of these questions that might allow Oedipa to question her commitment to the conspiracy and step aside from it. In freeing herself from the conspiracy, she might take a step closer to freeing herself from her tower. However, Oedipa reacts out of anger and self-preservation instead. She rejects Mike’s suggestions and accuses him of hating her, then finally lashes out by essentially calling him a Nazi. This keeps Oedipa trapped in the loop. This in turn keeps Oedipa not only trapped in the conspiracy, but it prevents her from progressing in the arc.

Immediately after Oedipa makes this climactic choice, she begins to descend into severe anxiety and paranoia: “...she hoped she was mentally ill; that’s all it was. That night she sat for hours, too numb even to drink, teaching herself to breathe in a vacuum. For this, oh God, was the void. There was nobody who could help her. Nobody in the world” (141). Here, Oedipa comes to

the end of her journey just as alone, trapped, and lonely as she was at its beginning, or perhaps even more so. Rather than leading her into awakening, fulfillment, and true self-knowledge, her interrupted arc is leading her deeper into paranoia, loss, and despair. Nevertheless, Oedipa continues to chase after the Tristero. She decides to attend an auction to see if the bidder on lot 49 might be working for Tristero. The novel ends before the buyer's identity is ever revealed.

This lack of resolution mirrors the ending of Oedipa's arc. Oedipa's final choice of the novel, to attend the auction in search of the Tristero, reflects her inability to free herself from the postmodern loop of knowledge. The false movement of uncovering the Tristero keeps her trapped and unable to find any sense of real meaning. The loop, by nature, is never-ending. Because of this, the novel has to cut short in the middle of one of these loops. The story cuts off, but Oedipa is left spinning. Because she cannot escape the arc, her story cannot come to a satisfying conclusion. This in turn is because the postmodernist fragmentation of the text prevents her from leaving the arc, defying a linear progression through the arc or a discovery of any sort of definite meaning. By purposefully disrupting the progress of the arc, the novel defies the arc's very structure and thus shows its incredulity for this, and any other, metanarrative.

Example #3: *The Death of Ivan Ilych* by Leo Tolstoy*Complete Awakening Arc*

Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* is a masterwork of fiction, containing the entirety of its subject's life in only sixty-four pages. Adding to its power is the fact that Ilych's awakening is not accompanied by a dramatic plot; indeed, most of the story involves Ilych confined to his house, dying. As a primarily character-driven piece, *The Death of Ivan Ilych* distinguishes itself from the other two texts examined in this thesis. It reveals how the Awakening Arc can not only manifest in a story with very little external plot movement, but also how the arc can reveal itself through the format of a short story and the structure of a nineteenth-century Russian text. Despite the focus of the plot on Ivan's own mortality, the short story is a beautiful one in which Ilych transforms from a class-obsessed, work-consumed sleepwalker to one who can find beauty, joy, lightness, and awakening even in the moment of death. Even though the reader knows from the very beginning that Ivan's story will end in death, his slow journey to awakening is one of quiet, tender beauty and, ultimately, redemption. His arc is somewhat condensed by necessity of the story's length, but it is no less apparent than in a plot-driven novel like *Fahrenheit 451*. Though Ivan's journey is mostly internal, the short story nevertheless provides a clear example of a complete awakening arc.

Part of the short story's effectiveness is due to the time and space Tolstoy dedicates to describing Ilych's sleepwalking stage. This stage is also effective, however, because it is contrasted with the first chapter, which takes place after Ivan is already dead. This chapter reveals immediately how Ilych's world is ruthless and calloused, governed by ease and pleasure rather than any true connection: "Ivan Ilych had been a colleague of the gentlemen present and was liked by them all... So on receiving the news of Ivan Ilych's death the first thought of each

of the gentlemen in that private room was of the changes and promotions it might occasion among themselves or their acquaintances” (93). In a few pages, it becomes clear that Ivan’s friends, members of a social class towards which Ivan constantly strived, care very little about Ivan’s actual passing and much more on the impact of his death upon their finances, social positions, and free time. They even see his funeral service as a burden and an imposition rather than a way to honor a friend they had cared about. The politeness and decorum with which Ivan’s friends treat his death conceal their true feelings, which primarily concern themselves. In fact, they feel, rather than sorrow, “the complacent feeling that ‘it is he who is dead and not I’” (94). Before Ivan’s own sleepwalking stage is described, it is already made clear that Ivan’s world has deep flaws that shaped him and influenced the man he became. This sets the stage for the story to come: Ivan’s life, goals, and eventual transformation. This too is hinted at in the first chapter, when one of Ivan’s friends visits Ivan Ilych’s funeral. In the open coffin, Ivan’s face appears “more dignified than when he was alive,” and the expression on his face “said that what was necessary had been accomplished, and accomplished rightly” (96). Ivan’s friend sees “in that expression a reproach and a warning to the living. This warning seemed to Peter Ivanovich out of place, or at least no applicable to him. He felt a certain discomfort...” (96). This passage hints that Ivan successfully completed his awakening arc. Despite his surroundings, he died a good death because in awakening he accomplished what needed to be accomplished. This awakening, furthermore, has a profound effect on the people around him. Even though Peter Ivanovich was not witness to Ivan’s awakening, he can sense it from the very expression on the dead man’s face. Ivan’s awakening is so profound that it reaches beyond his death to touch Peter Ivanovich, who is discomfited by it.

Chapters two and three describe Ivan's sleepwalking stage in detail, revealing carefully how the flaws in Ilych's world shaped this state of being. Tolstoy sets the tone for this with the opening line: "Ivan Ilych's life had been most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible" (102). The recurring theme throughout this stage is Ivan's near-insatiable desire to rise in social status and attain the favor of the elite. To do so, he must live a life governed by "pleasantness and decorousness." In other words, he must imitate the "friends" who failed to mourn him in the first chapter. He must live a life focused on pleasure and self-aggrandizement, concealed under a veil of politeness. Accordingly, throughout his life, Ivan pursues only what the upper class views as good and noteworthy. He graduates from the School of Law because that is what is expected of him, taking a job as a magistrate and then ruthlessly climbing up the judicial ladder. He marries his wife, Praskovya Fedorovna, not because he loves her, but because she loves him, has "some little property," was "well connected, and "thoroughly correct" (107). Despite this, once they have children together, Praskovya Fedorovna begins to "disturb the pleasure and propriety of their life" (107). In response, Ivan throws himself into his work, avoiding his home and wife as much as possible. His work becomes central to his life, and he begins to treat his marriage as an official duty rather than as a place for true emotional connection. In his marriage, as in the rest of his life, Ivan's "aim was to free himself more and more from those unpleasantness and to give them a semblance of harmlessness and prosperity," even though his utter lack of connection to his wife and his family "might have grieved Ivan Ilych had he considered that it ought not to exist" (109).

Later, when Ivan is passed over for a favorable judicial appointment, he decides to take the summer off from work. Without his work, which had consumed his life for so long, Ivan feels "*ennui*" and "intolerable depression" (111) that drives him, not to question why he feels lost

and alone without his work, but to gain a new judicial appointment with a significant salary increase no matter the cost. This will both sustain his expensive lifestyle and serve as revenge to those that passed him over. Ivan successfully finds such an appointment, and he immediately begins decorating a lavish apartment for his family. Even Praskovya Fedorovna is happy with this sudden move upward in social status, and for Ivan Ilych, “[e]verything progressed and progressed and approached the ideal he had set himself” (113). Ivan becomes consumed with the appearance of his house; when not at work, he throws himself into arranging it and keeping it looking nice. He becomes easily angered when anything is broken or out of place, and the twin pursuits of protecting the pleasant appearance of his house and going to work prevent Ivan from falling back into the ennui and depression that once consumed him. The irony of all this is that the house, which symbolizes Ivan’s devotion to belong to a social class higher than his own, is clearly only an imitation of the life that Ivan aspires to: “In reality it [the house] was just what is usually seen in the houses of people of moderate means who want to appear rich, and therefore succeed only in resembling others like themselves: there were...all the things people of a certain class have in order to resemble other people of that class” (114). In this, as in all things, Ivan’s life conforms to an unattainable ideal. He is blind to the failure of his attempts to belong to the upper class, and instead centers his life more and more around his attempts to be like them. In doing so, he rejects and strives to eliminate all instances of pain, discomfort, or negative emotion in his life. The tragedy of this decision is that Ivan, in blindly pursuing pleasantness over pain, is rejecting all sense of real emotional connection and honesty. He is unaware that his life, though “simple” and socially acceptable, is in fact “terrible” in its emotional emptiness.

Ivan’s recent move, however, sets him up for his quickening stage. After an accident Ivan has while arranging furniture for the new house, he develops severe abdominal pain. The pain

gradually worsens, and, after consultations with several doctors, Ivan eventually accepts that he is dying. Ivan's frightened realization that his sickness is incurable causes him to reevaluate his life, but it remains a precursor to the quickening rather than the quickening itself. Instead, the sickness sets Ivan up for his quickening by disrupting his lifestyle and making him dependent on other people for the first time in his life. It is this dependence, in fact, that leads to Ivan's quickening, as his encounter with life takes the form of one of his caretakers, his servant Gerasim.

Ivan realizes quickly that his illness compromises the pleasantness and decorousness of his family's lives. For the most part, he must rely on the family servants to take care of him, and Ivan chafes under this constant reminder of his own frailty. This makes Ivan curt and irritable around both his family and servants, with one clear difference. Ivan feels comfortable only around Gerasim, a simple peasant whose cheerful willingness to serve Ivan in his suffering is Ivan's only reprieve from that suffering. Only Gerasim, "a clean, fresh peasant lad, grown stout on town food and always cheerful and bright" (134), is described in terms that evoke life, light, and vitality. He walks with a "firm light tread, his heavy boots emitting a pleasant smell of tar and fresh winter air" (134). Gerasim brings a fresh, clean presence into Ivan's life and home, and the cheerful, dutiful manner with which he cares for Ilych deeply impacts Ilych. Even when changing Ivan's commode, Gerasim must restrain "the joy of life that beamed from his face" (135). Ivan, embarrassed by his own "uncleanliness" (134) and helplessness, apologizes to Gerasim. However, in direct contrast to every other figure in Ivan's life, including the doctors who look down on him and offer no real remedy, Gerasim does not treat Ivan as if he is dirty, a chore, or an infringement on his happiness. Instead, Gerasim reacts by saying:

“Oh, why sir,” and Gerasim’s eyes beamed and he showed his glistening white teeth,
“what’s a little trouble? It’s a case of illness with you, sir.”

And his deft strong hands did their accustomed task, and he went out of the room
stepping lightly. (135)

Gerasim cares for Ivan simply and without ambition. His honesty, his good nature, and his willingness to serve Ivan in any way he asks causes him to become Ivan’s only source of comfort in the midst of his pain and illness. Gerasim alone understands Ivan’s situation, acknowledges it fully, pities him, and wishes to serve him to the best of his ability, hoping only that “someone would do the same for him when his time came” (137). Gerasim’s sacrificial kindness touches and connects with Ivan Ilych in a way that no other character yet has. This is why Gerasim is Ivan’s encounter with life. He is a living display for the potential of Ivan’s life, as well as a representation of true life, love, and emotional connection. As such, he shows Ivan a glimpse of his true purpose in life: caring for others in the midst of a corrupt system. As a high-ranking judge, Ivan could use his position to treat others with the same warmhearted goodness with which Gerasim treats him. As a father, husband, and friend, he can also extend this sacrificial kindness to his friends and family. As such, Ivan has his first glimpse of the person he could be and the impact he could have on others who are suffering. This begins to change Ilych in almost imperceptible ways.

Ivan’s encounter with life, in which he catches a glimpse of what a full and fulfilling life could look like for him, sets him up for his encounter with death. Gerasim’s honest, simple willingness to serve stands in direct contrast to the selfish dishonesty of Ivan’s current world. Ivan comes to see that his own family is unwilling to acknowledge what is happening to him. Instead, they are engaged in the “deception” that his illness is minor, that he will recover easily

and quietly, and that to acknowledge otherwise would be to disrupt the carefully constructed decorum of their lives. Ivan realizes that:

The awful, terrible act of his dying was, he could see, reduced by those about him to the level of a casual, unpleasant, and almost indecorous incident (as if someone entered a drawing-room diffusing an unpleasant odour) and this was done by that very decorum which he had served all his life long. He saw that no one felt for him, because no one even wished to grasp his position. (137)

Ivan's realization that this "deception" is a product of the decorum he himself had lived by his entire life hints that these flaws were in existence long before Ivan's illness. However, in his sleepwalking stage, Ivan was unable to recognize that his life of decorum was really one of deception. Now, when contrasted with the encounter with life, Ivan is able to see that his life and world operate by a very different standard than Gerasim's simple, honest kindness. In contrast to Gerasim, who values care and compassion over decorum, Ivan notices instead the "falsity around him and within him" (138), which is caused by the emphasis on decorum and politeness over compassion and kindness. In noticing the way that honest connection is replaced with false, selfish decorousness, Ivan is further able to recognize the pain and the suffering this deception is causing him. His life, he realizes, is an ocean away from the potential that Gerasim showed him in the encounter with life. Instead of living a life that is joyous, honest, caring, and marked by true emotional connection, Ivan recognizes that he is living a life of suffering, deception, selfishness, and distance from those around him. The pain of this recognition manifests as anger, but it is this very pain that pushes Ivan onto his path of awakening.

The quickening—the encounters of life and death that work together to push Ivan onto his path of awakening—prepares Ivan for his Discovery stage, where he will grow increasingly

more aware of the falsehood of his world. Ivan's discovery stage takes place primarily in two key scenes. First, Ivan is visited by yet another doctor, and Ivan recognizes that the behavior of both his doctor and his wife is only contributing to this deception. Secondly, Ivan's family chooses to attend an opera that Ivan was originally planning to attend, satisfying their own desires while ignoring his very real needs. Both instances show Ivan different ways that his world is flawed.

When the doctor arrives, Ivan immediately perceives him as a facsimile of Gerasim; though the doctor is "fresh, hearty, plump, and cheerful," he is also inherently false, for "this expression is out of place here, but he has put it on once and for all and can't take it off" (140). Though the doctor speaks pleasantly and cheerfully, it is only out of politeness and appearances, as opposed to Gerasim's genuine desire to help and comfort. The doctor proceeds to examine Ilych, a procedure Ivan has endured many times before; so many times before, in fact, that Ivan sees that it is all "nonsense and pure deception" that he submits to "as he used to submit to the speeches of the lawyers, though he knew very well that they were all lying and why they were lying" (141). Ivan's perception of the doctor shows how he is coming to understand and perceive the "falsity" of his world. The doctor who is meant to cure him, care for him, and be honest with him about his options is in fact doing none of these things so that he can keep up appearances. He goes about his work in the most pleasant and decorous way, regardless of his patient's true needs and feelings. In this passage, furthermore, Ivan connects this deception to that of his fellow lawyers, foreshadowing that Ivan will eventually be able to recognize his own actions in that of the doctor's.

Importantly, as Ivan begins to uncover the deception of his life, he begins to blame his wife, Praskovya, for all of these flaws. His anger at the flaws of his world is misdirected at her.

She comes to represent all that is wrong with Ivan's world, and he consequently grows increasingly resentful of her. In the scene with the doctor, Ivan recognizes Praskovya's reenactment of these flaws: "Her attitude towards him and his disease is still the same...that he was not doing something he ought to do and was himself to blame, and that she reproached him lovingly for this—and she could not now change that attitude" (141-142). Praskovya also fails to see Ivan as a person in need of care; she holds fast to the appearance of propriety, ignoring Ivan's true condition and needs even while insisting on her own beneficence. Like the doctor, she "treats" Ivan while ignoring the true state of affairs. Praskovya does for Ivan only what is best for herself, causing Ivan to feel "that he was so surrounded and involved in a mesh of falsity that it was hard to unravel anything. Everything she did for him was entirely for her own sake" (142). Ivan's growing awareness of the selfishness of his world is the first step in his discovery.

Ivan's second step comes later that same night, when Praskovya is taking Ivan's children to the opera. They had decided to do this before Ivan fell ill, but they are now choosing to attend anyway regardless of Ivan's feelings. Before she leaves, Praskovya stops to explain herself to Ivan, though it is clear that she does so out of obligation and not out of any genuine concern: "Praskovya Fedorovna came in, self-satisfied but yet with a rather guilty air. She sat down and asked how he was, but...only for the sake of asking and not in order to learn about it...and then went on to what she really wanted to say" (143). Ivan's daughter, too, displays this same attitude: "impatient with illness, suffering, and death, because they interfered with her happiness" (144). This scene is yet another facet of the "falsity" of Ivan's world. He sees yet another example of the selfishness that surrounds him, manifested by his own family. It becomes clear to him that not only do they care about their own happiness more than they care about him, but that they will also do their utmost to conceal this selfishness under a mask of propriety and politeness. As Ivan

concludes his Discovery stage, he is able to see through this mask into the self-interest that drives the people around them.

For now, however, it is the mask itself, the “falsity,” that bothers Ivan. His anger stems from the pain of seeing through to his world as it really is. This is seen as the scene continues; Ivan’s family continues to converse with him before leaving, giving the appearance of interest and care so that they will feel free to go to the opera without him. In the midst of this conversation, however, everyone becomes aware that “Ivan Ilych was staring with glittering eyes straight before him, evidently indignant with them... The silence had to be broken, but for a time no one dared to break it and they all became afraid that the conventional deception would suddenly become obvious and the truth become plain to all” (145). In sensing this, Ivan’s family quickly end the conversation and leave.

In this moment, Ivan shows that he has completed his Discovery stage. He has become fully aware of the flaws of his world and has seen those flaws made manifest in a few different ways. He has now become cognizant of the deception and selfishness that surround him, and his anger has been sparked against his family, particularly Praskovya Fedorovna. Despite this, the narrative uses this scene to foreshadow Ivan’s eventual awakening. There is a glimpse of hope shown through Ivan’s young son Vasya. While the rest of the family is engaged in the false conversation about the opera, Vasya makes no attempt to pretend along with them. He openly shows fear and pity towards Ilych, and Ivan thinks briefly that “Vasya was the only one besides Gerasim who understood and pitied him” (144). Vasya’s uncomfortable, frightened honesty stands in contrast to the polite deception of the rest of his family, even Ivan’s. In this, the narrative hints that Vasya has not yet grown into and chosen the falsity that Ivan sees around

him. Because of this, there is a foreshadowing of hope. Vasya, perhaps, will see and choose his father's awakening over the falsity of his world.

Ivan next moves into the Rebellion stage. He has become aware of the polite, selfish deception of his world, and his anger has grown against the people he sees as the perpetrators of these flaws. Ivan, however, has not yet recognized his own role as such. Ivan's whole life was marked by his commitment to these ideals of pleasantness and decorousness, but he is not yet able to see this fact. Nevertheless, lying alone on his couch, Ivan begins to question his own role in the falsity he sees around him. He thinks back across his life and sees that the only truly pleasant moments of his life were in "the first recollections of childhood" (147). As Ivan thinks through his life, he realizes that this true pleasantness ebbed away: "As soon as the period began which had produced the present Ivan Ilych, all that had then seemed joys now melted before his sight and turned into something trivial and often nasty. And the further he departed from childhood and the nearer he came to the present the more worthless and doubtful were the joys" (147). Ivan Ilych is horrified to see that, as his life went on, the less there was of what was truly good. He begins to question the meaning of his entire life, along with the meaning of his current sufferings. This is the first time that Ilych has engaged in a true moment of self-reflection. He has seen the flaws of his world outwardly, in the people and world around him, and now he is beginning to see those same flaws inwardly, in his own life and conduct. He questions his own conduct for the very first time: "'Maybe I did not live as I ought to have done... But how could that be, when I did everything properly?'" (148). Ilych is not yet ready to accept his own complicity in the falsity of his world. Though he is able to question his own participation in these flaws, he immediately rejects the idea. Nevertheless, the thought haunts him: "And whenever the thought occurred to him, as it often did, that it all resulted from his not having lived as he ought

to have done, he at once recalled the correctness of his whole life and dismissed so strange an idea” (148). Ivan uses his own example of pleasantness and decorousness—the same selfish propriety that his family showed—to avoid the question of his own complicity. Though he has begun to self-reflect, he is not able to self-examine to the extent that he recognizes the scope of his world’s “falsity” in his own life. Every time he suspects that “I have not lived as I ought to,” he denies the thought by remembering “all the legality, correctitude, and propriety of his life” (150-151). As a result, he ignores his own contribution to the falsity of his world and continues to blame his wife and family for these flaws. His resentment, built by this outward focus, leads, finally, to his lashing out.

Ivan hits the peak of his Rebellion stage when he lashes out at his wife, daughter, and doctor in quick succession, all of whom he blames for the falsity of his world. First, his wife comes to visit him, and he “turned his eyes towards her with...so great an animosity, to her in particular” and yells, “For Christ’s sake let me die in peace!” (151). His daughter then enters the room, and Ilych “looked at her as he had done at his wife, and...said dryly that he would soon free them all of himself” (151). Finally, the doctor arrives for their usual appointment, during which Ivan only glares and answers in curt monosyllables. Finally, he says to the doctor:

“You know you can do nothing for me, so leave me alone.”

“We can ease your sufferings.”

“You can’t even do that. Leave me be.” (151-152)

In doing all this, Ivan rebels against every person that he blames for the flaws in his world.

Though he at last verbally expresses his anger, it does not relieve any of his suffering. In fact, it intensifies his mental anguish by bringing to the forefront his suspicion that he himself did not live his life well. He drives his family off, does not relieve his pain, and is forced to confront the

falsity of his own life. To his horror, he begins to question that he might have suppressed all his good impulses and that “the whole arrangement of his life...might all have been false” (152). In this moment, he can no longer defend the propriety of his life. This is the transition between Ivan’s Rebellion and Recognition stages. His rebellion forces him to confront the truth that the falsity he now hates in others is present in his own life. He sees “his wife, then his daughter, and then the doctor... In them he saw himself—all that for which he had lived—and saw clearly that it was not real at all, but a terrible and huge deception which had hidden both life and death. This consciousness intensified his physical suffering tenfold” (152-153). Despite this growing realization, Ivan has not yet fully emerged from the Rebellion stage because he continues to fight against this knowledge. He continues to lash out at his own thoughts and the people around him. He is unwilling to accept the fact that his own life has been false, and so he continues to rebel against it. When he sees his wife, he lashes out again at her because every part of her “all revealed the same thing. ‘This is wrong, it is not as it should be. All you have lived for and still live for is falsehood and deception, hiding life and death from you’” (153). In response to this thought, he shouts at his wife, “‘Go away! Go away and leave me alone!’” (154) In this scene, Ivan has recognized how the flaws of his world manifest in his family, but now those same people are showing him how those flaws reflect back on himself. Ivan is as yet unwilling to accept this and continues, desperately, to fight against this new self-knowledge.

Ivan then enters the last stage of his life. As he begins to die, he struggles against the knowledge that his life has been false. His refusal to accept it increases his suffering, and he is “hindered...by his conviction that his life had been a good one. That very justification of his life held him fast and prevented his moving forward, and it caused him most torment of all” (154). For three days, Ivan clings to the false belief that he has lived a good life, continually rejecting

the idea that he too has lived according to deceptive, selfish propriety. Suddenly, however, he breaks through into the Recognition stage. In the last hours of his life, he finally accepts his own complicity in his world's flaws. He thinks to himself, "'Yes, it was all not the right thing...but that's no matter. It can be done. But what *is* the right thing?'" (155) In this moment, Ivan releases his justifications, examines himself unflinchingly, and accepts the fact that he participated in the flaws of his world. Furthermore, he suddenly gains the desire to do the right thing, to combat his world's falsity, even in the last moments of his life. He realizes that "though his life had not been what it should have been, this could still be rectified. He asked himself, 'What *is* the right thing?' and grew still, listening" (155). In this moment, he completes his Recognition stage. When his wife and young son come to see him, he realizes what this right thing can be. This is the beginning of his Choice.

For the first time, Ivan holds no anger and resentment towards his family. Now that he has accepted his own complicity in the falsity of his world, he does not blame them for that falsity. In recognizing how their world has shaped all of them, including themselves, he is able to feel a compassion for them that he was never able to feel before: "He opened his eyes, looked at his son, and felt sorry for him. His wife came up to him and he glanced at her... He felt sorry for her too" (155). This newfound emotional connection allows Ilych to fully comprehend the choice that is set in front of him. For the first time, Ivan feels willing to die if it will help his family. In that moment, he puts their needs above his own: "'Yes, I am making them wretched,' he thought. 'They are sorry, but it will be better for them when I die'" (155). This is a rare moment of selflessness for Ilych. Though he has held desperately to his life and lashed out at his family throughout the book, he now wishes so passionately for their well-being that he would give up his own life for their sake. In order to fully awaken, however, he must now choose to act on that

desire. He must take a physical action, no matter how small, that places his family's needs over himself. Ivan himself recognizes this:

“Besides, why speak? I must act,” he thought. With a look at his wife he indicated his son and said: “Take him away...sorry for him...sorry for you too. ...” He tried to add, “forgive me,” but said “forgo” and waved his hand, knowing that He whose understanding mattered would understand. (155)

In this moment, Ivan makes his Choice. He chooses to act out of love and compassion for his family, and even though that action is small, it is monumental. This is because Ivan is acting completely selflessly. Even though he is dying, Ivan's thoughts are only for the welfare of his family. He wants to protect his son and expresses the compassion he now feels for both his son and his wife. In direct contrast to the bitter way he treated and thought of Praskovya in the past, he now humbly asks her to forgive him in his last moment. He recognizes the falsity and pain of their world and now longs to help, rather than blame, his wife. He reaches out in genuine emotional connection for the first time. This Choice completely contradicts the selfishness and dishonesty that marks their world. It shows that Ivan has fully awakened because he is able to act out of selflessness and honesty, choosing to care for others over himself. In this small moment, he completes his awakening arc.

Immediately after making this choice, Ivan loses both his pain and fear of death. He is filled with light and joy, devoid of pain and suffering: “‘How good and how simple!’ he thought... There was no fear because there was no death. In place of death there was light” (155-156). Ivan dies, but he dies a changed man. He is no longer bound to the falsity of his world; he has awakened from it. The joy and light that he feels show that this change has taken place. In awakening, he finds true life, joy, and emotional connection. In reaching out in kindness to those

who are suffering, he experiences his purpose. Though Ivan dies before fully going through the Continuing stage, his reaction to and result of his Choice make it clear that he fully awakened. Ivan completed his awakening arc in full, hitting and completing each stage as the story progressed. In doing so, his story became an example of powerful human connection, the ability to find joy and meaning even in the midst of deep suffering, and the ability of humans to awaken, grow, and change. Ivan Ilych, even in suffering, shows us our potential. He shows us what it looks like to awaken.

Conclusion

The Awakening Arc's seven stages are clearly identifiable in some form in several different works of literature. These works may differ in many ways, including in length, date published, and country of origin, but they all share characteristics of the Awakening Arc, whether complete or incomplete. The protagonist in each text undergoes some process of internal change, and these processes can be effectively mapped out and understood through the stages of the Awakening Arc. By loosely aligning with Freytag's external plot structure, the arc also demonstrates how a character's internal change affects and is affected by external plot events in a work of literature. This shows both the arc's viability and applicability as a narrative structure.

As a viable narrative structure, the Awakening Arc warrants further application to other works of literature. The arc should be analyzed in works of varying genres, lengths, time periods, countries, and cultures. Furthermore, not only should the arc be applied to other works of fiction, but it should be applied to works of nonfiction as well. Particularly relevant are works of memoir and creative nonfiction, as applying the arc in these contexts could shed further light on the link between the Awakening Arc as a character's experience and the arc as a function of the literary imagination. The arc should also be applied in the context of non-Western literature in order to study how its basic tenets may need to be adapted to more accurately express other cultural experiences. These studies will further hone and develop the Awakening Arc, and they will reveal how the arc, through the literary imagination, can be applied in the service of public life.

Perhaps most importantly, the Awakening Arc can be useful as far more than a narrative structure. The arc can and should be used as a critical tool or model to analyze and critique genres, texts, modes of thought, culture, and more. First, the model can serve as an explanatory tool to help the reader's comprehension of a text. For example, by analyzing Pynchon's *The*

Crying of Lot 49 through the lens of the Awakening Arc, I was able to move past its absurd, postmodernist structure to better understand the very human issues and social commentaries Pynchon was expressing through that very structure. By mapping out Oedipa's journey through the stages of the arc, and noting how her ability to find meaningful change was interrupted by postmodernism itself, I was better able to grasp the text's social, political, and historical context, as well as the nuanced choices Pynchon made to express his views on that context. I was able to see the pain caused by a country in turmoil, a burgeoning counterculture, and a people who had suddenly and painfully lost faith in their government. In this way, I became convinced of the arc's use as a valuable tool to better understand and even critique works of literature.

Furthermore, as a critical tool or model, the Awakening Arc can be used in a somewhat Bakhtinian or even Adlerian sense to engage in a discussion or dialogue with a work of literature. The arc can first be used to better comprehend a work of literature, and then it can be used to critique it. When I applied the Awakening Arc to *The Crying of Lot 49*, I was further able to study and critique the effects of postmodernist belief on narrative and culture. I noted the debilitating effect a postmodernist culture and structure had on Oedipa, an effect that could perhaps be logically extrapolated to postmodernism's effects on public and private life. In this way, the Awakening Arc can transcend its simple function as a character arc to become a valuable critical tool that lends itself to deep and relevant discourse, critique, and discussion.

Based on this, I contend that the Awakening Arc is not only viable as a narrative structure but as a deeply valuable tool to study, critique, and discuss narratives, works of literature, and even theory or culture itself. Because of this, the arc warrants further study, analysis, and application in many different contexts. It allows lessons learned from works of literature to become applicable to the rest of our lives; in this sense, it, like Clarisse, becomes a mirror that

reflects back to us our own potential for growth and change. As with Ivan Ilych, it fosters empathy and compassion. It also, like Oedipa, allows us to discover a new way of looking at society, culture, genre, and human need. In all these senses and more, the Awakening Arc is viable as a critical tool and as a vehicle for positive change. As a tool of metaphor, fancy, and the literary imagination, it can also be used to promote democracy, foster empathy, and positively impact public life. It can be part of a theory designed to have a concrete impact on the world around us, enabling us to look at ourselves, our narratives, and even our own cultures from a fresh, critical, compassion-oriented lens. It can be said that the difference between pity and compassion is that pity is stagnant, while compassion motivates us to take positive action for the sake of others. In this same sense, the Awakening Arc is part of what I believe to be the next, and most necessary step of literary theory: the active movement to positively apply literature, narrative, and the imagination to the world around us. It is designed as a tool of action rather than passivity, and of learning and movement rather than stagnation. As such a tool, it will be viable and useful for many years to come.

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