DRAMATICA:
A NEW THEORY OF STORY

Developed and Written by
Melanie Anne Phillips & Chris Huntley

SPECIAL ON-LINE EDITION.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

In support of the on-line writing community, Screenplay Systems Incorporated is providing this special on-line edition of the 450 page book, *DRAMATICA: A NEW THEORY OF STORY*.

How This Book Is Arranged

Part of what makes a story great is its underlying dramatic structure and part is the manner in which that structure is related to an audience, often called "storytelling". Therefore, this book is divided into two principal sections: *The Elements of Structure* and *The Art of Storytelling*. In The Elements of Structure you will explore the essential components that occur in all complete stories as they appear in Character, Theme, Plot, and Genre. In the Art of Storytelling you will examine the Four Stages of Communication that occur between an author and an audience: Storyforming, Storyencoding, Storyweaving, and Reception.

By the time you have finished, you will have gained a whole new understanding of what stories are and a whole new set of tools for creating them. For a glimpse of how some of Dramatica's basic concepts can be employed to improve a story, you might want to take a look at a constructive criticism of the motion picture Jurassic Park appearing in the Epilogue section.

You will note that the majority of examples provided in this book are drawn from motion pictures. This stems from

the authors' personal backgrounds in the motion picture industry. Dramatica, however, is a theory of story -- not a theory of screenplay. All of the dramatic concepts presented here are equally applicable to any medium of story expression.

Note about Pronoun Usage: Some characters are best looked at by their dramatic functions. To help keep this perspective, we use the impersonal pronoun "it" when referring to such characters. Other characters are best explored in terms of their growth. To help draw the reader into a closer relationship with such a character, we use the personal pronoun, "he". Earlier editions of this book used "she" as the personal pronoun. Because of this uncommon usage, readers were jarred out of a relationship with personal characters, rather than being drawn in, defeating our purpose. As a result, this edition employs masculine pronouns.

Chapter 1

Dramatica and the Creative Writer

A Place to Start

Mastering the craft of writing requires a skill in communication and a flair for style. Through communication, an audience receives meaning. Through style, an author achieves impact. The Dramatica theory of story explores both aspects of the writing process providing structural guidelines for clarifying communication and artistic techniques for enhancing style.

Accordingly, this book is divided into two principal sections: *The Elements of Structure* and *The Art of Storytelling*. Separating these two aspects of the writing craft allows us to see more deeply into each. This arrangement also splits the experience of writing into two parts, when in practice, they are usually blended in a simultaneous effort.

Many other books have been written which explore the blended creative process. In contrast, this is a book of

theory, and is designed more to educate, than to inspire. Still, the motivation to write is one of inspiration. So, before we rush headlong into a detailed, accurate, and revolutionary explanation of story, let us put everything in context by describing the relationship of Dramatica with the Creative Writer.

Communication

The process of communication requires at least two parties: the originator and the recipient. In addition, for communication to take place, the originator must be aware of the information or feelings he wishes to transmit, and the recipient must be able to determine that meaning.

Similarly, storytelling requires an author and an audience. And, to tell a story, one must have a story to tell. Only when an author is aware of the message he wishes to impart can he determine how to couch that message so it will be accurately received.

It should be noted that an audience is more than a passive participant in the storytelling process. When we write the phrase, "It was a dark and stormy night," we have communicated a message, albeit a nebulous one. In addition to the words, another force is at work creating meaning in the reader's mind. The readers themselves may have conjured up memories of the fragrance of fresh rain on dry straw, the trembling fear of blinding explosions of lightning, or a feeling of contentment that recalls a soft fur rug in front of a raging fire. But all we wrote was, "It was a dark and stormy night." We mentioned nothing in that phrase of straw or lightning or fireside memories. In fact, once the mood is set, the less said, the more the audience can imagine. Did the audience imagine what we, the authors, had in mind? Not likely. Did we communicate? Some. We communicated the idea of a dark and stormy night. The audience, however, did a lot of creating on its own. Did we tell a story? Definitely not!

Grand Argument Stories

The question arises: Is telling a story better than telling a non-story? No. Stories are not "better" than any other form of communication -- just different. To see this difference we need to define "story" so we can tell what a story is and what it is not. Herein lies a political problem. No matter how one defines "story," there will be an author someplace who finds his favorite work has been defined out, and feels it is somehow diminished by not being classified as a story. Rather than risk the ire of

countless creative authors, we have limited our definition to a very special kind of story: the *Grand Argument Story*.

As its name indicates, a *Grand Argument Story* presents an argument. To be Grand, the argument must be a complete one, covering all the ways the human mind might consider a problem and showing that only one approach is appropriate to solving it. Obviously, this limits out a lot of creative, artistic, important works -- but not out of being stories, just out of being Grand Argument Stories. So, is a Grand Argument Story better than any other kind? No. It is just a specific kind.

What's In A Grand Argument Story?

A Grand Argument Story is a conceptually *complete* story with both an emotional and logical comprehensiveness. There are a number of qualities which determine whether a story is a Grand Argument or not. These are seen in the story's Structure, Dynamics, Character, Theme, Plot, and Genre.

Structure: the underlying relationship between the parts of a story describe its structure. A Grand Argument Story has a very specific structure which will be explored thoroughly in the first half of this book entitled *The Elements of Structure*

Dynamics: the moving, growing, or changing parts of a story describe its dynamics. A Grand Argument Story has eight essential dynamics which are explored in the second half of this book entitled *The Art of Storytelling*

Character: Grand Argument Stories deal with two types of Characters: Objective Characters and Subjective Characters. These Characters provide the audience with the experience of moving through the story in both a passionate and an intellectual sense.

Theme: Theme, in a Grand Argument Story, is tied to every structural and dynamic element. Theme provides the various biases and perspectives necessary to convey the story's subject matter or meaning.

Plot: Plot in a Grand Argument Story is the sequence in which a story's thematic structure is explored. Plot details the order in which dramatic elements must occur within that story.

Genre: Genre in a Grand Argument Story classifies the audience's experience of a story in the broadest sense. Genre takes into account the elements of structure, dynamics, character, plot, and theme to define significant differences between various complete Grand Argument Stories.

These parts of a Grand Argument Story combine in complex relationships to create its Storyform. A Storyform is like a blueprint which describes how these parts shall relate in a particular story, regardless of how they are symbolized for the audience. It is such a Storyform which allows such different stories as West Side Story and Romeo and Juliet, or Cyrano de Bergerac and Roxanne to share the same meaning while bearing little resemblance to each other. What these two pairs of stories share is virtually the same Storyform.

The Free-form Author

While some authors write specifically to make an argument to an audience, many others write because they want to follow their personal muse. Sometimes writing is a catharsis, or an exploration of self. Sometimes authoring is a sharing of experiences, fragmented images, or just of a point of view. Sometimes authoring is marking a path for an audience to follow, or perhaps just presenting emotional resources the audience can construct into its own vision.

Interactive communications question the validity of a linear story itself, and justifiably so. There are many ways to communicate, and each has just as much value as the next *depending upon how one wishes to affect one's audience.*

The Scope of Dramatica

With all these forms of communication, isn't Dramatica severely limited in addressing only the Grand Argument Story? No. The Grand Argument model described by Dramatica functions to present all the ways a mind can look at an issue. As a result, all other forms of communication will be using the same pieces, just in different combinations, sequences, or portions. In our example, we indicated that the less we said, the more the audience could use its imagination. A Grand Argument Story says it all. Every point is made, even if hidden obscurely in the heart of an entertainment. Other forms of communication use "slices" of the model, chunks, or levels. Even if an author is unaware of this, the fact that human minds share common essential concepts means that the author will be using concepts and patterns found in the Dramatica model.

Symbolizing Concepts

It has been argued that perhaps the symbols we use are what create concepts, and therefore no common understanding between cultures, races, or times is possible. Dramatica works because indeed there ARE common concepts: morality, for example. *Morality,* a common concept? Yes. Not everyone shares the same definition of morality, but every culture and individual understands some concept that means "morality" to them. In other words, the concept of "morality" may have many different meanings -- depending on culture or experience -- but they all qualify as different meanings of "morality." Thus there can be universally shared essential concepts even though they drift apart through various interpretations. It is through this framework of essential concepts that communication is possible.

Communicating Concepts Through Symbols

How can essential concepts be communicated? Certainly not in their pure, intuitive form directly from mind to mind. (Not yet, anyway!) To communicate a concept, an author must symbolize it, either in words, actions, juxtapositions, interactions -- in some form or another. As soon as the concept is symbolized, however, it becomes culturally specific and therefore inaccessible to much of the rest of

the world.

Even within a specific culture, the different experiences of each member of an audience will lead to a slightly different interpretation of the complex patterns represented by intricate symbols. On the other hand, it is the acceptance of common symbols of communication that defines a culture. For example, when we see a child fall and cry, we do not need to know what language he speaks or what culture he comes from in order to understand what has happened. If we observe the same event in a story, however, it may be that in the author's culture a child who succumbs to tears is held in low esteem. In that case, then the emotions of sadness we may feel in our culture are not at all what was intended by the author.

Author's Intent

Simply having a feeling or a point of view does not an author make. One becomes an author the moment one establishes an intent to communicate. Usually some intriguing setting, dialog, or bit of action will spring to mind and along with it the desire to share it. Almost immediately, most authors leap ahead in their thinking to consider how the concept might best be presented to the audience. In other words, even before a complete story has come to mind most authors are already trying to figure out how to tell the parts they already have.

As a result, many authors come to the writing process carrying a lot of baggage: favorite scenes, characters, or action, but no real idea how they are all going to fit together. A common problem is that all of these wonderful inspirations often don't belong in the same story. Each may be a complete idea unto itself, but there is no greater meaning to the sum of the parts. To be a story, each and every part must also function as an aspect of the whole.

Some writers run into problems by trying to work out the entire dramatic structure of a story in advance only to find they end up with a formulaic and uninspired work. Conversely, other writers seek to rely on their muse and work their way through the process of expressing their ideas only to find they have created nothing more than a mess. If a way could be found to bring life to tired structures and also to knit individual ideas into a larger pattern, both kinds of authors might benefit. It is for this purpose that Dramatica was developed.

When to Use Dramatica

For some authors, applying Dramatica at the beginning of a creative project might be inhibiting. Many writers prefer to explore their subject, moving in whatever direction their muse leads them until they eventually establish an intent. In this case, the storytelling comes before the structure. After the first draft is completed, such an author can look back at what he has created with the new understanding he has arrived at by the end. Often, much of the work will no longer fit the story as the author now sees it. By telling Dramatica what he *now* intends, Dramatica will be able to indicate which parts of the existing draft are appropriate, which are not, and what may be needed that is currently missing. In this way, the creative process is both free and fulfilling, with Dramatica serving as analyst and collaborator.

Following the Muse

A number of authors write with no intent at all. They apply themselves to recording their journey through a topic or subject or simply wander, musing. The resulting work is almost always open to all kinds of interpretation, yet may elicit strong emotions and conclusions in virtually everyone who observes the work. Even when an author meanders, he does so with the same mental tools everyone shares. So although no intended message might be conveyed, the subconscious patterns of the author's mental processes are recorded in the work. For those authors who prefer a more freeform approach, the concept of a Grand Argument Story is generally useless. It is not that the Dramatica model cannot describe the nature of their communication. Rather, a freeform author simply has no need of it.

Dramatica as a Tool

None of the creative techniques an author might use are better or worse than others. They are simply different approaches to the creative process. The key is to find the ones that work for you. Sometimes what works is not to create a full argument, but to break the rules, shatter expectations, and play with the minds of your audience members. Even here Dramatica can help. Because it defines a complete argument, Dramatica can assist in predicting the effect that breaking an argument will have on the message going to the audience: it can describe how the communication has been altered. When all is said and written, Dramatica provides authors with a tool for

understanding the process of communication, if and when they want it.

Chapter Two
The Elements of Structure

Foundations: Central Concepts

In Dramatica, there are some central concepts that prove immediately useful. Presenting these up front reveals the practical side of the theory and provides a firm foundation for more in-depth explorations to come.

These central concepts are:

1. The *Story Mind*
2. The *Four Throughlines*
3. The *Objective Story Throughline*
4. The *Main Character Throughline*
5. The *Obstacle Character Throughline*
6. The *Subjective Story Throughline*
7. The *Grand Argument Story*

The Story Mind

One of the unique concepts that sets Dramatica apart from all other theories is the assertion that every complete story is a model of the mind's problem solving process. This *Story Mind* does not work like a computer, performing one operation after another until the solution is obtained. Rather, it works more holistically, like our own minds, bringing many conflicting considerations to bear on the issue. It is the author's argument as to the relative value of these considerations in solving a particular problem that gives a story its meaning.

To make his case, an author must examine all significant approaches to resolving the story's specific problem. If a part of the argument is left out, the story will have holes. If the argument is not made in an even-handed fashion, the story will have inconsistencies.

Characters, Plot, Theme, and Genre are the different *families* of considerations in the Story Mind made tangible, so audience members can see them at work and gain insight into their own methods of solving problems. Characters represent the motivations of the Story Mind (which often work at cross purposes and come into conflict). Plot documents the problem solving methods employed by the Story Mind. Theme examines the relative worth of the Story Mind's value standards. Genre establishes the Story Mind's overall attitude, which casts a bias or background on all other considerations. When a story is fully developed, the model of the Story Mind is complete.

The Four Throughlines

It is not enough, however, to develop a complete Story Mind. That only creates the argument the audience will be considering. Equally important is how the audience is positioned relative to that argument.

Does an author want the audience to examine a problem dispassionately or to experience what it is like to have that problem? Is it more important to explore a possible solution or to weigh the benefits and drawbacks of alternative solutions? In fact, all of these points of view must be developed for a story to be complete.

An author's argument must go beyond telling audience members what to look at. I must also show them how to see it. It is the relationship between object and observer that creates perspective, and in stories, *perspective creates meaning*.

There are four different perspectives which must be explored as a story unfolds in order to present all sides of the issue at the heart of a story. They are the *Objective Story Throughline,* the*Main Character Throughline,* the*Obstacle Character Throughline,* and the*Subjective Story Throughline.*

The Objective Story Throughline

The first perspective is from the ***Objective Story*** **Throughline,** so called because it is the most dispassionate look at the Story Mind.

Imagine the argument of a story as a battle between two armies. The Objective Story view is like that of a general

on a hill overlooking the battle. The general focuses on unfolding strategies and, from this perspective, sees soldiers not by name but by their function on the field: foot soldier, grenadier, cavalryman, scout. Though the general may care very much for the soldiers, he must concentrate on the events as they unfold. Because it emphasizes events, the ***Objective Story*** **Throughline** is often thought of as plot, but as we shall see later, plot is so much more.

The Main Character Throughline

For a story to be complete, the audience will need another view of the battle as well: that of the soldier in the trenches. Instead of looking at the Story Mind from the *outside,* the ***Main Character*** **Throughline** is a view *from* the *inside*. What if that Story Mind were our own? That is what the audience experiences when it becomes a soldier on the field: audience members identify with the Main Character of the story.

Through the Main Character we experience the battle as if we were directly participating in it. From this perspective we are much more concerned with what is happening immediately around us than we are with the larger strategies that are really too big to see. This most personally involved argument of the story is the ***Main Character*** **Throughline**.

As we shall explore shortly, the Main Character does not have to be the soldier leading the charge in the battle as a whole. Our Main Character might be any of the soldiers on the field: the cook, the medic, the bugler, or even the recruit cowering in the bushes.

The Obstacle Character Throughline

To see the third perspective, keep yourself in the shoes of the Main Character for a moment. You are right in the middle of the story's battle. Smoke from dramatic explosions obscures the field. You are not absolutely sure which way leads to safety. Still, before there was so much turmoil, the way was clear and you are confident in your sense of direction.

Then, from out of the smoke a shadowy figure appears, solidly blocking your way. The shadowy figure is your

***Obstacle Character*.** You can't see well enough to tell if he is friend or foe. He might be a compatriot trying to keep you from stepping into a mine field. Or, he might be the enemy luring you into a trap. What to do! Do you keep on your path and run over this person or try the other path instead? This is the dilemma that faces a Main Character.

To completely explore the issue at the heart of a story, an Obstacle Character must present an alternative approach to the Main Character. The ***Obstacle Character*** **Throughline** describes the advocate of this alternative path and the manner in which he impacts Main Character.

The Subjective Story Throughline

As soon as the Main Character encounters his Obstacle, a skirmish ensues at a personal level in the midst of the battle as a whole. The two characters close in on one another in a theatrical game of "chicken," each hoping the other will give in.

The Main Character shouts at his Obstacle to get out of the way. The Obstacle Character stands fast, insisting that the Main Character change course and even pointing toward the fork in the road. As they approach one another, the interchange becomes more heated until the two are engaged in heart-to-heart combat.

While the Objective Story battle rages all around, the Main and Obstacle Characters fight their private engagement. The ***Subjective Story*** **Throughline** describes the course this *passionate* battle takes.

The Four Throughlines Of A Story You Know

Here are some examples of how to see the four throughlines of some well known stories. Completed stories tend to blend these throughlines together in the interest of smooth narrative style. From a structural point of view, however, it is important to see how they can be separated.

Star Wars

Objective Story Throughline: The Objective view of ***Star Wars*** sees a civil war in the galaxy between the Rebels and the evil Empire. The Empire has built a Death Star which will destroy the Rebels if it isn't destroyed first. To even hope for a successful attack, the Rebels need the plans to the Death Star which are in the possession of a farm boy

and an old Jedi master. These two encounter many other characters while delivering the plans, ultimately leading to a climactic space-battle on the surface of the Death Star.

Main Character Throughline: The Main Character of ***Star Wars*** is Luke Skywalker. This throughline follows his personal growth over the course of this story. Luke is a farm boy who dreams of being a star pilot, but he can't allow himself to leave his foster parents to pursue his dreams. He learns that he is the son of a great Jedi Knight. When his foster parents are killed, he begins studying the religion of the Jedi: the Force. Surviving many dangerous situations, Luke learns to trust himself more and more. Ultimately he makes a leap of faith to trust his feelings over his computer technology while flying into battle as the Rebel's last hope of destroying the Death Star. It turns out well, and Luke is changed by the experience.

Obstacle Character Throughline: The Obstacle Character of ***Star Wars*** is Obi Wan Kenobi and this throughline describes his impact (especially on Luke Skywalker) over the course of the story. Obi Wan is a wizened old Jedi who sees everything as being under the mystic control of the Force. He amazes people with his resiliency and ability, all of which he credits to the Force.

Subjective Story Throughline: The Subjective Story throughline of ***Star Wars*** describes the relationship between Luke and Obi Wan. Obi Wan needs Luke to help him and he knows Luke has incredible potential as a Jedi. Luke, however, needs to be guided carefully because his desires are so strong and his abilities so new. Obi Wan sets about the manipulations which will help Luke see the true nature of the Force and learn to trust himself.

To Kill A Mockingbird

Objective Story Throughline: The Objective view of ***To Kill A Mockingbird*** sees the town of Maycomb with its horns locked in various attitudes over the rape trial of Tom Robinson. Due-process has taken over, however many people think this case should never see trial. As the trial comes to fruition, the people of the town argue back and forth about how the defense lawyer ought to behave and what role people should take in response to this alleged atrocity.

Main Character Throughline: The Main Character of ***To Kill A Mockingbird*** is Scout and her throughline describes her personal experiences in this story. Scout is a young tom-

boy who wants things in her life to remain as simple as they've always been. Going to school, however, and seeing the town's reaction to her father's work introduces her to a new world of emotional complexity. She learns that there is much more to people than what you can see.

Obstacle Character Throughline: The Obstacle Character point of view in ***To Kill A Mockingbird*** is presented through Boo Radley, the reclusive and much talked about boy living next door to Scout. The mystique surrounding this boy, fueled by the town's ignorance and fear, make everyone wonder what he is really like and if he's really as crazy as they say.

Subjective Story Throughline: The Subjective Story view of ***To Kill A Mockingbird*** sees the relationship between Scout and Boo Radley. This throughline explores what it's like for these two characters to live next door to each other and never get to know one another. It seems any friendship they might have is doomed from the start because Boo will always be locked away in his father's house. The real problem, however, turns out to be one of Scout's prejudice against Boo's mysterious life. Boo has been constantly active in Scout's life, protecting her from the background. When Scout finally realizes this she becomes a changed person who no longer judges people without first trying to stand in their shoes.

Summary - The Grand Argument Story

We have described a story as a battle. The overview that takes in the full scope of the battle is the *Objective Story Throughline.*

Within the fray is one special soldier through whom we experience the battle first-hand. How he fares is the *Main Character Throughline*.

The Main Character is confronted by another soldier, blocking the path. Is he friend or foe? Either way, he is an obstacle, and the exploration of his impact on the Main Character is the *Obstacle Character Throughline*.

The Main and Obstacle Characters engage in a skirmish. Main says, "Get out of my way!", and Obstacle says, "Change course!" In the end, the steadfast resolution of one will force the other to change. The growth of this interchange constitutes the *Subjective Story Throughline*.

Taken together, the four throughlines comprise the author's argument to the audience. They answer the questions: What

does it feel like to have this kind of problem? What's the other side of the issue? Which perspective is the most appropriate for dealing with that problem? What do things look like in the "big picture?"

Only through the development of these four simultaneous throughlines can the Story Mind truly reflect our own minds, pitting reason against emotion and immediate advantage against experience in the hope of resolving a problem in the most beneficial manner.

Moving On

Now that you've added Story Mind, Objective Story Throughline, Main Character Throughline, Obstacle Character Throughline, and Subjective Story Throughline to your writer's vocabulary, you have all the background you need to explore a whole new world of understanding: the ***Dramatica Theory of Story***.

Chapter 3
Introduction to Characters

Hero Is a Four Letter Word

It is easy to think of the principal character in a story as "the hero." Many beginning writers tend to base their stories on the adventures or experiences of a hero. As writers become more mature in their craft, they may come to think of their central character as a "protagonist," or perhaps a "main character." And yet, through all of this, no consistent definitions of any of these terms have ever been agreed upon. Before we proceed then, it seems prudent to establish what Dramatica means by each of these concepts.

- A Main Character is the player through whom the audience experiences the story first hand.
- A Protagonist is the prime mover of the plot.
- A Hero is a combination of both Main Character and Protagonist.

In other words, a hero is a blended character who does two jobs: move the plot forward and serve as a surrogate for the audience. When we consider all the characters other than a Protagonist who might serve as the audience's

position in a story, suddenly the concept of a hero becomes severely limited. It is not wrong, just limited. The value of separating the Main Character and Protagonist into two different characters can be seen in the motion picture, ***To Kill a Mockingbird***. Here, the character, Atticus, (played by Gregory Peck) is clearly the Protagonist, yet the story is told through the experiences of Scout, his young daughter.

Later on, we will explore many other ways in which the Main Character can be employed in much less archetypal terms than as a hero. For now, the key point is that Dramatica identifies two different kinds of characters: those who represent an audience point of view, and those who fulfill a dramatic function.

Objective and Subjective Characters

The reason there are two kinds of characters goes back to the concept of the Story Mind. We have two principal views of that mind: the Objective view from the outside looking in, and the Subjective view from the inside looking out. In terms of the Story Mind, the Objective view is like looking at another person, watching his thought processes at work. For an audience experiencing a story, the Objective view is like watching a football game from the stands. All the characters are most easily identified by their functions on the field.

The Subjective view is as if the Story Mind were our own. From this perspective, only two characters are visible: Main and Obstacle. The Main and Obstacle Characters represent the inner conflict of the Story Mind. In fact, we might say a story is of *two* minds. In real life, we often play our own devil's advocate, entertaining an alternative view as a means of arriving at the best decision. Similarly, the Story Mind's alternative views are made tangible through the Main and Obstacle Characters. To the audience of a story, the Main Character experience is as if the audience were actually one of the players on the field. The Obstacle Character is the player who blocks the way.

To summarize then, characters come in two varieties: Objective and Subjective. Objective Characters represent dramatic functions; Subjective Characters represent points of view. When the Main Character point of view is attached

to the Protagonist function, the resulting character is commonly thought of as a *hero*.

Looking Forward

In the next chapter we will begin an in-depth exploration of Objective Characters. Here we will meet the Protagonist, Antagonist, and several other archetypes. Next we will dissect each archetype to see what essential dramatic elements it contains. Finally, we will examine how those same elements can be combined in different, non-archetypal patterns to create more realistic and versatile *complex* characters.

Then we will turn our attention to the Subjective Characters: Main and Obstacle. We will examine how the audience point of view is shifted through the Main Character's growth. We will also explore the forces that drive these two characters and forge the belief systems they possess.

Chapter 4

Objective Characters

Archetypal Characters: Introduction to Archetypes

Archetypes exist as a form of storytelling shorthand. Because they are instantly recognizable, an author may choose to use archetypal characters for a variety of reasons -- because of limited storytelling time or space, to emphasize other aspects of story such as Plot or Theme, to play on audience familiarity, etc. The main advantage of Archetypes is their basic simplicity, although this can sometimes work as a disadvantage if the characters are not developed fully enough to make them seem real.

There are eight Archetypal Characters: *Protagonist*, *Antagonist*, *Reason*, *Emotion*, *Sidekick*, *Skeptic*, *Guardian*, and *Contagonist*. Several of these are familiar to most authors. Some are a bit more obscure. One is unique to Dramatica. We will introduce all eight, show how they interact, then explore each in greater detail.

Protagonist

Players and Characters?

In our earlier discussion of what sets the *Subjective Characters* apart from the *Objective Characters*, we described how authors frequently assign the roles of both Protagonist AND Main Character to the same *player* in the story.

The concept of "player" is found throughout Dramatica and differs from what we mean by "character." Dramatica defines a character as a set of dramatic functions that must be portrayed in order to make the complete argument of a story. Several functions may be grouped together and assigned to a person, place, or thing who will represent them in the story. The group of functions defines the nature of the character. The personage representing the functions is a **player**.

In other words, a player is like a vessel into which a character (and therefore a set of character functions) is placed. If more than one Objective Character is placed into a single player, the player will appear to have multiple personalities. This is clearly seen in the dual characters contained in player, Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde, or the many personalities of Sybil.

Describing the Protagonist

No doubt the most well-known of all the Archetypal Characters is the Protagonist. As with all the Archetypal Characters, there is a specific "shopping list" or "recipe" of dramatic functions that describes the Protagonist. In this regard, the archetypal Protagonist is the chief proponent and principal driver of the effort to achieve the story's goal.

At first, this description seems far too simple for even the most archetypal of Protagonists. This is because the Main Character is so often combined with the Protagonist when Archetypal Characters are used, that we seldom see a Protagonistic player representing the archetypal functions alone.

Still, pursuing the goal is the essential function of the Protagonist, and beginning here we can construct a network of relationships that describe the remaining archetypes.

(*As a side note, the entire exploration of the Subjective Story is an independent job of the Main Character. For purposes of describing the Archetypal*

Protagonist, therefore, we will be considering only its role in the Objective Story Throughline as just another player on the field [albeit a crucial one].

So, for our current needs, the Archetypal Protagonist can be considered the chief proponent and principal driver of the effort to achieve the story's goal.

Antagonist

What is an Antagonist?

The Archetypal Antagonist is diametrically opposed to the Protagonist's successful attainment of the goal. Often this results in a Protagonist who has a purpose and an Antagonist comes along and tries to stop it. Sometimes, however, it is the other way around. The Antagonist may have a goal of its own that causes negative repercussions. The Protagonist then has the goal of stopping the Antagonist. For purposes of establishing a consistent way to analyze how all Archetypal Characters relate to the goal of any story, Dramatica defines the Protagonist's goal as the .i.story's goal;, regardless of which kind it is.

Antagonist and the Obstacle Character

Just as the Protagonist is often "doubled up" with the function of the Main Character, the Antagonist is sometimes (though less frequently) combined with the Obstacle Character. The Obstacle Character is fully explored in the Subjective Characters section of this book. For now, a simple description of the Obstacle Character will serve our purposes.

Just as the Antagonist opposes the Protagonist in the Objective Story, the *Obstacle Character* stands in the way of the *Main Character* in the Subjective Story. Note we did not say the Obstacle Character *opposes* the Main Character, but rather *stands in the way*. The Obstacle Character's function is to represent an alternative belief system or world view to the Main Character, forcing him to avoid the easy way out and to face his personal problem.

When combining the Obstacle Character and the Antagonist in the same player, it is essential to keep in mind the difference between their respective functions, so that both dramatic purposes are fully expressed.

Reason & Emotion

Why Reason and Emotion Characters?

Having briefly described the Protagonist and Antagonist, we can already see how they represent basic functions of the Story Mind. The Protagonist represents the drive to try and solve a problem; the Antagonist represents the drive to undermine success. These two characters teeter back and forth over the course of the story as each in turn gains the upper hand.

Even in the most Archetypal terms this conflict is an insufficient process to fully describe an argument, for it fails to address many other basic concerns that will naturally occur in the minds of audience members, and must therefore be incorporated in the Story Mind as well. That is why there are six other Archetypal Characters. Just as Protagonist and Antagonist form a pair, the other six Archetypal Characters form three other pairs. The first of these is made up of Reason and Emotion.

Reason and Emotion Described

The *Reason* Archetypal Character is calm, collected, and cool, perhaps even cold. It makes decisions and takes action wholly on the basis of logic. (Remember, we say *wholly* because we are describing an *Archetypal* Character. As we shall see later, *Complex* Characters are much more diverse and dimensional.)

The Reason character is the organized, logical type. The Emotion character who is frenetic, disorganized, and driven by feelings.

It is important to note that as in real life, Reason is not inherently *better* than Emotion, nor does Emotion have the edge on Reason. They just have different areas of strength and weakness which may make one more appropriate than the other in a given context.

Functionally, the *Emotion* Character has its heart on its sleeve; it is quick to anger, but also quick to empathize. Because it is frenetic and disorganized, however, most of its energy is uncontrolled and gets wasted by lashing out in so many directions that it ends up running in circles and getting nowhere. In contrast, the *Reason* Character seems to lack "humanity" and has apparently no ability to think from the heart. As a result, the *Reason* Character often fails to find support for its well-laid plans and

ends up wasting its effort because it has unknowingly violated the personal concerns of others.

In terms of the *Story Mind*, *Reason* and *Emotion* describe the conflict between our purely practical conclusions and considerations of our human side. Throughout a story, the *Reason* and *Emotion* Archetypal Characters will conflict over the proper course of action and decision, illustrating the Story Mind's deliberation between intellect and heart.

Sidekick & Skeptic

The next pair of Archetypal Characters are the *Sidekick* and the *Skeptic*, who represent the conflict between confidence and doubt in the Story Mind. The Sidekick is the faithful supporter. Usually, a Sidekick is attached to the Protagonist. Sometimes, however, they may be supporters of the Antagonist. This gives a good clue to the way Dramatica sees Objective Characters: The purpose of the Sidekick is to show faithful support. That does not determine *who* or *wha*t it supports, but just that it must loyally support someone or something. Other dynamics of a story will determine who the Sidekick needs to be attached to in order to make the story's argument, but from the standpoint of just describing the Archetypal Characters by themselves, the Sidekick faithfully supports.

The Sidekick is balanced by the Skeptic. Where the Sidekick has *faith*, the Skeptic *disbelieves*; where the Sidekick *supports*, the Skeptic *opposes*. The nature of the Skeptic is nicely described in the line of a song... "Whatever it is, I'm against it." In the Story Mind, it is the function of the Skeptic to note the indicators that portend failure. In contrast, the Sidekick notes the indicators that point to success. The interactions between Sidekick and Skeptic describe the Story Mind's consideration of the likelihood of success.

Guardian & Contagonist

What are the Guardian and Contagonist?

Finally we come to the remaining pair of Archetypal Characters. The first of these archetypes is a common yet often loosely defined set of functions; the second archetype is unique to Dramatica. The first of these characters is the *Guardian*. The Guardian functions as a teacher/helper who represents the Conscience of the Story Mind. This is a protective character who eliminates

obstacles and illuminates the path ahead. In this way, the Guardian helps the Protagonist stay on the proper path to achieve success. Balancing the Guardian is a character representing Temptation in the Story Mind. This character works to place obstacles in the path of the Protagonist, and to lure it away from success. Because this character works to hinder the progress of the Protagonist, we coined the name "Contagonist".

Contagonist: "Whose side are you on?"

Because the *Contagonist* and *Antagonist* both have a negative effect on the Protagonist, they can easily be confused with one another. They are, however, two completely different characters because they have two completely different functions in the Story Mind. Whereas the Antagonist works to stop the Protagonist, the Contagonist acts to deflect the Protagonist. The Antagonist wants to prevent the Protagonist from making further progress, the Contagonist wants to delay or divert the Protagonist for a time.

As with the Sidekick, the Contagonist can be allied with either the Antagonist or the Protagonist. Often, Contagonists are cast as the Antagonist's henchman or second-in-command. However, Contagonists are sometimes attached to the Protagonist, where they function as a thorn in the side and bad influence. As a pair, Guardian and Contagonist function in the Story Mind as Conscience and Temptation, providing both a light to illuminate the proper path and the enticement to step off it.

Archetypes -- a Balanced Part of the Complete Argument

As a group, the *Archetypal Characters* represent all the essential functions of a complete Story Mind, though they are grouped in simple patterns. Because the Archetypes can be allied in different ways, however, a degree of versatility can be added to their relationships.

Complex Characters

What is a Complex Character?

Complex Characters are created from the same set of dramatic functions as Archetypes. The principal difference is that the Archetypal Characters group together functions that are most similar and compatible, and Complex Characters don't. This means that although Archetypal Characters may conflict with one another, an Archetypal

Character is never at odds with its own drives and attitudes. This is why the Archetypal Characters so often appear to be less developed than Complex Characters or perhaps less *human*.

To create characters who more closely represent our own inconsistencies, we must redistribute their functions so they are less internally compatible. As this results in many more levels of exploration and understanding, we refer to any arrangement of character functions other than an Archetypal grouping to be Complex. A character containing such a grouping is a *Complex Character*.

Archetypes and Complex Characters Together

A single story may have both Archetypal and Complex Characters. The decision of how to group the functions is completely open to an author's storytelling desires. The problem is, until one is aware of exactly what these functions are and how they relate, it is impossible to make meaningful decisions about how to combine them. These essential functions are at such a basic level that they form the elemental building blocks of Objective Characters. Therefore, we refer to these functions as character *Elements*. Listing them gives no feel for the end product, much as just listing the Periodic Chart of Elements in chemistry gives no feel for the natures of the compounds that might be engineered through combining them.

As a result, the best way to present the character Elements with meaning is to start with the Archetypal Characters (who by definition contain all the Elements) and break them down, step by step, level by level, until their elemental components are exposed. In this manner, understanding is carried down to the Elements, which may then be combined in non-archetypal ways to create Complex Characters.

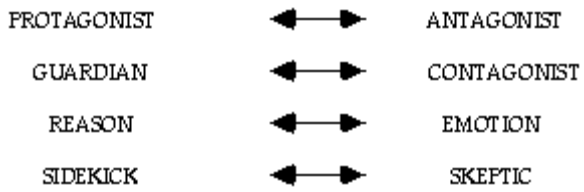
Chapter 5

Objective Character Functions

Drivers and Passengers

Dynamic Pairs

We have now created four distinct pairs of Archetypal Characters. Each pair presents the birthing ground of a particular kind of conflict. Two Characters bonded in such a relationship constitute a *Dynamic Pair.* Here are the Eight Archetypal Characters organized by Dynamic Pairs.



Functions of Dynamic Pairs

We can easily see how these Archetypal pairs represent a broad analogy to a human mind dealing with a problem. The Protagonist represents the desire to work at resolving the problem. Its Dynamic Pair, the Antagonist represents the desire to let the problem grow. As with the Archetypal Characters, we all face an internal battle between making decisions based upon Reason or upon Emotion. Like the functions of the Sidekick and Skeptic, the Story Mind will contain a struggle between Faith and Disbelief. And finally in an Archetypal sense, the Mind will be torn between the Contagonist's temptation for immediate gratification and the Guardian's counsel to consider the consequences.

Forcing the Story Forward

There is another useful grouping of the Archetypal Characters which helps uncover their essential Elements. Four of the characters seem to be the prime movers of the story, and it is their interactions that determine the thrust of the effort to address the story's problem. The other four are "back seat drivers" -- perhaps highly interested in the outcome, but rather than forcing the plot, they *influence* those who do force the plot. Remember, these descriptions are only applicable in a general way but serve to make comparisons between similar traits of characters. In Dramatica, we group four similar items that are interrelated into a simple table called a *quad.* So, we can create a quad of Driver Characters and a quad of Passenger Characters.

Drivers

The Driver Quad

Quad One: The Driver Characters

PROTAGONIST

GUARDIAN CONTAGONIST

ANTAGONIST

In simple stories, the Protagonist, Antagonist, Guardian, and Contagonist are all major drivers of the story. Whatever the object of their efforts, Protagonist will be trying to achieve it, Antagonist will be trying to prevent its achievement, Guardian will act to aid the achievement, and Contagonist will act to hinder (although Guardian and Contagonist may not be directly concerned with the goal itself or even each other). Regardless of their personal levels of awareness, each of these Characters seen *Objectively* acts with a unique drive that represents a basic Motivation of the Story Mind.

For example, if the Protagonist wants to build a shopping center, the Antagonist will not want it built. The Contagonist might get an injunction delaying construction so it can profit from a stock deal, even though it may like to see the center built eventually, and the Guardian might find a legal loophole to overturn the injunction, perhaps just as a by-product of another matter it is representing in court.

Remember, these Objective Characters are not judged by how THEY see the story, but how WE see them *affecting* the story.

Passengers

The Passenger Quad

Quad Two: The Passenger Characters

SIDEKICK

REASON EMOTION

SKEPTIC

Unlike the first quad, these four Characters are not the prime movers of the story, but rather ride the coattails of the Driver Characters. If not for the Drivers, the Passengers would not even be involved with the problem. Each represents an approach or attitude in the story: Sidekick is forever faithful while Skeptic is forever doubting; Reason acts on the basis of logic and Emotion responds from feelings. Of course, each of these Characters also has its own motivations, but seen Objectively as part of the Story Mind they represent different approaches and attitudes toward solving the problem.

Before we sub-divide the Archetypal Characters into their basic Elements, let's get a better feel for them by examining the Drivers and Passengers in several well known stories.

Drivers and Passengers in **Star Wars**

Archetypes in *Star Wars*

Most people would agree that Luke Skywalker is the Protagonist in ***Star Wars*** and Dramatica sees it the same way. The Empire itself, embodied in the Gran Mof Tarkin and his troops, is the force *diametrically* opposed to the story's goal of destroying the Death Star, and is therefore the Antagonist. Obi Wan Kenobi is the Guardian, protecting Luke and company and providing "moral" guidance, whereas Darth Vader is the Contagonist, representing the temptation of the "Dark side of the Force" and hindering progress at every turn.

Han Solo functions as the Skeptic, arguing his disbelief in the Force as well as his opposition to just about every course of action anyone tries to take. R2D2 and C3PO jointly fill the role of Sidekick, forever faithful to whomever they are assigned. Princess Leia is Reason, coldly calculating (although this is tempered in the storytelling), calm-headed and the real planner of the group. Chewbacca, in contrast, responds frequently with

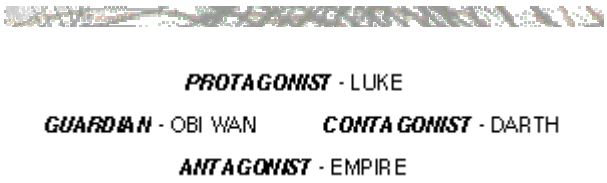
little or no thought and acts solely on the basis of his feelings, which clearly defines him as Emotion.

(It should be noted that R2D2 and C3PO have a well developed *sub-plot* between them, that is forefront as the movie opens. This gives them much more personality and versatility, and spells out differences between them that would not occur if they both simply shared the sidekick function. Sub-plots are dealt with later in the Storyweaving section of this book.)

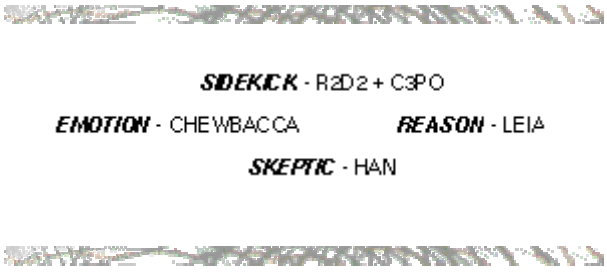
Drivers and Passengers in *Star Wars*

Having delineated our eight characters in ***Star Wars***, let us organize them into Drivers and Passengers.

Driver Characters



Passenger Characters



Drivers and Passengers in The Wizard of Oz

Archetypes in *The Wizard of Oz*

We can label Dorothy as the Protagonist in ***The Wizard of Oz*** with some confidence. Certainly the Scarecrow seems to be Reason since he is the planner of the group ("I'll show you how to get apples!"), but he is not very calm or collected. In fact, he is quite the opposite. Similarly, the Tin Man looks like Emotion as he cries in the poppy field, yet he is anything but frenetic when he rusts himself from the tears. Clearly, our original Archetypes don't seem quite as true-to-form as they did in ***Star Wars***.

Let's file that away for later and press on. The Cowardly Lion fills the role of Skeptic and Toto performs as the Sidekick. Glinda is an unabashed Guardian and the Wicked Witch of the West balances her as the Contagonist. But just a moment here... Doesn't the Wicked Witch act more like an Antagonist? Indeed she does, yet she seems to also fill the same role compared to Glinda as Darth Vader fills compared to Obi Wan. Assuming for a moment that the Wicked Witch IS the Antagonist, then who is the Contagonist?

There is only one major character yet unaccounted for -- the Wizard himself.

The Wizard as Contagonist? Somehow it doesn't sound quite right. At this point it becomes apparent that the characters in Oz are not all exactly Archetypal. Something is going on with the Scarecrow and Tin Man and the Witch and the Wizard that doesn't quite fit. Exploring these shortcomings of the Archetypal Character model as applied to Oz will ultimately offer some insight into the essential character Elements.

For the time being, however, let's pencil in the Witch as Antagonist and the Wizard as the Contagonist so we have a place to start. Here are the Eight Simple Characters of ***The Wizard of Oz*** in Quad format, ignoring any inconsistencies for the moment.

Drivers and Passengers in *The Wizard of Oz*

Driver Characters

PROTAGONIST - DOROTHY

GUARDIAN - GLINDA ***CONTAGONIST*** - WIZARD

ANTAGONIST - WICKED WITCH

Passenger Characters

SIDEKICK - TOTC

EMOTION - TIN MAN ***REASON*** - SCARECROW

SKEPTIC - LION

Drivers and Passengers in **Jaws**

Archetypes in *Jaws*

Chief Brody fills the Protagonist's shoes in ***Jaws***, and few would doubt that the Shark is the Antagonist. Hooper, with all his gizmos, takes the Reasonable stand, while Quint, who simply hates sharks, functions as Emotion. The Mayor is a strong Contagonist and Brody's wife is a weak Sidekick although it almost seems as if Hooper fills that role sometimes as well. Once again, more versatility is needed than the Archetypal Characters provide.

We still need a Guardian -- someone to protect Brody as well as stress the proper moral course. Simply put, ***Jaws*** has no character that performs BOTH functions. Rather, the **moral** half of the Guardian's role is played by Hooper who reminds Brody of his duty and urges him into taking action against the shark problem, while the **protective** role is filled in turn by the land itself, Hooper's boat, and ultimately Quint's boat.

Non-Archetypal Roles in *Jaws*

There is no reason why a character must be a *person*. A boat can be a player as well as a person, as long as it can demonstrate its function to the audience. Again, in Dramatica, the point of a story is to illustrate all aspects of the Story Mind dealing with a problem. As long as each aspect is accounted for, the specific carrier of that Element is *structurally* irrelevant and may only have storytelling ramifications.

So far we have not determined the Skeptic in ***Jaws***. Who refuses to believe evidence of the shark problem or the need for taking action against it? Clearly the Mayor embodies that characteristic well, and yet was previously identified as the Contagonist. Obviously some "doubling up" is going on here. If we look at who is across from whom in quad form, we can see some of the basic dramatic Character conflicts in ***Jaws***.

Drivers and Passengers in *Jaws*

Driver Characters

PROTAGONIST - BRODY

GUARDIAN - HOOPER ***CONTAGONIST*** - MAYOR

ANTAGONIST - SHARK

Passenger Characters

SIDEKICK - WIFE

EMOTION - QUINT ***REASON*** - HOOPER

SKEPTIC - MAYOR

From this breakdown, we see a good example in both the Mayor and Hooper of single players who actually portray two distinct Archetypal characters. The Mayor functions as Contagonist and Skeptic, whereas Hooper portrays both Guardian and Reason. Some of these broad labels fit better than others, which is why there are actually some Complex Character arrangements in ***Jaws*** as well, that do not quite fall into the strict Archetypal mold.

Chapter 6

Action and Decision Elements of Driver and Passenger Characters

Recap of Archetypal Characters

Now that we have become familiar with Archetypal characters and some of their limitations, let us recap our list of the eight Archetypal Characters as a prelude to resolving the inconsistencies we saw in ***The Wizard of Oz*** and ***Jaws***:

PROTAGONIST: The traditional Protagonist is the driver of the story: the one who forces the action. We root for it and hope for its success.

ANTAGONIST: The Antagonist is the character directly opposed to the Protagonist. It represents the problem that

must be solved or overcome for the Protagonist to succeed.

REASON: This character makes its decisions and takes action on the basis of logic, never letting feelings get in the way of a rational course.

EMOTION: The Emotion character responds with its feelings without thinking, whether it is angry or kind, with disregard for practicality.

SKEPTIC: Skeptic doubts everything -- courses of action, sincerity, truth -- whatever.

SIDEKICK: The Sidekick is unfailing in its loyalty and support. The Sidekick is often aligned with the Protagonist though may also be attached to the Antagonist.

GUARDIAN: The Guardian is a teacher or helper who aids the Protagonist in its quest and offers a moral standard.

CONTAGONIST: The Contagonist hinders and deludes the Protagonist, tempting it to take the wrong course or approach.

Splitting Archetypes Into Action and Decision Characteristics

Re-examining the list, we can learn something new that will help us in analyzing *The Wizard of Oz* and *Jaws*: each of the Eight Archetypal Characters contains one characteristic pertaining to actions and another characteristic pertaining to decisions.

PROTAGONIST
Action Characteristic: Pursues the goal. The traditional Protagonist is the driver of the story: the one who forces the action.

Decision Characteristic: Urges the other characters to consider the necessity of achieving the goal.

ANTAGONIST
Action Characteristic: The Antagonist physically tries to prevent or avoid the successful achievement of the goal by

the Protagonist.

Decision Characteristic: The Antagonist urges the other characters to reconsider the attempt to achieve the goal.

GUARDIAN
Action Characteristic: The Guardian is a helper who aids the efforts to achieve the story goal.

Decision Characteristic: It represents conscience in the mind, based upon the Author's view of morality.

CONTAGONIST
Action Characteristic: The Contagonist hinders the efforts to achieve the story goal.

Decision Characteristic: It represents temptation to take the wrong course or approach.

REASON
Action Characteristic: This character is very calm or controlled in its actions.

Decision Characteristic: It makes its decisions on the basis of logic, never letting emotion get in the way of a rational course.

EMOTION
Action Characteristic: The Emotional character is frenzied or uncontrolled in its actions.

Decision Characteristic: It responds with its feelings with disregard for practicality.

SIDEKICK
Action Characteristic: The Sidekick supports, playing a kind of cheering section.

Decision Characteristic: It is almost gullible in the extent of

its faith -- in the goal, in the Protagonist, in success, etc.

SKEPTIC
Action Characteristic: The Skeptic opposes -- everything.

Decision Characteristic: It disbelieves everything, doubting courses of action, sincerity, truth -- whatever.

Split Archetypes in Quads

Having split them in two, we can see that each of the Archetypal Characters has an attitude or Decision characteristic and an approach or Action characteristic. When we arrange both characteristics under each of the eight Archetypes in our Driver and Passenger Quad format, we get a graphic feel for the Archetypal Objective Characters and the Elements they represent.

Driver Quad

Passenger Quad

In Dramatica, we refer to these 16 characteristics as the Motivation Elements because they describe what drives the Archetypal Characters.

The 16 Motivation Elements in **Star Wars**

Elements of *Star Wars* **Characters**

Let's see how well these sixteen Motivation Elements line up with the characters we have examined so far. As Protagonist, Luke does indeed seem to be both the **pursuing** character and the one who urges all to **consider** the need to achieve the goal ("We've got to help the Princess!"). The Empire definitely wants to **prevent** Luke from succeeding, and urges him and all others to **reconsider** the propriety of his actions - reconsider or you will die. Obi Wan provides a sense of **conscience**, at the same time **helping** Luke when he gets into trouble. Darth, on the other hand, clearly represents the **tempting** "Dark side of the Force," as well as **hindering** Luke's progress, the Rebel's progress, and even hindering progress by the Empire itself!

R2D2 and C3PO are ever **faithful** and **supportive**, and Han is the perennial **disbeliever** and **opposer**. Chewbacca acts on his **feelings** and behaves in an **uncontrolled** way, and Leia is extremely **controlled** and driven by **logic**.

Charted out, the assignment of characteristics to the various characters has a good feel to it.

Character Quads with Elements

Driver Quad

PROTAGONIST - LUKE
Pursue-Consideration

GUARDIAN - OBIWAN
Help-Conscience

CONTAGONIST - DARTH
Hinder-Temptation

ANTAGONIST - EMPIRE
(Avoid)Prevent-Reconsideration

Passenger Quad

SIDEKICK - R2D2 + C3PO
Support-Faith

EMOTION - CHEWBACCA
Uncontrolled-Feeling

REASON - LEIA
Control-Logic

SKEPTIC - HAN
Oppose-Disbelief

The 16 Motivation Elements in **The Wizard of Oz**

Archetypal Elements of "Oz" Characters

Returning to Oz, Dorothy is both **pursue** and **consideration**. Toto is **faith** and **support**. The Cowardly Lion is clearly **disbelief** and **oppose**, and Glinda is **conscience** and **help**. But here is where breaking the Eight Archetypal Characters into 16 characteristics solves our previous problems.

Tin Man and Scarecrow Swap Meet

When we look at the Scarecrow he appears to exemplify **logic** but his approach, rather than being in control, is quite **uncontrolled**. Similarly, although the Tin Man is undoubtedly **feeling**, his demeanor is just as surely described by **control**.

Archetypal Arrangement

	Reason	Emotion
Decision Element	logic	feeling
Action Element	control	uncontrolled

Wizard of Oz

	Scarecrow	Tin Man
Decision Element	logic	feeling
Action Element	*uncontrolled*	*control*

Apparently, the Scarecrow and the Tin Man have swapped characteristics: logic goes with uncontrolled and feeling goes with control. In a sense, both of these Characters now contain two Elements that are at odds with each other. The Action Element does not reflect the Decision Element. This creates two very interesting Characters who have an additional degree of depth to them: an internal friction, inconsistency, or conflict. This is the kind of arrangement that begins to make characters more complex.

Witch and Wizard Ways

But what about the Witch and the Wizard? What is it that makes them diverge from the Archetypal molds? Could it be a similar "swapping" of Elements? As it turns out, it is a *similar* swapping, but not exactly the same. To be the Archetypal Contagonist, the Wizard would have to be **temptation** and **hinder**. To be the Antagonist, the Witch would have to be **reconsideration** and **prevent**. But rather than swapping an Action Element for another Action Element, the Witch ends up with **both** Action Elements and the Wizard with both Decision ones!

Archetypal Arrangement

	Antagonist	**Contagonist**
Decision Elements	reconsideration	temptation
Action Elements	*prevent (avoid)*	*hinder*

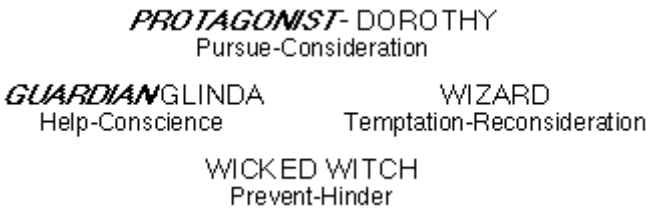
Wizard of Oz

Wizard Decision Elements	reconsideration	temptation
Witch *Action Elements*	*prevent (avoid)*	*hinder*

"Oz" Elements in Quads

When we put this information into our Quad formation, the Elements do not line up in a simple way.

Driver Quad



Passenger Quad

Everyone still has two characteristics; however, the arrangements are not Archetypal for all the Characters in ***The Wizard of Oz.*** As a result, the Archetypal role names have been removed where they do not apply.

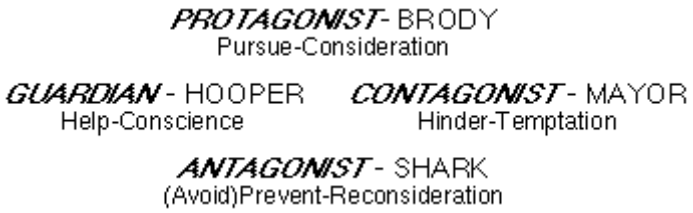
The 16 Motivation Elements in **Jaws**

Elements of *Jaws* Characters

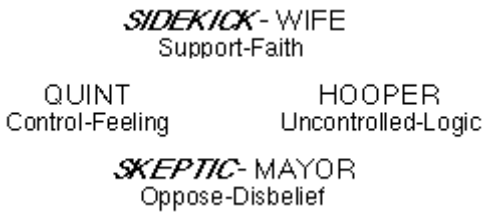
Brody, as Protagonist, is very nicely **pursue**, and certainly with his bell-ringing and whistle-blowing Brody is **consideration** as well. Hooper does provide the sense of **conscience** and **helps** Brody. The Mayor definitely **hinders** our Protagonist and dishes out plenty of **temptation** to give up the quest. Certainly the shark forces **reconsideration** of the propriety of the goal and goes out of its way to **prevent** Brody from accomplishing his goal of adjusting its feeding habits. Brody's wife is his **faithful supporter**. Hooper adds to his functions by filling the role of **logic** as well, yet he is very **uncontrolled** in his approach, as made evident by the variety of devices he employs to no apparent success. Quint is clearly operating from his **feelings**, but his approach is

very simple and in **control**. The Mayor, in addition, supplies us with **disbelief** and **oppose**.

Driver Quad



Passenger Quad



Chapter 7

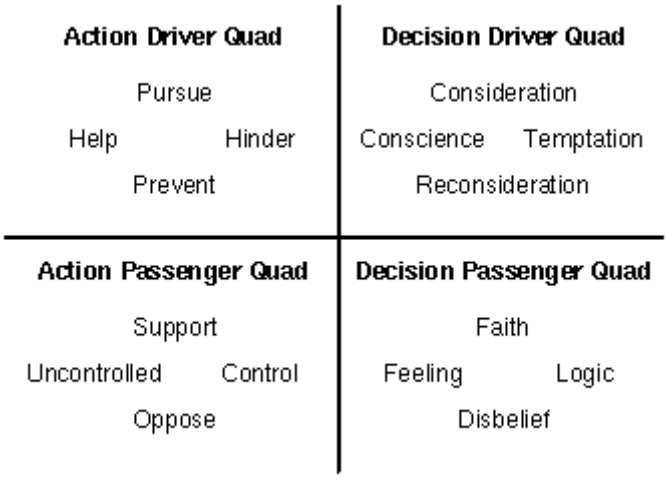
Grouping the 16 Motivation Elements

A Better Way to Group Elements

A better way to organize these characteristics is to separate the Action Elements from the Decision Elements. Of course, since the Eight Archetypal Character Types describe a specific pairing of Action characteristic to Decision characteristic, when we separate the sets, we cannot keep the Archetypal Character names as their contents are split. Nevertheless, it is much more useful to arrange the Elements by their similar natures rather than by the simple arrangement contained in the Archetypal Characters.

With 16 characteristics, we can create four quads of four characteristics each. This grows from having a Driver Character Quad and a Passenger Character Quad, then splitting each in two (Action Quad and Decision Quad), giving us four Quads: the Action Driver Quad, the Decision Driver Quad, the Action Passenger Quad, and the Decision Passenger Quad.

Motivation Element Quads



Using the Quads to Gain Meaning

In Dramatica, a group of four Quads is called a Set. Note how the set above provides additional meaning. For example, when dealing with a problem of Action in terms of Drivers, one would have the choice to Pursue, Prevent, Help, or Hinder. When a Character represents the Drive to Pursue, it applies itself to achieving the goal. Although it may also want the goal to be achieved, a Help Character focuses its efforts on being useful to the Pursuit of the goal rather than instigating its own effort. This explains the functions of and relationship between the Protagonist's Drive (Pursue) and the Guardian's Drive (Help).

Similarly, when a Protagonist's Drive is Pursue, an Antagonist's Drive is Prevent. And, of course, the Contagonist Hinders the Protagonist's Pursuit. In fact, when we consider all four Quads, we can obtain a very precise understanding of why the Eight Archetypal Characters are created as they are and exactly how they relate.

Complex Arrangements of Character Elements

So far we have only explored sixteen different character Elements. One way to create complex characters is by assigning these sixteen Elements to characters in non-archetypal patterns. However, as great as the number of potential characters that can be created is, this limited set of sixteen Elements is *still* not sufficient to describe all the rich complexities of the Objective Characters we see in sophisticated stories. This is because these sixteen Elements only represent character *Motivations*. In fact, we call them the Sixteen Motivation Elements.

Characters Do Not Live By Motivations Alone

Like real people, characters are driven by Motivations, but they also aspire to different *Purposes*, employ different *Methodologies* in the effort to achieve those purposes, and use different *Means of Evaluation* to determine the effectiveness of their efforts. The old adage that one should create three
dimensional characters falls short by one dimension. Fully realized characters are four dimensional possessing an Action and Decision Element in each dimension.

In the following sections we will explore two kinds of character complexity. First we will look at ways to rearrange the Motivation Elements, and second, we will outline how to bring the other three character dimensions into play.

Star Wars Characters in Four Motivation Quads

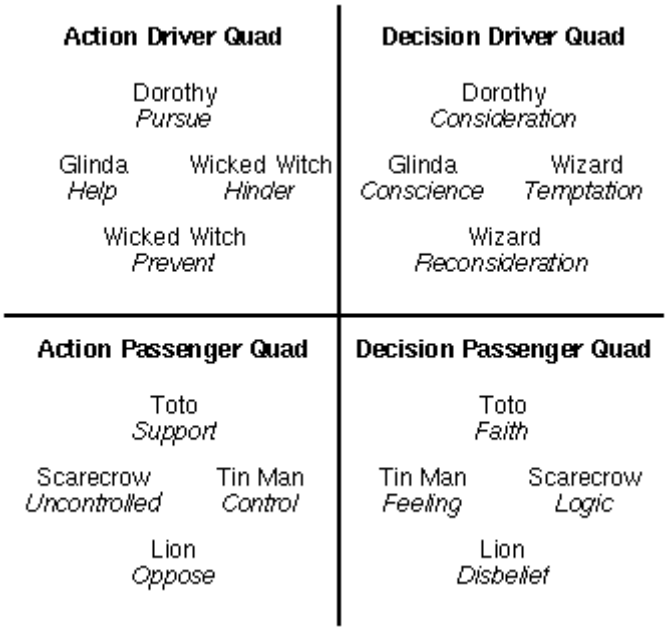
Once again, to enhance our "feel" for these relationships, let's add the names of the Characters in ***Star Wars*** to the Quads.

Star Wars

As before, the amazingly pure Archetypal Characters of ***Star Wars*** translate into a completely symmetrical pattern. Each Character has an Action Quad characteristic and a Decision Quad characteristic. Each pair of Characters is in direct opposition, both internally and externally. Further, Driver Archetypes are represented exclusively in the Driver Quads, and Passenger Archetypes are found entirely within the Passenger Quads.

"Oz" Characters in Four Motivation Quads

The Wizard of Oz



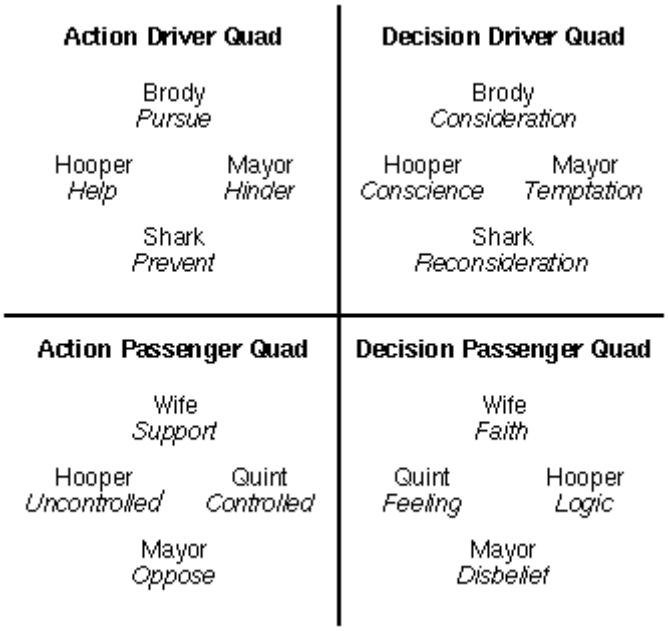
In looking at these patterns, the Passenger Characters in ***The Wizard of Oz*** seem very much like the Passenger Characters in ***Star Wars***, with that one notable exception of the "flipping" of Logic and Feeling in relation to Control and Uncontrolled. In other words, the two Characters simply traded places on one Dynamic Pair of Elements in a single Quad. It makes sense that a stereotypical Reason Character would be logical AND controlled, and a stereotypical Emotion Character would be feeling AND uncontrolled. But if you simply flip the Action Characteristics in relation to the Decision Characteristics, far more versatile Characters are created -- characters whose approach is no longer in *complement* to their attitude, but in *conflict* with it. In a sense, these Characters are made more interesting by creating an inequity *within* them even as they continue to represent methods of problem solving within the Story Mind.

Looking at the Wizard and the Wicked Witch we see that the other kind of swapping of characteristics also creates much less stereotypical Characters. Rather than a tempter, the Wicked Witch becomes a completely action-oriented pest not only trying to prevent Dorothy from achieving her goal, but hindering her every step on the way as well. The Wizard becomes a purely decision-oriented tempter who represents taking the apparent easy way out while also (through his fearsome reputation, embodiment, and requests) urging Dorothy and her friends to reconsider their decisions. This lack of action characteristics may help explain why the Wizard is so obviously absent during most of the story, although his influence is felt throughout. Obviously, the

nature of the combinations of characteristics has a great impact on which decisions and actions the audience will expect and accept from a Character.

Jaws Characters in Four Motivation Quads

Jaws



Clearly, the Driver Character characteristics in ***Jaws*** are as simple as those in ***Star Wars***. In fact, they are identical in terms of which characteristics are combined into a single Character. However, when we look at the Passenger Character characteristics, we see a new phenomenon: some of those Elements are present in the Driver Characters, two of whom are doing multiple duty.

The Mayor represents Temptation and Hinder as a Driver Character but also represents the Passenger characteristics of Disbelief and Oppose. Hooper, a Driver in Conscience and Help, also represents Logic and Uncontrolled, putting him in conflict with Quint. It is clear that these "multi-characteristic" Characters are much more complex in their make-up and therefore in their interactions than Archetypes. For this reason we refer to them as Complex Characters.

Chapter 8

Complex Motivation Characteristics

Rules for Building Characters?

The question now becomes, "Is there a definitive set of rules that govern how characteristics may or may not be combined without violating the analogy of the Story Mind?" Let's find out.

A Character Cannot Serve Two Masters

The first thing we notice when examining the Motivation Characters is that there is never an instance where a Character contains **both** characteristics in a Dynamic Pair. This makes common sense: "One cannot serve two masters." Essentially, how can you be AGAINST something at the same time you are FOR it? So, our first rule of combining characteristics is: **Characters should never represent more than one characteristic in a Dynamic Pair.**

Can't Serve Two Masters at the Same Time....

Sounds good, but what if you want to create a Character who represents one view and then the other. For example, if you had a one-woman show, you would need to combine ALL 16 Motivation characteristics into one person. This is accommodated by the difference between a character and a *player*. In a one-woman show, even if it is a single story argument, there might be a multitude of characters but only one player. The key to keeping them separate is that the player changes from one character to another, never simultaneously portraying more than one, such as by donning different apparel or adopting a different voice.

In light of this additional information we add a second rule of thumb to our first: **Players should never represent more than one character at a time.**

The Meaning of Objective Character Elements

In truth, there are many valid reasons for combining opposing characteristics in one body. An example is ***Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde.*** As Jekyll and Hyde, this player has a split personality representing, in effect, two *Characters* in the same body.

Dramatica sees a player as a shopper filling a grocery sack full of characteristics. You can select whatever you want, as long as you don't put in both Elements of a Dynamic Pair. You can also carry as many bags as you can handle.

But wouldn't a fixed grouping of characteristics prevent a Character from growing? For the answer, look back at what these characteristics really are. They are the problem-solving processes within the Story Mind *seen Objectively*. They are Objective Characters. Objectively, characters remain the same; it is *Subjectively* that they grow as points of view change. In a sense, the Objective nature of characters describes their innate disposition, in which no changes can be made. The Subjective nature of characters describes their learned behavior, which is what can be evolve in the course of a story.

What does all this mean in a practical sense to us as Authors? First, Dramatica tells us there are only 16 Motivations to spread among our players. If we use the same characteristic twice, it clutters our story. If we neglect to employ one, there will be a hole in our story's argument. Finally, we have a great deal of flexibility to create unique and memorable characters while fulfilling all the requirements an audience will look for in a Story Mind.

Complex Characters in Gone With the Wind

Simply "Gone With The Wind"

As an exercise, let's take a look at how the Motivation characteristics are represented and combined in some familiar well-written stories. Why don't we tackle something simple like ***Gone With the Wind***.

"Simple?" you say. In terms of thematics, ***Gone With the Wind***

is an extremely rich and complex story. But in terms of the characters, ***GWTW*** is no more complex than any of the other stories we have analyzed so far. Let's see how.

Scarlett and Rhett

A list of the most notable Characters might include: Scarlett O'Hara, Rhett Butler, Ashley Wilkes, Melanie Wilkes, Scarlett's sister Suellen, Frank Kennedy, Scarlett's father Gerald O'Hara, and Prissy. Taking them one at a time, we can see the stuff they are made of.

Intuitively, we sense that Scarlett and Rhett are the two most important characters. Looking at the 16 characteristics, Scarlett is clearly Pursue. She pursues Rhett, she pursues Ashley, she pursues the tax money, she pursues a fortune. She is motivated to get people to consider things they normally would not. Based on this analysis we will call Scarlett PURSUE and CONSIDERATION.

Rhett, on the other hand, spends most of his time avoiding. He avoids getting involved in the war, and by his contraband dealings he avoids financial hardship. He avoids Scarlett's advances, avoids the firing squad, avoids paying her the tax money, and on and on. Nonetheless, it is Rhett that continually urges Scarlett (and everyone else) to reconsider their actions. So Rhett comes down as AVOID and RECONSIDERATION.

Comparing Scarlett to Rhett, each contains one action characteristic and one decision characteristic. Solely in terms of Motivations, Scarlett and Rhett are Archetypal Protagonist and Antagonist.

Melanie and Ashley

There is little to disguise Ashley's effect as TEMPTATION upon Scarlett. Just because he never actively tempts her does not diminish his actual temptation value. And this is a good point to file away for later: **A character does not have to actively or even consciously employ a characteristic to represent it.**

Looking for Ashley's physical characteristic, although it is not strongly drawn, we find him to be HINDER. Now since his physical self is designed to be the source of Scarlett's temptation, Hinder has been down-played to make him more attractive. Nevertheless, he repeatedly jeopardizes Scarlett's situation. Temptation and Hinder make Ashley a Contagonist.

Melanie, in complement to Ashley, is CONSCIENCE and HELP. She continually tutors Scarlett in the "correct" morality, simultaneously cleaning up the real world messes that Scarlett leaves in her wake. Melanie is forever smoothing ruffled feathers and it is she who handles the hiding of the Yankee renegade soldier that Scarlett shoots. Conscience and Help make Melanie the Guardian.

It is interesting to note the Character pairings designed into this story. Scarlett (Pursue and Consideration) is paired with Rhett (Avoid and Reconsideration). Ashley (Temptation and Hinder) is paired with Melanie (Conscience and Help). Obviously, Margaret Mitchell had an amazingly intuitive sense of where the dramatic potentials lie. (But then, we knew that already, didn't we?) Let's see if this pattern continues.

Frank Kennedy, Suellen O'Hara, Gerald O'Hara, and Prissy

Scarlett's screaming sister Suellen plays nicely as FEELING and UNCONTROLLED, making her the Emotion Character. Her choice of husband, Frank Kennedy (who is snatched by Scarlett) is again, an opposite. Kennedy, by virtue of his steadfast business development and religion of practicality defines LOGIC. And also by virtue of his steadfast business development and resistance to diverging from his plans demonstrates that he represents CONTROL (restraint). Kennedy fits nicely as the Reason Character, again, in a complementary posture to his intended bride.

Finally, we reach a most telling pair. First, we perceive Scarlett's father Gerald O'Hara has FAITH. He believes that a war will never happen, then believes the South will win. Even when they have already lost he won't give up his faith. He goes into a fantasy world rather than admit his faith is in error. On the flip side, he constantly OPPOSES Scarlett's wishes. In the opening scene, Scarlett wants love but her father is pushing real estate. After the fall, he keeps jumping in with inane comments about the way Scarlett is handling the house. Consistently (albeit gently) he opposes her.

Prissy, on the other hand, has no faith at all. She is absolutely convinced that no matter what the situation, the worst will happen. She is a DISBELIEVER pure and true. And yet, she SUPPORTS Scarlett in every self-serving endeavor she instigates. As with other characters we have examined, Mr. O'Hara and Prissy have swapped characteristics, this time between the Skeptic and Sidekick. They are a complementary pair. This is a wonderful twist from a thematic standpoint, pairing and swapping characteristics between a rich white landholder and a poor black slave.

Complex Characters in Rear Window

Principal Characters in Rear Window

If there is anything that can be seen as "typical" about a Hitchcock film it would be his forefront use of thematics. ***Rear Window*** is no exception. As with ***Gone With the Wind***, the enjoyment of the story comes largely from what happens between the lines. But unlike ***GWTW***, the characters in ***Rear Window*** are relatively complex.

At first glance, it may seem that there are quite a few characters, what with the neighbors and all. There's the Composer, trying to sell his first hit song. There's Miss Lonely Heart, who can't get a date. We see a lot of Miss Torso who exercises in front of her open window. Upstairs is the Couple With the Dog, downstairs, the Sunbather. And, of course, Thornton the murderer.

More prominent, of course, is Jeffries and the characters we see in his apartment: his girlfriend Lisa; Doyle, the detective; and his Nurse. (It is important to note that Thornton also shows up in Jeffries' apartment near the end of the story and is the only neighbor to do so.)

The Top Five

The purpose of characters is to show how aspects of the Story Mind deal with a problem. And this is what determines that the neighbors are not Objective Characters. Aside from Thornton, they all have their own little stories, but only interact with each other peripherally, if at all. Their private stories enhance the thematic atmosphere of the overall story but neither advance nor clarify the plot.

If we eliminate all the neighbors who do not interact, we pare our list down to five actual characters: Jeffries, Lisa, Doyle, Nurse, and Thornton. If ***Rear Window*** is well written, we would expect all sixteen motivation Elements to be distributed among these five. Let's see if they are.

Elements of the Top Five

Who represents FAITH? Unquestionably Jeffries. He maintains his belief that a murder has been committed in the face of objections by each of the other characters. Lisa can't talk him out of it and neither can his Nurse. Thornton denies it

by his actions and Doyle is not convinced until after the proof is irrefutable. In fact, Doyle personifies DISBELIEF, even while HELPING Jeffries gain information to which he would not otherwise have access. Lisa comes around to accepting the possibility and so does Nurse. Thornton already *knows* the truth, but Doyle is *never* convinced until he sees the proof with his own eyes.

In addition, Doyle relies on LOGIC to support his disbelief. He will not accept Jeffries' contentions without logical arguments. Then is Jeffries FEELING? No. Jeffries does not disregard Logic in his considerations; he merely can't supply it. Jeffries urges the others to CONSIDER what he knows and what he suspects. Lisa, on the other hand, continually acts on impulse without regard for logic, illustrating nicely the characteristic of FEELING.

If Jeffries is CONSIDERATION, we would expect his nemesis, Thornton, to cause RECONSIDERATION, and he does. Thornton's apparently guilt-free actions are a constant force that urges Jeffries (and the others) to RECONSIDER. All we ever see of him is that he acts *methodically* to carry out his plan, whatever that might be. It is his methodical approach that makes Thornton the CONTROL Character as well. He wastes no time or energy on anything but the task at hand, whereas Jeffries dabbles at whatever fills his view, even when it interferes with his goal of getting the goods on Thornton. Jeffries plainly illustrates the Element of being UNCONTROLLED.

Even though Lisa SUPPORTS Jeffries in his quest, she manages to HINDER his efforts through distraction and re-direction of their conversations. She clearly TEMPTS him to give up PURSUING this crazy scheme. In contrast, Jeffries' Nurse OPPOSES his efforts, even while providing a moralistic philosophy or CONSCIENCE to his every comment. And, of course, Thornton would prefer to AVOID the whole thing.

Characteristic Lists

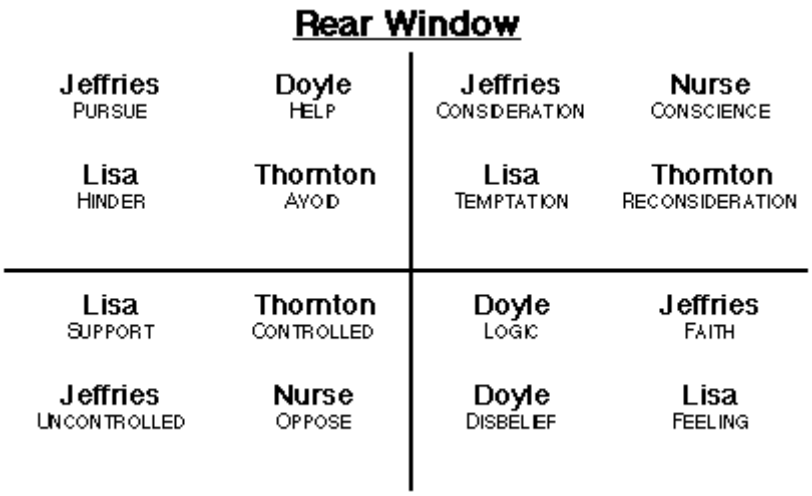
If we take a slightly different form, we can arrange the five Characters as column headings and list their characteristics beneath them.

Rear Window

JEFFRIES	LISA	DOYLE	NURSE	THORNTON
Faith	Temptation	Disbelief	Conscience	
Consideration	Feeling	Logic		Re-Consideration
Uncontrolled	Support		Oppose	Controlled
Pursue	Hinder		Help	Avoid

Rear Window Characters in the Motivation Set

Assigning the Character names of ***Rear Window*** to the Motivation Characteristic Quads we get:



Using the grid above we can predict the principal conflicts of ***Rear Window*** simply by noting which characters are in Dynamic (diagonal) positions and the issues (Elements) over which each pair will diverge.

In summary, the set of sixteen Motivation Elements offers a valuable tool for understanding some of the essential building blocks of Objective Characters and how they can be distributed to create both Archetypal and Complex characters.

Chapter 9

Other Character Dimensions

What's the Purpose?

When authors describe their characters, they are often asked to state a characters' motivations. A common reply might be, "The character Jane wants to be president." Often that is accepted as a valid motivation. In fact, becoming president is Jane's *Purpose*, **not** her motivation. Her motivation may be that she felt no control over her life as a child. Or she might be motivated by a love of the natural world, hoping to instigate a national conservation plan. She might be motivated by a desire for an equal rights amendment.

Just knowing what her purpose is does not tell us anything about what Jane is driven *by* but only what she is driven *toward*. Any of the stated motivations would be sufficient to explain Jane's purpose of becoming president. Conversely, if Jane's motivation were the first example - a lack of control over her life as a child - several different purposes might satisfy that motivation. She might become a school teacher, a drill sergeant, or a religious leader. Clearly, motivations do not specifically dictate purposes, nor are purposes indicative of any particular motivations.

Step into the Fourth Dimension....

In Dramatica, we refer to Motivation as a Character Dimension. Often it is said that characters must be three-dimensional to seem like real people. Dramatica sees *four* dimensions as necessary to flesh out a character. Motivations and Purposes are the first and last dimensions, but that is not enough. Motivation gives a character the force to move, Purpose gives a character a direction in which to move. But how is he actually going to get to where he wants to go? For this, he needs a Methodology, which is the third dimension of character. Methodologies describe the kinds of approaches a character might use in its efforts to achieve its purposes.

This might seem like enough dimensions. After all, we have a beginning (motivation), a middle (methodology), and an end (purpose). Still, there is one remaining dimension lacking: Evaluations. Evaluations are the standards by which characters measure their progress.

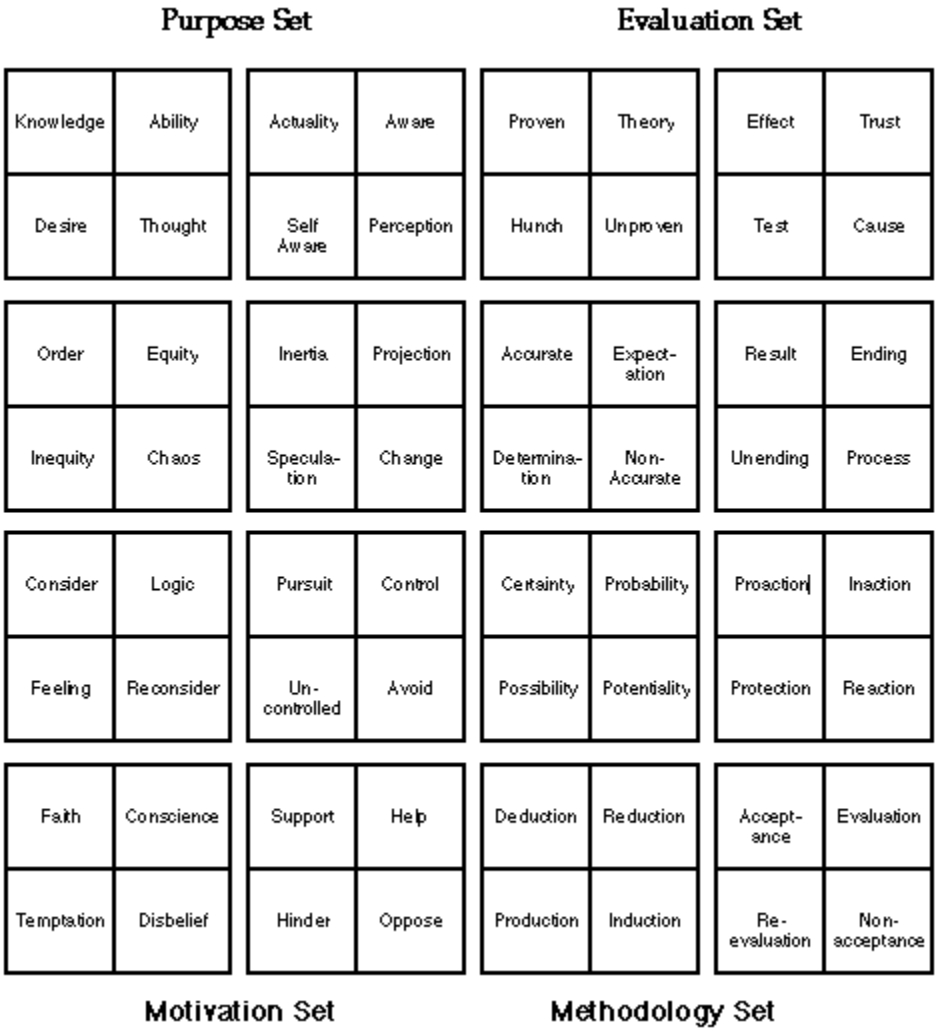
All right, Buddy... Where's the conflict?!

As an example of the concept of Evaluation, imagine two business partners who share motivations, methodologies and purposes. They might agree on what drives them (a motivation to be independent), what they want to achieve (a purpose of creating a thriving business), and how to achieve that (word-of-mouth advertising as a methodology). Still, they might argue if sales are up but satisfaction is low because one evaluates based on gross sales and the other evaluates based on customer satisfaction. Their word-of-mouth methodology brings in more business because their prices are good, but repeat business is non-existent because of poor customer satisfaction. As a result, the two partners argue all the time, even though they agree in all three dimensions of Motivation, Methodology, and Purpose.

Difficulties can arise between characters in any one of the four dimensions, even though they might agree completely in one or more of the other dimensions. In short, characters are never fully developed unless they are represented in all four dimensions, and they may come into conflict over any combination of Motivations, Methodologies, Means of Evaluation, or Purposes.

The Sixty-Four Element Question

Each of the character dimensions contains sixteen Elements, as we have already seen with Motivations. Each character dimension is referred to as a Set of Elements. All four Sets come together to create what is called a *Chess Set* (due to its eight by eight grid) as illustrated below:

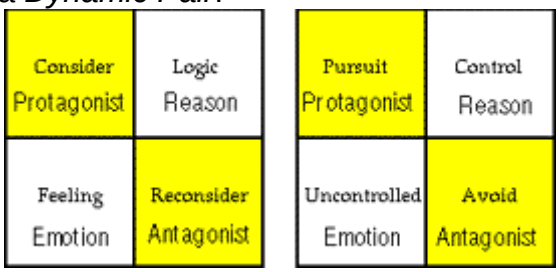


A good way to get a feel for the content of and relationships between character dimensions is through the Archetypal Characters. Beginning with the Motivation Set, when we superimpose the Archetypal Characters onto the character Elements, an "archetypal pattern" appears as follows:

Mapping the Archetypal Pattern

The archetypal pattern formed in the Motivation Set clearly illustrates the consistency and balance of the character Elements. In each quad of four Elements, the items that are diagonal from one another hold the greatest potential for conflict because they are exact opposites.

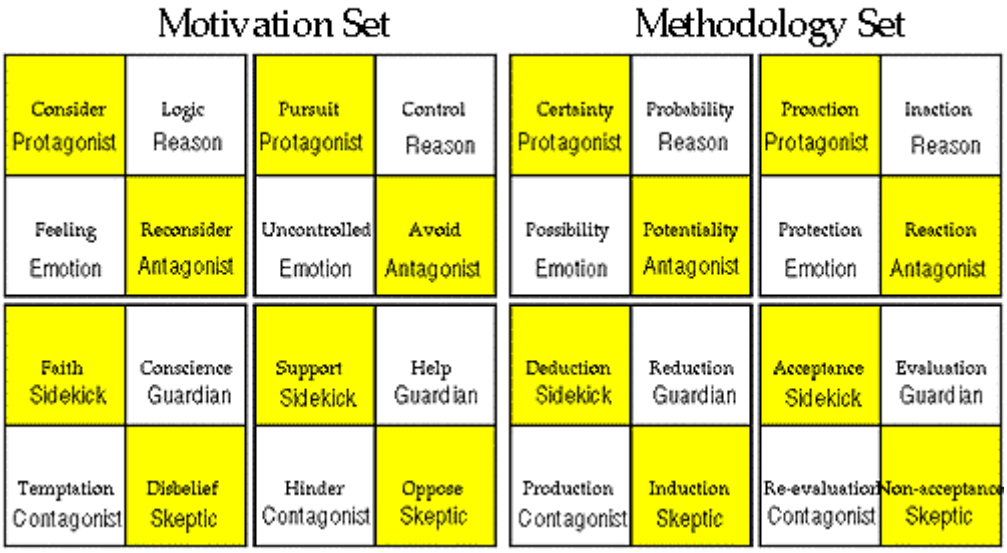
For example, Pursuit is the opposite of Avoid. As a result, when we place the Protagonist on the Motivation of Pursuit, we would expect the Antagonist to represent Avoid. As we have illustrated in the previous section, that is exactly the case. Similarly, when we place the Reason Archetype on Logic, it comes as no surprise to find Emotion residing on Feeling, since it is diagonal from Logic. In fact, every pair of Archetypes that are in a diagonal relationship will generate the greatest dynamics between them. This is why we call two Elements in diagonal opposition a *Dynamic Pair*.



Archetypal Methodologies

Shifting our attention to the Methodology Set, a very useful thing becomes evident. Because the Methodology Elements are also arranged in Dynamic Pairs, we can simply duplicate the Archetypal pattern from the Motivation Set

and the Archetypal Characters will cover the Methods they represent in stories as well.



For example, a Protagonist who is Motivated by Pursuit employs a Methodology of Pro-action, and a Skeptic who is Motivated to Oppose employs a Methodology of Non-Acceptance.

This Archetypal Pattern continues through all four character dimensions such that a Protagonist will be motivated by Pursuit, employ a Methodology of Pro-action, Evaluate its progress by the Effect it has, and strive toward achieving Actuality as its Purpose. Each of the Archetypal Characters follows the same pattern for both its External and Internal characteristics, resulting in an alignment of character Elements in four dimensions.

Complex Dimensional Patterns

Most stories tend to emphasize one dimension over the others. Character Motivations are often made most prominent. Still, many stories are written that compare the methods used by characters, question their purposes, or carry a message that a Means of Evaluation is actually the cause of the problem. Some characters become famous for characteristics other than Motivations, such as a notable detective who employs a methodology of Deduction.

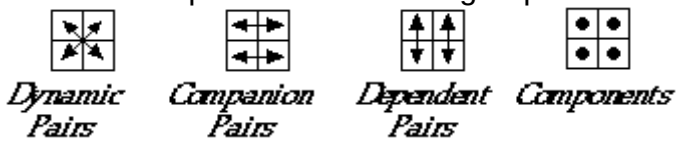
Being aware of all four character dimensions adds a level of versatility in creating complex characters as well. Characters might be Archetypal in one dimension, but fall into complex patterns in another. Also, a character may have three Motivations that drive it, yet strive toward a single Purpose that it hopes will satisfy all three. Some characters may not be represented at all in one or more dimensions, making them both more complex and less well-rounded at the same time. To fully make the argument of any story, however, all sixty-four Elements must be represented in one character or another. In addition, a key

point to remember is: Unless a character represents *at least one* Element, it is not fulfilling a dramatic function and is therefore being employed for storytelling only.

What's In a Pair?

Finally, we can use our Chess Set of Elements to learn something more about our character's relationships. In each quad of Elements, we find not only Dynamic (diagonal) Pairs, but horizontal and vertical pairs as well. Horizontal Elements are called Companion Pairs, and vertical Elements are Dependent Pairs. Each kind of pair describes a different kind of relationship between the Elements, and therefore between the characters that represent them.

In addition to the three types of pairs, we can look at each Element as a separate component and compare it to the overall nature of the quad itself. This Component approach describes the difference between any given Element and the family of Elements in which it resides (quad). Therefore, the degree of individuality the characters represent within the "group" can be explored.



Dynamic Pairs describe Elements with the greatest opposition to one another. Whenever two opposing forces come together they will create either a positive or negative relationship. They can form a *synthesis* and create something greater than the sum of the parts or they can simply tear away at each other until nothing is left (*destructive*). Within a quad, one of the Dynamic Pairs will indicate a positive relationship, the other a negative one. Which is which depends upon other story dynamics.

Companion Pairs contain the Elements that are most compatible. However, just being compatible does not preclude a negative relationship. In a positive Companion Pair, characters will proceed along their own paths, side by side. What one does not need they will offer to the other (*positive impact*). In a negative Companion Pair, one character may use up what the other needs. They are not against each other as in a negative Dynamic Pair, but still manage to interfere with each other's efforts (*negative impact*).

Dependent Pairs are most complementary. In a positive sense, each character provides strengths to compensate for the other's weaknesses (*cooperation*). Together they make a powerful team. In its negative incarnation, the Dependent Pair Relationship has each character *requiring* the other in order to proceed (*codependency*).

Components describe the nature of the Elements in relationship to the overall quad. On the one hand, the individual characters in a quad can be a group that works together (*interdependency*). The group is seen to be greater than the individual characters that comprise it, at the risk of overwhelming the individuality of its members. This is contrasted by identifying the disparate

nature of each character in the quad (*independency*). Seen this way, the characters are noted for their distinguishing characteristics at the risk of losing sight of shared interests.

Dynamic Relationships are the most familiar to writers, simply because they generate the most obvious kind of conflict. Companion and Dependent Pairs are used all the time without fanfare, as there has previously been no terminology to describe them. Components are useful to writers because they allow characters in groups to be evaluated in and out of context.

By constructing characters with thought and foresight, an author can use the position of Elements in the Chess Set to forge relationships that are Dynamic in one dimension while being Companion and Dependent in others. Characters created with Dramatica can represent both the *structural* Elements of the Story Mind's problem solving techniques and the *dynamic* interchange between those techniques.

Summary

Altogether we have outlined four dimensions of characteristics, each fostering an aspect of the eight Archetypes. Each of the Archetypes can be sub-divided into internal and external Elements resulting in a total of sixteen Elements in each dimension -- a total of sixty-four characteristics from all four dimensions with which to build characters. Complex character can be created by stepping out of the archetypal patterns and relationships.

Chapter 10

Subjective Characters

In The Elements of Structure: Foundations we described four throughlines in a story - the Objective Story Throughline, Main Character Throughline, Obstacle Character Throughline, and Subjective Story Throughline. The Objective Story Throughline describes the relative value of the approaches of the Objective Characters. The Main Character Throughline describes the point of view and growth of the Main Character. The Obstacle Character Throughline describes the alternative point of view and growing impact of the Obstacle Character, and the Subjective Story Throughline describes the ongoing argument between the Main and Obstacle Characters as to whether the Main character should change or not.

A good way to think of these four throughlines is as four different points of view

through which the audience relates to the Story Mind -- the same four points of view we all use in all of our relationships. The Main Character represents the "I" point of view. The Obstacle Character represents the "you" perspective. The Subjective Story Throughline covers the "we" perspective, and the Objective Story Throughline explores the "they" perspective. Taken together, the four points of view range from the most personal to the most impersonal, and provide all of the angles we use to examine the nature of our problems and the relative value of alternative solutions.

We have previously looked at the Elements of Character from a purely objective perspective. When we stand in the shoes of a character, however, we get an entirely different perspective. Rather than seeing how the events of a story relate to one another, we become more concerned with how events effect us personally. Providing this experience is the purpose of the Main Character.

The Main Character: One of a Kind

There is only one Main Character in a story. Why is this? Because each complete story is a model of the Story Mind which reflects our own minds, and in our minds we can only be one person at a time. At any given moment, we have a position in our own thoughts. Our state of mind in regard to a particular problem reflects the biases of the position on which we stand. If a story is to fully involve an audience, it must reflect this point of view.

What Is the Story Mind?

Dramatica is built on the concept that the structure and dynamics of a story are not random, but represent an analogy to a single human mind dealing with a problem. We call this concept the Story Mind. A Story Mind is not a character, the author, or even the audience, but the story itself. It's as if the audience's experience of a complete story were like looking inside of someone's head. Every act and scene, the thematic progression and message, the climax, plus all the characters and all that they do represent the parts and functions (or *thoughts* if you will) of the Story Mind.

A complete story successfully argues all possible sides of its message, thus it will address all the possible human perspectives on that specific issue. That is how the structure and dynamics of a single story create a single Story Mind. This is also why characters are common elements in all stories, along with theme, plot, acts and scenes.

Each of these represent the way in which essential human psychology is recreated in stories so that we can view our own thought processes more objectively from the outside looking in.

Now before we go on, it is important to note that there can be many Main Characters in a completed work, but there will be only one Main Character in a completed story. This is because a *work* is the finished product an author puts before an audience, and may contain a single story, several stories, or several partial and complete stories all woven together or at least nestled in the same fabric of storytelling. This means that a book or a movie, a stage play or teleplay, may have no Main Character at all, or it may have many. But for any single story in that work, there will be only one Main Character.

A Grand Argument Story does not allow the audience to stand in the shoes of every character, every Element, and see what the story looks like from there. Such a work would simply be too big to handle. Rather, the purpose of a Grand Argument Story is to determine if the Main Character is looking at the problem from the right place, or if he should change his bias and adopt another point of view instead.

An Alternative Point of View

There is also one other very special character who represents the argument for an alternative point of view. The character who spends the entire story making the case for change is called the Obstacle Character, for he acts as an obstacle to the direction the Main Character would go if left to his own devices.

As with each of us, the last thing we tend to question when examining a problem is ourselves. We look for all kinds of solutions both external and internal before we finally (if ever) get around to wondering if maybe we have to change the very nature of who we are and learn to see things differently. We *can* learn to like what we currently hate, but it takes a lot of convincing for us to make that leap.

When a Main Character makes the traditional *leap of faith* just before the climax, he has explored all possible means of resolving a problem short of changing who he is. The Obstacle Character has spent the entire story trying to sell the Main Character on the idea that change is good, and in fact, pointing out exactly how the Main Character ought to change. The clock is ticking, options are running out. If the Main Character doesn't choose on way or the

other, then failure is certain. But which way to go? There's no clear cut answer from the Main Character's perspective.

A History of Success

The Main Character came into the story with a tried and true method for dealing with the kind of problem featured in the story. That method has always worked for the Main Character before: it has a long history. Suddenly, a situation arises where that standard approach *doesn't* work, perhaps for the first time ever. This marks the beginning of the story's argument. As the story develops, the Main Character tries everything to find a way to make it work anyway, holding out in the hope that the problem will eventually go away, or work itself out, or be resolved by the tried and true method.

Along the way, the Obstacle Character comes into the picture. He tells the Main Character there is a better way, a more effective approach that not only solves the same problems the Main Character's tried and true method did, but solves this new one as well. It sounds a lot like pie in the sky, and the Main Character sees it that way. Why give up the old standby just because of a little flak?

As the story develops, the Obstacle Character makes his case. Slowly, an alternative paradigm is built up that becomes rather convincing. By the moment of truth, the long-term success of the old view is perfectly balanced by the larger, but as of yet untried, new view. There is no clear winner, and that is why it is a leap of faith for the Main Character to choose one over the other.

Main Character Resolve: Does the Main Character ultimately Change or Remain Steadfast?

In completely empathizing with the Main Character of a story, we practically become this person. There are certain dynamics we expect to be able to determine about a Main Character as part of experiencing things from his point of view. One of these is called Main Character Resolve.

Main Character Resolve answers the question "Does the Main Character ultimately Change or Remain Steadfast?" At the beginning of the story the Main Character is driven by a particular motivation. When the story ends, he will either still be driven by the same motivation (Steadfast) or have a new motivation (Change).

Main Character Resolve really describes the relationship

between the Main Character and the Obstacle Character. The impact of the Obstacle Character is what forces the Main Character to even consider changing. If the Main Character ultimately does change, it is the result of the Obstacle Character's effect on the Main Character's perspective. If, on the other hand, the Main Character remains steadfast, then his impact on the Obstacle Character will force the Obstacle Character to change.

Some Examples:
Star Wars: Main Character: Luke Skywalker (Change)
Obstacle Character: Obi Wan Kenobi (Steadfast)

The Story of Job: Main Character: Job (Steadfast)
Obstacle Character: The Devil (Change)

To Kill A Mockingbird: Main Character: Scout (Change)
Obstacle Character: Boo Radley (Steadfast)

The Fugitive: Main Character: Dr. Richard Kimble (Steadfast)
Obstacle Character: Agent Sam Gerard (Change)

It should be noted that the Obstacle Character need not even know he is having that kind of effect on the Main Character. He may know, but he may easily not even be aware. Main Characters are defined by the point of view, Obstacle Characters by the impact on that point of view.

A Leap or a Creep?

As a final thought in this brief introduction to Subjective Characters, the "leap of faith" story is not the only kind that occurs. Equally reflective of our own mind's processes is the *slow change* story where the Main Character gradually shifts his perspective until, by the end of the story, he is seen to have already adopted the alternative paradigm with little or no fanfare.

Usually, in such stories, a particular dramatic scenario occurs near the beginning of the story and is then repeated (in some similar manner) near the end. The Main Character reacted one way in the first scenario and then the audience gets a chance to see if he responds the same way again or not. In the Slow Change story, the Main Character may never even realize he has changed, but we, the audience, are able to evaluate the worth of the journey the Main Character has been through by seeing whether the Main Character has been changed and whether that is for better or worse.

In our current Western culture, especially in Hollywood-

style motion pictures, the leap of faith story is favored. In other media and cultures, however, the Slow Change story predominates. In theory, each reflects the way our minds shift belief systems: sometimes in a binary sense as a single decisive alternation, and other times in an analog sense as a progressive realignment.

Subjective Characters and the Objective Story

One of the most common mistakes made by authors of every level of experience is to create a problem for their Main Character that has nothing to do with the story at large. The reasoning behind this is not to separate the two, but usually occurs because an author works out a story and then realizes that he has not made it personal enough. Because the whole work is already completed, it is nearly impossible to tie the Main Character's personal problem into the larger story without a truly major rewrite. So, the next best thing is to improve the work by *tacking on* a personal issue for the Main Character in addition to the story's problem.

Of course, this leads to a finished piece in which either the story's issues or the Main Character's issues could be removed and still leave a cogent tale behind. In other words, to an audience it feels like one of the issues is out of place and shouldn't be in the work.

Now, if one of the two different problems were removed, it wouldn't leave a complete story, yet the remaining part would still feel like a complete *tale*. Dramatica differentiates between a "tale" and a "story". If a story is an argument, a tale is a statement. Whereas a story explores an issue from all sides to determine what is better or worse overall, a tale explores an issue down a single path and shows how it turns out. Most fairy tales are just that, tales.

There is nothing wrong with a tale. You can write a tale about a group of people facing a problem without having a Main Character. Or, you could write a personal tale about a Main Character without needing to explore a larger story. If you simply put an Objective Story-tale and a Main Character tale into the same work, one will often seem

incidental to the real thrust of the work. But, if the Main Character tale and the Objective Story-tale both hinge on the same issue, then suddenly they are tied together intimately, and what happens in one influences what happens in the other.

This, by definition, forms a Grand Argument Story, and opens the door to all kinds of dramatic power and variety not present in a tale. For example, although the story at large may end in success, the Main Character might be left miserable. Conversely, even though the big picture ended in failure, the Main Character might find personal satisfaction and solace. We'll discuss these options at great length in The Art Of Storytelling section. For now, let us use this as a foundation to examine the relationship between the Subjective Characters and the Objective Story.

The Crucial Element

The point at which the Objective Story and the Main Character hinge is appropriately called the Crucial Element. In fact, the *Crucial Element* is one of the sixty-four Objective Character Elements we have already explored. When we look at the Objective Character Elements as the soldiers on the field (from our earlier example), there is one special Element from which the audience experiences an internal perspective on the story. This is the Main Character position in the Objective Story, and the Element at that point is the Crucial Element. As a result, whichever Objective Character represents the Crucial Element should be placed in the same player as the Main Character. In that way, what happens during the Main Character's growth will have an impact on his Objective function. Similarly, pressures on his Objective function caused by the story's situations will influence his decision to change or remain steadfast.

We can see that a Protagonist will only be a Main Character if the Crucial Element is one of the Elements that make up a Protagonist. In other words, a Protagonist has eight different Elements, two from each dimension of character. If one of them is the Crucial Element, then the player containing the Protagonist must also contain the Main Character. This means that there are really eight different kinds of *heroes* that can be created. An action hero might have a Crucial Element of Pursue, while a thinking hero

might have a Crucial Element of Consider. Clearly, the opportunities to create meaningful Main Characters who are NOT Protagonists are also extensive.

The Obstacle Character has a special place in the Objective Character Elements as well. We have already discussed Dynamic Pairs. As it turns out, the point at which an Obstacle Character will have the greatest dramatic leverage to try and change the Main Character is the other Element in the Dynamic Pair with the Crucial Element. In simpler terms, the Main and Obstacle Characters are opposites on this crucial issue. Often one will contain the story's problem, the other the story's solution.

In the Objective Character Element set, if the Main Character (and Crucial Element) stands on Pursue, the Obstacle Character will occupy Avoid. If the Main Character is Logic, the Obstacle Character will be Feeling. In this manner, the essential differences between two opposite points of view will be explored both in an objective sense, looking from the outside in, and also in a subjective sense, from the inside looking out. All four throughlines come into play (Objective Story, Main Character, Obstacle Character, and Subjective Story), and by the end of the story, the audience will feel that the central issue of concern to the Story Mind has been fully examined from all pertinent angles.

To summarize, a complete story requires that both the Objective and Subjective views are provided to an audience, and that they are hinged together around the same central issue. This is accomplished by assigning the Main and Obstacle Characters to the Objective Characters who contain either the story's problem or solution Elements. The Element held by the Main Character becomes the Crucial Element, as both the Objective and Subjective Stories revolve around it.

The Crucial Element: Where Subjective meets Objective

The Crucial Element will be an item which is at the heart of a story from both the Objective and Subjective points of view. How this happens depends greatly on the Main Character. The Crucial Element is the connection between the Main Character and the Objective story and makes the Main Character special enough to be "Main." This issue at the heart of the Main Character is thematically the same issue which is at the heart of the Objective Story.

For Example:

To Kill A Mockingbird Crucial Element is INEQUITY

Inequity is the problem which is causing all of the conflict around the town of Maycomb. The trial of Tom Robinson brings all of the towns' people into squabbles about inequity in the treatment of different races, inequity among the social classes of people, their levels of income, and their educations.

Scout, as the Main Character, is driven by her personal problem of inequity. This is symbolized most clearly in her fear of Boo Radley. Kept at the margins of the Objective Story dealings with the problem of inequity, Scout however comes to see her prejudice against Boo Radley as being every bit as wrong.

Chapter 11

Problem Solving and Justification

Deep Theory:

The following section delves deeply into the inner workings of a Main Character and how that character grows over the course of a story. The material covered will address the following questions: How does a Main Character come to have a particular problem? How does that problem come to relate to the Objective Story as well? If the Main Character has a problem, why doesn't he just solve it? How can an Obstacle Character bring a Main Character to the point of change?

This discussion can get pretty theoretical at times, and is presented more for those who are interested in details, rather than as essential reading. If you have an interest in theory, read on! If not, you may wish to skip to the next chapter on Theme, or jump ahead to The Art Of Storytelling for a more practical approach.

Problem Solving and Justification

What are Justifications?

At the moment we act in response to a problem, each of us sees our approach as justifiable. If we later regret our actions or are called to task, we all have reasons why we should not be blamed or at least not held accountable. We call these reasons "Justifications." To us, these justifications legitimize our actions. To others who find our actions unwarranted, our reasons seem more like excuses, and our actions unjustified.

Sometimes, we ourselves may be unsure if we are justified in our actions or not because there is a conflict between what our reason and our feelings are telling us. When we see no clear-cut response, we go with the side of ourselves that makes the stronger case.

Excuses, Excuses!

To convince ourselves (and others) that our actions are justified, we say things like, "This is going to hurt me more than it's going to hurt you," "It's for your own good," I had to teach him a lesson," "She had it coming," I had no other choice," "I couldn't help myself," "There was nothing I could do," "It was the right thing to do," "The end justifies the means," etc. Each of these statements tries to imply that even though feeling says this is wrong, reason makes a stronger case that it is right (or vice versa).

Whenever the "proper" response is unclear, the legitimacy of our actions is open to interpretation. If there were a way to stand outside of it all and take a truly objective view, we could see absolutely which actions were justifiable and which were not. Unfortunately, we are not afforded this objective view in real life. So, we create stories to try and approximate the objective truth.

The Author Giveth; the Audience Taketh Away

An author builds an argument that the Main Character was either justified or not in his actions, then "proves" the point by concluding the story with an outcome of success or failure and a judgment of good or bad. In this way, the author hopes to convince an audience that actions taken in

a particular context are appropriate or inappropriate. The audience members hope to become convinced that when the proper course of action is unclear, they can rely on a more "objective" truth to guide them.

In real life, only time will tell if our actions will ultimately achieve what we want and if that will bring us more happiness than hurt. In stories, it is the author who determines what is justified and what is not. Within the confines of the story, the author's view IS objective truth.

The author's ability to decide the validity of actions "objectively" changes the meaning of justification from how we have been using it. In life, when actions are seen as justified, it means that everyone agrees with the reasons behind the actions. In stories, reasons don't count. Even if all the characters agree with the reasons, the author might show that all the characters were wrong. Reasons just explain *why* characters act as they do. Consensus regarding the reasons does not determine correctness.

What is Problem Solving?

All characters are driven by their justifications, but only some of the actions they take will end up solving a problem. From the author's "objective" view, approaches that lead to solutions are "problem solving". Approaches that do not are simply justifications.

The process of "problem solving" describes the paths an author promotes as being the most appropriate approaches to the story's problem. The process of justification describes all paths that are not as appropriate.

In a binary sense, the best path of all will be represented by either the Main or Obstacle character. The remaining character of the two will represent the worst path. Of Main and Obstacle, one will be problem solving, the other justifying. All the remaining characters represent alternative approaches between the two extremes.

From an author's perspective, though it is important to know how things will turn out, it is equally important to know how things got started. How is it that people can become so misguided? How is it that characters can become so justified?

Problems Start Innocently Enough....

It is the nature of people and characters as well, to try and find a source of joy and a resolution to that which hurts them. This hurt might be physical suffering or mental torment. The resolution may be to rearrange one's environment or to come to terms with the environment as it is. Regardless of the source of the inequity or the means employed to resolve it, all thinking creatures try to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain. That is the primal force which drives us in our lives, and the dramatic force that drives a story.

If our environments would instantly respond to our desires and if our feelings would immediately adjust to new attitudes, all inequities between ourselves and our environments would be equalized at once. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Rather, to solve external problems we must apply effort to rearrange the material that surrounds us, and to solve internal problems we must adopt a series of paradigm shifts to arrive at a perspective that minimizes our anguish.

Getting to the Heart of the Problem

Because it takes time to resolve inequities, problem solving can be defined as a process we engage in over time. Step by step we chip away at pieces of a problem until we arrive at a solution. We meet pre-requisites that give us the resources to fulfill the requirements that must be accomplished to clear the way to our goal. Or, we change the nature of the forces at work that determine the processes that sustain the inequity, so that it dissolves when its foundation is eroded.

Problem solving requires identifying the source of the inequity and/or the kind of effort that will bring an end to it. Each of these requirements depends upon an accurate assessment of the mechanism that generates the inequity, and therein lies the opportunity for error.

Characters, Problems, and Justification

Stories are about one character who is truly problem solving and a second character who believes they are problem solving but are in error. One will be the Main Character and the other the Obstacle Character. In terms of the Story Mind, these two characters represent our own

inability to know in advance if the method we have chosen to apply to a problem will lead to success or failure. When our approach leads to failure Dramatica does not refer to the process as problem solving, but calls that process *Justification*.

Why We Justify

It is important to note that no one justifies because they are stupid or mean. They are simply adopting the best approach they can conceive, based on their life experience. Neither justification nor problem solving are intrinsically good or bad. In fact, they are really the same process, the only difference being how things ultimately turn out. With the value of hindsight we can judge if the decisions made and actions taken were appropriate, but we cannot judge this as the effort is happening since none of us can see the future. So, no character or person can be certain whether their approach to an inequity will resolve it, not effect it, exacerbate it, or create another inequity somewhere else that might be even more disturbing. All any of us can do - all any of us EVER do is to make the decisions and take the actions our experience dictates as the best options toward resolving our inequities.

Poor, Misguided Souls....

From this perspective, no character is bad, merely misguided. However, that is not the only perspective. If we step into the story and see a misguided character doing hurtful things to others and even to ourselves, from OUR life experience we determine that character must be stopped. Perhaps we argue with them, try to educate them, fight with or kill them or just write them off, severing our emotional ties and letting them spiral down into self destruction because it is the only way to avoid being dragged down with them.

Or, we might argue with them and find ourselves convinced of their point of view, try to educate them but learn something instead, fight with them and lose or be killed, or be written off BY them or hold on to them and be dragged down as well, or drag them down with us.

The point is, both Main and Obstacle characters will feel they are right, believe in what they do, try to convince or thwart their counterpart and ultimately prove to be correct or misguided.

Uniqueness Means Never Having to Say, "I Agree"

As we are driven by life experiences and since the experiences of each of us are unique, it is no wonder we come into conflict and confrontation over most everything we can think of. Stories are about the incompatibility of two life experiences as they relate to the best way to resolve an inequity.

If a character stands by his life experience, then it stands to reason his approach served him well in other scenarios. Similarly, his counterpart has had different life experiences that served him equally well. In the context of the current inequity in question, each life experience generates an approach incompatible with the other. In one context, each set of experiences was problem solving. In the current context, one will be seen to be problem solving, the other justification.

Tell Me A Message, Mommy....

This is the purpose and function of story: to show that when something has previously served you well one hundred percent of the time, it may not continue to hold true, or conversely, that it will always hold true. Either message is equally valid and depends wholly upon the author's personal bias on the issue, which arbitrarily determines the slant of the message. Obviously, the outcome is not arbitrary to the author, but it is completely arbitrary to the story.

Whether the Main Character is change or steadfast, the outcome success or failure, and the judgment good or bad, determines the audience's position in relationship to the correct and incorrect approaches to the problem, and therefore the impact of the message upon them.

Step By Step, Slowly We Argued....

So far we have only identified the difference between problem solving and justification in terms of the results they create. From this point of view, no character can tell for sure if he is on the right or the wrong track until he sees the results. This is fine for the characters, but an author will want to fashion a story so that judgment is passed on each action and decision as it is taken. This is what constitutes the theme of the story and builds the emotional side of the story's argument event by event until

(hopefully) the audience is buried under overwhelming evidence to support the author's message and contentions.

Note the difference between the result-oriented *rational* argument and the more holistic *passionate* argument. In a story, when all is said and done, the author hopes to convince the audience of his point of view both in terms of its reasonable nature and that it simply feels good as well. In this manner, the audience members adopt the author's bias on the issue and are moved to alter their behavior accordingly in their everyday life. In a broader sense, participating in the story has added to the life experience of the audience and will affect their future choices for problem solving.

To carry an emotional appeal to an audience, a story must not only show the results of a method of problem solving, but must document the appropriateness of each step as well. To do this as an author requires an understanding of the *process* of problem solving and its justification counterpart. Let us examine both.

A Simple Example of Problem Solving

Imagine a waitress coming through the one-way door from the kitchen into the restaurant. Her nose begins to itch. She cannot scratch her nose because her hands are full of plates. She looks for a place to lay down the plates, but all the counter space is cluttered. She tries to call to a waiter, but he cannot hear her across the noisy room. She hollers to a bus boy who gets the waiter who takes her plates so she can scratch her nose. Problem solved! Or was it justification?

What if she could have solved the problem just by shrugging her shoulder and rubbing her nose? Then there were two possible solutions, but one was much more direct. Rationally, either one would serve as well in that particular context, yet one was much more efficient and therefore more emotionally satisfying because it required less unpleasant work than the other method.

There's a Problem In Your Solution!

If the waitress could not use her hand to scratch her nose, then using her shoulder was another potential solution to the same problem. However, trying to find a place to put down the plates is a generation removed from solving the

original problem. Instead of trying to find another way to scratch her nose, she was using her problem solving efforts to try and solve a problem with the first solution. In other words, there was an obstacle to using her hand to scratch her nose, and rather than evaluating other means of scratching she was looking for a place to get rid of her plates. When there was a problem with that, she compounded the inefficiency by trying to solve the plate problem with the solution devised to solve the problem with the first solution to the problem: she tried to flag down the waiter. In fact, by the time she actually got her nose scratched, she had to take a round-about path that took up all kinds of time and was several generations removed from the original problem. She made one big circle to get to where she could have gone directly.

But, what if there was a limit: her itching nose was about to make her sneeze and drop everything. Then, going on that long circular path might mean she would sneeze and fail, whereas the only appropriate path would be to use her shoulder to scratch before she sneezes. But what if her stiff uniform prevents her shoulder from reaching her nose? AND what if the extra time it took to try the shoulder actually delayed trying the round-about method just long enough to make her sneeze before the waiter arrived? If she had only taken the great circle route in the first place, she would have had just enough time to solve the problem.

Paying the Price For a Solution

Clearly, problem solving turns into justification and vice-versa, depending on the context. So how is it that achieving results in the rational sense is not the only determining factor as to which is which? Simply because sometimes the costs that must be paid in suffering in a long, indirect path to a goal far outweigh the benefits of achieving the goal itself. When we try to overcome obstacles that stand between us and a goal (pre-requisites and requirements) we pay a price in effort, resources, physical and emotional hardship. We suffer unpleasant conditions now in the hope of a reward later. This is fine as long as the rewards justify the expenses. But if they do not, and yet we continue to persevere, we cannot possibly recoup enough to make up for our losses, much as a gambler goes into the hole after losing her intended stake.

My Kingdom for a Solution!

Why is it that we (as characters) throw good money after

bad? This occurs because we are no longer evaluating what we originally hoped to achieve but are trying to solve the problems that have occurred with the solutions we have employed. In the case of our waitress, she wasn't thinking about her nose when she was calling to the waiter or yelling to the bus boy. She was thinking about the problem of getting their attention. Because she lost sight of her original objective, she could no longer tally up the accruing costs and compare them to the benefits of resolving the inequity. Rather, she compared each cost individually to the goal at hand: putting down the plates, calling to the waiter, yelling at the bus boy. And in each case, the *individual* costs were less than the benefits of resolving the *individual* sub-goals. However, if taken as a whole, the sum of the costs may far outweigh the benefits of resolving the original problem. And since the pre-requisites and requirements have no meaning except as a means to resolving that original problem, any benefits she felt by achieving those sub-goals should have had no bearing on determining if the effort was worth the benefits. But, as she had lost sight of the original problem, that measurement could not be made. In fact, it would never occur to her, until it was too late to recoup the costs even if the problem came to be resolved.

Does this mean the only danger lies in the round-about path? Not at all. If it were to turn out that there were NO direct paths that could work, ONLY an indirect one could resolve the problem at all. And if the existence of the problem is such that its inequity is not just a one time thing but continues to cause friction that rubs one physically or mentally raw, then the inequity itself grows the longer the problem remains, which justifies ANY indirect method to resolving the issue as long as the rate at which the costs accrue is less than the rate at which the inequity worsens.

Accelerating Inequities!

But let's complicate this even more... Suppose the inequity doesn't worsen at first, but only gets worse after a while. Then what may have been the most appropriate response for problem solving at one stage in the game becomes inappropriate at a later stage. In such a complex web of changing conditions and shifting context, how is an individual to know what choices are best? We can't. That is the point: we can never know which path is best because we cannot predict the future. We can only choose what our life experience has shown to be most often effective in similar situations and hope for the best. It does not matter how often we re-evaluate. The situation can change in

unpredictable ways at any time, throwing all of our plans and efforts into new contexts that change their evaluation from positive to negative or the vice versa.

Stories serve as collective truisms, much like the way insurance works. Through them we strive to contain the collective knowledge of human experience so although we cannot predict what will happen to any specific individual (even ourselves) we can tell what is *most likely* the best approach to inequity, based on the mean average of all individual experience.

Strategy vs. Analysis

Although we have covered a lot of ground, we have only covered one of two kinds of problem solving/justification: the effort to resolve an inequity. In contrast, the second kind of problem solving/justification refers to efforts made to understand inequities so that we might come to terms with them. In a sense, our initial exploration has dealt with strategies of problem solving whereas this other area of exploration deals with defining the problem itself.

Defining the Problem

We cannot move to resolve a problem until we recognize the problem. Even if we feel the inequity, until we can pinpoint it or understand what creates it, we can neither arrive at an appropriate response or act to nip it at its source.

If we had to evaluate each inequity that we encounter with an absolutely open mind, we could not learn from experience. Even if we had seen the same thing one hundred times before, we would not look to our memories to see what had turned out to be the source or what appropriate measures had been employed. We would be forced to consider every little friction that rubbed us the wrong way as if we have never encountered it. Certainly, this is another form of inefficiency, as "those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

In such a scenario, we would not learn from our mistakes, much less our successes. But is that inefficiency? What if we encounter an exception to the rules we have come to live by? If we rely completely on our life experience, when we encounter a new context in life, our whole paradigm may be inappropriate.

You Idiom!

We all know the truisms, "where there's smoke, there's fire," "guilt by association," "one bad apple spoils the bunch," "the only good (fill in the blank) is a dead (fill in the blank)." In each of these cases we assume a different kind of causal relationship than is generally scrutinized in our culture. Each of these phrases asserts that when you see one thing, another thing will either be there also, or will certainly follow. Why do we make these assumptions? Because, in context, they are often true. But as soon as we apply them *out of context* they are just as likely false.

Associations in Space and Time

When we see something occur enough times without exception, our mind accepts it as an absolute. After all, we have never seen it fail! This is like saying that every time you put a piece of paper on hot metal it will burn. Fine, but not in a vacuum! You need oxygen as well to create the reaction you anticipate.

In fact, every time we believe THIS leads to THAT or whenever we see THIS, THAT will also be present, we are making assumptions with a flagrant disregard for context. And that is where characters get into trouble. A character makes associations in their backstory. Because of the context in which they gather their experiences, these associations always hold true. But then the situation (context) changes, or they move into new areas in their lives. Suddenly some of these assumptions are absolutely untrue!

Hold on to Your Givens!

Why doesn't a character (or person) simply give up the old view for the new? There are two reasons why one will hold on to an outmoded, inappropriate understanding of the relationships between things. We'll outline them one at a time.

First, there is the notion of how many times a character has seen things go one way, compared to the number of times they've gone another. If a character builds up years of experience with something being true and then encounters one time it is not true, they will tend to treat that

single false time as an exception to the rule. It would take as many false responses as there had been true ones to counter the balance.

Context is a Sneaky Thing

Of course, one is more sensitive to the most recent patterns, so an equal number of false items (or alternative truths) is not really required when one is aware he has entered a new situation. However, situations often change slowly and even in ways we are not aware. So context is in a constant state of flux. If something has always proven true in *all contexts up to this point* then one is not conscious of entering a whole new context. Rather, as we move in and out of contexts, a truism that was ALWAYS true may now be true sometimes and not true at other times. It may have an increasing or decreasing frequency of proving true or may *tend* toward being false for a while, only to *tend* toward being true again later. This kind of dynamic context requires that something be seen as false as often as it has been seen as true in order to arrive even at a neutral point where one perspective is not held more strongly than the other.

Building Paradigms

The second reason characters hold onto outmoded views is that they have built other views upon the outmoded ones. In fact, this is how we learn. We see something as an unerring truth, stop considering it every time we see it and accept it as a given. Then, we assemble our givens, look for patterns and accept the relationships *between givens* as being givens in their own right. Layer upon layer we weave an intricate web of interconnections, some based on the order in which things are expected to occur, some based on items or activities we associate as always occurring together.

Strength in Paradigms

When we encounter something at the top level of the most recently determined givens, it can be a relatively small feat to rethink our conclusions. If one of our base assumptions was wrong, however, there may be no way to reconcile the occurrence with our understanding without completely dismantling the foundations of our whole belief system. Not an easy task! It is much easier to discount the variance as an exception. Even more important, because we

have not added the unusual incident to our knowledge base, but simply let it bounce off, the next occurrence of the same "new" truth will meet with the same strength of resistance as the first. We can hold onto our old paradigm unless so many *different* new truths hit us all at once that it becomes easier to create a new paradigm than to try and dismiss them all.

The Justified Main Character

This is the nature of the Main Character's struggle in a story. He has either built up an understanding of how to try and solve problems that no longer fits, or he has built up an understanding of what causes problems that is no longer correct. The backstory builds upon one of these scenarios. A context is established that creates one kind of problem solving regarding a specific problem. The story begins when the context changes and the problem solving technique is no longer appropriate. The question then becomes whether the Main Character should Change to conform to the new situation or remain Steadfast until things get back to "normal."

Dancing Toward Neutral Ground

The story unfolds as the Main and Obstacle Characters argue over direct vs. indirect, repetition vs. framework, strategy vs. analysis, and problem solving vs. justification. As the story progresses, it is the Obstacle Character's function to force the Main Character through all four of these conflicts, each representing a different "level" of justification (problem solving) until they both stand at the neutral point where one means of problem solving/evaluation is as good as the next. This is the moment of the Leap of Faith, where life experience has been completely counterbalanced by what has been recently learned. This is the moment the Main Character must step into the void with absolutely no personal experiences to guide him, and choose to continue with the path he has always taken or adopt a new one.

The story then resolves in Success/Good, Success/Bad, Failure/Good, Failure/Bad. These four resolutions are the "Author's Proof," wherein he states his personal bias as to what the most appropriate and inappropriate choices were.

From this perspective, we can see how the sequence in which dramatic events occur has tremendous impact not on the structure of a story, but on the meaning derived from that structure. The "feel" of the passionate argument will be determined by the order in which the Main Character passes through the levels of justification to face the real source of the story's inequity.

This sequence affects not only character, but plot and theme as well, and is therefore a complex series of cycles within cycles that is unpredictable during the viewing of a work, but falls into understanding at the conclusion or *denouement*. Because it is so complex, this is the part of Dramatica best left to computer calculation or to the intuition of the author himself.

Chapter 12

The Elements of Structure: Theme

What Exactly Is Theme?

It seems every author is aware of theme, but try to find one who can define it! Most will tell you theme has something to do with the mood or feel of a story. But how does that differ from *genre*? Others will say that theme is the message of the story. Some will put forth that theme is the *premise* of a story that illustrates the results of certain kinds of behavior.

Taking each of these a bit farther, a story's mood or feel might be "anger". A message might be "nuclear power plants are bad". A premise could be "greed leads to self-destruction." Clearly each of these might show up in the very same story, and each has a somewhat thematic feel to it. But just as certainly, none of them feels complete by itself. This is because each is just a different angle on what theme really is.

In fact, theme is perspective. Perspective is relationship. Theme describes the *relationship* between what is being looked at and from where it is being seen. This is why theme has traditionally been so hard to describe. It is not an independent thing like plot or character, but is a relationship *between* plot and character.

As a familiar example, think of the old adage about three blind men trying to describe an elephant. Each is like a character in a story, and their investigation of the beast is like the plot. One, feeling the tail comments, "It is long and thin like a snake." Another, feeling the ear replies, "No, it is wide and flat like a jungle leaf." The final investigator feels the leg and retorts, "You are both wrong! It is round and stout like a tree." How each of those men *felt* about the elephant, how they *understood* it, depended upon his point of view, and the fact that it was an elephant. It is also true, that had another animal been the object of study, the perspective would have changed as well.

Where we are looking from are the four points of view represented by the four throughlines (Objective Story, Main Character, Obstacle Character, and Subjective Story). In stories, *what* we are looking at is the problem that the Story Mind is considering. So, to truly understand perspective (and therefore theme) we must be able to accurately describe the nature of the story's problem, and then see how its appearance changes when seen from each different point of view.

Describing The Story's Problem

When we seek to classify something, we try to narrow its definition, such as when we ask if something is animal, vegetable, or mineral. When classifying problems that might be of concern to the Story Mind, the first thing we might want to know is if the problem is an external issue (such as an intolerable situation) or an internal one (such as a bad attitude). External problems occur in the Universe (or environment), Internal problems occur in the Mind.

Further, some problems don't have to do with states of things (an external situation or an internal attitude) but are processes that have gone awry. An external process falls in the category of Physics, which simply means physical activity of some kind. An internal process which results in a problem has to do with Psychology, which simply means a manner of thinking. Note that a manner of thinking (Psychology) is different than a fixed attitude

(Mind). Psychology describes problems like spending too much time with details, whereas Mind problems would be more like a prejudice.

Having identified four categories by which we might classify the nature of the Story Mind's problem, we can arrange them in a quad pattern, much as we did earlier with the Character Elements.

Since these four categories classify the problem, Dramatica refers to them as CLASSES.

More Resolution

So far, we have been able to roughly determine that a problem might be an external or internal state or process, represented by the four Classes. Already we can get a more refined view of the problem we will be describing in our story. We need only consider which of these four Classes best describes the problem about which we want to write.

For example, if we have an idea for a story about people trapped underwater in a sunken ship, that would be an external problem, best described as a state of things. An external state is the definition of a Universe problem, so this story idea takes place in the Universe Class.

If we wish to write about a harrowing trek through the jungle to a lost city, we are describing a Physics problem: an external activity from which difficulties arise.

A story exploring a father who will not let his daughter marry below her station in life is best described as a Mind problem, for it stems from a fixed attitude.

And finally, an author who wishes to comment thematically on a group of friends manipulating each other would select Psychology as his Class of problem, for the thematic issue at hand is changing one's manner of thinking. Again, this differs from changing one's Mind (about something).

It is important to note that ALL FOUR Classes will ultimately play a role in every complete Grand Argument Story. As we shall explore a bit later, each Class will describe the problem as it appears from a different throughline.

Domains

Earlier we illustrated how one could see four throughlines of *Star Wars*. Below are illustrations of how *Star Wars*' four throughlines would be seen in terms of Domains.

Star Wars

Objective Story Domain: Physics (the Class of Activities) -- *Star Wars* is about a war between the Empire and the Rebellion. There is not any set location where this needs to take place, rather it is an exploration of the feints, attacks, and battles that occur between the two forces.

Main Character Domain: Universe (the Class of Situations)-- Luke Skywalker is a whiny farm-boy from a small desert planet. He has a tremendous amount of unrealized talent because his father was a Jedi, but everyone sees him as a kid from the edge of the galaxy.

Obstacle Character Domain: Mind (the Class of Fixed Attitudes) -- Obi Wan Kenobi lives in the world of the Force. His attitude about the Force's power and impact, the existence of the Light and Dark sides of the Force, and the importance of the Force is unshakable.

Subjective Story Domain: Psychology (the Class of Ways of Thinking) -- Obi Wan clearly manipulates Luke through psychological means. He attempts to coerce Luke to help him get to Alderaan, which Luke resists; Obi Wan does not reveal the fate of Luke's aunt and uncle to Luke even though Obi Wan is clearly not surprised when he hears the news; Obi Wan purposely keeps Luke in the dark about his resources while bartering with Han Solo, hushing him up when Luke can barely contain himself; Obi Wan keeps Luke under his thumb by doling out information about the Force, the Empire, the Past, and everything else; and it's Obi Wan who whispers into Luke's head at several critical moments... "Run, Luke, run!" and "Trust your feelings, Luke."

At this point, we have achieved a more clear understanding of our story's theme by classifying the story's problem. In our own lives, however, this would not be enough information to identify the problem clearly enough to begin solving it, and so it is with the Story Mind as well. We need to dig deeper and be more precise if we are to eventually pin-point the source of the story's problem so it can be addressed at the root.

To increase our precision, we can sub-divide each of the Classes into different TYPES of problems within each Class, much as the classification "animal" and "vegetable" are sub-divided into various species.

Past	Progress	Understanding	Doing
Future	Present	Obtaining	Learning
Conceptualizing	Being	Memory	Preconscious
Becoming	Conceiving	Subconscious	Conscious

As you can see, the TYPE level of resolution on our story's problem is much more refined. Already the names of the Types carry much more of a thematic feel than those of the broad-stroke Classes. Some of the Types seem more familiar than others. This is because our culture has its own built-in biases and favorites and tends to focus on certain kinds of problems more than others.

If we compare the Types in one Class to those in the others, we can see how the chart does not cater to our culture's biases. Rather, it presents a neutral set of sub-categories so that any kind of problem an author might wish to address is treated with equal weight.

One of the first things we can begin to feel about the Types is that their position within each quad has an influence on the nature of the Type, which is reflected in its name. For example, in the upper left hand corner of the Universe Class we find the Type, "Past." By comparison, in the upper left hand corner of the Mind Class we find the Type, "Memory." The balance of the chart can be easily illustrated in the phrase, "Past is to Universe as Memory is to Mind." In fact, all

of the categories and sub-categories we have explored (and the two remaining levels to be presented) share this kind of relationship.

We have found that it really helps to get a feel for a story's problem by running this kind of comparison over in our minds as we examine the chart. Patterns of relationships begin to emerge, and the process of choosing the Class and Type of problem at the heart of our story's theme becomes almost a game.

Concerns:

Choosing the Type most prominent in a particular throughline sets up the Concerns which will be most important from that point of view. To demonstrate how this might work, let's look at the Concerns of *Star Wars.*

Star Wars

Objective Story Concern: Doing (Engaging in an activity)-- The Empire is building the Death Star and searching for the location of the Rebels; the Rebels are attempting to keep their location secret; the smuggler is trying to deliver passengers to Alderaan to earn the money he needs to pay off his boss; the passengers are trying to transport the plans of the Death Star to the Rebels who will decipher the plans and launch an attack on the Empire.

Main Character Concern: Progress (The way things are going)-- Luke Skywalker is constantly concerned with how things are going -- "At this rate I'll never get off this rock!" He is impatient and never satisfied with how things are progressing. Once he gets off of Tatooine, he is concerned with how long it will take for him to become a Jedi Knight -- the progress of his training. When Obi Wan gets sliced by Darth Vader, Luke's loss is compounded by the fact that he has lost a friend and a tutor. When they get to the Rebel base, he is concerned about how preparations are going and eventually with his own progress as a pilot in the Rebel attack on the Death Star.

Obstacle Character Concern: The Preconscious (Immediate responses)-- In order to be truly "one with the Force," a persons must completely let go of himself and let the Force act through him. This allows the Force to guide one's unthinking responses and reflexes and to become an unbeatable power for good or evil. This is Obi Wan's greatest concern and his efforts here impact everyone around him, especially Luke.

Subjective Story Concern: Being (Temporarily adopting a

lifestyle)-- Obi Wan wants Luke to be the faithful student, while Luke just wants to be a Hero without really understanding what good it does to be quiet and controlled like Obi Wan. Luke's farm-boy lifestyle is not at all in sync with his true nature as Obi Wan sees him. Obi Wan knows that Luke is the son of a Jedi and therefore he tries to manipulate Luke out of being what he's not.

Limitations of space prevent us from describing each and every Type through example. At the back of this book, however, you will find an appendix with a complete definition of each, as well as reproductions of the complete chart of categories.

Even with this degree of refinement, our story's problem has still not been identified with the precision required to truly focus our theme. It is time to move into the next level of the problem chart.

When we sub-divide the Types, we can establish four different VARIATIONS of each. This creates the extended chart below:

Fate	Prediction	Fact	Security	Instinct	Senses	Wisdom	Skill
Interdiction	Destiny	Threat	Fantasy	Interpre-tation	Conditioning	Experience	Enlighten-ment
Openness	Delay	Work	Attract	Approach	Self Interest	Pre-requisites	Strategy
Choice	Pre-conception	Repel	Attempt	Morality	Attitude	Analysis	Pre-conditions
State of Being	Situation	Knowledge	Ability	Truth	Evidence	Value	Confidence
Circum-stances	Sense of Self	Desire	Thought	Suspicion	Falsehood	Worry	Worth
Rationali-zation	Commitment	Permission	Need	Closure	Hope	Investigation	Appraisal
Responsi-bility	Obligation	Expediency	Deficiency	Dream	Denial	Reappraisal	Doubt

Now we can finally begin to see some familiar thematic topics: morality, fate, commitment, and hope, for example. We can also see a number of unfamiliar terms that we may not have considered before in regard to theme. As before, Western culture (as do all cultures) favors certain areas of exploration and virtually ignores others. For an author who wishes to explore new ground, these unfamiliar terms provide a wealth of options. For the author who writes for the mainstream, all the old standbys are there, but with much more detail than before.

One thing you will not find on this chart are terms like "love" or "greed." Although these concepts figure prominently in many discussions of theme, they are more descriptive of subject matter, rather than the perspectives one might take *about* that subject matter. For example, suppose we decide to write a story about love. All right, what kind of love? Brotherly love? Romantic love? Paternal, lustful, spiritual, or unrequited love? Clearly, love is in the eye of the beholder. In other words, love is shaded by the nature of the object that is loved.

In our chart of Variations, we find terms such as "Attraction", "Obligation", "Desire", or "Instinct", each of which can be used to describe a different kind of love.

Similarly, you won't find "Greed" on this chart, but you will find "Self-Interest" (near the lower left corner of the Physics Variations). "Self-Interest" is not as emotionally charged as "Greed" but it more clearly defines the issues at the center of a rich man's miserliness, a poor man's embezzlement, and also a loving parent who must leave her child to die in a fire in order to save herself. And other Variations like "Fantasy", "Need", "Rationalization", or "Denial" would each reflect a different kind of "Greed".

It is not our purpose to force new, sterile and unfamiliar terminology on the writers of the world. It is our purpose to clarify. So, we urge you to pencil in your favorite terms to the chart we have provided. Stick "love" on "Attraction", place "Greed" on "Self-Interest", if that is how the most seem to you. In this manner, you will create a chart that already reflects your personal biases, and most likely incorporates those of your culture as well. The original bias-free chart, however, is always available serve as an neutral framework for refining your story's problem.

As a means of zeroing in on the Variation that best describes the thematic nature of your story's problem, it helps to look at the Variations as pairs. Just as with characters, the Variations that are most directly opposed in nature occur as diagonals in the chart. A familiar dynamic pair of Variations is Morality and Self-Interest. The potential conflict between the two emerges when we put a "vs." between the two terms: Morality vs. Self-Interest. That makes them feel a lot more like the familiar kind of thematic conflict.

Later we shall return to describe how each dynamic pair in the chart can form the basis for a thematic premise in your story. We will also show how this kind of dynamic conflict does not have to be a good vs. bad situation, but can create a "lesser of two evils" or "better of two goods" situation as well.

Ranges

Identifying the Variation which is most suited to the central explorations of a throughline sets up the Range of

thematic concepts to be explored from that point of view. To demonstrate how this might work, let's look at the Ranges of *Star Wars.*

Star Wars

Objective Story Range: Skill (Practiced ability)-- Everyone in this galaxy compares themselves to one another in terms of their skills; piloting a spacecraft, fighting their way out of tight situations, and standing up for themselves. The princess immediately evaluates her rescuers (Han, Chewbacca, and Luke) in terms of their apparent lack of skill. The entire war between the Rebellion and the Empire is a match between skills and experience. The Empire has a great deal of experience in quashing upstart groups, but its skills at doing so are rusty. The Rebellion, which has far less experience, is made up of great numbers of raw talent like Luke. Skill is an advantageous quality in this story.

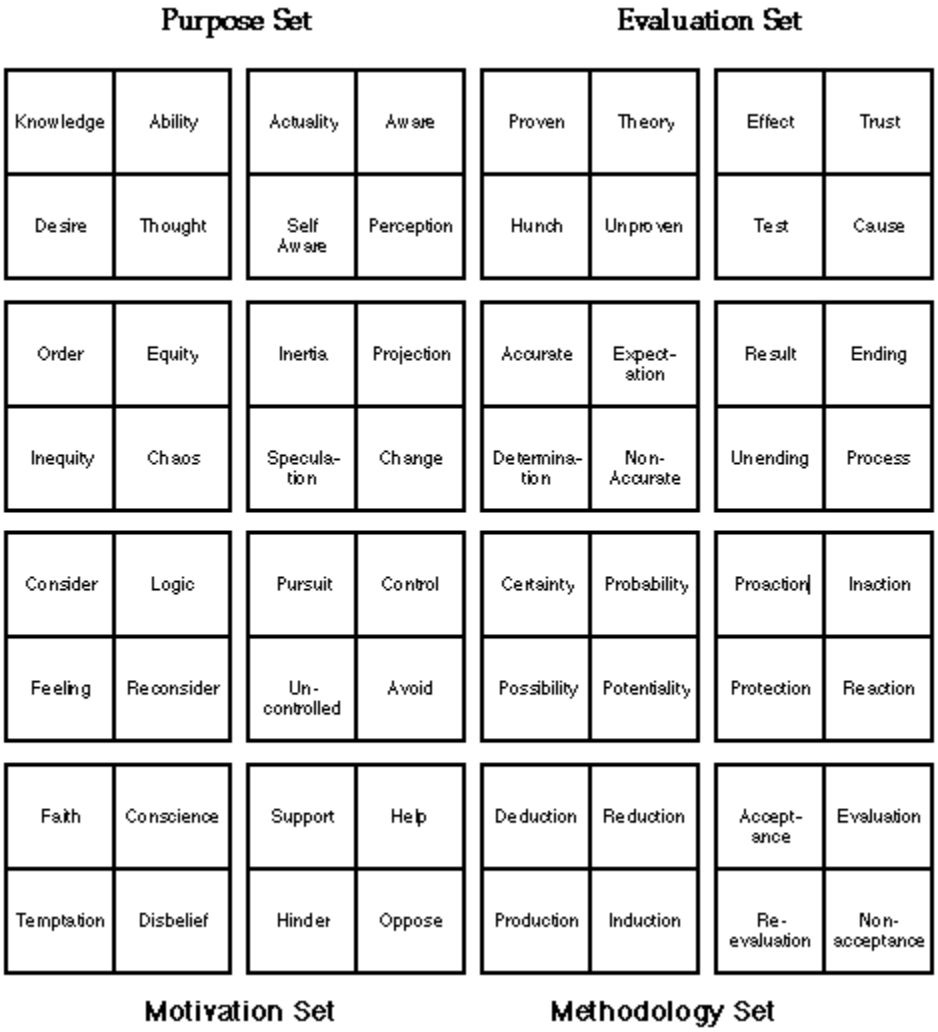
Main Character Range: Fantasy (Belief in something unreal)-- Fantasy is an important part of Luke Skywalker's life. He has no idea what wars are really like, but he wants to hear all he can about them because his fantasy is to be a hero in one. He plays with toy space ships, he is intrigued by messages from damsels in distress, and he cares more about these fantasies than about the hum-drum life of farming on a desert planet. These fantasies help set him apart from the unimaginative people around him (e.g. his uncle), yet they also make him seem exceedingly inexperienced and naive (as he is almost killed in Mos Isley cantina). Fantasy is advantageous for Luke.

Obstacle Character Range: Worth (A rating of usefulness or desirability to oneself)-- Obi Wan's impact forces considerations of what should be thought to have true worth (as opposed to objective value). Obi Wan makes it clear that he believes the Force is what everyone should see as having the greatest worth in the galaxy, and then he backs up his opinion by using it to get himself and others out of tight jams. He also appears at first to be a nutty old hermit, but is revealed to be a person of great worth in the eyes of Princess Leia, an important leader in the Rebellion. Because Obi Wan shows that things are seldom what they seem, his impact often causes people to reevaluate what they find of worth and what they don't. These re-evaluations of worth generally lead to a greater understanding -- especially for Luke Skywalker. Obi Wan shows Worth to be advantageous.

Subjective Story Range: Ability (The innate capacity to do

or be)-- The most focused aspect of Luke's and Obi Wan's relationship has to do with developing the abilities of a Jedi Knight. When Luke is either improving his own abilities or admiring Obi Wan's, everyone sees this relationship as a positive one for both people involved. Obi Wan's influence helps Luke see abilities which he didn't ever allow himself to see, such as the ability to leave home and join the Rebellion. Clarifying these abilities, however, would not be positive to their relationship if these two didn't also share similar desires. Fortunately for them, every time Obi Wan uncovers a new ability, such as being able to use a light saber without looking, it makes Luke want more. These kinds of demonstrable abilities make others, such as Han Solo, see that there really is something good happening between this teacher and student--even if it does involve ancient religion. Ability in this relationship is advantageous.

We still have one final level of the thematic chart of a story's problem to encounter. In fact, we have already encountered it. It is the very same chess set of sixty four Character Elements we created earlier:



Each Variation can be sub-divided again into four Elements. And, it turns out that when we get to the heart of the thematic issues in a story, no matter what kind of problem we began with it all comes down to the same thing: Character. Not surprising at all, really. Characters represent the different ways the Story Mind can go about solving the story's problem. The Main Character sits on the Crucial Element, and must either stick with it, if it is the solution, or abandon it if it turns out to be the problem itself.

Problems

Identifying the Element at the heart of each throughline puts a specific name on the Problem which drives that throughline through the story.

Star Wars

Objective Story Problem: Test (A trial to determine

something's validity)-- Rather than trusting in the design and efficiency of the Death Star, the Empire determines it must have a test run on Alderaan. This clues Princess Leia, Obi Wan, and subsequently the Rebellion, as to the terrifying nature of what they are facing. This also allows the Rebellion forces to prepare for the worst which is the Empire's undoing. The Rebellion, on the other hand, does not fully trust their information about the Empire's secret weapon and tests its accuracy by waiting until they actually have the plans in their hands. Had they trusted their initial reports they could have moved the base and remained out of the Empire's reach.

Main Character Problem: Test (A trial to determine something's validity)--Luke is constantly driven to test his skills -- as a wannabe Jedi, as a daring doer, as a marksman, and eventually as a pilot. By constantly testing himself, he gets into situations that he would have avoided if he had confidence (or trust) in himself. For example, he knew better than to go alone into the Sand people's territory; the scuffle he created at the bar could easily have been avoided; the messy breakout of the Princess was partially motivated by his testing his limits.

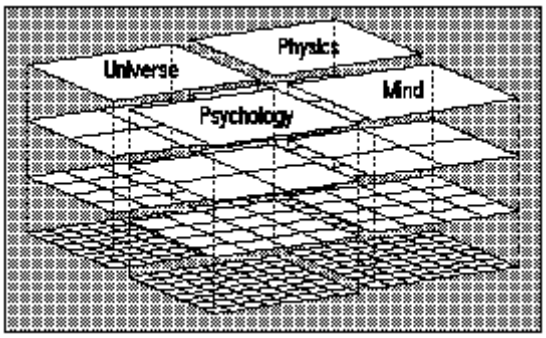
Obstacle Character Problem: Unproven (A rating of knowledge that has not been tested)-- Due to his devout faith in the Force, Obi Wan is driven by the idea that everything remains unproven -- even if common sense might dictate otherwise. He finds exceptions to every generality that people mention around him. The impact of his character is to make others draw their most cherished beliefs into question, because the true nature of "the Force" is so unimaginable, yet so powerful.

Subjective Story Problem: Non-Accurate (Not within tolerances)-- Obi Wan's secrecy and misleading comments to Luke keeps their relationship off balance. Obi Wan attempts to lure Luke away with him to Alderaan, then feigns indifference when Luke wimps out; Obi Wan marginally warns Luke to be careful at the cantina without giving Luke a real idea of the dangers within; Obi Wan's vagueness about the necessary "pains" associated with Luke's Jedi training (like getting zapped by the trainer robot) jostles their relationship.

We need to take a breather here! Much new material has been covered and it takes quite some time to assimilate. We suggest you put the book down for a while, ponder what we've just explored, have a snack, watch a program on TV,

and then return once the dust has settled. If we could, we'd provide some soothing mood music right about now. Since that is a bit difficult, we'll do the next best thing - pull it all together in a simplified image.

Because each level "falls" under the one above it, we can create a "3-D" representation of the thematic chart that illustrates its nested nature:



The Dramatica Structural Model

This projection gives a good feel for how Classes, Types, Variations, and Elements relate to one another. We start at the top by loosely classifying our story's problem, then sub-divide each Class into Types. Each Type is refined into Variations and then defined in terms of its basic Elements. Remember, our purpose here is only to identify the components of theme. Later in THE ART OF STORYTELLING we will illustrate how to construct and develop your story's theme.

Chapter 13

Domain Descriptions

Matching Points Of View To The Chart

To reiterate: Theme is perspective. Perspective is created by the relationship between two things: what is being looked at and where it is being seen from. In stories, what is being looked at is the nature of the problem and its ramifications.

To define the story's problem we start with its Class, then find out what Type of problem it is within that Class. Next

we see what Variation of that Type the problem is and then finally work down to the Elemental nature of the problem, which is reflected in Character.

Now we need to see what each of those aspects of the problem looks like from each of the four points of view an audience will expect in a complete story. Let's begin with the Class level.

Objective Story Domain

All *four* of the Classes of problem (Universe - a situation, Mind - a fixed attitude, Physics - an activity, and Psychology - a manner of thinking) will show up in a complete story. As it turns out, one will represent the way the Objective Story view sees the problem, one the Main Character's view of it, one the Obstacle Character's view, and the remaining Class will tell us how the problem looks from the Subjective Story view.

The first key, then, to creating thematic perspectives in a story is to assign each of the four throughlines to the four Classes in the structure. Once this is accomplished, the most broad stroke foundations of the author's biases on the story's issues have been laid.

As an example, objectively, the problem in a particular story might seem to be a situation. This means that the Objective Story point of view and the Universe Class would be matched or linked in such a story. When we *assign* a point of view to a Class, we say that Class is the point of view's *Domain*. In other words, all that we see in our hypothetical story from the Objective Story view can be found in the Universe Class, so the Universe Class is the Objective Story Domain.

Assigning a point of view to a Class creates the perspective, and therefore changes the way dramatic items in that Class appear.

For example, if Universe is the Objective Story Domain, the story at large would be about a situation that affects all the characters in the story to some degree. Such a story might be about people in a post-nuclear holocaust world, prisoners of war in a concentration camp, or two teenagers from rival gang families who have fallen in love. In each case, the external situation is the cause of the story's problems, when we see them objectively. Also in each case, all of the characters in the story will be affected by the

same situation, which is the definition of the problem when seen from the "they" point of view, like that of the general on the hill watching the battle. The audience will want to see what the problem looks like from this point of view to feel that the issues of the story have been fully explored.

In contrast, if the Main Character point of view were assigned to the Universe Class, the Universe Class would become the Main Character Domain. In a different hypothetical story with this arrangement, only the Main Character would be in the situation; the other characters would be involved in one of the remaining Classes. In such a story where Universe is the Main Character Domain, the situation might be that the Main Character is second in command on a battleship, has a physical deformity like *The Elephant Man*, or particular race or sex. In other words, the Main Character will be best described as a result of his personal situation, which will be some external condition that is causing difficulties only for that character. Quite a difference from an Objective Story situation that affects *all* the characters in a story (including the Main Character).

Before we move to the Type, Variation, and Element levels, let's take a brief look at each of the sixteen Class/throughline combinations that might be created.

Universe as Objective Story Domain

When Universe is the Objective Story Domain the story's troubles are best described as pertaining to a Situation. This will be an overview concept: all of the Objective Characters in the story will see the common source of their troubles as emanating from an external situation. Just because the situation is external and objective does not mean it must be without feeling, but simply that the situation is not personal to the audience.

Physics as Objective Story Domain

An Objective Story Domain of Physics means the story's troubles are caused by an activity gone wrong. This might be an activity engaged in by people or existing in nature. Either way, the "perpetuation" of this activity is what generates all the difficulties faced by the Objective Characters. There is often the tendency to think of an activity in the large scale, making it macroscopic; larger

than life. But dry rot works as well as a marauding horde in creating problems big enough to drive a story. The only constraint is that the activity must be an external one that is causing the difficulties.

Situation vs. Activities

It is easy to think of kinds of activities that border on being situations. For example, we might want to tell a story about a disease. If the story's problem stems from *having* the disease, it is a situation. If the story's problem is actually caused by *fighting* the disease, it is an activity. Because all four Classes will show up in a complete story, it is likely that both having and fighting the disease will show up as things unfold. The thematic question here is: which one is seen objectively, or phrased another way, which one is best seen as the cause of the problems for *all* the characters throughout the entire story - having it or fighting it?

Mind as Objective Story Domain

Mind is an internal state, describing problems which come from fixed attitudes. When Mind is chosen as the Objective Story Domain, the problems that affect all the characters will stem from internal attitudes and fixations. For example, an Objective Story Domain of Mind might be about how prejudice affects a town or how a humiliating memory affects a kingdom. In contrast, Universe and Physics Objective Stories deal with external states and processes. A selection of Mind as the Objective Story Domain specifically means that the source of the difficulties between all the Objective Characters is best seen as a problematic state of mind.

Psychology as Objective Story Domain

Psychology is an internal process, describing problems which come from the ways in which people think. When Psychology is chosen as the Objective Story Domain, the problems that affect all the characters will stem from manipulations and conflicting processes of thought. As opposed to the fixed attitudes described in the Mind Class, Psychology is about problems which arise from manners of thinking. For example, an Objective Story Domain of Psychology might be about the problems caused in a regiment that has been overly trained to follow orders or in a dysfunctional family which is trying to manipulate each other into a nervous breakdown.

Main Character Domain

Because an audience identifies most strongly with the Main Character, choosing a Main Character Domain is like asking your potential audience, "Where's your mind at?" This Domain describes the realm in which the Main Characters operates. Each Class, therefore, provides a completely different mind set for the Main Character.

Universe as Main Character Domain

Universe is a Class of situations. A Universe Main Character finds himself in a situation. The situation in question can be a social status issue, such as being a certain race or gender or being queen or king. It could be a predicament such as being a rock star, or it could be a physical condition such as having an extremely large nose or exceptional beauty. Each of these illustrations shows a Main Character as being defined by the situation in which he is found.

Mind as Main Character Domain

A Mind Main Character will be defined as holding onto a fixed attitude. Such a character might be suffering from a prejudice, haunted by a suppressed memory, or unable to shake a crush on the kid down the street. In each case, it is a fixed state of mind that causes the Main Character's difficulties.

Physics as Main Character Domain

A Physics Main Character is a person of action. For example, he might be doing something just to do it, or he might be trying to obtain or achieve something. Other activities of a Physics Main Character might be learning or seeking to understand something. At first learning and understanding might seem too internal to be Physics, but consider that these activities are *applied* externally. Learning is gathering information about something and understanding is seeking the meaning of something. This is quite different than coming up with original thought which *would* be internal.

Psychology as Main Character Domain

A Main Character Domain of Psychology indicates an individual who is best described by how he thinks. This could be a flighty person, someone who jumps to conclusions, or even a calculating, manipulative person. In each of these scenarios, the opinions the Main Character holds are not what sets him apart, but rather the kinds of mental processes he goes through. Though there may be many Objective Characters who represent manners of thinking, only the Main Character will provide the audience with the experience of thinking that way.

The Main Character has Class

Clearly, the nature and concerns of a Main Character change radically from Class to Class. If you are most interested in exploring your Main Character in a story, then choosing the Main Character Class before any others is the way to approach developing a story. Keep in mind, though, that once a Class has been assigned to one of the four Domains in a story, it cannot be assigned to any of the others. So whatever you might pick for your Main Character's Class will not be available for the Objective Story, Subjective Story or Obstacle Character.

Obstacle Character Domain

It is important to be clear about the difference between the Main Character and the Obstacle Character. The audience looks through the Main Character's eyes, and through them looks *at* the Obstacle Character. Through the Main Character, we feel what it is like to be in a particular predicament. With the Obstacle Character we see an external view of what someone else looks like in the same predicament. Since we cannot really climb into and become this character, we can only judge him by how he affects the characters and events around him.

As an example, if a Main Character were handicapped, during the duration of the story the audience members would also feel handicapped, suffering the problems this creates as if it were a problem in their own lives. If the Obstacle Character were handicapped, the audience would examine the problem from the outside, learning more about the difficulties logistically, not experientially. The focus would be on how this handicap impacts others. "Impact" is the key word to keep in mind when examining the story's problem in the Obstacle Character Domain.

Universe as Obstacle Character Domain

An Obstacle Character with a Domain of Universe will impact others because of his social status, race, gender, physical attributes, position or station. Whatever the situation might be, it provides the alternative paradigm to the Main Character's view of things.

Physics as Obstacle Character Domain

A Physics Domain Obstacle Character will be a person whose actions in the areas of Learning, Understanding, Doing, or Obtaining (the four Physics Types) make a case against the Main Character's point of view. At the end of such a story, the audience will not have experienced what it feels like to engage in these activities, but will know a lot about what *impact* these activities have.

Mind as Obstacle Character Domain

The Mind Obstacle Character exhibits a fixation or attitude dealing primarily with memories, desires, immediate responses or considerations. It is this attitude that causes the Main Character to reconsider and/or justify his position.

Psychology as Obstacle Character Domain

A Psychology Obstacle Character influences others through direct manipulation or may just have an impact because of the way in which he thinks. In either case, the focus of this Domain is an external view of how thought process affect those whom come in contact with them.

Subjective Story Domain

The Subjective Story Domain is the realm of the story's Passionate Argument. This is where the author creates meaning for the audience's emotional appraisal of a story's message. The primary focus is on the *relationship* between the Main and Obstacle Characters. Since the Main and Obstacle Characters are, by definition, at odds with one another, the Subjective Story Domain forms the background against which the battle between them is fought. As a result, choosing a Class as the Subjective Story Domain affects how a story *feels* to an audience.

Universe as Subjective Story Domain

A Subjective Story Domain of Universe has the Main and Obstacle Characters at odds over a situation that exists between them. This could be a marriage contract, business partnership, a chain of military command, being caretaker for an invalid, any kind of employment situation, etc. To properly illustrate a Subjective Story Domain of Universe, you will need to create a situation that is principally limited to some sort of relationship between the Main and Obstacle Characters that involves the past, present, progress, or future.

Physics as Subjective Story Domain

If Physics is the Subjective Story Domain, the Main and Obstacle Characters will be grappling over an activity. This could be an activity that is leading toward a purpose or just something engaged in for its own rewards. It might even be a detrimental activity engaged in as a means of punishing oneself to relieve guilt. Both Main and Obstacle may be striving to out-do each other at this activity, or one may be for the activity and the other against it. In any case, the activity lies at the heart of the difficulties between them and forms the subject of the story's passionate argument if Physics is the Subjective Story Domain.

Mind as Subjective Story Domain

When Mind is selected as the Subjective Story Domain, fixed attitudes or mind-sets form the battleground of the Main and Obstacle Characters. How many fixed attitudes can we see as a personal point of contention between two people? A prejudice, political view, religion, an attitude toward a child or parent, or a feeling of worthlessness would do the trick. A scenario that portrays the troubles between the Main and Obstacle Characters as revolving around a fixed state of mind, will successfully represent Mind as the Subjective Story Domain.

Psychology as Subjective Story Domain

Psychology as the Subjective Story Domain has the Main and Obstacle Characters diverging over a manner of thinking. Phrases like, "You always get this way when we argue," and

"No, I don't - it's *you* that keeps changing subjects," are referring not to a particular attitude, but a manner of thinking that is not appreciated between the Main and Obstacle Characters. When the way one goes about working something out becomes the issue between the Main and Obstacle Characters, the Subjective Story Throughline Domain will be Psychology.

Chapter 14

Concerns, Ranges and Problems

Domains and Beyond

As we have seen, each of these sixteen perspectives has a slightly different flavor as a result of the particular point of view linked with a specific Class. This alone is a more quantitative way to look at Theme than has previously been available, yet we still have three more levels of the thematic structure to explore! Each level will have its own kind of perspectives. For convenience, we call the thematic perspectives created at any level *appreciations*, which simply means that is how we appreciate a problem at that level from that point of view.

Due to practical constraints on the size of this book, we won't be able to go into as much detail for appreciations at the Type, Variation, and Element levels as we might like. What we *can* do is provide a general description of the appreciations found in each throughline. Once one gets a feel for how a throughline changes the meaning of a structural item in general, one can apply that understanding to any item in the structure and arrive at an accurate dramatic appreciation.

To recap, the Main Character Domain represents the audience point of view in a story. The Obstacle Character Domain is the opposing point of view the audience is asked to consider. The Subjective Story Domain contains the passionate argument between those two points of view. The Objective Story Domain is the realm of the practical argument about the relative value of all approaches that

might be taken in regard to the story's central problem *including those of the Main and Obstacle Characters.*

So, a Main Character *Throughline* explores what it looks like and feels like to have a particular kind of problem (often seen as drive). The Obstacle Character Throughline explores what kind of impact someone with that kind of problem (or drive) has on the people and events around him. The Subjective Story Throughline determines which is the better position to be in personally between Main and Obstacle, according to the author. The Objective Story Throughline determines which is the better position to be in for the benefit of everyone else.

Keeping these points of view in mind, let's see what other appreciations are created at the Type, Variation, and Element levels.

CONCERNS

Just as the combination of a throughline and a Class creates a Domain in which the problem appears from that point of view, the combination of a throughline and a Type creates an area of Concern. So, there will be an Objective Story Concern, a Main Character Concern, an Obstacle Character Concern and a Subjective Story Concern in every complete story. As its name implies, a Concern reflects the area in which the problem will be of greatest concern for each throughline.

Objective Story Concern

The Objective Story Concern is the area in which all of the characters share a common concern. This might be a single item they are all concerned about, or it might be that each of them has a personal concern of this nature. For example, if the Objective Story Concern was the Type "Obtaining", then all the characters would be concerned with Obtaining something. In such a story, everyone might be trying to Obtain the same thing, such as a buried treasure. In another story with an Objective Story Concern of Obtaining everyone might be trying to Obtain something different. The Protagonist might want to Obtain the treasure, but the Reason Character might want to Obtain a diploma. The nature of the Concern is shared, not necessarily the specific manifestation of it.

Later, in the Plot and Encoding sections, we will touch on

how one can pull these different items of Obtaining together into the same story. In the example above, the Protagonist could be a treasure hunter wanting to Obtain the treasure. The Reason Character who wants to Obtain a diploma in archeology joins the Protagonist's team because he seeks the quest for the treasure as the basis for his doctoral thesis. Tying items together in this manner is not a structural aspect of story, but one of storytelling, and is therefore beyond the scope of this section on The Elements of Structure.

Keep in mind that a Concern of Obtaining might also mean a Concern of *getting rid* of something. Whether one wants to Obtain or wants to stop Obtaining does not change the nature of the *area* of Concern. So, for this appreciation and all the following, remember to consider it as either meaning *not enough of something or too much of something.*

Main Character Concern

As one would expect, the Main Character Concern is of interest only to the Main Character. This appreciation describes the area in which the Main Character is most worried or interested in regard to the way it sees the problem.

If Obtaining were the Main Character Concern, the Main Character alone would be trying to get or get rid of (hold on to or refuse to hold on to) something. None of the other characters would share this Concern because the other throughlines are all in other Classes with different Types. This divergence is what gives a story some breadth and a sense of completeness for an audience. Rather than focusing on just one issue, every point of view regarding the story's problem falls into a different Domain with its own unique Concern.

Similarly, a Main Character with a Concern of Memory would be trying to remember, to forget, to establish a memory, or to prevent one from forming.

Obstacle Character Concern

Because the Obstacle Character Throughline is looked at in terms of its impact, the Concern here will be seen as the area in which the Obstacle Character has its greatest effect. A way of phrasing this is to say that the Obstacle Character's impact primarily Concerns this area. So, an

Obstacle Character Concern of Obtaining here would describe an Obstacle Character who changes what is or can be Obtained (or refused) because of his impact on the people and events around him.

Subjective Story Concern

The Subjective Story Concern describes the area of greatest conflict or divergence between the Main and Obstacle Characters. They might see eye-to-eye everywhere else, but when it comes to the Subjective Story Concern, they always come to blows. It is the nature of the way the thematic structure is created that the Concern of the Subjective Story Throughline will seem to grow out of the Main and Obstacle Concerns.

If the Subjective Story Concern were Obtaining, the Main and Obstacle would argue over whether or not they should have something. It might be something only one of them has or can have (who should have it?) or it might be something they must either have together or not at all.

Wrapping Up Our Concerns

As we have seen, matching a Type with a throughline creates a Concern. Each Concern provides a deeper appreciation of a different side of the story's problem for the audience.

Variations On A Theme

Moving down to the Variation level, we find appreciations that further refine the understanding of the story's problem as it is seen from each throughline. Each of these is called a *Range* for it describes the *Range* of subject matter that is appropriately explored in regard to the Concerns in a given Domain. In a sense, the Range might be thought of as the thematic topic for each throughline.

Objective Story Range

This appreciation describes the kind of value judgments that seem to pertain to all the characters and events in a story. For example, a Range of Morality will have a dynamic counterpoint of Self-Interest. This means the thematic conflict in the Objective Story Throughline would be Morality vs. Self-Interest. Because Morality is the Range,

it would be in the forefront and appear as the topic or subject matter of the Objective Story Throughline's Theme.

Because Morality is the *Objective Story* Range, it will appear almost everywhere. In a hypothetical story, we might see a man taking candy from a baby, a headline proclaiming that a company's profits are up, while behind the newsstand we see the company dumping toxic waste in the background. Illustrations of the Objective Story Range can focus on the characters or can act as a flavoring for the story as a whole. We shall explore this in greater detail in the Encoding section.

Main Character Range

The Main Character Range (and its counterpoint) represent the thematic conflict of personal interest to the Main Character. It will be seen in the kinds of things this character notices which no one else does. Because it is so personal a value judgment, the author can use this appreciation to whisper his point of view, rather than shouting it overtly, as might happen with the Objective Story Range. Because it is so personal, the Main Character Range helps bring humanity to the Main Character. It is through the issues explored through the Range that the audience can identify not only with the Main Character's head but his heart as well.

Obstacle Character Range

The Obstacle Character Range provides a way of evaluating the appropriateness of the Obstacle Character's impact. The Obstacle Character Range and Counterpoint act as a balance or scale against which the results of the Obstacle Character's point of view are weighed. This is where an author can truly tip the balance as to which point of view the audience comes to favor. Later we shall explore how that balance might be tipped back and forth over the course of the story, making a more realistic and less heavy-handed statement of the author's bias.

Subjective Story Range

The Subjective Story Concern describes the area of shared concern for the Main and Obstacle Characters. The Subjective Story Range and Counterpoint describe why they come to blows over it. The Main Character will believe the

Subjective Story Range (or counterpoint) is the value standard that should be used when looking at the Subjective Story Concern. As a result, The Main Character will see the Concern in a particular light. In contrast, the Obstacle Character will believe the other Variation (Range or counterpoint) is the proper way to evaluate the Concern. Since this standard of measure results in different conclusions about the Concern, the Main and Obstacle Characters come into conflict. They use these two points as they argue over two issues: what should be done about the Concern, and which is the best way to look at it.

It's Elemental!

Finally, we have arrived at the most basic and precise level of understanding in regard to a story's problem: the Element level. It is here that the source of difficulties experienced in each throughline can be found. The Objective Story Problem is something that will affect all of the characters and all that they do.

In contrast, the Main Character's Problem will be the source of his drive. Ultimately, it may turn out to be (or reflect) the Objective Story Problem, or have the potential to solve the Objective Story Problem, if only the Main Character can bring himself to apply it.

The Obstacle Character Problem is the source of his drive as well, but rather than being experienced by the audience as to what is driving them it will be examined from the outside, "What is driving him or her."

Lastly, let's examine the Subjective Story Problem. Unlike the Problems in each of the other throughlines, this one is not about an item, but a relationship - the relationship between Main and Obstacle. What is at the heart of their disagreements? What is the most essential issue from which all their conflict grows? The Subjective Story Problem describes the most refined view of what drives (or pulls) the Main and Obstacle Characters apart.

At this point we have defined all of the principal thematic perspectives in a story. We have determined that any Problem might be understood in terms of its Class, Type, Variation, and Element. We have further described that the story's central Problem itself can never be seen directly, but will be approximated by exploring how it appears from four different points of view. Each view will provide its own understanding of the nature of the Problem's Class, Type, Variation, and Element. Each of these is called an

appreciation. When all the appreciations are considered together in the mind of the audience, the author's bias on the issues at the heart of a story is established.

Chapter 15

Deep Theme Theory

Deep Theme

What we have done so far is describe the Elements of Theme. Now we have to put them in motion as well.

The Thematic Argument

What moves Theme forward is the Thematic Argument. Why an argument? Because unless the audience shares the author's bias on the story's issues, it will not accept a blanket statement that the author's proposed way of dealing with a particular problem is the best. The audience really does want to be convinced - it wants to learn something useful in real life while being entertained at the same time. But, unless an author can successfully make an emotional argument supporting his bias through his Theme, he will not be able to change the heart of his audience.

Premise and the Thematic Argument

One of the most familiar attempts to describe the nature of the thematic argument relies on a concept called the *premise*. A premise usually takes this form: *Some activity or character trait leads to a particular result or conclusion*. An example of this would be *Greed leads to Self-Destruction.* A premise can be very useful in describing what a thematic argument is about in a nutshell, but provides very little information about how that argument will proceed.

In regard to the example above, there are many ways in which greed might lead to self-destruction. In addition, each of the four throughlines has its own view of the

thematic nature of the problem, so each one needs its own thematic argument. The traditional premise looks at a story's Theme from one point of view only. If greed leads to self-destruction, is this a problem for everyone, just for the Main Character, just the Obstacle Character, or does it perhaps describe the nature and outcome of the relationship between Main and Obstacle? We simply don't have enough information to determine that. As a result, the traditional premise is fine for summing up a story, but does little to help an author create a thematic argument.

Dramatica's view of a thematic argument begins not with a conflict - the thematic conflict. Each of the throughlines has its own thematic conflict which we have already described to some degree during our discussion of Range.

The Range itself forms one side of the thematic conflict and the Counterpoint forms the other. As indicated earlier, you won't find Greed in Dramatica's thematic structure, but you will find Self-Interest. The Counterpoint for Self-Interest is the dynamically opposed to it in the chart, which is Morality. Thus, the premise of a thematic argument dealing with Greed might begin with the conflict, Self-Interest vs. Morality.

The advantage of the thematic conflict is that it spells out *both* sides of the thematic argument. Both Range and counterpoint must be played against one another over the course of the story if the author is to make a case that one is better than the other.

The component of traditional premise which describes growth is reflected in the phrase "leads to." In some cases this may also be "prevents," "creates," "hinders" or any other word or words that indicate the relationship of the topic (such as Greed) to the conclusion (such as self-destruction). Again, this describes what an audience comes to understand at the end of a story, but does not give a clue about how to develop that understanding while creating a story.

Because it begins with a conflict rather than a topic, Dramatica's version of a thematic argument supports an author creating as many scenes or events as he may choose in which the Range is weighed against the Counterpoint. Each time the Range or Counterpoint is illustrated it can be a shade of gray and does not have be shown in terms of all good vs. all bad. Using our example from above, in a series of scenes Self-Interest might be shown to be moderately positive, largely negative, slightly negative, then largely positive. At the end of the story the audience

can sum up or average out all the instances in which they have seen.

Similarly, the counterpoint of Morality in its own scenes might be largely positive, moderately positive, largely negative and largely negative again. At the end of the story the audience will sum up the counterpoint and determine whether Morality by itself is a positive or negative thing.

The audience does not consciously work out these averages. Rather, it is simply affected by the ongoing layering of value judgments created by the author's bias. In fact, audience members are constantly balancing the Range against the counterpoint in their hearts until the story is over and they are left feeling more toward one or the other.

The advantage of this approach is that an author does not have to be heavy-handed by saying only negative things about one side of the thematic conflict and only positive things about the other. An audience will be much more open to a balanced emotional argument where decisions are seldom black and white.

Finally, as reflected in traditional premise, an audience will want to see the ultimate results of adhering to one value standard over another. In our example of Greed, it led to Self-destruction. This is a generic conclusion. It could mean either a failure in one's goals or a personal loss of the heart.

Dramatica sees goals and yearnings as two different things: one born of reason and one born of emotion. How completely we achieve our goals determines our degree of satisfaction. How well we accommodate our yearnings determines our degree of fulfillment. So, one thing we need to know at the end of thematic argument is whether or not our goals ended in success or failure, and also whether or not things feel good or bad.

The degree of success or failure, good or bad, is determined in storytelling. The thematic appreciations of Success, Failure, Good, and Bad simply indicate on which side of the fence the conclusion settled. As a result, there are two different aspects to the conclusion of a Dramatica thematic argument -- the outcome (Success or Failure) and the Judgment (Good or Bad).

From these considerations we can see that four broad conclusions to a thematic argument are possible:

1. The Success/Good conclusion or Happy Ending

2. The Failure/Bad conclusion or Tragedy

3. The Success/Bad conclusion or Personal Tragedy

4. The Failure/Good conclusion or Personal Triumph

It is important to note that a Failure/Good story, for example, does not mean the Failure is Good but that in spite of a lack of satisfaction, the feel of the story is fulfilling. Such is the case in the motion picture *Rain Man* in which Charlie (Tom Cruise) fails to get the inheritance, yet overcomes his hatred of his father. This is a Personal Triumph.

Similarly, Success/Bad stories are like *Remains of the Day* in which Mr. Stevens (Anthony Hopkins) successfully maintains the household through thick and thin, yet in the end finds himself empty and alone. This is a Personal Tragedy.

Sewing Together The Themes

In this section we have learned that the traditional premise is too blunt a tool to do more than describe the gist of a finished work. In contrast, Dramatica's concept of a thematic argument is explored through thematic conflict, development of the relative value of different standards, and concluded with an assessment of both the level of satisfaction and fulfillment. Such an approach is much more in line with the organic flow of a story's emotional impact as felt through Theme, and is much more accessible as a creative guideline.

The Storyform: How Does All This Stuff Hold Together?

In our present exploration of Theme we are looking at Thematic Appreciations one by one. From this point of view Appreciations can appear rather independent, with each carrying its own meaning which needs to be determined and developed.

This point of view is deceptive, however. The meaning which Appreciations hold is partly in their individuality and partly in their relationships to each other. The nature of any single Appreciation has an impact on how to see every other Appreciation in that story. All together, the collective impact of a specific arrangement of Appreciations describes the underlying structure of a single complete story.

The connections these Appreciations have with one another is exceedingly complex. Beyond the obvious links between such items as Domains/Concerns/ and Ranges, the web of dramatic relationships between the Appreciations of a single story can only be kept fully consistent using a computer.

The purpose of this section, *The Elements of Structure*, is just to catalogue the pieces of story structure. The second half of this book, titled *The Art of Storytelling*, will explore exactly how creating a story determines what relationships will exist between that story's Appreciations.

Additional Appreciations

Domain, Concern, Range, and Problem are not the only appreciations in Dramatica. In fact, there are six other appreciations for each of the four throughlines, plus others that affect the whole story. Whether or not an author consciously considers them while writing, these appreciations will clearly appear in every complete story.

Additional Element Level Appreciations:

At the Element level where we already found each throughline's Problem, each of the four throughlines also has three additional appreciations. Since each throughline has a Problem, it is not surprising that each also has a Solution. The Solution is found directly opposite the Problem in the thematic structure. For example, the Solution for too much or too little *logic* is more or less *feeling*.

If a Problem were seen as a disease, its Solution would be a cure. A disease will also have symptoms, and treatments for those symptoms. This is reflected in the same quad as the Problem and Solution in each throughline, where one of the remaining Elements will be the Focus (symptom) or Direction (treatment). The reason they are called Focus and Direction is that characters, like real people, find their attention drawn to the difficulties caused by a problem more than to the problem itself. Whether the Focus and Direction we are considering falls in the Objective Story, Main, Obstacle, or Subjective Story Throughline, they represent the symptoms of the Problem which draw attention

(Focus) and what the characters try to do about it (Direction).

In the Objective Story Throughline, the Focus is where all the characters concentrate, as that is where their troubles are most apparent. The Direction is how they respond to try and alleviate those troubles. If the story were a body with a disease (Problem), sometimes a cure must be found and one must ignore the symptoms, not worry about a treatment, and concentrate on a cure. Other times, the cure cannot be found, but if one simply treats the symptoms, the body will recover enough to heal itself.

In the Main Character Throughline, the decision as to whether or not to change is intimately tied to whether the Main Character is driven by the Focus toward a Direction of effort, or whether he seeks the cure. The Main Character cannot tell which is the correct approach, but a final decision at a leap of faith (or the more gradual shift from one approach to the other) will ultimately determine whether the conclusion of the thematic argument ends in Success or Failure and Good or Bad.

In the Obstacle Character Throughline, the Focus is where this character hopes to have the greatest impact, and Direction is how he wants things to change as a result of that impact.

Focus in the Subjective Story Throughline is the actual topic over which Main and Obstacle Characters argue because it gets their attention. The audience will see the real Problem between them, but the Main Character and Obstacle Character will only see the Focus. Subjective Story Direction describes the direction in which the argument tends to lead.

Additional Variation Level Appreciations

At the Variation level each of the four throughlines has two additional appreciations. They function roughly the same way in each throughline, but are most similar in between the Main and Obstacle Character Throughlines and between Objective Story and Subjective Story Throughlines. Both Main and Obstacle have a Unique Ability and a Critical Flaw. In the Main Character, the Unique Ability represents some trait or quality that has the potential to allow that character to resolve his Problem. The Critical Flaw, however, undermines that Unique Ability. If the Main Character is ever to solve his troubles, he must overcome his Critical Flaw in order to fully employ his Unique

Ability.

Because the Obstacle Character is seen in terms of his impact, his Unique Ability describes the quality he possesses that enables him to have a special impact on the Main Character (in trying to change the Main Character's point of view). The Obstacle Character's Critical Flaw is another quality that undermines that impact.

In the Objective Story and Subjective Story Throughlines, these same two items are better described as the Catalyst and Inhibitor. Catalyst and Inhibitor act as the accelerator and brake pedal on the forward progress of each throughline. In the Objective Story Throughline, bringing in the Catalyst moves the plot forward more quickly, applying the Inhibitor slows things down. This is a structural aid in pacing a story.

In the Subjective Story Throughline, Catalyst and Inhibitor control the rate at which the relationship between Main and Obstacle Characters will develop. More Catalyst can bring a confrontation to a head, more Inhibitor can delay it. Because Catalyst, Inhibitor, Range, and counterpoint are all Variations, the proper choice of these items insures that the pacing of the story will seem to come from inside the structure, rather than being arbitrarily imposed by the author.

Additional Type Level Appreciations

At the Type level, each of the four throughlines has one additional appreciation. It is called a Stipulation, because it stipulates how the growth of each throughline will make itself known. The Stipulation provides a category in which the progress of each throughline can be charted. For example, an Objective Story Stipulation of Obtaining might be seen in the characters gathering cash receipts in their efforts to afford tuition. In the Main Character Throughline, a Stipulation of Obtaining might be the unused concert tickets on a shy man's bed stand from all the times he bought them but then was too afraid to ask someone out to the show.

What about the Class level?

The Class level has no additional appreciations, since it only has four items and each is already spoken for as the four Domains.

Please keep in mind that this section of the Dramatica Theory Book deals with The Elements Of Structure. It describes what the pieces are, not how to put them together. That comes later in The Art Of Storytelling.

Chapter 16

The Elements of Structure

Plot

Plot vs. Storyweaving

A common mistake made when considering plot is to assume that plot refers to the sequence of events in a finished story. A more accurate view considers that there is a difference between the progression of events in a story's structure, and the order in which these are revealed to an audience.

As an example of the difference between the two, we can look to the novel The Bridge of San Luis Rey by Thornton Wilder. The book opens with five travelers falling to their deaths as the bridge they are crossing collapses. The remainder of the book documents how each of the travelers came to be on that bridge at that time. Clearly, the progression of events for the characters was quite different than the order of revelation granted to the audience.

In contrast, the novel Slaughterhouse Five by Kurt Vonnegut Jr. follows the adventures of a Main Character who lives his life out of chronological order. In this case, the mixed-up progression of events is *part* of the plot's structure, not simply part of the storytelling.

The key difference between these two aspects of plot is that there is an internal logic to the plot's structure from the character's point of view and there is an order in which that logic is revealed to the audience.

Looking toward motion pictures for examples, films such as Pulp Fiction or Remains of the Day present their plots in quite a different order than the events *actually* occurred. In each of these stories, there is an internal logic to the sequence of events as they occurred in the structure. Then, that sequence is mixed up in order. This new arrangement has a completely different affect on how an audience will respond to each story, yet does not alter the internal logic at all. In other words, if Pulp Fiction or Remains of the Day were re-edited to reveal the plot in chronological order, the message of the story's structure would remain the same, but the viewing experience for the audience would be completely changed.

A prime example of this kind of impact shift can be seen in the film and video versions of the movie, Once Upon a Time in America. The story explores the changing relationships of a group of friends from their days as poor children during the Depression to their ultimate stations in life as old men in today's society. In its original theatrical release, episodes from several different periods in their long history together were jumbled up, so that the audience would see them as old men, then young boys, old men again, and then teenagers. A large part of the enjoyment in watching this film was to try and sort out how one thing would eventually lead to another, and also to determine why some expected things didn't happen after all. In a sense, viewing the movie was like assembling a jigsaw puzzle.

In the video release, however, the story was re-edited to chronological order. All the same pieces were there, but the story lost much of their charm, appearing ludicrously simple and predictable in this new form.

The point is: the plot of a story describes the internal logic or sequence of events that lead the characters from their situations and attitudes at the beginning of the problem to their situations and attitudes when the effort to solve the problem is finally over. Once that has been established, an author may choose to rearrange the order in which those events are revealed to the audience. This rearrangement may be integral to the feel of the finished work, but has no effect on the internal logic. As a result, such a technique falls into the realm of storytelling. In Dramatica, storytelling techniques of this nature are called *Storyweaving*. Storyweaving is fully explored in the portion of this book dealing with The Art of Storytelling. Here, we will only examine the nature of the plot itself.

Chapter 17

Plot Appreciations

A Thematic Side To Plot

Plot has two sides: One side deals with the sequence of what happens next. The other side is thematic in nature and determines what the plot is about. Terms that describe the sequence of plot include *Acts*, *Chapters*, and *Scenes*. Terms that describe the thematics of plot include *Goal*, *Requirements*, and *Consequences*. We'll examine the thematic side of plot first.

Plot Appreciations

As with the thematic perspectives we have already explored, plot thematics are also called appreciations. What sets these apart is that they do not fall in any single throughline. In fact, they are scattered among all four throughlines. This is because these plot appreciations represent the collective impact of all four throughlines combined. So, when we speak of Goal, we are not talking about one throughline's goal. Rather, we are referring to the Story Goal, which is derived from and impacts all four throughlines.

The story-wide effect of plot appreciations can be clearly seen in-so-far-as the Main Character, Obstacle Character, and Objective Characters will *all* be caught up in the ripples caused by the quest for the Story Goal. Even the Subjective Story Throughline will be impacted by the nature of the goal and the effort to achieve it.

There are eight Plot Appreciations that stand at the center of all four throughlines. They are the story *Goal*, *Requirements*, *Consequences*, *Forewarnings*, *Dividends*, *Costs*, *Prerequisites*, and *Preconditions*. All of these appreciations can be found at the Type level of the Thematic Structure.

In stories that reflect Western culture - particularly in American culture - the Story Goal is traditionally found in the Objective Story Throughline. This results in a story in

which the Goal pertains to all of the Objective Characters. The Goal, however, might just as appropriately be found in the Main Character Throughline, or either of the other two. In such a story, the overall Goal could appear to be whatever the Main Character was hoping for or working toward, regardless of what was of concern to the Objective Characters.

In fact, it is the Concerns in each throughline that might also double up as the Story Goal. This has the effect of tying all four throughlines' Concerns together into the issues central to the story as a whole. The relationship among the eight plot appreciations remains the same no matter which throughline serves as their anchor point. Therefore, we shall describe the nature of the eight Plot Appreciations as they appear when the Story Goal is also the Objective Story Throughline Concern. For other perspectives, one merely needs to shift into a different point of view, such as that of the Main Character. The appreciations themselves would remain the same, only what they are applied to would change.

Story Goal

The Story Goal will share the same Type as the Objective Story Concern. What then is the difference between a Goal and a Concern? A Concern simply describes the category of the kinds of things the Objective Characters are most worried about. The Story Goal describes a specific item that is a shared concern. For example, if the Objective Story Concern is Obtaining, then all the characters would be worried about Obtaining something important to each of them. One might wish to Obtain a diploma, another to Obtain a lost treasure. A Story Goal of Obtaining in the same story might be everyone's desire to Obtain a pirate map. The map would bring recognition leading to a diploma for one character and a lost treasure to another. In such a story, the audience will be waiting to see if the Goal is Obtained or not *because of the character concerns that such an outcome will affect.*

Story Requirements

In order to achieve a particular Type of Story Goal, a necessary Type of Requirements must be met. Requirements can come in two varieties. One is a series of steps that must be achieved in a particular order. The other is more like a shopping list that must be filled, no matter the order in which it is completed. Step Requirements can be

accomplishments such as winning a series of preliminary bouts to qualify for a shot at the title. List Requirements can be items that must be gathered, such as clues or ingredients. Regardless of the Step or List nature of the Requirements for a particular story, they must all fall into the category described by the Requirement's Type.

Story Consequences

What happens if the Goal is not achieved? The Consequences are suffered. In some stories, the characters may already be suffering Consequences as the story opens. The Goal then becomes that one thing which will bring an end to the suffering. In this case, the character's troubles are the Consequences of *not yet having achieved the Goal.* Just as in real life, sometimes Goals are a reward, other times Goals bring relief. It all depends on whether the situation starts out good, but could still be improved, or whether it starts out bad and needs to be corrected.

Story Forewarnings

Just as progress in meeting Requirements indicates how close the Goal is to being attained, the progress of Forewarnings indicates how close the Consequences are to being imposed. Forewarnings can be as simple as cracks forming in a dam or as subtle as an increasing number of missed appointments. Characters are not only running toward the Goal, but trying to outrun the Consequences as well. Tension increases when one is both the pursuer and the pursued. For stories in which the Consequences are already in place, Forewarnings indicate how close things are to making the Consequence permanent. An example of this kind of Forewarning can be found in Walt Disney's production of Beauty And The Beast. Here, petals falling off a rose portend the point at which the prince must remain a beast forever.

Driver And Passenger Plot Appreciations

Just as there are Driver and Passenger characters, there are Driver and Passenger Plot Appreciations as well. Goal, Requirements, Consequences, and Forewarnings are the Drivers and set the course of a story's plot. The next four appreciations, Dividends, Costs, Prerequisites, and Preconditions, are the Passengers which *modulate* the course of the plot set by the Drivers.

Story Dividends

During the effort to achieve the goal, certain benefits are enjoyed or accrued along the way. These serve to add motivation for the characters to continue. No one likes to keep his nose to the grindstone for an extended duration in the hope of ultimately receiving a reward. Similarly, if one is already suffering a Consequence, simply accepting that torment while working toward relief quickly becomes unbearable. In a like manner, characters need to enjoy small rewards along the way - little perks that make the journey bearable and the effort tolerable.

Story Costs

Just as positive benefits accrue during the effort to achieve the goal, so do negative costs have to be paid. Every time a character endures some displeasure as a result of trying to achieve the goal, this additional price is a Cost. Costs and Dividends modulate the intensity of the Objective Character's drive toward the Goal. These characters cannot know if they will ultimately succeed or not. As a result, putting in effort is something of a gamble. Just as with a slot machine in a casino, every spin that simply takes one's money is a Cost. Every small pay-out is a Dividend. By properly balancing the two, motivation to continue in hopes of a jackpot can be maintained, for each Dividend is seen as *proof* that rewards can be had, and even if the Costs outweigh the Dividends, the Goal would cover those costs and leave much more profit besides. Of course, as with gambling, characters may slowly accrue so many costs that even the achievement of the goal would not cover the physical or emotional debt.

Story Prerequisites

Any effort requires supplies, often called *essentials*. The effort to achieve the Goal also requires these essential Prerequisites, without which progress cannot be made. Only by gathering what is needed can an attempt be made to meet a story's Requirements. Prerequisites might be a certain kind of transportation, an amount of money, a grade point average, or the approval of a bureaucrat. As long as the item in question is essential to mounting the effort to achieve the Goal, it is a Prerequisite. Prerequisites themselves do not bring the Goal any closer, which is why they are not Requirements. All they do is define the raw

materials or foundations that must be in place before the quest for the Goal can proceed.

Story Preconditions

In contrast to Prerequisites, Preconditions are like *riders* that are tacked on to the ends of bills being voted on in Congress. With such a bill, the Goal might be to help an endangered species. One of the Requirements would be to pass a bill that gives the species legal status as being endangered. One of the Prerequisites would be to get enough votes to pass the bill. One of the Preconditions for getting a block of votes would be to add a rider on the bill that provides subsidies to the tobacco industry. Clearly the rider has nothing to do with the original bill, and might even be philosophically at odds with its intent. But, to get the job done, concessions must be made.

In a like manner, Preconditions in a story are non-essential constraints or costs placed on the characters in exchange for the help of someone who controls essential Prerequisites. This might be the only Bedouin who can supply camels so an expedition can cross a desert, who insists they take his uncontrollable daughter with them.

In the movie, The Karate Kid, the Protagonist is a young boy who wants to be a Karate Champion. To achieve this goal, he must meet the Requirements of winning preliminary bouts. To win these bouts, the Prerequisites are that he receive additional training from a master. The master, who controls this Prerequisite, adds a precondition. He insists that the young boy learn new moves by doing chores around the master's house that incorporate those moves, "Wax on... Wax off." Clearly, there are other ways to learn Karate than doing chores, but this Precondition was brought about by the master's desire that the boy learn humility along with his skill.

In Summary

These eight Plot Appreciations are the touch points between plot and Theme. Without them, the plot would simply be a series of events that held no particular meaning. With them, the plot supports the thematic argument, and through it touches the other Thematic Appreciations including those such as the Main Character Problem, which lie at the heart of what drives a story's characters. In this manner, Theme stands as a bridge connecting character to plot so that

what characters do thematically impacts the progression of events, and events that occur thematically impact the way characters think.

Chapter 18

The Progression of Plot

Plot Progression

There are Objective Story Throughline appreciations, Main Character appreciations, Obstacle Character appreciations and Subjective Story Throughline appreciations. There are even appreciations that are the synthesis of all four points of view such as Goal, Requirements, and Consequences. These central appreciations seem the most plot-like because they affect the Concerns of all four throughlines.

As varied as all of these appreciations are, there is one quality they share: they stay the same from the beginning to the end of a story. For example, if a story's Goal is Obtaining, that never changes during the course of the story. If the Main Character's Problem is Logic, then Logic is always that character's Problem from "Once upon a time" to "They all lived happily ever after." True, the Main Character may solve his Problem, but he will never magically stop being driven by one kind of Problem and start being driven by another. Appreciations of this stable nature are called *Static Appreciations.*

Static Appreciations are thematic in nature because they form a bias or commentary on the story as a whole. Even the eight Plot Appreciations have a Theme-like feel to them, for they describe what the plot is about. But there is more to plot that this. In fact, there is a completely different *kind* of appreciation that moves from one issue to another as a story develops. These are called *Progressive Appreciations*, and it is through them that story explores the series of events in the Objective Story Throughline, the growth of the Main Character, the changing nature of the Obstacle Character's impact, and the development of the relationship of the Main and Obstacle Characters in the Subjective Story Throughline.

We can see that each of the four throughlines has, in a sense, a plot of its own, yet they all affect one another in some consistent manner. What is it that makes them separate, yet binds them together? A good way to get a feel for this kind of relationship is to think of a story as a football game being covered by four different referees. The "real" plot of the game is the series of events that take place on the field. Not one of the four referees can truly observe all the events, for each can only see what is visible from his position. A referee on the opposite side of the field, however, might see interactions that were completely masked or hidden from the first position, whereas the first referee would report activities not visible from the other side.

Based on what he believes to be happening from his position, each of the referees will call penalties or allow play to continue. Often, the other referees will simply accept that judgment and play will continue. Occasionally though, two or more referees will disagree as to what transpired simply because the events actually looked different from each of their perspectives. In this case, the umpire steps in to moderate the referees and determine what the call should be, even if he did not see the play himself.

In stories, each throughline is like one of these referees. Each provides an angle on the events of the story as they unfold. When something appears unfavorable from one of those points of view, the characters in that Domain cry foul and invoke a penalty to alter the course of action. Each of the throughlines is affected by the series of events that transpire, and conversely, each throughline can have an impact on the course of future events. This is how all four throughlines seem to have plots of their own, yet affect one another in a consistent manner. And, just as the umpire must sometimes step in to settle disagreements, so the author steps in from time to time to side with one throughline or another and allow a penalty or revoke it.

In the end, the true plot of the story is never seen directly, but simply synthesized as the result of all four throughline plots taken into consideration. As Taoist philosophy would explain it, "The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao." As Dramatica would have it, "The plot that can be seen is not the actual plot."

How then shall we know what must happen in a story's plot? This we can learn by examining the mechanism of the Progressive Appreciations that occur in each throughline.

In this manner, we can *plot* the course of events as seen from each point of view. The synthesis of these into a single understanding of the story's central plot is what will then occur in the minds of our audience members as the plots unfolds.

Progressive Appreciations

So just what *are* Progressive Appreciations? Chances are, you are already familiar with them. They are Acts, Sequences, Scenes, and Events. The Progressive Appreciations are not unlike the way we measure time in Days, Hours, Minutes, and Seconds. We can see that a Minute does not stand independently, but is *nested* within an Hour, which is in turn nested within a Day. Similarly, Scenes are appreciations that happen within an Act. Events are nested in Scenes which are nested in Sequences which are nested in Acts.

No event stands alone, but will bear something of the flavor or identity of the larger units in which it resides and the smaller units it contains. If this begins to sound like the thematic appreciations we have already explored, it is no accident. Domain, Concern, Range, and Problem narrow the issue of the story when the story is seen as a state. Act, Sequence, Scene, and Event narrow the issue of the story when the story is seen as a process. The Static Appreciations tell us what a story is about. The Progressive Appreciations tell us how a story unfolds. Taken together, the Static and Progressive Appreciations convey a story's meaning.

Acts

Each Class in the Thematic Structure has four Types in the level just below the Class. In the Physics Class, for example, the four Types are Learning, Understanding, Doing, and Obtaining. Because the Physics Class will be assigned as the Domain of one of the four throughlines, one of these Types will be that throughline's Concern. For this example, let us assume that Physics is the Objective Story Domain, and the Concern is Obtaining.

Because a Concern is a Static Appreciation, it will be felt throughout the story. Therefore, the Objective Characters will remain concerned with Obtaining from the beginning to the end of the story. Even so, these characters do not simply sit around being concerned with possessing

something, rather, they proceed through a series of endeavors in the attempt to Obtain it (or get rid of it). As it turns out, each of the four Types in a Domain represents a stage in this attempt.

In our example, the story might begin with the characters Learning something that ultimately brings them to an Understanding. Eventually they Understand enough to start Doing something, and when they have Done enough, they just might Obtain whatever it is they are after. The four stages of this endeavor, then, would be Learning, Understanding, Doing, and Obtaining, in that order.

Another story might start with the characters Doing something. Once they have Done enough, they Obtain something. As they come to examine what they have Obtained, an Understanding grows until, after years of accepting what was, they finally begin to Learn again.

The Types in a Domain can be explored in any order. Each different order, however, will create a different meaning. As an analogy to this, imagine two events: a slap in the face and a scream. A slap followed by a scream might seem as if someone were crying out from having been hit. A scream followed by a slap, however, might seem as if someone was hysterical and being brought to her senses. The order in which events occur changes their Progressive meaning, even though their Static meaning might remain the same. This same dynamic holds true for Acts as well, so that the order in which the Types are explored changes the Progressive meaning of that throughline's view of the plot at large.

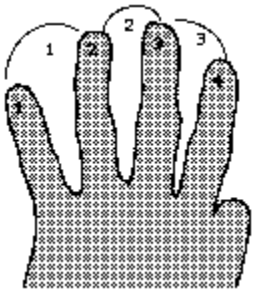
Each Type in a throughline will be the subject matter of one of four Acts in that throughline. The order in which the Types are explored determines the Progressive meaning of that throughline's evolution.

Another View: 3 Act Progressions

Some two thousand years ago, Aristotle proposed that every functional plot should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Since that time, this notion has evolved into a widely held view that there should be three Acts in a complete story. Act one sets up the dramatic potentials. Act two plays these potentials against each other. Act three describes how it all turned out.

At first, a three act progression might seem in conflict

with Dramatica's four act view. As we shall see, however, the two actually go hand in hand.



The illustration above shows how a plot that covers four different Acts will automatically generate three different transitions as the subject matter shifts from one concern to the next. In a sense, we might think of a throughline's plot as a road.

At the beginning of the road is the point of departure: City A. At the end of the road is the destination: City D. Along the way are two other cities, B and C. The first leg of the journey begins at City A and ends at City B. The second leg begins at B and ends at C. The final journey begins at City C and ends at the destination, City D.

At each city is a signpost that gives its name. The four signposts in a throughline's plot are the names of the Types. The order in which they will occur in the plot determines where they fall along the road. Between the four signposts are three journeys, each of which can be described as traveling from one signpost to the next.

Returning to an earlier example, Signposts A, B, C, and D might be Learning, Understanding, Doing, and Obtaining. The Three journeys in this plot would then be Learning -> Understanding, Understanding -> Doing, and Doing -> Obtaining. With four signposts and three journeys, each throughline's plot actually has *seven* different Progressive Appreciations that are required for that perspective to be complete.

When Aristotle saw a beginning, middle and end, he was seeing Signpost A, all three journeys lumped together, and

Signpost D. When successive generations of writers evolved a three act structure, it became very difficult to determine, "What happens in Act 2?" as all three journeys and two of the signposts were simply blended into "the middle". By adopting a Four Act *structure* which coincides with three *dynamic* acts, the true nature of a throughline's plot is far easier to understand and construct.

Sequences

Just as Theme has appreciations that are more character oriented, some more aligned to plot, others that pertain most strongly to genre, and those that are closest to the heart of Theme itself, Progressive Appreciations also touch on all four aspects of the Elements of Structure.

Acts are the most plot-like of the Progressive Appreciations, and accordingly fall in the Type level of the structure. Sequences, on the other hand, occur at the Variation level and therefore, like the Range, are the most Theme-like of the Progressive Appreciations.

What Is A Sequence?

Sequences deal with a quad of Variations much as Acts deal with a quad of Types. The quad we will be interested in is the one containing the Range, as that is the item at the heart of a throughline's Theme. Returning to our example story about an Objective Story Throughline in the Physics Class with a Concern of Obtaining, we shall say the Range is Morality, as illustrated in the quad below.

Approach	Self Interest
Morality	Attitude

If Morality is the Range, then Self-Interest is the counter-point. Theme is primarily derived from the balance between items. When examining the quad of Variations containing the Range, we can see that the Range and counter-point make up only one pair out of those that might be created in that quad. We have also seen this kind of balance explored in the chapter on Character where we

talked about three different kinds of pairs that might be explored: Dynamic, Companion, and Dependent.

Just as with character quads, we can make two diagonal pairs, two horizontal pairs, and two vertical pairs from the Variations in the Range quad. For the Morality quad, these six pairs are Morality/Self-Interest, Morality/Attitude, Morality/Approach, Self-Interest/Attitude, Self-Interest/Approach, and Attitude/Approach. Each of these pairs adds commentary on the relative value of Morality to Self-Interest. Only after all six have been explored will the thematic argument will have been fully made. It could go in a manner as follows:

Morality/Self-Interest
On face value, which appears to be the better of the two?

Morality/Attitude
When Morality is the issue, how do we rate the Attitude of those espousing it?

Morality/Approach
When Morality is the issue, how do we rate the Approach of those espousing it?

Self-Interest/Attitude
When Self-Interest is the issue, how do we rate the Attitude of those espousing it?

Self-interest/Approach
When Self-Interest is the issue, how do we rate the Approach of those espousing it?

Attitude/Approach
Overall, which should carry more weight in regard to this issue?

By answering each of these questions in a different thematic sequence, the *absolute* value of Morality compared to Self-Interest will be argued by the impact of the six different *relative* values.

How Sequences Relate To Acts

Three Act Progressions

With six thematic Sequences and three dynamic Acts, it is not surprising that we find two Sequences per Act. In fact, this is part of what makes an *Act Break* feel like an Act

Break. It is the simultaneous closure of a Plot Progression and a Theme Progression. The order in which the six thematic sequences occur does not affect the message of a story, but it does determine the thematic experience for the audience as the story unfolds. The only constraints on order would be that since the Range is the heart of the thematic argument, one of the three pairs containing the Range should appear in each of the three dynamic Acts. Any one of the other three pairs can be the other Sequence.

Four Act Progressions

The three dynamic Acts or Journeys in a throughline's plot represent the experience of traversing the road through the story's issues. The four structural Acts are more like a map of the terrain. As a result, a more structural kind of thematic Sequence is associated with the Types directly.

Beneath each Type is a quad of four Variations. From a structural point of view, the Act representing each Type will be examined or judged by the four Variations beneath it. In our ongoing example, the Act dealing with Obtaining would be examined in terms of Morality, Self-Interest, Attitude, and Approach. The difference between this and the thematic sequences we have just explored is that Obtaining is judged by each Variation in the quad separately, rather than each Variation in the quad being compared with one another. It is an upward looking evaluation, rather than a sideways looking evaluation.

In this manner, a thematic *statement* can be made about the subject matter of concern in each of the four structural Acts. The six Sequences constitute an *argument* about the appropriateness of different value standards.

Scenes

By the time we get down to scene resolution, there are so many cross-purposes at work that we need to limit our appreciation of what is going on in order to see anything in the clutter. First, however, let's touch on some of the forces that tend to obscure the real function of scenes, then strip them away to reveal the dynamic mechanism beneath.

Resolution and Sequence

Earlier we spoke of plot in terms of Types. We also speak of plot here in terms of four resolutions: Acts, Sequences, Scenes, and Events. Both of these perspectives are valid appreciations *depending on the purpose at hand.* Because all units in Dramatica are related holographically, no single point of view can completely describe the model. That is why we select the most appropriate view to the purpose at hand. Even though looking at plot in terms of Types is useful, it is true that "plot-like" twists and turns are going on at the scene resolution as well. However, these dynamics are not truly *part* of the scene, but merely *in* the scene. An Act, Sequence, Scene, or Event is really a temporal container -- a box made out of time that holds dynamics within its bounds. Much like filters or gratings with different-sized holes, the resolutions "sift" the dynamics trapping large movements at the highest levels and allowing smaller nuances to fall all the way down to the Elements.

What's in a Scene?

At the scene resolution, the effects of Types and Variations can be felt like the tidal pull of some distant moon. But scenes are not the resolution at which to control those forces. Scenes are containers that hold Elements -- anything larger cannot get crammed in without breaking. So the richness we feel in scenes is not solely due to what the scene itself contains, but also to the overall impact of what is happening at several larger scales.

What then does a scene contain? Scenes describe the *change* in dynamics between Elements as the story progresses over time. And since Elements are the building blocks of characters, scenes describe the changing relationships between characters.

Characters and Scenes

Characters are made up of Motivations, Methodologies, Means of Evaluation, and Purposes. These terms also describe the four major sets of Elements from which the characters are built. The driving force of a character in a given scene can be determined, such as whether their argument is over someone's motivations or just the method they are employing.

6 Goes Into 24 Like Theme Goes Into Scenes

We have spoken of the three and four act appreciations of story. It was illustrated how both divisions are valid to specific tasks. When dealing with scenes, we find that no scenes ever hang between two acts, half in one and half in the other, regardless of a three or four act appreciation. This is because there are exactly 24 scenes created at the Element level: six per act in a four act appreciation, eight per act in a three act appreciation. In both cases, the scenes divide evenly into the acts, contributing to the "feel" of each act break being a major turning point in the progress of the story.

Sequences, on the other hand, exist as a six part partition of the story. Therefore, they divide evenly into a three act appreciation but not into a four. Since the four act view is objective, sequences -- as they define Thematic movements -- are truly an experiential phenomenon in the subjective appreciation and lose much of their power objectively.

Events

One of the fascinating aspects of the Dramatica model is that it is recursive. It represents one full cycle of the consideration of a problem. In fact, a story's dramatics are such that at the end one has returned to reconsider the beginning. Mirroring this looping effect, the smallest dynamic units in the model merge right back into the largest structural units. Time doubles back to meet Space so a decision can be made as to which one really contains the solution.

Events and Domains

In Plot, the most defined resolution -- Events -- is actually described by the most broad stroke structural units: Classes. To recap, there are four Classes: Universe, Mind, Physics, and Psychology. Each is represented as an Event. An Event is an occurrence -- something that changes (or remains the same) enough to be noticed by an audience. The dynamics of that incident create dramatic meaning at its most delicate level.

There are four Events within the boundaries of each scene. This means that in addition to character relationships,

each scene must also describe a Situation, an Activity, a Manner of Thinking and a State of Mind. All four Classes should be represented to complete a scene. Immediately, one thinks of action "scenes" that just show something blowing up or deliberation "scenes" where nothing moves. How can these be scenes if they don't contain all four Classes? They can't. In fact, they are Events.

Events Masquerading as Scenes

Twenty-four scenes are *required* for a complete Grand Argument Story. However, if one breaks down those scenes a bit farther, it can be noted that 96 Events occur in a complete story as well.

The "red herring" that obscures this temporal division is caused by changing locations. For example, if a Physics Event (action) takes place in the jungle, then is followed by a Psychology Event (deliberation) back home in England, the change in location tends to make one feel that two different scenes have occurred. Yet, if the story is well designed, it will be noted that the Mind and Universe Domains are also represented just before, during or just after.

This is all part of storytelling: to bring emphasis to certain aspects of the argument or exploration and to diminish others. Three Events may occur in one location, to be followed by the fourth in another. Still, they have filled only one Scene.

Chapter 19

The Elements of Structure

Genre

Previously, we have seen that the characteristics which build the Objective Characters reside at the Element level of the Thematic Structure. Theme itself emanates most strongly from the Variation level. Plot is generated in the Types. It should not be a surprise, therefore, to find that

Genre is most influenced at the Class level. In fact, matching a point of view to a Class creates a story's Domains, and it is these Domains that have the greatest *structural* impact on Genre.

As one moves up the Dramatica structure, looking from Character to Theme to Plot, the structural components (the Elements, Variations, and Types) take on a *decreasing* significance to the finished work compared to the storytelling aspects involved. Objective Characters are very easy to define solely in terms of their Elemental dramatic functions. Theme is a bit less tied to the structure as it explores the comparison between two dramatic Variations whose balance must be established by the author in the process of storytelling. Plot can be looked at rather precisely in terms of Acts, but is less so when it comes to thematic Sequences. At the Scene resolution of Plot a large part of what goes on is storytelling. At Event resolution, determining exactly what events ought to occur is almost exclusively storytelling, with the events falling into four broad structural categories.

Following this progression it stands to reason that Genre, which centers on the Class level just above where Plot is found, would be the least structural of story aspects and also the most influenced by storytelling. And so it is.

In a casual sampling of traditional Genres, we immediately notice that Genre sometimes refers to the setting of a story, as in *Westerns* or *Science Fiction.* Other times, it describes the relationships between characters such as *Love Stories* and *Buddy Pictures.* Genre might pertain to the feeling an audience gets from a story as in *Comedy* and *Horror Stories.* Even styles of storytelling can have their own Genres like *Musicals* or *Character Studies.*

With all these different duties performed by the word Genre, how can we hope to define it? An attempt is made by video rental stores. All the old standards are there dividing the movies on their shelves: *Action, Drama, Children's.* This is fine for picking out what you want to watch some evening, but not much help to authors trying to create stories of their own.

***Producer**: "Write me a war story!"*
***Writer**: "O.K. What do you want, something like M.A.S.H. or Platoon or The Great Escape?"*

Traditional Genre categories are really only useful for grouping finished works. The overall feel of a story is

created from a blending of many different components that have an impact on the audience. These range from the underlying dramatic structure (storyform) through the subject matter (encoding) and style (weaving) to audience expectations (reception).

The traditional concept of Genre is most useful to writers by keeping them mindful of the "flavor" of their story, no matter if they are working on character, plot, or theme. Genre would be a lot more useful if it could be clearly defined. This is where Dramatica can help.

Dramatica intends to help writers construct the deep structure which underlies their stories. This framework functions as the dramatic skeleton upon which the specifics of a story are built. Story encoding then places muscle on the skeleton, Story weaving clothes the creation, and Reception affects how the audience might react to such a thing.

When considering Genre from an author's point of view -- rather than the traditional audience point of view -- the most critical aspect will be structural. That is where the foundation is laid, upon which the storytelling will be built. The first step of seeing Genre this way is to look at the four Classes. These four Classes indicate the nature of the subject matter that will be covered in a story's Genre. To recap, the four Classes are:

- Universe p; an external state; commonly seen as a situation.
- Physics p; an external process; commonly seen as an activity.
- Mind p; an internal state; commonly seen as a fixed attitude or bias.
- Psychology p; an internal process; commonly seen as a manner of thinking or manipulation.

Modes of Expression

Next, we want to consider a new concept: four *modes of expression* through which the story's structure can be conveyed to an audience. The four modes of expression are:

- Information p; focusing the audience on knowledge.
- Drama p; focusing the audience on thought.
- Comedy p; focusing the audience on ability.
- Entertainment p; focusing the audience on desire.

The Dramatica Classes describe what the audience will see. The modes describe in what light they will see them. When

we match the two categories, we begin to control the feel our story will generate within the audience.

This is analogous to the manner in which Domains are created by attaching a point of view to a Class. Domains are part of the Story Mind itself and represent how a mind shifts its perspective to consider all sides of an issue. Genres, while also creating perspectives, do so outside of the Story Mind and represent the four different ways an audience can look at the Story Mind as a finished work they are receiving.

The following "Grid of Dramatica Genres," shows the four Dramatica Classes along one axis, and the four modes of expression along the other.

Grid of Dramatica Genres

	Universe	Physics	Mind	Psychology
Information *(Education)*	**Where/What it is**	**How it works**	**What it means**	**Why it's important**
Drama *(Serious)*	**Exploration Drama**	**Action Drama**	**Bias Drama**	**Growth Drama**
Comedy *(Humor)*	**Situation Comedy**	**Physical Comedy**	**Comedy of Manners**	**Comedy of Errors**
Entertainment *(Diversion)*	**Entertainment through Atmosphere**	**Entertainment through Thrills**	**Entertaining Concept**	**Entertainment through Twists**

- **Where/What it is** p; (Information/Universe) p; an examination of events and situations with an emphasis on the past, present, progress, and future "state of things" (e.g. Documentary, Historical and Period Pieces).
- **How it works** p; (Information/Physics) p; an examination of how specific processes work with an emphasis on instruction (e.g. Educational, Informational, Instructional).
- **What it means** p; (Information/Mind) p; an examination of opinions and points of view with an emphasis on the context in which they are made (e.g. Inspirational, Motivational).
- **Why it's important** p; (Information/Psychology) p; an examination of value systems with an emphasis on providing context relevant to the audience's personal life (e.g. Persuasion, Propaganda).

- **Exploration Drama** p; (Drama/Universe) p; a serious exploration of how the "state of things" is unbalanced (e.g. Courtroom, Crime, and Classroom dramas).
- **Action Drama** p; (Drama/Physics) p; a serious take on how problems are created by ongoing activities (e.g. Espionage and War dramas).
- **Bias Drama** p; (Drama/Mind) p; a serious take on what types of conflicts arise from incompatible attitudes (e.g. Obsession and Prejudice dramas).
- **Growth Drama** p; (Drama/Psychology) p; a serious take on the attempts to

overcome difficulties resulting from manipulations and/or evolving identities (e.g. Coming of Age and Dysfunctional Family dramas).

- **Situation Comedy** p; (Comedy/Universe) p; humor derived from the difficulties created by placing characters in some sort of predicament (e.g. TV Sitcoms).
- **Physical Comedy** p; (Comedy/Physics) p; pratfalls, slapstick, and other forms of humor derived from physical activities gone awry (e.g. The Three Stooges and much of Charlie Chaplin's work)
- **Comedy of Manners** p; (Comedy/Mind) p; humor derived from divergent attitudes, biases, or fixations - frequently noted as drawing room comedies (e.g. Jack Benny or Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Ernest).
- **Comedy of Errors** p; (Comedy/Psychology) p; humor derived from misinterpretation or, in psychological terms, attribution error (e.g. Abbott and Costello's Who's on First and several Shakespeare comedies including Twelfth Night).

- **Entertainment through Atmosphere** p; (Entertainment/Universe) p; entertainment derived from new, unique, or interesting settings or backgrounds (e.g. Disaster, Fantasy, Horror, Musical, and Science Fiction)
- **Entertainment through Thrills** p; (Entertainment/Physics) p; entertainment derived from new, unique, or interesting activities/experiences - much like thrill rides at an amusement park (e.g. Action Adventure, Suspense)
- **Entertaining Concept** p; (Entertainment/Mind) p; entertainment derived from new, unique, or interesting ideas (e.g. High Concept piece)
- **Entertainment through Twists** p; (Entertainment/Psychology) p; entertainment derived from new, unique, or interesting forms of audience manipulation (e.g. Mysteries, Thrillers)

This grid illustrates how the mode of expression can change the impact a Class will have on an audience. If the Physics Class is expressed in terms of Information it would seem like a "How to" story. If Comedy is chosen as the mode of expression, however, the Physics Class looks more like a story involving physical humor or "slapstick."

The beauty of the grid is that it provides authors with a "shopping list" of the kinds of impact they may wish to have upon their audience. Take time to fully examine the table. Look at the brief explanation of each mode/Class combination. Unlike most of the previous information in this book, this table lends itself to an intuitive feel that ties in much more closely with the Art of Storytelling than with the Elements of Structure.

Taken together, Classes and modes of expression determine the feel of the subject matter in a story. Still, there is one aspect of Genre remaining: positioning the audience in

relationship to the subject matter. To do this, we can make use of the four Dramatica *Domains*. As a brief recap, they are:

- Main Character Domain p; the first person point of view (I) matched with a Class, this Domain provides the audience with a "down in the trenches," personal view of the story.

- Obstacle Character Domain p; the second person point of view (you) matched with a Class, this Domain provides the audience with a "what's impacting me," impersonal view of the story.

- Subjective Story Domain p; the first person plural point of view (we) matched with a Class, this Domain provides the audience with a "what's it like to be in this type of a relationship," passionate view of the story.

- Objective Story Domain p; the third person point of view (they) matched with a Class, this Domain provides the audience with a "big picture," dispassionate view of the story.

By positioning the audience's four points of view on the Class/modes of expression grid, we can accurately predict the feel our story will have.

EXAMPLE #1:

	Universe	Physics	Mind	Psychology
Comedy *(Humor)*	**Situation Comedy**	**Physical Comedy**	**Comedy of Manners**	**Comedy of Errors**
(Domains)	*Objective Story*	*Main Character*	*Subjective Story*	*Obstacle Character*

Suppose we wanted to write a Comedy with the Objective Story Domain of Universe and the Main Character Domain of Physics. We could assign all of the Domains to the grid in the Comedy mode of expression like above.

If we are good storytellers, all four throughlines would have a consistently humorous (comedic) feel to them. The Objective Story would be a situation comedy; the Main Character would be a physically goofy or funny person(e.g. Stanley Ipkiss in The Mask); the Obstacle Character might be someone who is constantly being mistaken for someone else or mistaking the Main Character for someone else; the Subjective Story relationship between the Main and Obstacle Characters would be conflicting over silly or exaggerated

differences of opinion.

Though a story like this covers all of the storyforming bases, its single mode of expression lacks the emotional depth that comes from variety. This monotone form of storytelling is fine (and often preferable) for some forms of storytelling. Many audiences, however, prefer to have greater variety of expression in their stories. As it stands, this example story lacks any educational intent (Information), any sense of seriousness (Drama), and any pure diversions (Entertainment).

How does one diversify? Assign each Domain to a different mode of expression.

A story of such a completely mixed arrangement has no single, overriding feel to it. What it gives up in consistency, however, it gains in variety.

The Objective Story (Universe/Entertainment) would be set in some unique or viscerally intriguing setting (perhaps a Western, the distant future, or the dark side of the moon) in which something is amiss. In this setting we find our Main Character (Physics/Comedy), perhaps clumsy (e.g. Inspector Clouseau from The Pink Panther), or overly active like *Ace Ventura*. Providing a nice contrast to the humorous nature of the Main Character are the serious impact of Obstacle Character's manipulations (Psychology/Drama). Finally, we add the Subjective Story relationship (Mind/Information) as it describes how the Main and Obstacle Characters' fixed attitudes conflict over "what it all means."

This is the heart of Dramatica's approach to Genre. At its most basic level it is a choice between four modes of expression. At its most exciting and elegant, it concerns the sophisticated relationship and dynamics that are created when the four modes of expression, the four structural Classes, and the four Domains are brought together. The Class/modes of expressions grid allows authors to select Domains using their feelings and intuition. By carefully setting these Dramatica relationships in a story, you can create a powerful Genre experience for your audience with exactly the impact you intended.

Finally, there is a greater depth to Dramatica theory that offers more information about what is really going on in Genre. It may be more than you really need to consider for your style of writing and the kinds of stories you create. If you'd like to explore this final aspect of The Elements

of Structure, read on.

The Class/modes of expression table we have been using makes it appear as if a throughline must remain in one mode for the duration of a story. In fact, this is only the Static Appreciation of Genre. In actual practice, the Genre of a story develops as the story unfolds, so that it may appear to be simply a Drama as it begins, by the time it is over it will have defined exactly what kind of Drama it is.

In this respect, beginning as one among a broadly identifiable group of stories and ending up where no other story has gone before, each and every story develops its own *unique* Genre by the time it is over. The manner by which this happens pertains to the *Progressive Appreciation* of Genre, which we will now explore.

First of all, once a throughline is assigned to a Class, thereby creating a Domain, that particular combination will remain for the duration of the story. Therefore, when we examine how the Mode/Class table is laid out, we can see that each Domain will fall in a vertical column and stay there. The Progressive nature of Genre is seen when each Domain *slides* up and down its particular column so that during the story it may touch on all four modes of expression. The fact that each Domain is always in its same Class gives them consistency; the ability to shift modes of expression gives them versatility.

Just as with Progressive Plot appreciations there *are* limits to how a Domain can move from one mode to another. Like the Acts in Plot, Domains must move through modes of expression in a particular order. The rule of thumb is that a Domain cannot *skip over* a mode (according to the order used in the table) but must go through each mode of expression in between to get to the desired one.

The reason for this limitation is that neither the human mind nor the Story Mind can shift mental gears from, say, first gear to third gear without going through second gear. Modes of expression are largely emotional concerns, and as such, the human mind must be allowed to experience the transition from one emotional state to the next if it is to feel natural.

A good example of the awkwardness that results from ignoring this rule of thumb can be found in the motion picture, Hudson Hawke, starring Bruce Willis. The filmmakers made a valiant effort to break convention and have a serious heist thriller jumbled up with comedy and

even song and dance numbers in the middle of a robbery! This might have worked, had the audience been taken through the intermediate modes. Alas, such was not the case and therefore the story simply came out jumbled and impossible to get a grip on emotionally.

It should be noted that sometimes in the process of storytelling an author will want to shock an audience. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, including breaking structure or skipping the transitional modes of expression. These kinds of techniques are fully explored in the Storyweaving section of The Art of Storytelling. For now, our discussion is limited to what a consistent progression of Genre would be.

If you have closely examined the table, you may have wondered if the mode at the top (Information) could ever connect to the mode at the bottom (Entertainment) without having to go through both Drama and Comedy first. The answer to this question is, "Yes."

If you were to clip the Class/modes of expression table out of this book (not recommended!) you could bend it around from top to bottom to make a cylinder. When presented in this form, it can be seen that Information is actually right next to Entertainment. So, during the course of a story, a single Domain might shift up or down or all around, as long as it stays within its Class column.

Taken together, all four Domains could shift from scene to scene into different relative positions, not unlike a combination lock, making the story all comedic at one time, serio-comic at another, and so on. By the end of the story, the progressive shift of Domains provides the combination for the unique Genre of a story.

Chapter 20

Section Two:

The Art of Storytelling

Foundations

Introduction to Storytelling

All complete stories exhibit two principal aspects: an underlying dramatic structure which contains the story's inherent meaning and a secondary meaning which is created by the manner in which that structure is presented in words and symbols. In practice, neither aspect of story can exist without the other, for a structure which has not been made tangible in some form cannot be communicated and similarly no mode of expression can be created without something to express.

The first half of this book explored The Elements Of Structure. Its purpose was to define the essential components that occur in the dramatic structure of all complete stories. These components fell into four principal categories: Character, Theme, Plot, and Genre.

This half of the book explores The Art Of Storytelling, which documents the process of conceptualizing and conveying a story. This process passes through four distinct stages: Storyforming, Storyencoding, Storyweaving, and Reception.

An author might begin either with Structure or Storytelling, depending upon his personal interests and/or style. If you come to a concept that is unfamiliar or unclear, you may wish to use the index to reference that topic in The Elements Of Structure or to take advantage of the extensive appendices at the back of the book.

The Four Stages of Communication

There are four stages of communication that stand between an author and an audience when a story is related. Stage one is Storyforming, in which the arrangement and sequence of dramatic appreciations are determined. Stage two is Encoding where the Storyform appreciations are translated into topics and events that symbolize the essential dramatic concepts in terms the author anticipates will have meaning to an audience. Stage three is Storyweaving, where all the independent illustrations are woven together into a synthesized whole that is the story as it will be presented to an audience. Stage four is Reception in which the audience assigns meaning to what they observe the work to be, hopefully decoding the intent of the author with some degree of accuracy.

The Four Stages of Communication

In bringing a story to an audience, through any media, there are four distinct *stages of communication* through which

the story will pass. When an author is developing a story or looking for ways in which to improve it, a good idea is always to evaluate how the story is working at each of these stages individually. Problems can exist in any single stage or bridge across into many. Seeing where the problem lies is half the work of fixing it.

The Four Stages are:

Stage 1: Storyforming -- at which point the structural design and dynamic settings of an idea are conceived. This is where the original meaning of the story is born, the meaning which the author wants to communicate.

Stage 2: Storyencoding -- where the symbols with which the author will work are chosen. Stories are presented through characters, setting, and other particulars which are meant to symbolize the meaning of the story. No symbols are inherently part of any Storyform, so the choices of *how* a particular Storyform will be *Storyencoded* must be considered carefully.

Stage 3: Storyweaving -- where the author selects an order and emphasis to use in presenting his encoded story to his audience in the final work. The way in which to deliver a story to an audience, piece by piece, involves decisions about what to present first, second, and last. The potential strategies are countless: you may start with the beginning, as in Star Wars, or you my start with the end, as in Remains of the Day, or with some combination, as in The Usual Suspects. What you most want the audience to be thinking about will guide your decisions in this stage, because choices made here have the most effect on the experience of receiving the story as an audience member.

Stage 4: Reception -- where the audience takes over, interpreting the symbols they've received and making meaning of the story. The audience is a very active participant in its relationship with a story. It has preconceptions which affect how it will see anything you put in front of it. The audience is presented with a finished, Storywoven work and hopes to be able to be able to interpret the work's symbols and decipher the Storyforming intent of the authors behind the work. The accuracy with which this is accomplished has a lot to do with how the story was developed in the other three stages of communication.

There are many ways to play with any one of these stages

and many reasons for doing so. It all depends on what impact the author wants to make with his work.

Genre, Plot, Theme, and Character

In each of the four stages of story communication, authors have recognized four aspects of storytelling at work: Genre, Plot, Theme and Character. In other words, first there must be a Storyforming stage in which Genre, Plot, Theme, and Character are designed as dramatic concepts. Next is the Encoding stage where Genre, Plot, Theme, and Character are symbolized into the language of the culture. Stage three, Storyweaving, sees the author blending the symbolic representations into a seamless flow that presents the symbols for Genre, Plot, Theme, and Character to an audience. The final stage of Reception puts the audience to work decoding the symbols to appreciate the author's intent as represented in Genre, Plot, Theme, and Character.

Naturally, with so many internal steps and appreciations, the opportunity for miscommunication is considerable. In addition, since the audience members are looking from stage four back to stage one, they are in fact authors of their own Reception. In this role the audience may create meaning that is fully supported by the symbology, yet never intended by the author.

How Dramatica Fits In

The study of Reception theory is well documented in many books, articles, and essays. The process of storytelling is brilliantly covered by many inspired teachers of the art, including Aristotle himself. Dramatica provides a view of story never before seen so clearly: an actual model of the structure and dynamics that lie at the heart of communication - the Story Mind itself. By using the structure of story as a foundation, the process of communication becomes much more accurate, giving the author much more control over the audience experience.

Author as Audience

With the author at one end of the communication chain and the audience at the other, it is not unusual for an author to cast himself in the role of audience to see how the story is working. In other words, many authors approach their story not so much as the creator of the work, but as its greatest fan. They look at the blended result of Storyforming, Storyencoding, Storyweaving and Reception and judge the combined impact even as they write it. This can be extremely valuable in making sure that all stages of communication are working together, but it carries hidden dangers as well.

When an author adopts the audience perspective, he compresses all four stages together. Thus, Genre, Plot, Theme, and Character become complete,

yet their components become nebulous and much harder to define. This makes it very easy to tell if something is going wrong, but much harder to determine which part of the process is at fault.

To avoid this problem, Dramatica suggests first building a Storyform that spells out the dramatic appreciations necessary to fashion a complete argument in line with one's intent. Then, referring to this structure while encoding (or symbolizing) the storyform, an author can make sure that missing or inconsistent pieces of the storyform are not masked under clever storytelling.

Emphasis Where Emphasis is Due

Encoding simply creates scenarios and events that illustrate the Storyform's dramatic appreciations. In the Encoding stage, no illustration is more important than another. The emphasis is provided by the nature of the illustration. For example, a Goal of Obtaining might be encoded as the attempt to win a fifty dollar prize or the effort to win the presidency of a country.

Further emphasis is set in the third phase of communication, Storyweaving, when the illustrated appreciations are actually written into the work, favoring some with extended coverage while de-emphasizing others with mere lip service. In this manner, the portions of a Storyform structure which are more central to an author's personal interests rise to the surface of the work while those of less interest sink to the bottom to form a complete but minimalist foundation for the story's argument.

In short, it is fine to stand back and admire one's handiwork, criticize it, and see if all its parts are working together. The audience point of view, however, is not a good perspective from which to fashion a work.

In keeping with this philosophy, this book began by outlining The Elements Of Structure. Now it is time to shift mental gears and outline the process of communication itself as expressed in The Art Of Storytelling.

The Art of Storytelling

Stage One:

Storyforming

Introduction to Storyforming

Inspiration

When an author begins work on a story, he seldom has the whole thing figured out in advance. In fact, he might start with nothing more than a bit of action, a scrap of dialogue, or perhaps only a title. The urge to write springs from some personal interest one wants to share. It could be an emotion, an experience, or a point of view on a particular subject matter. Once inspiration strikes, however, there is the compelling desire to find a way to communicate what one has in mind.

Another thing usually happens along the way. One creative thought leads to another, and the scope of what one wishes to communicate grows from a single item into a collection of items. Action suggests dialogue which defines a character who goes into action, and on and on. Ultimately, an author finds himself with a bag of interesting dramatic elements, each of which is intriguing, but not all of which are connected. It is at this point an author's mind shifts gears and looks at the emerging work as an analyst rather than as a creator.

Structure

The author as analyst examines what he has so far. Intuitively he can sense that some sort of structure is developing. The trick now is to get a grip on the "big picture." Four aspects of this emerging story become immediately apparent: Character, Theme, Plot, and Genre. An author may find that the points of view expressed by certain characters are unopposed in the story, making the author's point of view seem heavy-handed and biased. In other places, logic fails, and the current explanation of how point A got to point C is incomplete. She may also notice that some kind of overall theme is partially developed, and that the entire work could be improved by shading more dramatic elements with the same issues.

So far, our intrepid author has still not created a story. Oh, there's one in there somewhere, but much needs to be done to bring it out. For one thing, certain items that have been developed may begin to seem out of place. They don't fit in with the feel of the work as a whole. Also, certain gaps have become apparent which beg to be filled. In addition, parts of a single dramatic item may work and other parts may not. For example, a character may ring true at one moment, but turn into a klunker the next.

Having analyzed, then, the author sets about remedying the ailments of his work in the attempt to fashion it into a complete and unified story. Intuitively, an author will examine all the logical and emotional aspects of his story, weed out irregularities and fill in cracks until nothing seems out of place in his considerations. Just as one might start with any piece of a jigsaw puzzle, and in the end a larger picture emerges, so the story eventually fills the author's heart and mind as a single, seamless, and balanced item, greater than the sum of its parts. The story has taken on an identity all its own.

Communication

Looking at the finished story, we can tell two things right off the bat. First, there is a certain logistic dramatic structure to the work. Second, that structure is expressed in a particular way. In Dramatica, we call that underlying deep dramatic structure a Storyform. The manner in which it is communicated is the Storytelling.

As an example of how the Storyform differs from the Storytelling, consider Romeo and Juliet and West Side Story. It is easily seen that dramatics of both stories are essentially the same. Yet the expression of those dramatics is completely different. Storytelling dresses the dramatics in different clothes, couches the message in specific contexts, and brings additional non-structure material to the work.

The structure of a story is like a vacant apartment. Everything is functional, but it doesn't have a personality until someone moves in. Over the years, any number of people might occupy the same rooms, working within the same functionality but making the environment uniquely their own. Similarly, the same dramatic structures have been around for a long time. Yet, every time we dress them up in a way we haven't seen before, they become new again. So, part of what we find in a finished work is the actual Grand Argument Story and part is the Storytelling.

The problems most writers face arise from the fact that the creative process works on both storyform and storytelling at the same time. The two become inseparably blended, so trying to figure out what really needs to be fixed is like trying to determine the recipe for quiche from the finished pie. It can be done, but it is tough work. What is worse, an author's personal tastes and assumptions often blind him to some of the obvious flaws in the work, while over-emphasizing others. This can leave an author running around in circles, getting nowhere.

Fortunately, another pathway exists. Because the eventual storyform outlines all of the essential feelings and logic that will be generated by a story, an author can begin by creating a storyform first. Then, all that follows will work together for it is built on a consistent and solid foundation.

To create a storyform, an author will need to make decisions about the kinds of topics he wishes to explore and the kinds of impact he wishes to have on his audience. This can sometimes be a daunting task. Most authors prefer

to stumble into the answers to these questions during the writing process, rather than deliberate over them in advance. Still, with a little consideration up front, much grief can be prevented later on as the story develops.

Chapter 21

Storytelling and Character Dynamics

Audience Impact

There are eight questions about a story that are so crucial and powerful that we refer to them as the essential questions. Determining the answers to these can instantly clarify an embryonic story idea into a full fledged story concept. Four of the questions refer to the Main Character and four refer to the overall Plot. Taken together, they crystallize how a story feels when it is over, and how it feels getting there.

Character Dynamics

Both structure and dynamics can be seen at work in characters. Structural relationships are seen most easily in the Objective Characters who serve to illustrate fixed dramatic relationships that define the potentials at work in a story from an objective point of view. Dynamic relationships are seen more easily in the Subjective Characters who serve to illustrate growth in themselves and their relationships over the course of a story.

The Subjective Characters are best described by the forces that drive them, rather than by the characteristics they contain. These forces are most clearly seen (and therefore best determined) in reference to the Main Character. There are four Dynamics that determine the nature of the Main Character's problem-solving efforts. The four Character Dynamics specify the shape of the Main Character's growth. Let's explore each of the four essential character dynamics and their impact on the story as a whole.

Character Dynamic Examples

Main Character Resolve:

Change Characters: Hamlet in Hamlet; Frank Galvin in The Verdict; Wilber in Charlotte's Web; Rick in Casablanca; Michael Corleone in The Godfather; Scrooge in A Christmas Carol; Nora in A Doll's House

Steadfast Characters: Laura Wingfield in The Glass Menagerie; Jake Gittes in Chinatown; Clarice Starling in The Silence of the Lambs; Chance Gardener in Being There; Job in the Bible

Main Character Direction:

Start Characters: Laura Wingfield in The Glass Menagerie; Rick in Casablanca; Scrooge in A Christmas Carol; Nora in A Doll's House

Stop Characters; Hamlet in Hamlet; Frank Galvin in The Verdict; Wilber in Charlotte's Web; Jake Gittes in Chinatown; Clarice Starling in The Silence of the Lambs; Chance Gardener in Being There; Job in the Bible; Michael Corleone in The Godfather;

Main Character Approach:

Do-er Characters: Frank Galvin in The Verdict; Wilber in Charlotte's Web; Jake Gittes in Chinatown; Clarice Starling in The Silence of the Lambs; Michael Corleone in The Godfather;

Be-er Characters: Laura Wingfield in The Glass Menagerie; Rick in Casablanca; Scrooge in A Christmas Carol; Hamlet in Hamlet; Chance Gardener in Being There; Job in the Bible; Nora in A Doll's House;

Main Character Mental Sex:

Female Mental Sex Characters: Laura Wingfield in The Glass Menagerie; Nora in A Doll's House;
Male Mental Sex Characters: Frank Galvin in The Verdict; Wilber in Charlotte's Web; Jake Gittes in Chinatown; Clarice Starling in The Silence of the Lambs; Michael Corleone in The Godfather; Rick in Casablanca; Scrooge in A Christmas Carol; Hamlet in Hamlet; Chance Gardener in Being There; Job in the Bible.

Resolve: Change or Steadfast?

The first Essential Character Dynamic determines if the Main Character will be a changed person at the end of a story. From an author's perspective, selecting Change or Steadfast sets up the kind of argument that will be made about the effort to solve the story's problem.

There are two principal approaches through which an author can illustrate the best way to solve the Problem explored in a story: One is to show the proper way of going about solving the Problem, the other is to show the wrong way to solve the Problem.

- To illustrate the proper way, your Main Character *must* hold on to his Resolve and remain Steadfast if he is to succeed, because he truly is on the right path.
- To illustrate the improper way of dealing with a Problem, your Main Character *must* change to succeed, for he is going about it the wrong way.

Of course, Success is not the only Outcome that can befall a Main Character. Another way to illustrate that an approach for dealing with a Problem is proper would be to have the Main Character Change his way of going about it and fail. Similarly, the improper way can be illustrated by a Main Character that remains Steadfast and fails.

So, choosing Change or Steadfast really has nothing directly to do with being correct or incorrect; it just describes whether the Main Character's ultimate Resolve is to stay the course or try a different tack.

Just because a Main Character should remain Steadfast does not mean he doesn't consider changing. In fact, that is a temptation with which he is constantly faced: to give up or alter his approach in the face of ever-increasing opposition.

Even if, in spite of difficulties and suffering, the Main Character remains steadfast, the audience may still not want him to ultimately succeed. This is because simply being steadfast does not mean one is correct.

If the audience is shown that a character is misguided yet remains steadfast, the audience will hope for his ultimate failure.

Similarly, a Change Main Character does not mean he is changing all the time. In fact, in most cases, the Change Main Character will resist change, all the way to the moment of truth where he must choose once and for all to continue down his original path, or to jump to the new path by accepting change in himself or his outlook.

Regardless of the benefits to be had by remaining steadfast, the audience will want the Change Main Character ultimately to succeed if he is on the wrong path and changes. However, if he does not change, the audience will want him to lose all the benefits he thought he had gained.

Your selection of Change or Steadfast has wide-ranging effects on the dynamics of your story. Such things as the relationship between the Objective and Subjective Story Throughlines and the order of exploration of your thematic

points is adjusted in the Dramatica model to create and support the ultimate decision of your Main Character to either change or remain steadfast.

Direction: Stop or Start?

The second essential question determine the direction of the Main Character's growth.
Whether or not a Main Character eventually Changes his nature or remains Steadfast, he will still grow over the course of the story, as he develops new skills and understanding. This growth has a direction.

Either he will grow into something (Start) or grow out of something (Stop).

A Change Main Character grows either by adding a characteristic he lacks (Start) or by dropping a characteristic he already has (Stop). Either way, his make up is changed in nature. As an example we can look to Ebeneezer Scrooge in Dickens' A Christmas Carol.

Does Scrooge need to Change because he is miserly or because he lacks generosity? Scrooge's Problems do not stem from his active greed, but from his passive lack of compassion. It is not that he is on the attack, but that he does not actively seek to help others. This reflects a need to Start, rather than Stop. This difference is important in order to place the focus of conflict so that it supports the overall argument of the story.

In contrast, Steadfast Main Characters will not add nor delete a characteristic, but will grow either by holding on against something bad, waiting for it to Stop, or by holding out until something good can Start.

For a Steadfast Character, growth is not a matter of Change, but a matter of degree. Change is still of concern to him but in his environment, not in himself. Conversely, a Change Character actually alters his being, under the influence of situational considerations. This helps clarify why it is often falsely thought that a Main Character MUST Change, and also why Steadfast characters are thought not to grow.

To properly develop growth in a Main Character one must determine whether he is Change or Steadfast and also at the direction of the growth.

A good way to get a feel for this dynamic in Change Characters is to picture the Stop character as having a chip on his shoulder and the Start character as having a

hole in his heart. If the actions or decisions taken by the character are what make the problem worse, then he needs to Stop. If the problem worsens because the character fails to take certain *obvious* actions or decisions, then he needs to Start.

Of course, to the character, neither of these perspectives on the problem is *obvious*, as he must grow and learn to see it. The audience can empathize with the character's failure to see himself as the source of the problem even while recognizing that he should or should not change because the audience is shown another view the character does not get: the objective view. It is here that Start and Stop register with the audience as being obvious.

Essentially, if you want to tell a story about someone who learns he has actually been making the problem worse, choose Stop. If you want to tell a story about someone who has allowed a problem to become worse, choose Start.

A Steadfast Main Character's Resolve needs to grow regardless of Start or Stop. If he is a Start Character, he will be tempted by indications that the desired outcome is not going to happen or is unattainable. If he is a Stop Character, he will find himself pressured to *give in*.

Remember that Direction of growth in a Steadfast Character is largely seen in his environment. His personal growth is seen as a matter of degree.

Approach: Do-er or Be-er?

The third essential question determines the Main Character's preferential approach to problem-solving.

By temperament, Main Characters (like each of us) have a preferential method of approaching Problems. Some would rather adapt their environment to themselves through action, others would rather adapt their environment to themselves through strength of character, charisma, and influence.

There is nothing intrinsically right or wrong with either Approach, yet it does affect how one will respond to Problems.

Choosing "Do-er" or "Be-er" does not prevent a Main Character from using either Approach, but merely defines the way they are likely to first Approach a Problem. The Main Character will only use the other method if their preferred method fails. Having a preference does not mean

being less able in the other area.

Do-er and Be-er should not be confused with active and passive. If a Do-er is seen as active physically, a Be-er should be seen as active mentally. While the Do-er jumps in and tackles the problem by physical maneuverings, the Be-er jumps in and tackles the problem with mental deliberations.

The point is not which one is more motivated to hold his ground but how he tries to hold it.

A Do-er would build a business by the sweat of his brow.

A Be-er would build a business by attention to the needs of his clients.

Obviously both Approaches are important, but Main Characters, just like the real people they represent, will have a preference.

A martial artist might choose to avoid conflict first as a Be-er character, yet be quite capable of beating the tar out of an opponent if avoiding conflict proved impossible.

Similarly, a school teacher might stress exercises and homework as a Do-er character, yet open his heart to a student who needs moral support.

When creating your Main Character, you may want someone who acts first and asks questions later, or you may prefer someone who avoids conflict if possible, then lays waste the opponent if they won't compromise.

A Do-er deals in competition, a Be-er in collaboration.

The Main Character's effect on the story is both one of rearranging the dramatic potentials of the story, and also one of reordering the sequence of dramatic events.

Mental Sex: Male or Female?

The fourth Essential Character Question determines a Main Character's problem-solving techniques to be linear or holistic.

Much of what we do as individuals is learned behavior. Yet, the basic operating system of the mind is cast biologically before birth as being more sensitive to space or time. We all have a sense of how things are arranged (space) and how things are going (time), but which one filters our thinking determines our Mental Sex as being Male or Female,

respectively.

Male Mental Sex describes spatial thinkers who tend to use linear Problem solving as their method of choice. They set a specific Goal, determine the steps necessary to achieve that Goal, then embark on the effort to accomplish those steps.

Female Mental Sex describes temporal thinkers who tend to use holistic Problem solving as their method of choice. They get a sense of the way they want things to be, determine how things need to be balanced to bring about those changes, then make adjustments to create that balance.

While life experience, conditioning, and personal choice can go a long way toward counter-balancing those sensitivities, underneath all our experience and training the tendency to see things primarily in terms of space or time still remains. In dealing with the psychology of Main Characters, it is essential to understand the foundation upon which their experience rests.

How can we illustrate the Mental Sex of our Main Character? The following point by point comparison provides some clues:

Female: looks at motivations	***Male***: looks at purposes
Female: tries to see connections	***Male***: tries to gather evidence
Female: sets up conditions	***Male***: sets up requirements
Female: determines the leverage points that can restore balance	***Male***: breaks a job into steps
Female: seeks fulfillment	***Male***: seeks satisfaction
Female: concentrates on "Why" and "When"	***Male***: concentrates on "How" and "What"
Female: puts the issues in context	***Male***: argues the issues
Female: tries to hold it all together	***Male***: tries to pull it all together

In stories, more often than not, physical gender matches Mental Sex. From time to time, however, gender and Mental Sex are cross-matched to create unusual and interesting characters. For example, Ripley in Alien and Clarice Starling in The Silence of the Lambs are **Male Mental Sex**

characters. Tom Wingo in The Prince of Tides and Jack Ryan in The Hunt for Red October are **Female Mental Sex**. In most episodes of The X Files, Scully (the female F.B.I. agent) is **Male Mental Sex** and Mulder (the male F.B.I. agent) is **Female Mental Sex**, which is part of the series' unusual feel. Note that Mental Sex has nothing to do with a character's sexual preferences or tendency toward being masculine or feminine in mannerism--it simply deals with the character's problem-solving techniques.

Sometimes stereotypes are propagated by what an audience expects to see, which filters the message and dilutes the truth. By placing a female psyche in a physically male character or a male psyche in a physically female character, preconceptions no longer prevent the message from being heard. On the downside, some audience members may have trouble relating to a Main Character whose problem-solving techniques do not match the physical expectations.

Wrapping Up Character Dynamics

We have presented four simple questions, yet each carries such weight in regard to the way an audience will be struck by a story that knowing the answers provides a strong sense of guidelines for an author in the construction of his message. The one seeming drawback is that each of the questions appears binary in nature, which can easily lead to concerns that this kind of approach will generate an overly structured or formulaic story. One should keep in mind that this is just the first stage of communication, storyforming, which is intended to create a solid structure upon which the other three stages can be built.

As we proceed through this process, we shall learn how the remaining three stages bring shading, tonality, and more of a gray-scale feel to each of these questions. For example, the question of Resolve leads to other questions in each of the other stages that determine such things as how *strongly* the Main Character has embraced change or how weakly he now clings to his steadfastness, how big was the scope of the change or how small the attitudes that didn't budge, how much does change or steadfast really matter to the state of things in the story: will it alter everything or just a few things in the big pond. In the end, the Character Dynamics firmly yet gently mold the point of view from which the audience will receive its most personal experiences in the story.

Chapter 22

Storytelling and Plot Dynamics

Plot Dynamic

Plot Dynamics Examples

Story Work

Action Stories: *Hamlet*; *The Silence of the Lambs*; *Being There*; *A Christmas Carol*; *Rain Man*
Decision Stories: *The Verdict*; *Chinatown*; *The Glass Menagerie*; *Casablanca*; *The Godfather*; *The Story of Job*; *Charlotte's Web*; *A Doll's House*

Story Limit

Optionlock Stories: *Hamlet*; *The Silence of the Lambs*; *Being There*; *The Verdict*; *Chinatown*; *The Glass Menagerie*; *Casablanca*; *The Godfather*; *The Story of Job*; *Rain Man*; *A Doll's House*
Timelock Stories: *Charlotte's Web*; *American Graffiti*; *High Noon*; *48 hrs*; *A Christmas Carol*

Story Outcome

Success Stories: *The Silence of the Lambs*; *Being There*; *A Christmas Carol*; *The Verdict*; *Chinatown*; *Casablanca*; *The Godfather*; *The Story of Job*; *Charlotte's Web*
Failure Stories: *Hamlet*; *The Glass Menagerie*; *Rain Man*; *A Doll's House*

Story Judgment

Stories with a Judgment of Good: *Being There*; *A Christmas Carol*; *The Verdict*; *Casablanca*; *Charlotte's Web*; *Rain Man*; *A Doll's House*
Stories with a Judgment of Bad: *Hamlet*; *The Silence of the Lambs*; *Chinatown*; *The Godfather*; *The Glass Menagerie*

Work: Action or Decision?

Action or Decision describes how the story is driven forward. The question is: Do Actions precipitate Decisions or vice versa?

At the end of a story there will be an essential need for an Action to be taken and a Decision to be made. However, one of them will be the roadblock that must be removed first in order to enable the other. This causal relationship is felt throughout the story where either Actions would never happen on their own, except that Decisions keep forcing them, or Decisions would never be made except that Actions leave no other choice than to decide. In fact, the "inciting event" that causes the story's Problem in the first place will also match the kind of Work that will be required to resolve it. This "bookends" a story so that its Problem and solution are both precipitated by the same kind of Work: Action or Decision.

Stories contain both Action and Decision. Choosing one does not exclude the other. It merely gives preference to one over the other. Do Actions precipitate Decisions, or do Decisions precipitate Actions?

This preference can be enhanced or nearly balanced out by other dynamic questions you answer about your story. It's really a matter of the background against which you want your Main Character to operate.

The choice of background does not have to reflect the nature of the Main Character. In fact, some very interesting dramatic potentials can be created when they do not match.

For example, a Main Character of action (called a Do-er) forced by circumstance to handle a deliberation-type problem would find himself at a loss for the experience and tools he needs to do the job.

Similarly, a deliberating Main Character (called a Be-er) would find himself whipped into a turmoil if forced to resolve a problem requiring action.

These mixed stories appear everywhere from tragedy to comedy and can add an extra dimension to an otherwise one-sided argument.

Since a story has both Actions and Decisions, it is really a question of which an author wants to come first: chicken or egg? By selecting one over the other, you instruct Dramatica to establish a causal order between dynamic movements in the Action line and the Decision line.

Limit : Timelock or Optionlock?

Limit determines the kind of constraints which will ultimately bring a story to a conclusion.

For an audience, a story's limit adds dramatic tension as they wonder if the characters will accomplish the story's goal. In addition, the limit forces a Main Character to end his deliberations and Change or Remain Steadfast.

Sometimes stories end because of a time limit. Other times they draw to a conclusion because all options have been exhausted. Running out of time is accomplished by a Timelock; running out of options is accomplished by an Optionlock.

Both of these means of limiting the story and forcing the Main Character to decide are felt from early on in the story and get stronger until the moment of truth.

Optionlocks need not be claustrophobic so much as that they provide limited pieces with which to solve the Problem. They limit the scope of the Problem and its potential solutions.

Timelocks need not be hurried so much as they limit the interval during which something can happen. Timelocks determine the duration of the growth of the Problem and the search for solutions.

Choosing a Timelock or an Optionlock has a tremendous impact on the nature of the tension the audience will feel as the story progresses toward its climax.

A Timelock tends to take a single point of view and slowly fragment it until many things are going on at once.

An Optionlock tends to take many pieces of the puzzle and bring them all together at the end.

A Timelock raises tension by dividing attention, and an Optionlock raises tension by focusing it. Timelocks increase tension by bringing a single thing closer to being an immediate problem, Optionlocks increase tension by building a single thing that becomes a functioning problem.

One cannot look just to the climax to determine if a Timelock or Optionlock is in effect. Indeed, both Time and Option locks may be tagged on at the end to increase tension.

A better way to gauge which is at work is to look at the nature of the obstacles thrown in the path of the Protagonist or Main Character. If the obstacles are primarily delays, a Timelock is in effect; if the obstacles are caused by missing essential parts, an Optionlock is in effect.

An author may feel more comfortable building tension by delays or building tension by missing pieces. Choose the kind of lock most meaningful for you.

Outcome: Success or Failure?

Although it can be tempered by degree, Success or Failure is easily determined by seeing whether or not the Objective Characters achieve what they set out to achieve at the beginning of the story.

Certainly, the Objective Characters may learn they really don't want what they thought they did, and in the end not go for it. Even though they have grown, this is considered a Failure -- they did not achieve what they originally intended.

Similarly, they may actually achieve what they wanted, and even though they find it unfulfilling or unsatisfying, it must be said they succeeded.

The point here is not to pass a value judgment on the worth of their Success or Failure, but simply to determine if the Objective Characters actually did succeed or fail in the attempt to achieve what they set out to achieve at the beginning of the story.

Judgment: Good or Bad?

Judgment determines whether or not the Main Character resolves his personal angst.

The rational argument of a story deals with practicality: does the kind of approach taken lead to Success or Failure in the endeavor. In contrast, the passionate argument of a story deals with fulfillment: does the Main Character find peace at the end of his journey?

If you want an *upper* story, you will want Success in the Objective Story and a Judgment of *Good* in the Objective Story.

If you want a tragedy, you will want the objective effort to fail, and the subjective journey to end badly as well.

Life is often made of trade-offs, compromises, sacrifices, and re-evaluations, and so should be stories. Choosing Success/Bad stories or Failure/Good stories opens the door to these alternatives.

If we choose a Failure/Good story, we can imagine a Main Character who realizes he had been fooled into trying to achieve an unworthy Goal and discovers his mistake in time, or a Main Character who discovers something more important to him personally in the course of trying to achieve the Goal. Each of these would be called a "personal triumph."

A Success/Bad story might end with a Main Character achieving his dreams only to find they are meaningless, or

Main Character who makes a sacrifice for the success of others but ends up bitter and vindictive. Each of these would be a "personal tragedy."

Because Success and Failure are measurements of how well specific requirements have been met, they are by nature objective. In contrast, Good and Bad are subjective value Judgments based on an appreciation of the Main Character's personal fulfillment.

Chapter 23

Storytelling the Structural Appreciations

Storyforming Structural Appreciations

By answering the eight essential questions we greatly refine our understanding of the way our story will feel to our audience. The next task is to clarify what it is we intend to talk about. In the Theme section of The Elements of Structure we were introduced to the various Appreciations an audience will look for in the course of experiencing and evaluating a story. Now we turn our attention to examining the issues we, as authors, must consider in selecting our story's Appreciation's. We begin with the Appreciations that most affect Genre, then work our way down through Plot and Theme to arrive at a discussion of what goes into selecting a Main Character's Problem.

Selecting the Domains in your story

One of the easiest ways to identify the four Domains in your story (Objective Story, Subjective Story, Main Character, and Obstacle Character) is by looking at the characters that appear in each Domain. Who are they? What are they doing? What are their relationships to one another? Clearly identifying the characters in each throughline will make selecting the thematic Domains, Concerns, Ranges, and Problems for the throughlines much easier.

For the Objective Story Throughline:

When looking at the characters in the Objective Story Throughline, identify them by the roles they play instead of their names. This keeps them at a distance, making them a lot easier to evaluate *objectively*. For instance, some of the characters in Shakespeare's Hamlet might be the king, the queen, the ghost, the prince, the chancellor, and the chancellor's daughter, while the characters in The Fugitive might be the fugitive doctor, the federal marshal, the dead wife, the one-armed man, and so on. By avoiding the characters' proper names you also avoid identifying with them and confusing their personal concerns with their concerns as Objective Characters.

Aren't the Main Character and the Obstacle Character also part of the Objective Story?

The Main Character and the Obstacle Character will each have a role in the Objective Story in addition to their explorations of their own throughlines. From the Objective Story point of view we see all the story's Objective Characters and identify them by the functions they fulfill in the quest to reach the Objective Story Concern. The Objective Story throughline is what brings all of the characters in the story together and describes what they do in relation to one another in order to achieve this Concern.

It is extremely important to be able to separate the Main Character throughline from the Objective Story throughline in order to see your story's structure accurately. It is equally important to make the distinction between the Obstacle Character and the Objective Story. Exploring these two characters' throughlines in a story requires a complete shift in the audience's perspective, away from the overall story that involves *all* the characters and into the subjective experiences that only these two characters have within the story. Thus, each of these throughlines should be considered individually.

The Main Character and the Obstacle Character will, however, each have at least one function to perform in the Objective Story as well. When we see them here, though, they both appear as Objective Characters. In the Objective Story all we see are the characteristics they represent in relation to the other Objective Characters.

So if your Main Character happens to be the Protagonist as well, then it is purely as the Protagonist that we will see him in the Objective Story. If your Obstacle Character is also an Archetypal Guardian, then his *helping* and *conscience* are all you should consider about that character in the Objective Story.

In every story, these two will at least be called upon in the Objective Story to represent the story's Crucial Element and its dynamic opposite. It is possible that the Main and Obstacle Characters could have no other relationship with the Objective Story than these single characteristics. The point is that their importance to the Objective Story should be thought of completely in terms of these and any other Objective characteristics which are assigned.

For the Subjective Story Throughline:

When looking at the characters in the Subjective Story Throughline, it is best to look at the Main and Obstacle Characters by their relationship with each other in lieu of their names. The Subjective Story Throughline is the "We" perspective, (i.e. first-person plural) so think entirely in terms of the relationship *between* the Main and Obstacle Characters, not the characters themselves. Thus, "the relationship between Dr. Richard Kimble and Sam Gerard" is the focus of the Subjective Story Throughline in The Fugitive, whereas The Verdict focuses on "the relationship between Frank Galvin and Laura Fischer."

For the Main Character Throughline:

When looking at the Main Character's Throughline, all other characters are unimportant and should not be considered. Only the Main Character's personal identity or essential nature is meaningful from this point of view. What qualities of the Main Character are so much a part of him that they would not change even if he were plopped down in another story? For example, Hamlet's brooding nature and his tendency to over-think things would remain consistent and recognizable if he were to show up in a different story. Laura Wingfield, in The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams, would carry with her a world of rationalizations and a crippling propensity to dream if we were to see her

appear again. These are the kinds of things to pay attention to in looking at the Main Character Throughline.

For the Obstacle Character Throughline:

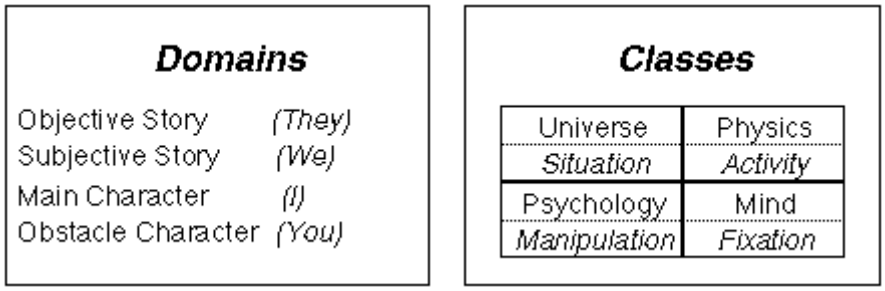
When considering the Obstacle Character's Throughline, look at their identity in terms of their impact on others, particularly the Main Character. Think of the Obstacle Character in terms of his name, but it's the name of someone else, someone who can really get under your skin. In viewing the Obstacle Character this way, it is easier to identify the kind of impact that he has on others. Obi Wan Kenobi's fanaticism (regarding *using the force*) in Star Wars and Deputy Marshal Sam Gerard's tenacity (in *out-thinking his prey*) in The Fugitive are aspects of these Obstacle Characters that are inherent to their nature and would continue to be so in any story they might be found in.

Picking the proper Classes for the Domains in your Story

Which is the right *Class* for the Main Character *Domain* in your story? For the Objective Story Domain? For the Subjective Story Domain? For the Obstacle Character Domain? Assigning the appropriate Dramatica Classes to the Domains of your story is a tricky but important process.

There are four *Domains* or *throughlines* in a story: the Main Character, the Obstacle Character, the Subjective Story, and the Objective Story. These throughlines provide an audience with various points of view from which to explore the story. The four audience points of view can be seen as I, YOU, WE, and THEY as the audience's point of view shifts from empathizing with the Main Character, to feeling the impact of the Obstacle Character, to experiencing the relationship between the Main and Obstacle Character, and then finally stepping back to see the big picture that has *everyone* in it (all of THEM). Each point of view describes an aspect of the story *experience* to which an audience is privy.

There are four Classes containing all the possible kinds of problems that can be felt in those throughlines (one Class to each throughline): Universe, Mind, Physics, and Psychology. These Classes suggest different areas to explore in the story. The areas can be seen as SITUATIONS, FIXED ATTITUDES or FIXATIONS, ACTIVITIES, and MANNERS OF THINKING or MANIPULATION.



In Dramatica, a story will contain all four areas to explore (Classes) and all four points of view (throughlines). Each Class will be explored from one of the throughlines. The combination of Class and throughline into a Domain is the broadest way to describe the meaning in a story. For example, exploring a Main Character in terms of his situation is quite different than exploring a Main Character in terms of his attitude, the activities he is involved in, or how he is being manipulated. Which is right for *your* story?

Pairing the appropriate Class with the proper throughline for your story can be difficult. An approach you may find useful is to pick a throughline, adopt the audience perspective that throughline provides, and from that point of view examine each of the four Classes to see which feels the best.

Each of the following sections present the four Classes from one specific audience perspective. For best effect, adopt the perspective described in the section and ask the questions as they appear in terms of your own story. One set of questions should seem more important or relevant from that perspective. *NOTE: Selecting a throughline/Class relationship (or Domain) indicates much about the emphasis you wish to place in the context of your story. No pairing is better or worse than another. One pairing will be, however, most appropriate to what you have in mind for your story than the other three alternatives.*

Dynamic Pairs of Domains

Each of the throughlines in a story can be seen as standing alone or as standing in relation to the other throughlines. When selecting which Classes to assign the throughlines of your story, it is extremely important to remember two relationships in particular among the throughlines:

The Objective Story and Subjective Story throughlines will always be a dynamic pair

And...

The Main Character and Obstacle Character throughlines will always be a dynamic pair

These relationships reflect the kind of impact these throughlines have on each other in every story. The Main and Obstacle Characters face off throughout the story until one of them Changes (indicated by the Main Character Resolve). Their relationship in the Subjective Story will help precipitate either Success or Failure in the Objective Story (indicated by the Story Outcome).

What these relationships mean to the process of building the Domains in your story is that *whenever you set up one Domain, you also set up its dynamic pair.*

For example, matching the Main Character throughline with the Universe class not only creates a Main Character Domain of Universe in your story, it also creates an Obstacle Character Domain of Mind. Since Mind is the dynamic pair to Universe in the Dramatica structure, matching one throughline to one of the Classes automatically puts the other throughline on the opposite Class to support the two throughlines' dynamic pair relationship.

Likewise, matching the Objective Story throughline with Psychology to create an Objective Story Domain of Psychology will automatically create a Subjective Story Domain of Physics at the same time. The reasoning is the same here as it was for the Main and Obstacle Character throughlines. No matter which Class you match with one of the throughlines on the Dramatica structure, the dynamic pair of that class will be matched to the dynamic pair of that throughline.

Who am I and what am I doing?

When looking from the Main Character's perspective, use the first person singular (I) voice to evaluate the Classes.

- If the Main Character's Domain is Universe (*e.g. Luke in Star Wars or George in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*), questions like the following would arise: What is it like to be in my situation? What is my status? What condition am I in? Where am I going to be in the future? What's so special about my past?

- If the Main Character's Domain is Physics (*e.g. Frank Galvin in The Verdict* The Verdict or Dr. Richard Kimble in *The Fugitive*), questions like the following would be more appropriate: What am I involved in? How do I get what I want? What must I learn to do the things I want to do? What does it mean to me to have (or lose) something?
- If the Main Character's Domain is Mind (*e.g. Scrooge in A Christmas Carol*), you would consider questions such as the following: What am I afraid of? What is my opinion? How do I react to something? How do I feel about this or that? What is it that I remember about that night?
- If the Main Character's Domain is Psychology (*e.g. Laura in The Glass Menagerie* The Glass Menagerie or Frank in *In The Line of Fire*), the concerns would be more like: Who am I really? How should I act? How can I become a different person? Why am I so angry, or reserved, or whatever? How am I manipulating or being manipulated?

Who are YOU and what are YOU doing?

When considering the Obstacle Character's perspective, it is best to use the second person singular ("You") voice to evaluate the Classes. This is best imagined as if one is addressing the Obstacle Character directly, where "*You*" is referring to the Obstacle Character.

- If the Obstacle Character's Domain is Universe (*e.g. Marley's Ghost in A Christmas Carol*), you might ask them: What is it like to be in your situation? What is your status? What condition are you in? Where are you going to be in the future? What's so special about your past?
- If the Obstacle Character's Domain is Physics (*e.g. Jim in The Glass Menagerie* The Glass Menagerie or Booth in *In The Line of Fire*): What are you involved in? How do you get what you want? What must you learn to do the things you want to do? What does it mean to you to have (or lose) something?
- If the Obstacle Character's Domain is Mind (*e.g. Obi Wan in Star Wars* Star Wars or Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*): What are you afraid of? What is your opinion? How do you react to that? How do you feel about this or that? What is it that you remember about that night?
- If the Obstacle Character's Domain is Psychology (*e.g. Laura Fisher in The Verdict* The Verdict or Sam Gerard in *The Fugitive*): Who are you really? How should you act? How can you become a different person? Why are you so angry, or reserved, or whatever? How are you manipulating or being manipulated?

Who are WE and what are WE doing?

When considering the Subjective Story perspective, it is best to use the first person plural ("We") voice to evaluate the Classes. *We* refers to the Main and Obstacle Characters collectively.

- If the Subjective Story's Domain is Universe (e.g. The Ghost & Hamlet's pact in Hamlet or Reggie & Marcus' alliance in The Client), consider asking: What is it like to be in our situation? What is our status? What condition are we in? Where are we going to be in the future? What's so special about our past?
- If the Subjective Story's Domain is Physics (e.g. George & Martha's game in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?): What are we involved in? How do we get what we want? What must we learn to do the things we want to do? What does it mean to us to have (or lose) something?
- If the Subjective Story's Domain is Mind (e.g. Frank & Laura's affair in The Verdict or Dr. Kimble & Sam Gerard's relationship in The Fugitive): What are we afraid of? What is our opinion? How do we react to that? How do we feel about this or that? What is it that we remember about that night?
- If the Subjective Story's Domain is Psychology (e.g. Obi Wan & Luke's relationship in Star Wars): Who are we really? How should we act? How can we become different people? Why are we so angry, or reserved, or whatever? How are we manipulating or being manipulated?

Who are THEY and what are THEY doing?

When considering the Objective Story perspective, it is best to use the third person plural ("They") voice to evaluate the Classes. *They* refers to the entire set of Objective Characters (protagonist, antagonist, sidekick, etc.) collectively.

- If the Objective Story's Domain is Universe (e.g. The Verdict, The Poseidon Adventure, or The Fugitive), consider asking: What is it like to be in their situation? What is their status? What condition are they in? Where are they going to be in the future? What's so special about their past?
- If the Objective Story's Domain is Physics (e.g. Star Wars): What are they involved in? How do they get what they want? What must they learn to do the things they want to do? What does it mean to them to have (or lose) something?
- If the Objective Story's Domain is Mind (e.g. Hamlet or To Kill A Mockingbird): What are they afraid of? What is their opinion? How do they react to that? How do they feel about this or that? What is it that they remember about that night?
- If the Objective Story's Domain is Psychology (e.g. Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? or Four Weddings and a Funeral): Who are they really? How should they act? How can they become different people? Why are they so angry, or reserved, or whatever? How are they manipulating or being manipulated?

Chapter 24

Storytelling and Plot Appreciations

Selecting Plot Appreciations

Plot Appreciations come in two varieties: Static Appreciations, and Progressive Appreciations. Static Appreciations are dramatic items such as Goal, Requirements, and Consequences, and may also include the Concerns of each throughline. Progressive Appreciations deal with the order in which each Domain's Types are arranged to become a throughline's Acts. In this section we shall first explore the issues involved in selecting the Static Plot Appreciations, then turn our attention to what influence the order of Acts will have on our story's impact, and consequently on our audience.

Static Plot Appreciations

Story Goal

A story's Goal is most often found in the Objective Domain for stories written in our culture. Aside from that bias, the story Goal might just as properly be found in any of the four Domains. As we now consider how to select the Goal for our story, we need to know a little bit more about what a Goal really does for an audience, and what kinds of control over our audience we can exercise simply by choosing where we place the Goal.

An audience sees a story's Goal as being the central objective of the story. As such, it will be of the same nature as the Concern of one of the four Domains. Which one depends upon which throughline an author wants to emphasize in his storytelling. For example, suppose your Main Character and his experiences are the most important thing to you, the author. Then you will most likely want to make the Main Character's Concern your story Goal as well. On the other hand, if your story is about a problem that is affecting everyone, you will probably want to make the Objective Story Domain Concern your story Goal.

Each throughline will have its own Concern. When the audience considers each throughline separately, it will focus on that Concern as being the principal objective *from that point of view.* When the audience considers the story as a whole, however, it will get a feel for which throughline is most emphasized by the author's storytelling, and will see that throughline's Concern as the overall story Goal.

Since emphasis is a gray-scale kind of process, the story Goal may appear to be a highly focused issue in some stories and of lesser concern in others. In fact, all four throughlines might be equally emphasized, which would result in an audience being unable to easily answer the question, *what was this story about?* Just because no overall Goal is identifiable does not mean the plot necessarily has a hole. It might mean that the issues explored in the story are more evenly considered in a holistic sense, and the story is simply not as Goal-oriented. In contrast, the Concern of each Domain *must* appear clearly in a complete story, for Concerns are purely structural appreciations which are developed through storytelling, but not dependent upon it.

When selecting a Goal, some authors prefer to first select the Concerns for each Domain. In this way, all of the potential objectives of the story have been pre-determined and the author then simply needs to choose which one to emphasize. Other authors prefer not to choose the Goal at all, since it is not truly an essential part of a story's *structure*. Instead, they select their Concerns and then let the muse guide them in how much they emphasize one throughline over another. In this way, the Goal will emerge all by itself in a much more organic way. Still, other authors like to select the Goal before any of the Concerns. In this case, they may not even know which Domain the Goal will ultimately be a part of. For this kind of author, the principal question they wish to answer is, *what is my story about?* By approaching the selection of your story Goal from one of these three directions, you can begin to create a storyform that reflects your personal interests in telling this particular story.

There are four different Classes from which to choose our Goal. Each Class has four unique Types. In a practical sense, the first question we might ask ourselves is whether we want the Goal of our story to be something physical or something mental. In making this decision we are able to limit our available choices to Universe/Physics (physical goals) or Mind/Psychology (mental goals). Instantly we have cut the sixteen possible Goals down to only eight.

Next we can look at the names of the Types themselves. In Universe: Past, Progress, Present, and Future. In Physics: Understanding, Doing, Learning, and Obtaining. In Mind: Memory, Preconscious, Conscious, and Subconscious. In Psychology: Conceptualizing, Being, Conceiving, and Becoming. Some are easy to get a grip on; others seem more obscure. This is because our culture favors certain Types of issues and doesn't pay as much attention to others. This

is reflected in our language as well so that even though the words used to describe the Types are quite accurate, many of them require a bit more thought and even a definition before they become clear. (Refer to the appendices of this book for definitions of each).

Whether you have narrowed your potential selections to eight or just jump right in with the whole sixteen, choose the Type that best represents the kind of Goal you wish to focus on in your story.

Requirements

Requirements are the essential steps or circumstances which must be met in order to reach the story's Goal. If we were to select a story's Requirements before any other appreciation, it would simply be a decision about the kinds of activities or endeavors we want to concentrate on as the central effort of our story. If we have already selected our story's Goal, however, much has already been determined that may limit which Types are appropriate to support that Goal.

Although the model of dramatic relationships implemented in the Dramatica software can determine which are the best candidates to be chosen for a given appreciation, the ultimate decision must rest with the author. "Trust your feelings, Luke," says Obi Wan to young Skywalker. When selecting appreciations that advice is just as appropriate.

Consequences

Consequences are dependent upon the Goal, though other appreciations may change the nature of that dependency. Consequences may be expressed as what will happen if the Goal is not achieved or they may be what is already being suffered and will continue if the Goal is not achieved. You should select the Type that best describes your story's down-side risk.

One of the eight essential questions asks if the direction of your story is Start or Stop. A Start story is one in which the audience will see the Consequences as occurring only if the Goal is not achieved. In a Stop story, the audience will see the Consequences already in place, and if the Goal is not achieved the Consequences will remain.

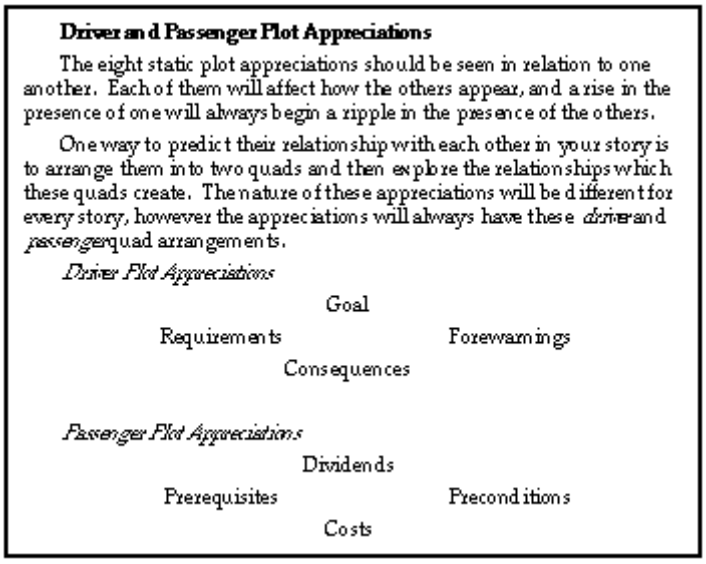
Choosing the Type of Consequence does not determine Start or Stop, and neither does choosing Start or Stop determine the Type of Consequence. *How the Consequence will come into play*, however, is a Start/Stop issue. Since that dynamic affects the overall feel of a story, it is often best to make this dynamic decision of Start or Stop before attempting the structural one of selecting the Consequence Type.

Forewarnings

Forewarnings appear as a signal that the Consequences are imminent. At first, one might suspect that for a particular Type of Consequences, a certain Type of Forewarnings will always be the most appropriate. Certainly, there are relationships between Forewarnings and Consequences that are so widespread in our culture that they have almost become story law. But in fact, the relationship between Forewarnings and Consequences is just as flexible as that between Requirements and Goal.

Can the Forewarnings be anything at all then? No, and to see why we need look no further than the fact that Consequences and Forewarnings are both Types. They are never Variations, or Elements, or Classes. But, within the realm of Types, which one will be the appropriate Forewarnings for particular Consequences depends upon the impact of other appreciations.

When selecting the Type of Forewarning for your story, think of this appreciation both by itself and also in conjunction with the Consequences. By itself, examine the Types to see which one feels like the area from which you want tension, fear, or stress to flow for your audience and/or characters. Then, in conjunction with the Consequences, determine if you see a way in which this Type of Forewarning might be the harbinger that will herald the imminent approach of the Consequences. If it all fits, use it. If not, you may need to rethink either your selection for Forewarnings or your choice for Consequences.



Driver and Passenger Plot Appreciations

The eight static plot appreciations should be seen in relation to one another. Each of them will affect how the others appear, and a rise in the presence of one will always begin a ripple in the presence of the others.

One way to predict their relationship with each other in your story is to arrange them into two quads and then explore the relationships which these quads create. The nature of these appreciations will be different for every story, however the appreciations will always have these *driver* and *passenger* quad arrangements.

Driver Plot Appreciations

Goal

Requirements Forewarnings

Consequences

Passenger Plot Appreciations

Dividends

Prerequisites Preconditions

Costs

Dividends

Dividends are benefits accrued on the way to the Goal. Goal, Requirements, Consequences, and Forewarnings are all Driver Appreciations in Plot. Dividends are the first of the Passenger Appreciations. As such, we see it used in storytelling more as a modifier than a subject unto itself. Still, since authors may choose to emphasize whatever they wish, Dividends may be lifted up to the forefront in a particular story and take on a significance far beyond their structural weight.

No matter what emphasis Dividends are given in your story, they are still modifiers of the Goal. As such, when selecting the Type of Dividends for your story, consider how well your choice will dovetail with your Goal. Sometimes Dividends are very close in nature to the Goal, almost as natural results of getting closer to the Goal. Other times Dividends may be quite different in nature than the Goal, and are simply positive items or experiences that cross the characters' paths during the quest.

As with the Driver Appreciations, this choice is not arbitrary. The dynamics that determine it, however, are so many and varied that only a software system can calculate it. Still, when one has answered the essential questions, it is likely one's writing instincts have become so fine-tuned for a story as to sense which kinds of Dividends will seem appropriate to the Goal *under those particular dynamic conditions.*

Costs

Costs function much like negative Dividends. They are the detrimental effects of the effort to reach the Goal. Look at the Requirements for your story and see what Type of Costs might make that effort more taxing. Look at the Consequences for your story and see what Type of Costs might seem like an indicator of what might happen if the Goal is not achieved. Look at the Forewarnings and determine the Type of Costs that enhances, or possibly obscures the Forewarnings from your characters. Finally, look at the Dividends and try to find a Type for Costs that balances the positive perks. To balance Dividends, Costs need not be an exact opposite, but simply have the opposite (negative) effect on the characters.

Prerequisites

Prerequisites determine what is needed to begin meeting the Requirements. When selecting Prerequisites, keep in mind they are to be used in your story as *essential* steps or items that must be met or gathered in order to attempt a

Requirement. As such, the appropriate Type of Prerequisites is much more heavily influenced by the Type of Requirements than the Type of Goal.
Prerequisites may open the opportunity for easy ways to bring in Dividends, Costs, or even Preconditions (which we shall discuss shortly.) Certain Types of considerations may be more familiar to you than others as a result of your personal life experience. As such, they will likely be a better source of material from which to draw inspiration. Choosing a familiar Type will help you later on when it becomes time to *illustrate* your appreciations in Storyencoding.

Preconditions

Preconditions are *non-essential* steps or items that become attached to the effort to achieve the Goal through someone's insistence. A keen distinction here is that while Pre-requisites are almost always used in relation to the Requirements in a story, Preconditions are likely to apply to either Requirements or the Goal itself. As such, both Goal and Requirements should be taken into account when selecting Preconditions.

Think about the sorts of petty annoyances, frustrations, and sources of friction with which your characters might become saddled with, in exchange for assistance with some essential Prerequisite. If you were one of your characters, what kind of Preconditions would most irritate you?

Appreciations of this level are usually presented as a background item in storytelling. Draw on your own experiences while making this selection so that the level of nuance required can grow from your familiarity.

Plot Appreciation Examples:

GOAL:

*The Story Goal in Hamlet is **Memory**:* Everyone wants to be comfortable with the memory of King Hamlet. Most wish to accomplish this by erasing the memory entirely, but Hamlet wants to keep it alive and painful.

*The Story Goal in The Godfather is **Obtaining**:* The Objective Story goal of the Godfather is for the Corleone family to reclaim their place of power and find a new "Godfather" to maintain this status.

REQUIREMENTS:

The Story Requirements in Hamlet are ***The Subconscious:*** Hamlet must get Claudius to expose his true nature, his lust for power and Gertrude, before anyone will believe Hamlet's accusations.

The Story Requirements in The Godfather are ***Doing:*** In order for a new Don Corleone to regain his family's former stature and power, he must do things which demonstrate his superiority in the rivalry among the New York families. This is accomplished with the hits on Barzini, Tessio, and Moe Green on the day Michael "settles all family business."

CONSEQUENCES:

The Story Consequences in Hamlet are ***The Past****:* If the memory of King Hamlet is not allowed to rest, a repetition of the past murder will (and does) occur. King Claudius kills Hamlet to maintain his position as king.

The Story Consequences in The Godfather are ***Becoming****:* If the Corleone family fails to reclaim their power then they will be forced to become one of the secondary families in the New York crime scene, a fate which hasn't been theirs for a very long time.

FOREWARNINGS:

The Story Forewarnings in Hamlet are ***Becoming****:* Hamlet starts becoming the crazy person he is pretending to be. This alerts everyone, including King Claudius who plots against Hamlet, that Hamlet will not let the memory of his father die peacefully.

The Story Forewarnings in The Godfather are ***Progress****:* When Don Corleone realizes that it was the Barzini family who had been orchestrating his downfall all along, the Barzini's have already made quite a lot of progress towards becoming the new top family in New York. The progress of the loyalty of other families falling in line with Barzini threatens to cut off Michael's chance to re-establish his family's stature.

DIVIDENDS:

The Story Dividends in Hamlet are ***Conceptualizing****:* There is a general

sense of creative freedom among the members of King Claudius' court exemplified by Polonius' advice to Laertes on how to take advantage of his trip abroad. Hamlet finds that suddenly many ordinary things can be used to help in his objective of manipulating the truth out of King Claudius, and he takes pleasure in them. The play becomes a trap, every discussion becomes an opportunity to investigate people's true opinions. These are all dividends of the efforts made in this story.

*The Story Dividends in The Godfather are **The Future**:* The struggle in the world of organized crime over how drugs will be distributed is costly, but it lays the ground work for what will one day be their biggest money making industry. Michael's choice of assassinations that make him New York's new "Godfather" also ensures his family a safe move to Las Vegas in the future.

COSTS:

*The Story Costs in Hamlet are **Understanding**:* In *Hamlet*, understanding is seen as a high price to pay -- sometimes too high. King Claudius comes to the understanding that Hamlet is on to him and won't stop pushing until his father's death is avenged; Ophelia comes to the understanding that Hamlet does not love her and is also responsible for her father's death, so she loses her mind; Queen Gertrude comes to the understanding that her son is probably insane and her new husband is a murderer; etc.

*The Story Costs in The Godfather are **The Subconscious**:* As the struggle for power in New York's underground continues, all of the people involved suffer emotional damage which hits them in their subconscious. For example, Tom's pain over the fact that he is not really the Don's son is exacerbated by the death of Sonny; Don Corleone suffers for the future of his family as his sons are killed or forced to become criminals like himself; Sonny is forced to suffer the insult of living with a brother-in-law who beats Sonny's sister; the "Turk" is forced into a traumatic position when the Don is only wounded during a murder attempt; Kaye is forced to bury her suspicions that her husband is involved in organized crime.

PREREQUISITES:

*The Prerequisites in Hamlet are **The Future**:* Before Hamlet can begin the work of exposing Claudius, he must know when the appropriate people will be around so he can put his plans

(such as the play) into place.

The Prerequisites in The Godfather are ***Being****:* Because Michael, the new candidate for the title of Don Corleone, had intended to avoid being in his family's business, others are forced to temporarily fill in the vacancy left by his wounded father. Michael himself believes he is temporarily becoming involved with the Mafia up until the point when he has truly become the new "Godfather."

PRECONDITIONS:

Preconditions in Hamlet are ***Obtaining****:* Hamlet needs hard evidence of his uncle's murderous actions -- his own preconditions are that he cannot allow himself to go on the word of the Ghost alone.

Preconditions in The Godfather are ***The Preconscious****:* In order for someone to be a good Don, they have to have the correct kinds of immediate responses. Sonny was "not a good Don," because he was too hot-headed. A precondition, which Michael fulfills, is that he have the instincts to guide the family well. He demonstrates these when he has no frightened responses while protecting his father at the hospital and when he immediately insists on killing the "Turk" himself; once again when he accepts the news of Tessio's betrayal without blinking an eye or betraying himself at any point through Preconscious reactions; etc. When Sonny's hot-headed attempts to muscle the Corleone's back to the top failed, it became apparent that there are preconditions set as to who could be the next "Godfather." Only someone with a steel control over his Preconscious responses could be cool enough to successfully lead the Corleone family back to prominence.

Summary On Selecting Static Plot Appreciations

We have examined some of the considerations that go into selecting Static Plot Appreciations. Independent of any other dramatics, any Type might be selected for any of these appreciations. When additional structural appreciations are already chosen, however, one must consider their impact as well in making a selection.

In Western culture, the Goal is most often found in the Objective Story Domain, however, it might be equally appropriate in any of the four Domains. In

conjunction with the eight essential questions the relationship between the Static Plot Appreciations may place them evenly throughout the Domains, or may favor some Domains more than others.

All things considered, these eight Static Plot Appreciations are not solely structural items (though grounded in structure) but are also affected by how they are emphasized in storytelling.

Static & Progressive Plot Appreciations:

There are two kinds of plot appreciations, *Static* ones which do not change and *Progressive* ones which transform as the story continues. To see each kind of appreciation in your story you need to alter your point of view.

Static plot appreciations are *Goal, Requirements, Consequences, Forewarnings, Dividends, Costs, Prerequisites*, and *Preconditions*. Since these static plot appreciations remain constant in nature from the beginning of the story to the end, the perspective from which to see them is to look at the story as a *whole*, as if it were one single thing. These appreciations should seem to be in effect no matter what part of the story you look at. The Goal will always be present and identifiable, the Consequences will always be looming, etc. Their presence at any point in the story may be understated or right up front, but the clearer they remain throughout the story, the stronger the story's plot will be from this point of view.

Progressive Plot appreciations are *Acts, Sequences, Scenes,* and *Events*. These appreciations describe the experience of moving *through* the story so it is important to look at them in sequence. Whichever kind of progressive appreciation you are looking at, it is how they relate from one item to the next which is most important aspect about them to understand.

Progressive Plot Appreciations

The structure of a Grand Argument Story can be thought of a house the characters need to explore. The Objective Characters will be looking for clues to a treasure. The Main Character is thinking of buying the house and the Obstacle Character is trying to sell it to him. The plot is like a sight-seeing tour through this story house. The house itself has three floors each of which is

separated into two wings. Each wing has four rooms. This is like a story with three acts, each of which is separated into two sequences, each of which has four scenes.

Our characters begin on the ground floor and enter the first room in the first wing. This room is like the first scene in the first sequence (wing) of the first act (floor) of the story. Here, they look around, opening drawers, checking under the furniture and peering out the windows, if any. Each little area of investigation is an event in the first scene.

The Objective Characters are trying to discover a treasure map. The Main Character is looking for termites and problem plumbing and the Obstacle Character is pointing out the conveniences. When they have all finished, they have a pretty good idea about the value of this room, either as a source of clues to the treasure or as a place to live. Still, they have learned all they can here, and it is time to move on.

The characters now enter a second room, which is still in the same wing on the same floor. This is like the second scene in the first sequence (wing) in the first act (floor). Again, they investigate. They may find this room to be geared more to function than the last. Or, it might be designed more for entertainment. It may or may not have windows or more than one doorway to other rooms. In fact, part of the interest (and possibly suspense) for them is which room they will be taken to visit next.

When they have fully explored four rooms (scenes), it is time to move on to the next wing (sequence). One of the rules of our tour is that the characters cannot leave a room (scene) until it is fully explored, cannot leave a wing (sequence) until all the rooms (scenes) on that floor of the wing have been explored, and cannot leave a floor (act) until all the rooms (scenes) on that floor in both wings (sequences) have been explored.

In the second wing, our characters also find four rooms and explore them one after another. Once they have finished, the entire first floor (act) has been examined in its entirety. Now it is time to go up to the next floor and continue their tour of the house. On the second floor they look through the four rooms in the first wing, the four in the second, and thereby complete that level and move up one more to the third and final floor. Here they repeat the same procedure until, at last, the entire house has been fully explored.

At this point, the characters have gathered all the information they are going to be given about the house. If the Objective Characters have gather enough clues to find the treasure, their problem is solved. If the Main Character buys the house, he is a change character. The question then remains, is he solving his problem of having a place to live or buying into even more problems with the faulty plumbing.

We can see that the Main Character's decision is based partly on what was in the house and partly on the order in which things were presented. We all know that first impressions are powerful, even if they are later proven to be

inaccurate. How the Main Character decides must conform to the combination of both these influences.

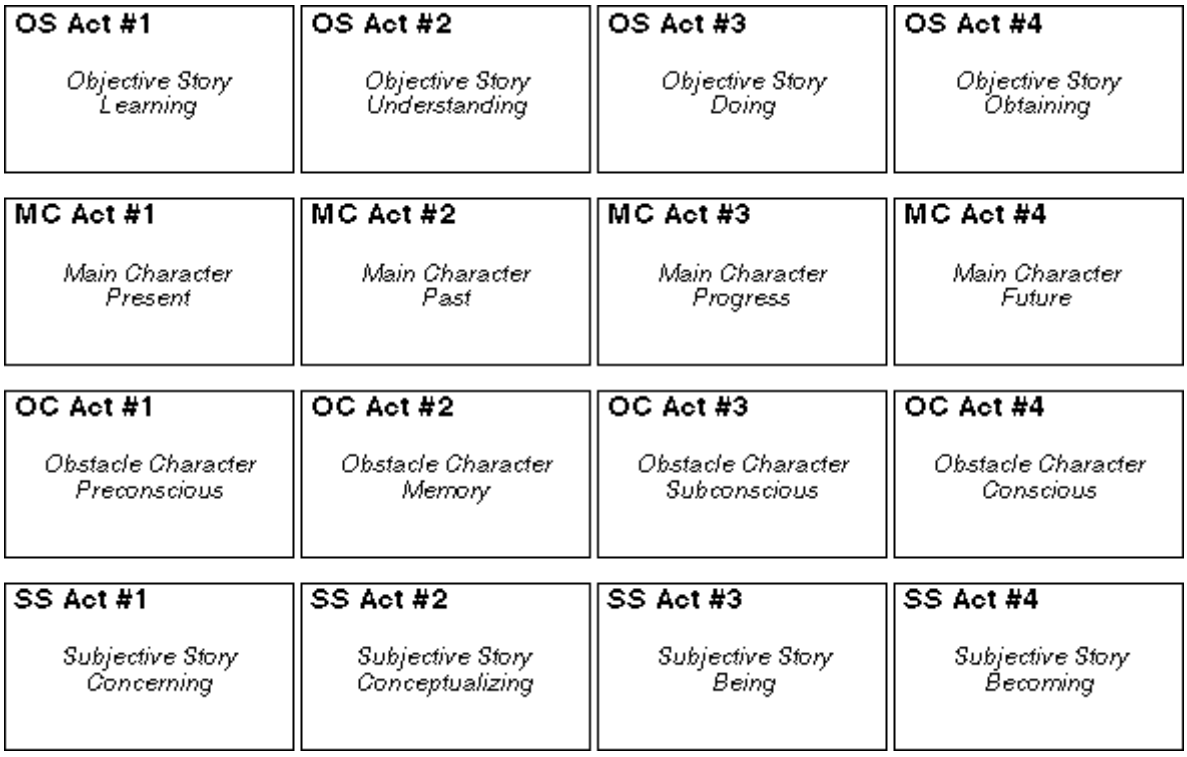
Similarly, the order in which the Objective Characters gather clues will have an influence on whether they are able to put the pieces together or not. Assumptions can easily be made that would not have been made if the information was presented in a different order.

In the end, an audience will reject our story's argument either if there are rooms missing (static) or if they are visited in an order that doesn't reflect the outcome (progressive). It is important, therefore, to pay as much attention to the Progressive Plot Appreciations as the Static ones. Because Acts are the largest resolution of the Progressive Appreciations they have the greatest influence on the flow of a story's plot, and therefore deserve significant attention.

ACTS

Each throughline has its own four structural acts, which are like the three floors and the roof of our story house. Each of the dynamic acts is like the journey that explores the rooms on one of the three floors. As already discussed, when we choose a Class to be a particular Domain, the four Types in that Class become the names of the four structural acts. We might write those names on cards and place them in front of us. We can then rearrange those cards until we establish an order that reflects the concern with which we want that throughline to begin, the intermediate concerns, and the concern of interest when that throughline concludes. Most likely, our decision will be based not only on the logistics of our story, but just as heavily on how this order feels, both to us and hopefully to our audience. When we have settled on an order, we can be confident that throughline reflects the proper journey to reach the conclusion we have envisioned for it.

If we establish an order for each of the throughlines, we might feel our act level work is done. That would be true if the throughlines were not connected. As we already know, however, there is a strong connection between the four throughlines, for each really represents only one angle on the same overall story. All four throughlines are really happening simultaneously, just as the characters in our story house all take the tour at the same time. To truly understand the impact of our decisions for act order, we must lay out all four sets of our cards in parallel rows, side by side, and compare what is happening in the same act in all four throughlines.



As we can see in the illustration above, the flavor of our story as a whole depends both on the order of acts within each throughline and the combination of the acts from all four throughlines. When our plot is laid out in this manner, we may elect to make a few changes in one or more throughline's order to more accurately represent the overall concerns of our story's progression as we envision it.

It is important to remember when making these decisions that the order we're talking about reflects only the *internal* logic of the story, not necessarily the order in which it will be revealed to the audience. How exposition is presented to the audience is a whole different area of concern that is covered extensively in Storyweaving. Here we simply want to make sure that the act progression in each of the throughlines supports the outcomes, judgments, and conclusions of our story both from a logical and emotional perspective.

Obviously, such considerations must rely heavily on intuition. That is why it is often best to select all of the static appreciations before determining the progressive appreciations. That extra familiarity with your story will go a long way toward clarifying your intent, thereby providing a more solid foundation for your intuition. In addition, for those who find constructing act order a daunting task, the Dramatica software model is able to

calculate the best progression for each throughline's acts, based on your selection of static appreciations. In this manner, authors who would like some guidance in designing their plots can approach their stories by subject matter and have that input translated into the key stages of plot development and character growth.

Chapter 25

Storytelling & Thematic Appreciations

Selecting Thematic Appreciations

Selecting a Range

A Range is the thematic focus of a throughline. The focus, when explored with its counterpoint and then coupled with a conclusion, *creates* a premise. A throughline's Range is found at the Variation level of the thematic structure. Variations, as part of the balanced structure, do not provide value judgments to thematic foci as to whether they are good, bad or indifferent. These interpretations are deciphered by the audience from the interaction of *all* the dynamics of a story. For example, whether or not the Main Character succeeds or fails can have a big influence on the value of a thematic focus, even though success and failure are not Variations.

Focus and Point of View

An author might select the Variation "Morality" as the thematic focus, making the thematic conflict Morality vs. Self-Interest. But which is better between the two? Both are. And both are worse. It really depends on the context. The author's message might be to speak out in favor of putting others first, or that one must first take care of oneself before one can help others. Either point of view can be argued, as long as it is argued completely and makes sense in context.

Because it is simply the point of focus, one might argue for a Range of Morality by either showing that Morality is a good thing or that Self-interest is bad. Of course, both Variations will take their turn at the forefront in the exploration of the pair, yet one will seem to be the pivot point around which the throughline revolves. Is the throughline's message *about* Morality or *about* Self-Interest? The answer to that question determines the thematic Range.

Thematic Quads

Although the exploration of a thematic focus will develop nuance and detail, the focus itself (as well as the thematic counterpoint) must be pure so the issues at stake are clear. This provides a balanced, delineated argument at the heart of the thematic exploration, much as there must be a clear storyform at the heart of the storytelling. To accommodate this need for clarity, one must zero in on the specific Range at the heart of a throughline's argument. With so much balance involved, choosing the right one for your story is not always an easy thing to do. There is a method one can apply, however, that makes it a bit easier and even rather fun.

As described earlier in the section on Theme, there are 64 Variations, grouped into four sets of 16. Each set has four quads as illustrated below. We can start by selecting a set, then a quad, then a conflict and finally a Range, similar to the manner in which we originally explored the thematic structure by starting with the broad stroke Classes and then sub-dividing each into Types, then Variations, and finally Elements.

Dramatica's 64 Thematic Variatio

Universe Variations ----------Physics Variations

Fate	Prediction	Fact	Security	Instinct	Senses	Wisdom	Skill
Interdiction	Destiny	Threat	Fantasy	Interpre-tation	Conditioning	Experience	Enlighten-ment
Openness	Delay	Work	Attract	Approach	Self Interest	Pre-requisites	Strategy
Choice	Pre-conception	Repel	Attempt	Morality	Attitude	Analysis	Pre-conditions
State of Being	Situation	Knowledge	Ability	Truth	Evidence	Value	Confidence
Circum-stances	Sense of Self	Desire	Thought	Suspicion	Falsehood	Worry	Worth
Rationali-zation	Commitment	Permission	Need	Closure	Hope	Investigation	Appraisal
Responsi-bility	Obligation	Expediency	Deficiency	Dream	Denial	Reappraisal	Doubt

Psychology Variations ----------Mind Variations

Approach	**Self Interest**
Morailty	**Attitude**

Perhaps the easiest way to get a *feel* for one's theme is to take each quad by itself, and experience the four Variations all at once to get a sense of the relationships between them. In the Morality/Self-Interest quad, for example, the other two Variations are Approach and Attitude. It is the nature of these Variations that the

good or bad nature of one pair will be *measured* by the other pair. In this case, if either Morality or Self-Interest was selected as the focus, the contrast between them would be measured in terms of Attitude and Approach. If Attitude and Approach were to be explored, they would be measured by Morality and Self-Interest.

Grazing for Themes

Let's assume you have not yet selected any other appreciations. Begin by picking the throughline you want to work with, i.e., Objective Story, Main Character, etc. Don't consider what Class that throughline might be attached to. Then, keeping that throughline in your mind, get a feel for the Variations in each Class by simply letting your eyes wander over each set of sixteen and treating them as a single item. Eventually one set should emerge as having the best overall feel for that throughline. In other words, the Variations in that set best express the kinds of thematic issues you will want to explore in that throughline.

Now, think of the sixteen Variations in that set as four groups of four. Each group is called a *quad*, and has a unique flavor that defines the four Variations in it as being part of the same family. Consider all four quads in the set, getting a feel for each one. Then zero in on the quad that best exemplifies the family of subject matter you wish to address in that throughline.

In the quad you have selected there are two different diagonal pairs of Variations. Pick the diagonal pair (dynamic pair) of Variations that illustrates the thematic conflict you wish to explore. Finally, choose one of the two Variations in the pair to be the focus of your theme, and you have your Range. The other Variation in the pair is your thematic counterpoint.

In this manner, you can begin with a feeling and end up with a specific dramatic choice that will affect not only theme, but character and plot as well.

Selecting Character Appreciations

A Bridge between Subjective and Objective…

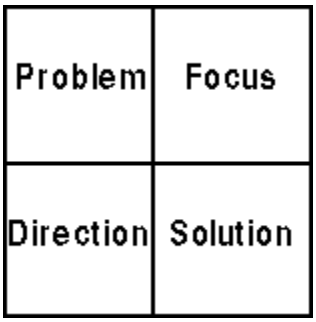
What is so special about the Main Character? The Main Character is uniquely qualified to illustrate both the Objective and Subjective problems. This is because he contains the one character Element that is central to both

the Objective and Subjective problems. As a result, neither problem can be resolved without his participation. Therefore, selecting the Main Character's Problem requires the consideration of other Elements as well.

The Main Character need not be the source of the problem, but might contain the Element crucial to the solution. This is why it is so easy to make the Protagonist the Main Character. The Protagonist is pursuing the Objective Story goal already; why not have him pursue the subjective one as well? If he is taking the correct approach in the author's view, he contains the solution. If he is taking the incorrect approach, he contains the problem. Either way, the Main Character, as Protagonist or not, is the linchpin that holds the Objective and Subjective Stories together.

The act of pursuing a goal and being crucial to achieving it are two completely different things. For example, it might be the Main Character's insight or resolve that spurs the Protagonist on to success or distracts it into failure. Either way, the Main Character *precipitates* the outcome of the story by changing or by remaining steadfast in regard to that crucial Element.

The Problem Quad



In the quad of Elements containing the Problem Element, there is also its counterpart, the Solution Element, which is indeed the solution to that particular problem. There are also two remaining Elements in the quad: the Focus and the Direction. If the Problem is a disease and the Solution the cure, then the Focus is the primary symptom of the story's problem and the Direction is that symptom's most appropriate treatment.

As indicated, Main Characters do not have to contain the Element that is the cause of the problem. But if they do not contain the Problem Element, they will contain one of the other Elements in this crucial quad.

For example, we might determine that we want the problem and solution to be found in the quad containing Logic, Feeling, Control and Uncontrolled. Any one of these can be the problem. If we select Feeling as the problem, then Logic will be the solution. If we select Control as the problem, then Uncontrolled will be the solution. Once we determine one pair to be the Problem-Solution pair, the other pair is the Focus-Direction pair.

Focus is simply descriptive of what the Main Character believes the problem to be; Direction is what they feel the solution is. So, for every actual Problem and Solution, there is a corresponding Focus and Direction. Which Element is focus and which is direction is determined by other dynamics at work in the story.

Change Characters and the Crucial Element

In the case of a *Change* Main Character, he will either contain the Problem or Solution Element. In the case of a *Steadfast* Main Character, he will either contain the Focus or the Direction Element.

Why would a Change Main Character contain the problem or solution? In a sense, the inequity of the story is not just in the Main Character or in their environment, but exists between the two. It is created out of an imbalance in the distribution of Elements. When a Main Character solves a problem by changing, he restores balance either by taking an Element from himself and placing it back in the environment where it belongs, or by grabbing an Element out of the environment and putting it within himself where it is needed. If he must give up an Element, he contains the solution to the problem. If he must receive an Element, he contains the problem. Either way, the Main Character must change his internal make-up: his very nature.

Steadfast Characters and the Crucial Element

For a Steadfast Main Character, the imbalance is not seen by him to be between himself and the environment, but

wholly within the environment. In this case, the Main Character takes an Element from one place and moves it to another to restore balance. If the story is built around the Element that needs to be moved, the Main Character contains the focus. If the story is built around the hole that needs to be filled, the Main Character contains the direction.

The real essence of the Crucial Element is that the Main Character is responsible for either getting rid of something undesirable or obtaining something desirable, either within himself or in his environment. If accomplished, the Main Character restores equilibrium and both the Objective and Subjective problems are resolved.

Wrapping Up The Selection Of Appreciations

We could write endlessly on how to evaluate each appreciation. But in truth, there is no mechanical way to make these choices. Any choice is just as good as any other. It is only when the author's feelings and intents come into play that one selection proves better than another.

When previous selections have already been made, however, then the logistics of the story's argument begin to take a degree of control. The more selections that are made, the greater that control becomes until all remaining selections have already been pre-determined by the author's earlier choices.

Understanding which appreciations have the greatest influence on others goes a long way to helping an author make appropriate choices that keep his message and the feelings generated by his story's structure consistent. Still, such considerations are intuitive in nature, and when intuition fails, it helps to employ the model of the relationships between appreciations contained in the Dramatica software.

Chapter 26

The Art of Storytelling

Stage Two:
Storyencoding

Introduction To Storyencoding

Storyencoding is simply the process of turning the *raw* appreciations of a storyform structure into the flesh and blood people, places, and events of a story that can be told.

As an example, suppose in our storyform we have selected an Objective Domain of Universe. As we have learned, this means that the Objective throughline revolves around an external situation. Now, when it comes to actually writing our story, we are not going to put down on paper, "The Objective throughline was revolving around an external situation." Our audience would have a lot of trouble getting involved with that! Instead, we're going to connect that bare appreciation to something concrete so the audience can relate to what we're talking about.

To make this appreciation real, we ask ourselves, "What kind of a situation is it?" One author might choose to say, "The situation around which my Objective throughline revolves is that a group of travelers are trapped in a sunken ship." That fulfills the dramatic function called for by the appreciation that the Objective Domain is Universe.

Another author might choose to encode an Objective Story Domain of Universe by saying, "The situation around which my Objective throughline revolves is that the parents of five children have died in a car crash, leaving the children to fend for themselves."

Clearly, each appreciation might be encoded in any number of ways. Which way you choose depends only on the kinds of subject matter you wish to explore. How you encode each appreciation will determine much of the setting of your story in a Genre sense, the kinds of things that might happen in you plot, the thematic issues that are likely to rise to the surface, and the nature of the people populating your story.

Once the concept of encoding is understood, another issue often comes up: "Storyforming and then Storyencoding doesn't seem like a very organic way to go about creating a

story." Well, we can't argue with that. You see, most authors are attracted to a story not by the underlying structure, but by some element of storytelling. It could be a setting or a character or a bit of action -- anything that stimulates the imagination. In fact, *most* authors don't even think about a message at this stage. What gets them started is some intriguing concept, and the remainder of their effort in developing that concept is to try and build a story around it.

At first, things go very smoothly. But at some point along the way there is a hole and no inspiration to fill it. Or, there are some incompatibilities or inconsistencies and no idea how to fix them. It is at this point that authors beat their heads against the wall, run in circles screaming and shouting, and tell their story to every remaining friend they have in hope of getting some comment that will clear the creative skies.

It is a lot easier if you have a storyform.

If you already *know* what your story is about, then all you need to do is illustrate it. Rather than being constraining, this process is liberating. You can let your imagination run wild, then hold up each new inspiration to the storyform and see if there is an appreciation that idea will encode. You may have to tweak it a bit to make sure it will communicate the appreciation accurately, but if your intuition is pretty much on the mark, then just about anything you come up with is likely to be a part of the puzzle and simply needs to be nuanced a bit to slip it into the job it really ought to be doing.

Some of the appreciations in your storyform will already be encoded. In fact, they were encoded before you created the storyform; that's how you knew which appreciations to select. If you are using the Dramatica software, after making a limited number of selections (perhaps twelve or even fewer!) all the remaining appreciations are selected by the Story Engine. In other words, the model of story programmed into the software has calculated the dramatic influence of the selections you've made and determined that all the remaining appreciations for a balanced and complete story structure.

In the case above, many of the appreciations predicted by the Story Engine may not yet connect with anything you have already developed. Rather, you find in your Storyform a Goal of Obtaining, for example, and wonder, "Obtaining *what*? What are my characters after?" This is when you think about what you *do* know about your story. Maybe it takes

place in a circus. Then a Goal of Obtaining could be getting to perform in the center ring, or winning a place as a permanent attraction in a new mega-amusement park. Your story might be about a mountain man, and his Goal of Obtaining might be to find a wife, or to get a ranch of his own. It really doesn't matter *how* you encode an appreciation, as long as the encoding carries the message of the story through one more stage of communication between author and audience.

Finally, if you are not using the Dramatica software, you will have selected your appreciations by feel or topic. Some may have been chosen as appropriate to specific ideas you are working with, but the rest just seemed appropriate to the story you have in your mind and/or in your heart. We're back to intuition again here. And once again, you will need to examine those appreciations which do not yet have specific encoding in your story and ask your muse to suggest something.

In the end, even if the storytelling may be atrocious it will at least make sense if it is built on a sound storyform.

The remainder of this section presents hints and tips for encoding all four aspects of story: Character, Theme, Plot, and Genre. By far, Character is the most complex of these for it requires the greatest subtlety and nuance to fashion believable people who still manage to fulfill their dramatic functions. As a result, you will find the character section the longest of the lot, and also, due to its importance, the first one we address.

Chapter 27

Storytelling & Encoding Objective Characters

Although encoding places the argument of a story in the context of real life, the storyform itself is not real life at all. It is an analogy to the mind's problem-solving process. We all know what it is like to face problems in our own lives. However, we have no way of knowing what our

manner of dealing with problems looks like from the outside; from a more objective viewpoint. Storyforms deal with only one problem, which is seen from two principal directions: the inside *and* the outside. When we look at the problem from the inside, we can connect with experiences we all have had. The view is familiar and we relate emotionally to situations that touch our personal nerves. In fact, we tend to substitute our own experiences in place of what we observe in the story. This subjective view holds our feelings and gives credibility to the objective view.

Out of Body Experiences

When we take an external view of a story, however, we no longer identify with the Story Mind directly but view it more like we would in an "out of body" experience. It is if we had stepped out of our own heads, then turned around to see what we were thinking. It is from this view that the author makes his rational argument, telling the audience, "If it feels like *this* from the inside, you'll want to be doing *that*."

Even this simple message carries value for an audience since the audience members can benefit from good advice born of experiences they have not had to suffer personally. In this way, when similar situations occur to them subjectively they can recall the objective dictum from the story giving them at least one plan to try.

Characters as the Author's Contentions

All the ways of considering each problem are represented by a story's characters. Because they represent parts of the argument, Objective Characters must be called in the proper order and combination to support each of the author's contentions. This all sounds very complex and manipulative. It is. But as authors, when we are on a roll we don't stop to consider each aspect of what we are doing. Rather, it all synthesizes together into the smooth flow of creativity that we "feel" through our writer's instincts. If the complexity is not there beneath it all, however, there will be noticeable holes in our plot and inconsistent characters.

Dramatica identifies every point of view that is essential to the objective argument. It allows an author to divvy them up amongst his characters, then tracks the progress of the characters through the story. In this way, an author can cut loose with creative fervor until the muse fails. Then he can call on Dramatica to locate the end of the thread so he can begin to weave it again.

Archetypal Characters

Just because characters are Archetypal does not mean they cannot be fresh and interesting. Archetypal Characters have just as many diverse

characteristics as Complex Characters. The only difference is how these characteristics are divided among your story's characters. When an equal number are given to each character and when all the elements making up each character are from a single "family" of elements, Archetypal Characters are created. In this sense, an Archetypal Character set is like an alignment of the planets: each individual orbit is complex, but we choose to observe them when they are all lined up in a clear and simple pattern.

Nonetheless, we must still explore all aspects of each character to make the Story Mind's argument fully. However, since there is such consistency to the way the elements are distributed, the audience will anticipate the content of each character, allowing an author the luxury of using shortcuts to describe them. In fact, once a character is outlined enough to establish its Archetypal tendency, an author can leave out the rest of the information since the audience will fill it in anyway. In a sense, a character is guilty of being Archetypal until proven otherwise.

A Sample Story Using Archetypes

When an author wishes to concentrate primarily on action or entertainment, it is often best to take advantage of the Archetypal arrangement to fully make the story's argument with a minimum of exposition. The characters still need to be interesting in order to involve an audience in their story. To illustrate how even Archetypal characters can be intriguing, let's create story using only Archetypes and dress them up in some attractive storytelling.

Creating a Protagonist

We want to write a simple story using Archetypal Characters. We can create a PROTAGONIST called Jane. Jane wants to... what?... rob a bank?...kill the monster?... stop the terrorists?... resolve her differences with her mother? It really doesn't matter; her goal can be whatever interests us as authors. So we'll pick "stop the terrorists" because it interests us. All right, our Protagonist -- Jane -- wants to stop the terrorists.

Creating an Antagonist

Dramatica says we need an ANTAGONIST. Antagonist by definition is the person who tries to prevent achievement of the goal. So, who might be diametrically against the completion of the task Jane wants to accomplish? The Religious Leader whose dogma is the source of inspiration that spawns the acts of terror?... The multinational business cartel that stands to make billions if the terrorists succeed in their scheme?... Her former lover who leads the elite band of criminals? We like THAT one! Okay, we have our Protagonist (Jane) who wants to stop the terrorists who are led by her former lover (Johann).

Creating a Skeptic

Two simple Characters down, six to go. Dramatica now tells us we need a SKEPTIC. Who might oppose the effort and disbelieve in the ultimate success

of good Jane? A rival special agent who doesn't want to be left in the dust by her glowing success?... Her current love interest on the force who feels Jane is in over her head?... Her father, the Senator, who wants his daughter to follow him into politics? Good enough for us. So we have Jane who wants to stop the terrorists, pitted against her former lover Johann who heads the criminal band, and opposed by her father, the Senator.

Creating a Sidekick

To balance the Skeptic, we're going to need a SIDEKICK. We could bring back her current lover but *this* time have him knowing how much ridding the world of scum-sucking pigs appeals to Jane so he remains steadfastly behind her. Or we might employ her Supervisor and mentor on the force who knows the depth of Jane's talent, wants to inspire other young idealists to take action against threats to democracy, or prove his theories and vindicate his name in the undercover world... We'll use the Supervisor. So here's Jane who wants to stop the terrorists, pitted against her former lover Johann, the head of the band who wants to stop her, opposed by her father, the Senator, and supported by her Supervisor.

Creating a Contagonist

Let's bring in a CONTAGONIST: the Seasoned Cop who says, "You have to play by the rules" and thwarts Jane's efforts to forge a better modus operandi?... Or, the Ex-Con with a heart of gold who studies the classics and counsels her to base her approach on proven scenarios?... Or, her friend Sheila, a computer whiz who has a bogus response plan based on averaging every scenario every attempted? Computer whiz it is. So Jane wants to stop the terrorists, is pitted against the head of the band (her former lover Johann) who wants to stop her, opposed by her father, the Senator, supported by her Supervisor, and tempted by her friend Sheila, the computer whiz.

Creating a Guardian

Keeping in mind the concept of Dynamic Pairs, we are going to want to balance the Computer Whiz with a GUARDIAN. The Master of the Oriental martial arts who urges her to "go with the flow" ("Use The Force, Jane!")?... The Ex-Con again who urges, "Get back to basics"?... or perhaps the Seasoned Cop who paves the way through the undercover jungle?.... We like the Seasoned Cop. Note how we could have used him as Contagonist, but elected to use him as Guardian instead. It's totally up to us as authors which characteristics go into which players. Jane wants to stop the terrorists, is pitted against the head of the band (her former lover Johann) who wants to stop her, is opposed by her father, the Senator, supported by her Supervisor, tempted by her friend Sheila the computer whiz, and protected by the Seasoned Cop.

Creating Reason and Emotion Characters

Since we really like some of our earlier concepts for Characters, let's use the Ex-Con as REASON, stressing the need to use classic scenarios. We'll balance her with the Master of the Oriental martial arts, who maintains Jane's need to break with the Western approach by letting loose and following her feelings.

Well, that seems to cover all eight Archetypal Characters: Protagonist, Antagonist, Skeptic, Sidekick, Contagonist, Guardian, Reason and Emotion. Finally, we have Jane who wants to stop the terrorists and is pitted against the head of the band (her former lover Johann) who wants to stop her, is opposed by her Father, the Senator, is supported by her Supervisor, tempted by her friend Sheila the computer whiz, protected by the Seasoned Cop, urged by the Ex-Con to copy the classics, and counseled by the Master of Oriental martial arts to let loose and follow her feelings.

The Same Old Story?

This is beginning to sound like a lot of many stories we've seen before. Why have we seen this so many times? Because it is simple and it works. Of course, we have limited ourselves in this example to the Archetypal Characters, not even taking advantage of the Complex Characters we could also create.

When you keep in mind the Dramatica rules for mixing and matching characteristics to create Complex Characters, you have an astronomical number of possible people (or non-people) who might occupy your story. Because of the structure of inter-relationships Dramatica provides, they will all fit together to the greatest potential and nothing will be duplicated or missed. As a result, the Story Mind will be fully functional; the argument fully made.

Complex Characters

It is not the content that makes characters complex, but the *arrangement* of that content. We all know people who have one-track minds or are so aligned as to be completely predictable (and often, therefore, boring!) People who are more diverse contain conflicting or dissimilar traits and are much more interesting to be around. So it is with characters.

Imagine building characters to be like playing Scrabble. There are a given number of letter tiles, no more, no less. The object is to create words until all the tiles have been employed. The game won't feel "complete" if any tiles are left over. Now imagine a set of words that are all the same length and use up all the letters so none are remaining. Suppose there is only one combination of letters that will accomplish this. If we build characters that way, we get the one and only Archetypal set. There's nothing wrong with playing the game that way, but after a few zillion times, seeing the same limited set of words over and over

again wears pretty thin. It is much more interesting to create a wide vocabulary of all kinds and sizes of words.

Archetypes Have Their Place, But....

Archetypal Characters have their place, mind you. If an author's focus is on Plot or Theme, he may want to create easily identifiable Archetypes as a shorthand to save space and time. As soon as the edges of an Archetypal Character are sketched out, audiences (who have seen these Archetypes time and again) will fill in the rest, pending information to the contrary. In this way, an author can free up time or pages for aspects of the story which may be much more interesting to him.

As a result, Complex Characters are often the first things torn down in an effort to conserve media real estate. This leads to a glut of action-oriented stories populated by stick-figure people. Whenever there is a glut in one place, you will find a deficiency somewhere else. The imbalance between glut and deficiency creates demand. Box office is directly proportional to demand. No more need be said.

Four Dimensional Characters

All characters, Archetypal or Complex, have four levels or Dimensions in which they may contain characteristics. These are:

1. Motivations
2. Methodologies
3. Means of Evaluation
4. Purposes

Archetypal Characters contain one characteristic in each of these areas that describes how they deal with external problems. They also contain one each that describes how they deal with internal problems. Altogether they possess eight characteristics.

Swap Meet

The easiest way to create Complex Characters is to simply swap a few Elements between one Archetypal Character and another at the same level. This results in evenly-balanced characters who aren't nearly as predictable as Archetypes. When the points of view are mixed so that the focus of a scene or act changes from Methodologies to Motivations, for example, the manner in which a character responds might also shift dramatically.

Even more Complex Characters can be built by giving more characteristics to some and fewer to others. For example, one character might have two

Motivations, three Methodologies and so on. Another character might only have Purposes but no Motivations or any of the others. Those characters having the most characteristics will be called upon more frequently to appear, thereby strengthening their presence with an audience.

A Character Cannot Serve Two Masters

An author can create characters for any purpose, to be played like cards at particular points in the hand. The only "rules" of character construction caution against any character containing more than one Element of a dynamic pair. In addition, it is best to avoid assigning a character more than one Element from the same quad as the character would then represent conflicting points of view on the same issue.

At first, this might seem desirable as it would create internal conflict. But in the case of Objective Characters, they are seen from the outside. We cannot perceive their internal deliberations. Any internal conflict simple weakens their objective function.

Objective Throughline Characteristics

Elements are the most refined resolution of the problem in a story. Beneath each Variation are four Elements that make up the parts of that Variation and are also defined by its umbrella. One of the four elements under the Range is the Problem of the story in its most essential form. Another of the four will prove to be the Solution. A third element is the Focus of the story, where the Problem appears to principally manifest itself. The final element represents the Direction that is taken in response to the Focus.

Each of these elements has a specific and recognizable function even in traditional story theory. For example, we know that characters often work not toward the real solution but to a perceived solution. And characters frequently grapple with a problem that is ultimately recognized as only a symptom of the real problem.

The "Crucial" Element

As indicated elsewhere, stories are *really* about inequities and their resolutions. When the four principal elements are considered in this light, the Problem element appears more like the essence of the inequity. The Solution becomes the essence of what is needed to restore balance. Depending upon the dynamics of the story, one of the four elements is "lifted up" as the prominent point of view. It becomes the *Crucial Element* upon which all other lesser inequities in the story center. It is Crucial because if it comes into balance all the remaining inequities of the story are forced to balance themselves as well. If not balanced, none of the others can be resolved.

Objective Elements and the Subjective Characters

Elements serve to show what the inequity looks like from all possible points of view and thereby hone in on the source: the one bad apple in the basket. All 64 Elements in this level must be represented in character form in order to fully explore the story's inequity. Of all these, two special characters bear special attention: the Main and Obstacle.

The Main and Obstacle characters do double-duty by carrying the Subjective Storyline and also playing an Objective role by being assigned to two different players that contain an Objective function. The player containing the Main Character always contains the Crucial Element in its Objective role. However, that element does not always have to be the Solution. It might be the Problem, Focus, or Direction Element, depending upon the dynamics. It is this duality that makes those two players the linchpins of the story: the hinge upon which the Objective AND Subjective Problems and storylines converge.

The player containing the Obstacle Character also contains the Element diagonal to the crucial element: the other half of the dynamic pair. In this way as a Main Character or Obstacle Character comes to eventually change or remain steadfast, the subjective problem influences how that player will respond in regard to the Objective Element it also contains. Like magnets with North and South poles, what happens on the Subjective side will influence the Objective stand, and when pressures force a change in the Objective stand, it will influence the Subjective point of view. It is no surprise that this relationship between Objective and Subjective dynamics in characters has seemed so indefinably obscure for so long.

Chapter 28

Storytelling & Encoding Subjective Characters

Although authors use Subjective Characters all the time they unfortunately view the Subjective functions simply as other aspects of Objective Characters. In fact, the two functions are most often blended into a single concept of character that does double-duty. This is dangerous since every aspect of the argument must be made twice: once Objectively and once Subjectively. If both roles are blended, this can appear redundant. As a result, important points in the separate arguments may be missing. In a temporal medium such as motion pictures, it is often the Subjective argument that suffers as the focus is on more

objective action. In novels, the Objective Story is often flawed as the spatial nature of a book favors the Subjective view.

Just because a medium favors one view over the other does not mean anything can be neglected. All parts of both arguments must be present in order to create an effective synthesis in the mind of the audience regardless of the emphasis a medium may place on each view.

The Main Character is Not Necessarily the Protagonist

Many authors are not aware that a Protagonist does not have to be the Main Character. When we stop to think about it, many examples come to mind of stories in which we experience the story through the eyes of a character other than a Protagonist. Yet when it comes to writing our own stories, many of us never diverge from a Protagonist/Main combination.

There is nothing wrong with this combination. In fact, as long as both characters are represented in the single player, such a blend is a fine Archetypal Character. The point is: there are other ways.

Subjective Characters range from the Main Character with whom we identify to all the "other soldiers in the trenches" around us as we experience the battle together. They are friends and foes, mentors and acolytes. We see in them characteristics of Worry, Instinct, Experience and Doubt. Rather than functioning as approaches the way the Objective Characters appear to do, the Subjective Characters function as attitudes.

"We're Both Alike, You and I..."

The Main and Obstacle Characters are counterparts. They represent the two principal sides to the argument of the story. Because they are dealing with the same issues a case can be made that they are not too far apart. This often results in such familiar lines as "We're both alike," "We're just two sides of the same coin," "I'm your shadow self," and so on. In contrast, though they are concerned with the same things, they are coming at them from completely opposing views. This leads to common line such as "We're nothing alike, you and I," or "We used to be friends until you stepped over the line."

Evil Twins?

Many authors picture the Obstacle Character as a negative or evil twin. Although this can be true, it has little to do with the Obstacle Character's dramatic function. For example, if a Main Character is evil and needs to change, their Obstacle might be a virtuous steadfast character. Or *both* characters might be evil, with the resolve of one contrasting the change in the other. In any case, the function of the Main and Obstacle Characters is to show two opposing sides

of the same issue. That is their story function: to show what happens when one changes and the other remains steadfast on a particular issue.

Encoding Mental Sex

Both Males and Females use the same techniques, but in different contexts. As a result, what is problem solving for one may actually be justification for the other. In fact, for the four perspectives in any given story, in one Domain both male and female mental sex characters will see a given approach as problem solving, while in another Domain both will see it as justification. The third Domain would be problem solving for one mental sex and justification for the other and the fourth just the reverse.

Men TEND to use linear problem solving as their first method of choice. In linear problem solving, they set a specific goal, determine the steps necessary to achieve that goal, and embark on the effort to accomplish those steps. Gathering facts, or successfully achieving requirements all deal with seeing a number of definable items that must be brought together to make the mechanism work in the desired manner.

This is a very spatial view of problem solving, as it sees all the parts that must be accomplished and/or brought together to resolve the problem or achieve the goal.

Women TEND to use holistic problem solving as their first method of choice. In holistic problem solving, steps are not important and there may not even be a specific goal to achieve but simply a new direction desired. As a result, the RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN things are what is measured and adjusted to create a change in the forces that determine that direction. Unlike male problem solving, there is no causal relationship stating that THIS leads to THAT. Instead, COMBINATIONS of changes in the way things are related alters the dynamics of the situation rather than the structure, and changes context rather than meaning.

This is a very temporal view of problem solving, as it looks at the way things are going and tries to alter relationships so that the direction of the forces that create the problem is deflected.

Now, men and women use both techniques. Also, women may become trained to use the linear method first, and men may develop a preference for the holistic method as their primary problem solving approach. These are preferences made through conscious choice, training, or experience. Underneath it all, the brain's operating system for problem solving will either be linear or holistic. This is what sets men and women apart from each other. No matter how much common ground they come to from training, experience and conscious choice, there is always that underlying level in which they can never see eye to eye, because they have intrinsically different outlooks.

So, when choosing male or female mental sex, we are not concerned with the

up front and obvious, we are concerned with that hidden level at the foundation of the Main Character's psyche that dictates a linear or holistic approach to the problem regardless of what is done consciously.

That's why the issue becomes vague - because it is not cut and dried in the Main Character nor is it up front. It is just their tendency at the lowest most basic part of their mind to go linear or holistic.
How can we illustrate this in a Main Character? The following point by point comparison can help:

Female: looks at motivations	*Male:* looks at purposes
Female: tries to see connections	*Male:* tries to gather evidence
Female: sets up conditions	*Male:* sets up requirements
Female: determines the leverage points that can restore balance	*Male:* breaks a job into steps
Female: seeks fulfillment	*Male:* seeks satisfaction
Female: concentrates on "Why" and "When"	*Male:* concentrates on "How" and "What"
Female: puts the issues in context	*Male:* argues the issues
Female: tries to hold it all together	*Male:* tries to pull it all together

As we can see, though both men and women will use both techniques depending on context, one kind comes first or takes priority. Which one is the principal technique is determined by mental sex. So, if you keep in mind that this all may be overshadowed by other learned techniques, you can illustrate male and female problem solving techniques as a TENDENCY to employ those listed above, all other things being equal.

Building a Mind for the Audience to Possess

When an audience looks at the Objective Characters, they see the Story Mind from the outside in. When an audience empathizes with the Main Character, they see the story from the inside out. In order for the audience to be able to step into the shoes of the Main Character and look through his eyes, he must possess a complete mind for the audience to possess. And that perhaps is the best way to look at it: the audience takes possession of the Main Character's mind. That's why you hear people in a movie yelling, "NO.... don't do that!!!" to a Main Character who is about to enter the shed where the slasher is waiting.

However, the question arises: who is taking possession of whom? As authors we direct our Main Character to take control of the audience's hearts and souls. We make them feel what the Main Character feels, experience what he experiences. It's a pretty sinister occupation we engage in. But that is how a story stops being a spectacle and worms its way into the heart.

Chapter 29

Storytelling & Encoding Theme

The trick in encoding theme is to make sure the audience knows what the argument is about without coming right out and saying it, and also to make sure the argument is made without the audience ever feeling manipulated or that the point is being made in a heavy handed fashion. In this section we will explore methods of achieving these purposes for theme in general and also suggest tips and considerations specific to the themes of each of the four throughlines.

What Are You Talking About?

Without theme, a story is just a series of events that proceeds logistically and ends up one way or another. Theme is what gives it all meaning. When encoded, theme will not be a universal meaning for all things, but a smaller truth pertaining to the *proper* way of dealing with a *particular* situation. In a sense, the encoding of theme moves the emotional argument of the story from the general to the specific. It the argument is made strongly enough, it may influence attitudes in areas far beyond the specific, but to be made strongly, it must limit its scope to precise encoding.

If our thematic conflict is Morality vs. Self-interest, for example, it would be a mistake to try and argue that Morality is *always* better than Self-Interest. In fact, there would be few people whose life experience would not tell them that sometimes Self-Interest is the better of the two. Keep in mind here that Dramatica defines Morality as "Doing for others with no regard for self" and Self-Interest as "Doing for self with no regard for others." This doesn't mean a Self-Interested person is out hurt to others, but simply that what happens to others, good or bad, is not even a consideration.

As an example, Morality might be better if one has plenty of food to share during a harsh winter and does so. Morality might be worse if one subjugates one's life rather than displease one's peers. Self-Interest might be better if a crazed maniac is charging at you and you kill him with an ax. Self-Interest might be bad if you won't share the last of the penicillin in case you might need it later. It really all depends on the context.

Clearly, the very first step in encoding thematic appreciations is to check the definitions first! Dramatica was designed to be extremely precise in its definitions in order to make sure the thematic structure represented all the shades of gray an audience might expect to see in a thematic argument. So, before you even consider the conflict, read the definition which will help define where the real conflict lies.

Unlike other appreciations which really only need to show up once to be encoded into a story, thematic appreciations will need to show up several times. A good rule of thumb is that each conflict should be explored at least once per act. In this way, the balance between the two sides of the conflict can be examined in all contexts appropriate to story's message.

Further, it is heavy handed to encode the entire conflict. It is much better to show one side of the conflict, then later show the other side in a similar situation. In this manner, the relative value of each side of the thematic conflict is established without the two ever being directly compared. In each act, then, what are some methods of encoding the two sides of the thematic conflict? This depends on which throughline is in question.

Encoding the Objective Story Theme

The Objective Story theme is an emotional argument that is story wide. Its connection to the Objective Story makes this theme "objective", *not* any unemotional feeling that may be implied by the title. To encode the Objective Story theme one must come up with scenes, events, comments, or dialogue that not only pertains to the thematic conflict, but at least imply that this particular issue represents the central imbalance in value standards that affects *everyone* in the story. In fact, it is often better that the Objective Story theme be encoded through incidental characters or background incidents so that the message is not tainted by association with any other dynamics in the story.

For example, our Main Character is walking down the hall of a ward in a Veteran's hospital with a doctor who is an incidental character whose purpose in the story is only to provide exposition on a particular point. While they are walking, the doctor, an older man, notes that he is out of breath trying to keep up with our Main Character. He comments, "I can't keep up with you young guys like I used to." Moments later, a double amputee wheels across their path, stops, says cheerfully to the Main Character, "As soon as they fix me up, I'm going to be a dancer again!" and wheels off. The doctor then remarks, "He's been like that since they brought him here." The Main Character asks, "How long?" The doctor says, "Nineteen sixty-eight."

What thematic conflict is at work here? The doctor's comments represent Closure (accepting an end). The patient's comments reflect Denial (refusing to accept an end). By itself, this short thematic encoding will not make the conflict clear. But as the story continues to unfold, several different encodings will eventually clarify the item they all share in common.

What's more, in this example, it is clear by the way we presented the conflict, Closure is seen as a better standard of value that Denial. It would be just as easy to have the doctor appear run-down by life and having no hope, while the patient is joyous. In such a case, the message would have been the reverse. The doctor, representing Closure, would be seen to be miserable, and the patient who lives in a dream world of Denial would have happiness.

Theme encoding is an effort of subtle balance. Simply shifting a word or a reaction, even slightly, can completely tip a well balanced argument. That is why many authors prefer more black-and-white thematic statements than a gentle thematic argument. In truth, it is the ability to get away from the binary that brings richness and depth to the emotional content of a story.

One other thing we might notice about our example is that we might evaluate whether Closure or Denial is better by seeing how each camp fared in regard to Hope and Dream. Why Hope and Dream? They are the other two Variations in the same quad as Closure and Denial. We can see that the doctor has no Hope, but the patient still has Dreams. By showing that lack of Hope causes misery and an abundance of Dreaming bring joy, the case is made that the doctor who represents Closure does not achieve as beneficial a result as the patient who represents Denial.

Clearly this thematic message is not true in every situation we might encounter in real life. In the context of our latter example, however, we are saying that for this particular kind of problem (the Objective Story Problem) Denial is a better way to go.

Our next concern is that even with a more balanced argument, it still seems one-sided. The way to alleviate this attribute is to have some thematic moments occur in which Closure turns out to be better than Denial . By so doing, we are admitting to our audience that even for the kind of Objective Story Problem we are dealing with, neither Closure nor Denial is a panacea. As a result, the audience begins to be excitedly drawn toward the end of the story, because only then can it average out all the incidents of Closure and Denial and see which one came out on top and by how much.

Theme encoding requires skill and inspiration. Because it must be approached by feel, rather than by logic, it is hard to learn and hard to teach. But by understanding the nature of the gentle balance that tips the emotional argument in favor of the Range or its counterpoint, one can consciously consider when and where and how to encode the theme, rather than simply winging it and hoping for the best. Knowing the storyform for your theme makes it far easier to draw the audience into feeling as you want them to.

Encoding Theme for the Other Throughlines

The Main Character theme follows many of the same guidelines as the Objective Story theme. In fact, the basic approaches of illustrating the conflict by indirect means, calling on the other two Variations in the thematic quad and having the balance between Range and counterpoint shift back and forth are good rules of thumb for all four throughlines. The principal difference in theme encoding from one throughline to another is where the conflict is directed.

For the Main Character Throughline, only the Main Character will be aware of the thematic conflict in that Domain. It might still be illustrated by contrasts between incidental characters or in non-essential actions or events, but no one will notice but the Main Character. For example, our Main Character in a motion picture might be sitting in a diner and look out the window to see a hungry man sifting through a trash can for some food. The focus shifts (as the Main Character ostensibly shifts his attention) to bring to clarity another man sitting in front of the window getting up to leave from his plate of half-eaten food. No one else is in a position to see this except our Main Character (and through him, the audience).

The above example would be a VERY subtle beginning of an argument about Morality vs. Self-Interest. In and of itself, there is not enough to say which is the Range and which is the counterpoint. Also, this example merely sets up that there are haves and have-nots, but does not yet place a value judgment, for we do not even know which of the two men is representing Morality and which Self-interest.

An interesting turn would be to have a Maitre'd notice our Main Character looking at the hungry man through the window and run over to say, "I'm sorry, Monsieur, I'll have my waiter tell him to leave." Our Main Character says, "No, wait..." He reaches into his pocket, pulls out his last hundred francs and, giving it to the Maitre'd says, "Bring him some food instead."

Still watching from the window, our Main Character sees the waiter taking a plate of food to the hungry man. As soon as he arrives, the hungry man beats the waiter over the head, takes his wallet, and runs off. The food has fallen into the garbage. Now, what have we said through our encoding about the relative value of Morality vs. Self-Interest as experienced by the Main Character? Also, which one is the Range?

In our Main Character example, we did not feel like we were judging the Main Character himself because of the results of his actions. Rather, we were making a judgment about the relative value of Morality and Self-Interest. In contrast, the Obstacle Character theme encoding is designed to place a value judgment on the Obstacle Character himself.

Obstacle Characters are looked at, not from. As such, we want to evaluate the appropriateness of their actions. Part of this is accomplished by showing whether the Obstacle

Character's influence on the balance between Range and counterpoint results in positive or negative changes.

Suppose we keep everything from our Main Character example in the diner the same, except we substitute the Obstacle Character instead. All the events would transpire in the same order, but our point of view as an audience would have to shift. The question for the audience would no longer be, "How am I going to respond in this situation?" but would become, "How is *he* going to respond in this situation?"

The point of view shot through the window might no longer be appropriate. Instead, we might shoot from over the shoulder of the Obstacle Character. Further, we would want to make sure the audience does not get too drawn in toward the Obstacle point of view. So, we might have another customer observing the whole thing. Or, we might simply choose camera positions outside the diner to show what happens, rather than staying in the whole time looking out as we did with the Main Character.

Novels, stage plays, and all different media and formats present their own unique strengths, weaknesses, and conventions in how one can appropriately encode for a given throughline. Knowing which ones to use and inventing new ones that have never before been used comprises a large part of the craft and art of storytelling.

Finally, let us briefly address thematic encoding for the Subjective Story Throughline. Theme in the Subjective Story Throughline describes the meaning of the relationship between the Main and Obstacle Characters. There are two distinct ways to evaluate everything that goes on in the relationship and these two ways don't lead to the same conclusions. The thematic Range and counterpoint reflect these two different means of evaluation.

In most relationships, everyone involved seems to have an opinion about what's best to do. That's the way it always is in a story. As the Obstacle Character Throughline and the Main Character Throughline have an impact on each other, so do the Objective and Subjective Stories. Therefore, both Objective and Subjective Characters will have opinions to express about how the *relationship* between the Main and Obstacle Characters is going. Remember, it's this *relationship* that makes the Subjective Story.

The variety of places to find opinions about the Subjective Story relationship means the Range and Counterpoint in the Subjective Story need not come exclusively from the Main and Obstacle Characters. They could be brought up and

argued without the presence of either the Main Character or Obstacle Character.

Of course, these two characters will be involved at some point as well. When they're together, they're likely to be arguing the two sides of the Subjective Story's Thematic issue and providing the Thematic Conflict. When they do, however, it is a good idea to avoid just giving one character the Range and the other character the Counterpoint. That would lead to a simple face off over the issues without really exploring them. Instead, have them swap arguments, each using the Range, then the Counterpoint as their *weapon*. Neither of them is solely a villain or a good guy from this personal point of view.

Giving your Objective Characters conversations about this relationship is a good way to express Range vs. Counterpoint without involving the Main or Obstacle Characters. This will help avoid unintentionally biasing the audience against either of them.

The real issue is, which is the best way to look at the relationship?

We all know stories involving newlyweds where the father of the bride argues that his daughter's fiancee is not good enough for her since the boy has no job nor means to provide for her. In these stories, the mother will often counter the father's argument by saying the two kids *really* love each other, so what could be better?

In that example, father and mother may be Objective Characters arguing about the best way to look at the Subjective Story between the Main and Obstacle Characters (the daughter and son-in-law). In the end, one way of seeing the kids' romance will prove to be the better way of evaluating the relationship.

The thematic resolution may be that the Subjective Story relationship appears terrible from one standard of evaluation and only poor from the other, in which case these people haven't got much of a relationship. Or, a relationship may appear mundanely workable from one standard and thrilling from the other. Or, one may see it as highly negative and the other sees it as highly positive. These are all potential conflicting points of view about a relationship and these discrepancies give the Subjective Story theme its depth.

The important job of the writer is to balance the argument so there is a real question as to which way of seeing the

relationship is using the best standard of evaluation. Then the audience is not just being sold a biased bill of goods, but is being presented a much more realistic tableau.

Chapter 30

Storytelling & Encoding Plot

Encoding Plot

Encoding Static Plot Appreciations is very simple. One need only figure out what it is. How and when it is going to actually show up in the story is a completely different issue and is part of Storyweaving.

The way to approach the encoding of Static Plot Appreciations is more or less the same for all of them. As an example, let us consider something fairly conventional: a Goal of Obtaining. Obtaining what? That is what encoding determines. The Goal might be to Obtain the stolen diamonds, a diploma, or someone's love. In each case, Obtaining has been effectively encoded. Which one you might choose is dependent only upon your personal muse.

Interestingly, there are many ways to stretch an appreciation to fit preconceived story ideas. Suppose that we want to tell a story about a woman who wants to be President. It might be he wants to be elected to the office. That would encode a Goal of Obtaining. Or, he might want to have people believe he was the President on a foreign trip. That would be a Goal of Being. He might already hold the office but feel that he is not authoritative enough and wants to Become presidential. That would encode a Goal of Becoming.

Clearly, there are ways to bend a story concept to fit almost any appreciation. And, in fact, that is the purpose of encoding - to create a symbol that represents an appreciation's particular bend. So, going around the remaining Types, we might also have a Goal about discovering a president's Past, how much legislative Progress a president is able to make, the Future of the presidency, whether the president is able to address Present concerns, to Understand the president's vision, Doing what is necessary regardless of chances for reelection, Learning the President's hidden agenda, Conceptualizing a new order, Conceiving a new kind of political leverage, trying to evoke the Memory of a past president's greatness, responding with Preconscious reflexes should the president be attacked, trying to curb a president's subconscious drives until after the election, making the president Conscious of a problem only he can solve.

Each of the above encodings deals with the presidency, but in a completely

different way. This allows an author to stick with the subject matter that interested him in the first place, yet still make sure the Story Goal is accurately encoded. And why even bother? Because the wrong perspective creates the wrong meaning. Anything that is not properly encoded will work against the dramatics of your story, rather than with them, and your story's overall message and experience will be weakened.

Encoding Progressive Plot Appreciations

Progressive Plot Appreciations are also relatively straight forward. At act resolution there is a simple method for encoding Signposts and Journeys that also establishes the plot aspects of your story's scenes.

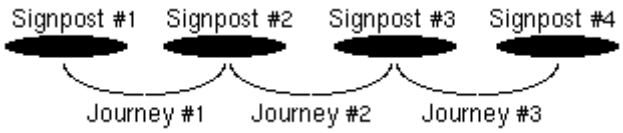
Signposts and Journeys

When we develop a plot, we are in effect planning a Journey for our characters. In this respect, we might imagine our plot as a road. We have already discussed how that road might be thought of as containing four signposts which define three journeys. Our characters' *Point of Departure* is marked by the Type at Signpost #1. This Type is the name of the town at which we are beginning our Journey. In our example, the characters are in the good borough of Learning.

We have also planned a destination for our characters. Again, in our example, we wish our characters to arrive at the village of Obtaining. Obtaining's city limits are marked by Signpost #4.

In order for our characters to experience the Journey we intend, we also want them to pass through the towns of Understanding and Doing along the way. Once they have arrived at Obtaining, they will have covered all the ground we want them to.

Our Plot is not only made up of Signposts, but also the experience of traversing the road *between* the Signposts.



If we have four Signposts, we can see three Journeys between them. The Signposts merely provide our audience with an impartial map of the checkpoints along the way. It is the Journeys, however, that involve our audience in the experience of crossing that ground.

Some writers have learned to create stories in a *Three Act Structure*. Others have worked in a *Four Act Structure*. In fact, *both* are needed to map out the terrain and involve the audience.

Now that we know the names of the Signposts in our Objective Story, it is time to describe the kinds of Journeys that will take place on the road between them.

Example:

In our example, the three Journeys are:

Topic 1. Learning -----> Topic 2. Understanding
Topic 2. Understanding -----> Topic 3. Doing

Topic 3. Doing -----> Topic 4. Obtaining.

For a hypothetical story, we might then encode each Signpost and Journey as follows:

SIGNPOST #1

Type 1. Learning

Our characters Learn that a number of robberies have occurred involving diamonds.

JOURNEY #1

Type 1. Learning------> **Type 2.** Understanding

As our characters Learn about the robberies that have occurred, they become aware of similarities in the crimes. Eventually, the similarities are too much to be coincidental.

SIGNPOST #2

Type 2. Understanding

Our characters arrive at the Understanding that there is one multi-national consortium involved in the heists.

JOURNEY #2

Type 2. Understanding ------> **Type 3.** Doing

The more our characters Understand about the consortium, the more they are able to figure out which smaller organizations are involved, as well as the names of specific individuals. Eventually, the characters Understand enough of the organization of the consortium to try and put someone on the inside.

SIGNPOST #3

Type 3. Doing

Our characters track down and infiltrate the consortium.

JOURNEY #3

Type 3. Doing ------> **Type 4.** Obtaining

Our characters get in tighter and tighter with the consortium until they are finally trusted enough to be employed in heist. Through a series of dangerous maneuvers, our characters are able to get word of the heist back to their organization, who alert the authorities.

SIGNPOST #4

Type 4 . Obtaining

Our characters retrieve the stolen diamonds.

As you can see, the Signposts outline the direction events will take. The Journeys help bring them to life.

Main Character Domain Plot Progression

By now you should be familiar with the concept that the Main Character represents a point of view for the audience. In fact, the audience stands in the shoes of the Main Character and sees what he sees and feels what he feels.

In the Objective Story Domain, the Plot Progression concentrates on the kinds

of activities in which the Objective Characters are involved. In the Main Character Domain, Plot Progression describes the stages of the Main Character's Growth.

Each Type in the Main Character Domain reflects the Main Character's primary concern at that point in his development. Eventually, he will grow enough to deal with the issue closest to his heart: the Main Character Concern. Let's look at an example of how you might encode this by continuing to develop the story we presented for Type Order Plot Progression of the Objective Story.

Example:

In this fictitious story example, the Main Character Domain has been chosen to be Universe. The Type order selected for the Main Character is as follows: Past, Progress, Present, and lastly Future.

SIGNPOST #1

 **Type 1.** Past

> *The Main Character is a law enforcement agency Department Chief with political aspirations. He has zero tolerance for officers of the law who have accepted payoffs from organized crime. As the story opens, his chief Concern of the moment is the past history of graft in his department.*

JOURNEY #1

 **Type 1.** Past ------> **Type 2.** Progress

> *The Main Character investigates Past instances of Consortium influences in his department. Using this historical information, he gets closer to infiltrating the Consortium.*

SIGNPOST #2

 **Type 2.** Progress

> *The Main Character decides his agents are too weak to resist stealing money from the Consortium. Therefore, he takes the case himself, going undercover and slowly snaking his way into the heart of the Consortium over a period of some months.*

JOURNEY #2

Type 2. Progress ------> **Type 3.** Present

The more the Main Character gets deeper into the Consortium, the more he is trusted with the Consortium's funds. Also, he finds himself in something of a Godfather position in which local businesses and organizations come to him for help. For a while, he is able to either deny them or pacify them.

SIGNPOST #3

Type 3. Present

Now, well established in the Consortium, the Main Character is faced with a situation in which an important Children's Hospital will be closed... unless he uses some of the Consortium's ill-gotten gains to provide the necessary funding.

JOURNEY #3

Type 3. Present ------> **Type 4.** Future

The Main Character gives in to the needs of others, violating his own zero tolerance code of ethics because of the serious needs of the children. Still, he is able to get the goods on the Consortium enough to stop some of their local plans, though not enough to damage the consortium at core level. When he is "brought in from the cold" by his agency, they treat him as a hero for his success. In contrast, he is troubled by his own ethical failing. He gave in to the temptation to take the money.

SIGNPOST #4

Type 4. Future

Though he is in a better position than ever to break into the political scene and demand strict adherence to a code of ethics, his grand words about his Future are now just ashes in his mouth, as he sits miserably in his office pondering his shortcomings, drained of ambition.

Obstacle Character Domain Plot Progression

The Obstacle Character in a story never stands alone, but is always evaluated in terms of his impact on the Main Character. When encoding the Obstacle Character Domain Plot Progression, this is equally true. Unlike the Main Character Type Order which reflects the Main Character's Growth from one concern to another, the Obstacle Character Type Order reflects the progression of the Obstacle Character's impact on the Main Character. In other words, each of the four Obstacle Character Types describes a chink in the Main Character's armor, a weakness that is exploited by the Obstacle Character. This forces the Main Character to consider issues that will ultimately bring him to Change or remain Steadfast.

For example, in our sample story, the Obstacle Character Domain is in the Mind Class. As a result, the Obstacle Character Domain Types are Memory, Preconscious, Conscious, and Subconscious. This means that the Obstacle Character will (in some order) force the Main Character to remember (Memory), to respond differently when there is no time for consideration (Preconscious), to become aware of something (Conscious), and to desire something (Subconscious).

Encode the Obstacle Character's Types by the impact the Obstacle Character has in that area of concern on the Main Character. In this way, your Obstacle Character will *force* your Main Character to grow to a point of potential Change. That is the function and purpose of the Obstacle Character in a story.

Obstacle Character Domain Type Order Encoding

Example:

In this fictitious story example, the Obstacle Character Domain has been chosen as Mind. The Type order selected for the Obstacle Character is as follows: Preconscious, Conscious, Memory, and lastly Subconscious.

SIGNPOST #1

 **Type 1.** Preconscious

> *The Obstacle Character is a happy-go-lucky kind of guy. He sees justice and honor as being flexible, dependent upon the situation. His very attitude causes unthinking responses (Preconscious) in the Main Character, who reacts to every instance of the Obstacle Character's sliding scale of values as if he were shocked with an electric prod. The Obstacle Character's actions force the Main Character to lose his temper, make threats he later regrets, and smash things in a fit of self-righteous rage.*

JOURNEY #1

Type 1. Preconscious ------> **Type 2.** Conscious

As the Main Character becomes more obsessed with infiltrating the Consortium and edges toward putting himself under cover, the Obstacle Character's flexible ways infuriate him more and more. Eventually, the Obstacle Character has had enough of this, and begins to intentionally exhibit his easy attitude in front of the Main Character, so he can make him aware of situations in which rigid views just won't work.

SIGNPOST #2

Type 2. Conscious

The Obstacle Character carries the argument to the Main Character that no one is immune to temptation. Going under cover in the Consortium will surely cause the Main Character to break if he does not learn to bend. Prophetically, the Obstacle Character makes the Main Character aware (Conscious) that there are some situations in which a fixed code of ethics creates a paradox where one must re-examine one's ideals.

JOURNEY #2

Type 2. Conscious ------> **Type 3.** Memory

Coming to see that even though the Main Character is now aware of the issues involved, he still does not relent in his plans, The Obstacle Character begins to bring up "the old days" when they were both beat cops together, fresh out of growing up in the same neighborhood. The Obstacle Character uses the Main Character's memories to drive home the point that the Main Character was also flexible in those days, and they laughed at the stiffs who usually ended up getting killed or going crazy.

SIGNPOST #3

Type 3. Memory

The Main Character has gone so deeply under cover that no one at the agency has heard from him in days. The Obstacle Character contacts and meets with the Main Character, finding him caught in a web of self-doubt, unable to choose between sticking with his code or helping the children's hospital. The Obstacle Character forces the Main Character to remember their days growing up

together in the same neighborhood. Recalling how the Main Character's thinking was not always so black and white, he urges the Main Character to learn a lesson from those memories and bend with the wind, rather than snap under the pressures that are upon him.

JOURNEY #3

Type 3. Memory ------> **Type 4.** Subconscious

Unable to be in further contact with the Main Character who remains under cover, the Obstacle Character gets a few old friends from the early days to cross paths with the Main Character in the attempt to loosen him up. Each has been told by the Obstacle Character to remind the Main Character about "the old days" and how much fun they used to have, how many dreams they shared before they got "locked in" to the system.

(Note to authors: The Obstacle Character need not be physically present in order for his impact to be felt!)

SIGNPOST #4

Type 4. Subconscious

Now that the Main Character is back in the agency, the Obstacle Character passes judgment upon him. He tells the Main Character to look to his heart - look to all the noble things the Main Character had hoped to do in the political realm. The Obstacle Character asks the Main Character how he feels now, knowing that he has violated the very ideals he had intended to run on. "What does your heart tell you now?" he asks of the Main Character, then walks out leaving the dejected Main Character alone.

Subjective Story Domain Plot Progression

It is always best to work on the Subjective Story Domain last since it describes the growth of the relationship between the Main and Obstacle Characters, and therefore needs to call upon what was previously determined for them.

Imagine for a moment that the Main Character is a boxer. As an audience we stand in his shoes, effectively becoming him for the duration of the story. We look in the far corner and see our opponent, the Obstacle Character warming up for the bout. As the fight begins, we pass through changing concerns represented by the Main Character Domain Type Order. As the fight progresses, the Obstacle Character lands some telling blows. These are described by the Obstacle Character Type Order.

Outside the ring sit the judges. They do not stand in the shoes of the Main

Character, nor are they concerned, fearful, or impacted by the Obstacle Character's attack. Rather, the judges watch two fighters circling around the issues - maintaining the same relationship between them as adversaries, but covering different ground in the ring.

So it is with the Subjective Story Domain Type Order. As the first round begins, the Main and Obstacle Characters converge on a particular issue. They argue the issue, each from his own point of view. Once they have thrashed that topic into submission, they move on to another area of friction and continue sparring.

Example:

In this fictitious story example, the Subjective Story Domain has been chosen to be Psychology. The Type order selected for the Subjective Story is as follows: Conceptualizing, Conceiving, Being, and lastly Becoming.

SIGNPOST #1

 **Type 1.** Conceptualizing

> *Conceptualizing means working out a plan, model, belief system, or paradigm. In the Subjective Story, the Main and Obstacle Characters quickly come into conflict about how to look at the relationship between organized crime and law enforcement. The Main Character argues that law enforcement is like a breakwater, holding back an ocean of anarchy. The Obstacle Character sees the system more like an ecology, where each kind of activity has its place in an ever-changing environment.*

JOURNEY #1

 **Type 1.** Conceptualizing ------> **Type 2.** Conceiving

> *As new information about the increasing number of diamond heists builds, both the Main and Obstacle Characters approach the problem, arguing over how to put the clues into a meaningful pattern. When they discover the international Consortium, the Main Character looks for ways to stop it completely, while the Obstacle looks for ways to divert it. Based on his views, the Main Character Conceives of the need to place one of his agents deep within the Consortium as a mole. The Obstacle Character argues that the Main Character is thinking about it all wrong. They should be working out how to make the heists too difficult and costly a venture so the Consortium will go elsewhere to greener pastures*.

SIGNPOST #2

Type 2. Conceiving

Conceiving means coming up with an idea or determining a need. They finally come up with the idea of using the Main Character as the mole in an undercover operation, agreeing that this will be the best way to proceed given their two points of view. They both believe that this plan will not only achieve their purposes, but will also make the other see the error of his ways. The Main Character believes he will be able to prove that he can stop the Consortium dead in its tracks, and the Obstacle Character believes the Main Character will be forced to compromise and change his point of view.

JOURNEY #2

Type 2. Conceiving ------> **Type 3.** Being

As the Main and Obstacle Character come up with more ideas to help him rise among the Consortium, they realize they are still not seeing eye to eye on how to run this operation. The Main Character starts acting more and more impatient with the Obstacle Character, being more and more like the role he is playing to be in among the sting. The Obstacle Character starts taking on a different role, that of the Main Character's nagging conscience.

SIGNPOST #3

Type 3. Being

Being means acting a role or playing a part. With the Main Character now on the inside of the Consortium, he adopts the role of an up-and-coming organized crime boss. The Obstacle character is only allowed to see him while playing the role of his long-time friend and priest. Having to meet under the gaze of criminals, their relationship becomes one of play-acting.

JOURNEY #3

Type 3. Being ------> **Type 4.** Becoming

In their meetings, the Obstacle Character argues that if the Main Character is determined to follow through in his plan, and successfully become a mole in the Consortium, the Main Character needs to play the role better than he has been. This will mean acting ruthlessly and letting a few people get hurt. The Main Character argues that he will not cross his personal line, even if that choice blows his cover: if he acted like them, he says he would be no better than they are. The Obstacle Character points out that if the Main Character doesn't bend his own code a little more, they will both become suspected narcs and probably be exposed. This comes down to the choice between letting crime money be used to save the children's hospital or letting the hospital be shut down, and the Main Character chooses to save it.

SIGNPOST #4

Type 4. Becoming

Becoming means truly transforming one's nature. The Obstacle Character points out to the Main Character that The Main Character is no longer the self assured champion of righteousness he once was. He points out that there was no escaping the change that the Main Character made in his personal code to be able to bring the Consortium to some measure of justice. The Main Character responds that the angst he is suffering is a test of his moral fiber. Those who stand against the pressure and survive Become stronger for it. He throws the Obstacle Character out of his office yelling that they will never work together again, but it is clear that the Main Character has seen too much in himself and has become convinced that his moral ethics are no longer as powerful as they used to be.

Chapter 31

Storytelling & Encoding Genre

Encoding Genre

As previously discussed, Genre is only slightly influenced by a storyform. This is because only four appreciations have a structural influence on Genre: the four Domains. Once each Domain has been encoded, all the rest of the nebulous realm called Genre consists of storytelling preferences.

We have already explored the meaning of each Domain appreciation in the Genre portion of The Elements of Structure. In the next section on

Storyweaving, we will touch on many writing techniques that help to fashion Genre.

For now, let us simply recall that a story's Genre does not spring forth full-grown from the very first word. Rather, it begins as a generalization and gradually evolves into a more and more refined overall feel and tone until it becomes a unique Genre represented only the this single story.

As a caution, keep in mind that trying to be completely unique up front often alienates an audience. Conversely, failing to develop enough unique refinements over the course of a story makes it less than memorable. A safer approach is to start with the same general nature as any one of thousands of other stories and then slowly mold a new realm. This is much more audience-friendly and will still create a one-of-a-kind experience.

Medium and Format

Up to this point, we have explored the encoding process as if storyform and storytelling were the only concerns. This is only true in a theoretical sense. In practice, a story cannot be transmitted from author to audience except across a medium. The medium in which a story is presented both limits the tools available to the author, and provides uniquely useful tools. For example, motion pictures are not known for the capacity to present stories told in taste or touch or smell. Stage productions, however, have made effective use of all three. Also, a novel allows a reader to jump ahead if he desires, and examine aspects of the story out of order, something one cannot do in a movie.

Stories in many media are recorded to play back directly to the audience. Others are recorded as cues to performers and translated through them to the audience. Still others are not recorded at all and simply told. There can be as many media as there are means of conveying information.

Even within a single medium there may exist several formats. For example, in television there are half-hour three-camera formats, half-hour single-camera formats, one-hour and two-hour and mini-series formats. Also, time is not the only quality that defines a format. Soap operas, episodic series, and multi-storyline episodic series are but a few variations. Each of these formats offers dramatic opportunities and each operates under constraints. By exploring their demands and benefits, the process of encoding can be related to best advantage in each.

Chapter 32

The Art of Storytelling

Stage Three:
Storyweaving

Introduction To Storyweaving

Of the Four Stages of Communication, Storyweaving is most like what authors usually think of as the writing process. It is here that we gather everything we know about our story and decide how to present it to our audience.

Some authors are *planners* and like to work out everything before they write a word. For them, the Storyweaving process is simply determining the most interesting way to relate a story that, for them, is already complete in their minds. Another breed of author consider themselves *organic* writers, and jump headlong into the writing process, only discovering what their stories are about along the way. Most authors fall somewhere between these two extremes, working out portions of their stories to varying degrees, then jumping in with the intent to become inspired by the writing process to fill in the gaps.

Which technique is best? Whichever works for you. Writing should be a positive experience, not drudgery. If you are having headaches instead of triumphs, you might want to consider changing the balance between your degree of preparation and your spontaneous exploration. For anyone destined to write, the best mix can be found.

Of course, the proper mix of structure and stream of consciousness may change for an author from day to day. Some days may be good for working on the framework of a story. Other days it may be best to simply dive in and write. And the best mix can also change depending upon the subject matter or even the medium or format. Writing is not a science but an art. Still, like any art, science can improve the tools of the trade to make artistic expression more enjoyable and the finished product more reflective of the author's intent. This is where Dramatica can help.

As aids to structure, the Storyforming and Storyencoding stages of communication describe everything necessary to construct a complete argument. As tools for organic writing, Storyweaving and reception provide techniques that create results. As you approach a story, you will likely want to draw on many of these tools to fashion the story you have in mind in the manner that brings the most creative fulfillment.

Having now set the stage, as it were, of how Storyweaving fits into the writing process, let's explore some of the tricks of the trade.

Chapter 34

Storyweaving & Storytelling

There are two kinds of storytelling: techniques, those that affect the arrangement of things (spatial) and those that affect the sequence of things (temporal). In Dramatica theory, we have cataloged four different techniques of each kind.

Spatial techniques:

Building size (changing scope)

This technique holds audience interest by revealing the true size of something over the course of the story until it can be seen to be either larger or smaller than it originally appeared. This makes things appear to grow or diminish as the story unfolds.

Conspiracy stories are usually good examples of increasing scope, as only the tip of the iceberg first comes to light and the full extent is ultimately much bigger. The motion picture The Parallax View illustrates this nicely. Stories about things being less extensive than they originally appear are not unlike The Wizard Of Oz in which a seemingly huge network of power turns out to be just one man behind a curtain. Both of these techniques are used almost as a sub-genre in science fiction stories, recently notable in Star Trek The Next Generation.

Red herrings (changing importance)

Red herrings are designed to make something appear more or less important than it really is. Several good examples of this technique can be found in the motion picture The Fugitive. In one scene a police car flashes its lights and siren at Dr. Kimble, but only to tell him to move along. In another scene, Kimble is in his apartment when an entire battalion of police show up with sirens blazing and guns drawn. It turns out they were really after the son of his landlord and had no interest in him at all. Red herrings can inject storytelling tension where more structurally related weaving may be lethargic. (Note the difference from changing size, which concentrates on the changing extent of something, rather than re-evaluations of its power.)

Meaning Reversals (shifting context to change meaning)

Reversals change context. In other words, part of the meaning of anything we consider is due to its environment. The phrase, *guilt by association,* expresses this notion. In Storyweaving, we can play upon audience empathy and sympathy by making it like or dislike something, only to have it find out it was mistaken. There is an old Mickey Mouse cartoon called Mickey's Trailer which exemplifies this nicely. The story opens with Mickey stepping from his house in the country with blue skies and white clouds. He yawns, stretches, then pushes a button on the house. All at once, the lawn roll up, the fence folds in and the house becomes a trailer. Then, the sky and clouds fold up revealing the trailer is actually parked in a junkyard. Certainly a reversal from our original understanding.

Message Reversals (shifting context to change message)

In the example above, the structure of the story actually changed from what we thought it was. In contrast, when we shift context to create a different message , the structure remains the same, but our appreciation of it changes. This can be seen very clearly in a Twilight Zone episode entitled, Invaders, in which Agnes Moorhead plays a lady alone on a farm besieged by aliens from another world. The aliens in question are only six inches tall, wear odd space suits and attack the simple country woman with space age weapons. Nearly defeated, she finally musters the strength to overcome the little demons, and smashes their miniature flying saucer. On its side we see the American Flag, the letters U.S.A. and hear the last broadcast of the landing team saying they have been slaughtered by a giant. Now, the structure didn't change, but our sympathies sure did, which was the purpose of the piece.

Temporal techniques:

Building importance (changing impact)

In this technique, things not only appear more or less important, but actually become so. This was also a favorite of Hitchcock in such films as North By Northwest and television series like MacGuyver. In another episode of The Twilight Zone, for example, Mickey Rooney plays a jockey who gets his wish to be big, only to be too large to run the race of a lifetime.

Non-causality

There is often a difference between what an audience expects and what logically must happen. A prime example occurs in the Laurel and Hardy film, The Music Box. Stan and Ollie are piano movers. The setup is their efforts to get a piano up a quarter mile flight of stairs to a hillside house. Every time they

get to the top, one way or another it slides down to the bottom again. Finally, they get it up there only to discover the address is on the second floor! So, they rig a block and tackle and begin to hoist the piano up to the second floor window. The winch strains, the rope frays, the piano sways. And just when they get the piano up to the window, they push it inside without incident.

After the audience has been conditioned by the multiple efforts to get the piano up the stairs, pushing it in the window without mishap has the audience rolling in the aisles, as they say.

Out of sequence experiences (changing temporal relationships)

With this technique, the audience is unaware they are being presented things out of order. Such a story is the motion picture, Betrayal, with Ben Kingsley. The story opens and plays through the first act. We come to determine whom we side with and whom we don't: who is naughty and who is nice. Then, the second act begins. It doesn't take long for us to realize that this action actually happened *before* the act we have just seen. Suddenly, all the assumed relationships and motivations of the characters must be re-evaluated, and many of our opinions have to be changed. This happens again with the next act, so that only at the end of the movie are we able to be sure of our opinions about the first act we saw, which was the last act in the story.

A more recent example is Pulp Fiction in which we are at first unaware that things are playing out of order. Only later in the film do we catch on to this, and are then forced to alter our opinions.

Flashbacks and flash-forwards (sneak previews and postviews)

There is a big difference between flashbacks where a character reminisces and flashbacks that simply transport an audience to an earlier time. If the characters are aware of the time shift, it affects their thinking, and is therefore part of the story's structure. If they are not, the flashback is simply a Storyweaving technique engineered to enhance the audience experience.

In the motion picture and book of Interview With The Vampire, the story is a structural flashback, as we are really concerned with how Louis will react once he has finished relating these events from his past. In contrast, in Remains Of The Day, the story is presented out of sequence for the purpose of comparing aspects of the characters lives in ways only the audience can appreciate. Even Pulp Fiction employs that technique once the cat is out of the bag that things are not in order. From that point forward, we are looking for part of the author's message to be *outside* the structure, in the realm of storytelling.

Technique Wrap-up

As long as the audience is able to discern the story's structure by the time it is over, the underlying argument will be clear. Beyond that, there is no law that says if, when, or in what combinations these Storyweaving techniques can be brought into play. That is part of the art of storytelling, and as such is best left to the muse.

The one area we have not yet explored is the impact medium and format have on Storyweaving techniques. Not to leave a stone un-turned, Dramatica has a few tips for several of these.

Chapter 35

Storyweaving Tips for Short Stories

How to Make Short, a Story

The Dramatica model contains an entire Grand Argument Storyform. There is simply not enough room in a short story, however, to cover all aspects of a Grand Argument. The worst thing to do is arbitrarily hack off chunks of the Grand Argument Story in an attempt to whittle things down. A better solution is to limit the *scope* of the argument. This can best be done by focusing on a single Class or eliminating a level of resolution (such as Objective Characters or Theme).

Two Ways to Limit Scope

When limited to one Class, the story will be told from only one point of view: Main Character, Obstacle Character, Objective Story Throughline, or Subjective Story Throughline. Because storyforms are holographic, the gist of the argument is made but only "proven" within the confines of that point of view.

When limiting to fewer resolutions, a whole level of examination is removed, effectively obscuring a portion of the exploration and leaving it dark. Again, the gist of the topic is explored but only in the illuminated areas.

In the case of a single-Class story, the argument appears one-sided, and

indeed it is. In the limited-resolution story, the exploration of the topic seems somewhat shallow but is complete as deep as it goes.

Ultra-Short Stories

When writing VERY short stories, these two methods of "paring down" the information are often combined, resulting in a loss of perspective AND detail. So how small can a story be and still be a story? The minimal story consists of four dramatic units in a quad. This is the tiniest story that can create an interference pattern between the flow of space and time, encoding both reason and emotion in a way than can be decoded by an audience. However, ANY quad will do, which leads to a great number of minimal stories.

Tips for Episodic Television Series

Characters in Episodic Series

Keeping Characters Alive

Unlike single stories that are told from scratch, television stories have "carry-over." That which is established becomes embedded in the mythic lore of the series, creating an inertia that strangles many fine concepts before their time. This inertia can be a very good thing if it forms a foundation that acts as a stage for the characters rather than burying the characters under the foundation.

To keep a limber concept from succumbing to arthritis in this concrete jungle, creating characters who can portray the full Element level of the structural storyform and making choices that shift the dynamics from episode to episode are required to keep things lively.

Archetypal Characters

Many episodic series rely on Archetypal Characters who can be counted on to respond in the same way from episode to episode. This caters to the strengths of television series with a loyal audience: the ability to create friends and family on which one can rely.

The first few episodes of a series usually bring in the "Villain of the Week" (essentially a new Archetypal Antagonist each time) while the Archetypal roles are becoming established for the regular cast and the mythic lore is being outlined. This formula wears thin rather quickly as the characters fall into predictable relationships with each other. They assume standard roles from which they never vary until the series loses its ratings and is canceled.

Swapping Roles

A solution to this growing inflexibility is to change the formula after a few "establishing" episodes. If one keeps the Objective Characters the same for stability but swaps the Subjective Character roles, the dynamics of the character inter-relationships change even while the structure remains the same. This means the Protagonist is still the Protagonist, Reason is still Reason and so on, but Reason may be the Main Character of the week and Protagonist the Obstacle Character. By shifting Subjective Character roles, several season's worth of character variations can be created without any repeats and the loyal audience's attention is retained.

To further break up the routine, occasional stories can focus on one of the Objective Characters as Protagonist and Main Character in his own story, without the other cast members. For this episode only, a whole new ensemble is assembled as if it were a story independent of the series. Obviously, too much of this weakens the mythic lore, so this technique should be used sparingly.

Characters of the Week

On the other hand, many successful series have been built around a single character who travels into new situations from week to week, meeting a whole new cast of characters each time. This forms the equivalent of an anthology series, except the Main Character recurs from week to week.

A means of generating character variety is to occasionally assign this recurring character to roles other than that of Protagonist. Instead of telling every episode as revolving around the recurring character, have that character be Guardian or Antagonist or Skeptic to some other Protagonist. This technique has allowed many "on the road" series to remain fresh for years.

Plot in Episodic Series

Plot is the aspect of episodic series most plagued with formula. This is because of a predictable *Dramatic Circuit*. A Dramatic Circuit is made up of a Potential, Resistance, Current, and Outcome. Each of these aspects must be present to create the flow of dramatic tension.

Conventions have been established that often follow the order indicated above. Each episode begins with the potential for trouble either as the first act in a half-hour series or as the teaser in an hour series. In half-hour series, the next act brings in a Resistance to threaten conflict with the Potential. Hour-long series present an act establishing the status quo that the Potential is about to disrupt,

then present an act on the Resistance. Next follows the Current act in which Potential and Resistance conflict. In the final act, Potential and Resistance "have it out" with one or the other coming out on top. Some series favor the Potential winning, others the Resistance, still others alternate depending on the mood of the producers, writers and stars.

Some feel this kind of formula is a good pattern to establish because the audience becomes comfortable with the flow. Sometimes this is true, but unless the Character, Theme, and Domain of each episode varies the audience will wind up getting bored instead. More interesting approaches vary which function of the Dramatic Circuit comes first and jumble up the order of the others as well. Starting with an Outcome and showing how it builds to a Potential, then leaving that Potential open at the end of the story can make plots seem inspired. Many a notable comedy series has its occasional bitter-sweet ending where all the pieces don't come together.

Theme in Episodic Series

Often in episodic series, "themes" are replaced with "topics." Although Dramatica refers to the central thematic subject as a Topic, common usage sees topics as hot subjects of the moment. This makes topics an element of storytelling, not storyform. Frequently, the actual thematic topic is missing or only hinted at in the exploration of a news topic.

For example, the "topic of the week" in a typical series might be "Babies for Sale." But is that a Theme? Not hardly. What is interesting about Babies for Sale? Are we exploring someone's Strategy or Worry or Responsibility or Morality? Any of these or any of the 60 other Variations could be the thematic topic of "Babies for Sale."

To involve the audience emotionally, the theme of each episode must be distinct, clearly defined and fully explored in essential human ways -- not just revolving around a news item.

Genre in Episodic Series

Series can be comedies, action stories, love stories -- whatever. The key point to consider is that Dramatica Domains work in any Genre. To keep a "high" concept from bottoming out, rotate through the Domains, using a different one each week. There are only four Domains: a Situation, an Activity, a Manner of Thinking and a State of Mind. A Situation Comedy (Situation) is quite different from a Comedy of Errors (a Manner of Thinking). Whatever Genre the series is cast in, bouncing the episodes through the Domains keeps the Genre fresh. In addition, jumping among genres from time to time can spice up the flavor of a series that has begun to seem like leftovers from the same meal, week to week.

Tips for Multi-Story Ensemble Series and Soap Operas

Subplots

The least complex form of the Multi-Story Ensemble Series employs the use of subplots. Subplots are tales or stories drawn with less resolution than the principal story. They hinge on one of the principal story's characters other than the Main Character. This hinge character becomes the Main Character of the subplot story.

Subplots are never essential to the progression of the principal plot and only serve to more fully explore issues tangential to the principal story's argument. "Tangent" is a good word to use here, as it describes something that touches upon yet does not interfere with something else.

Subplots may begin at any time during the course of the principal story, but should wrap up just before the principal climax, or just after in the denouement (author's proof).

Relationships of Subplots to Plot

Since subplots are essentially separate stories, they may or may not reflect the values and concerns of the principal story. This allows an author to complement or counterpoint the principal argument. Frequently a subplot becomes a parallel of the principal story in another storytelling context, broadening the scope of the principal argument by inference to include all similar situations. In contrast, the subplot may arrive at the opposite conclusion, indicating that the solution for one storytelling situation is not universally appropriate.

There can be as many subplots in a story as time allows. Each one, however, must hinge on a character who is essential to the principal story (as opposed to a character merely created for storytelling convenience). Each character can only head up a single subplot, just as the Main Character of the principal story cannot carry any additional subplots. However, the Main Character can (and often does) participate in a subplot as one of its objective characters.

Multi-Story Formats

Other than subplots, Multi-Story Series can contain several stories that are not related at all. In this case, there may be two or more completely independent sets of characters who never cross paths. Or an author may choose to interweave these independent stories so that the characters come into contact, but only in an incidental way. In a sense, this form is sort of a "spatial

anthology" wherein multiple stories are told not in succession but simultaneously.

Perhaps the most complex form of the Multi-Story Ensemble Series is when both subplots and separate stories are employed. Often, the subplots and the separate stories both use the principal story's characters as well as characters that do not come into play in the principal story.

Stretching Time

An over-abundance of storytelling becomes difficult to conclude within the limits of even a one-hour show. Therefore, single episodes can be treated more like acts with stories sometimes running over four or more episodes. Each episode might also contain subplots staggered in such a way that more than one may conclude or begin in the middle of another subplot which continues over several episodes.

Obviously, a lot of cross-dynamics can be going on here. It is the author's job as storyteller to make sure the audience is aware at all times as to which story or subplot they are seeing and what the character's roles are in each context. This is essential, since no internal storyform is controlling all of the independent stories. They are held together here only by the connective tissue of storytelling.

Tips for Novels

Novels, like all forms of prose, employ "stretchy time" where (unlike plays) individual audience members can proceed through the work at their own pace. They can also re-experience important or personally meaningful sections and skip sections. As a result, in novels an author can play with storytelling in ways that would be ineffective with the audience of a stage play.

More than most formats, the author can meander in a novel without losing his audience. This is a wonderful opportunity to explore areas of personal interest, develop a particularly intriguing character, harp on a message or engage in a fantasy in public.

Of course, if you intend to tell an actual story in your novel, then the storyform has to be in there somewhere. However, with stretchy time in effect, time is not of the essence and one can afford to stray from the path and play in the fields on the way to Grandmother's house.

Tips for Motion Pictures

The Rule of Threes

Many rules and guidelines work fine until you sit down to write. As soon as you get inspired, creative frenzy takes over and the muse bolts forward like a mad bull. But there is one rule of thumb that sticks out like a sore thumb: the Rule of Threes.

Interactions and the Rule of Threes

Objective Characters represent dramatic functions which need to interact to reflect all sides of solving the story problem. The first interaction sets the relationship between the two characters. The second interaction brings them into conflict. The third interaction demonstrates which one fare better, establishing one as more appropriate than the other.

This is true between Protagonist and Antagonist, Protagonist and Skeptic, Skeptic and Sidekick -- in short, between all essential characters in a story. A good guide while writing is to arrange at least three interactions between each pairing of characters. In this manner, the most concise, yet complete portrayal can be made of essential storyform dynamics.

Introductions

Each of the characters must be introduced before the three interactions occur, and they must be dismissed after the three interactions are complete. These two functions set-up the story and then disband it, much like one might put up a grandstand for a parade and then tear it down after the event is over. This often makes it feel like there are five acts in a story when three are truly dynamic acts and two have been "borrowed" from the structure.

The introduction of characters is so well known that it is often forgotten by the author. A character's intrinsic nature must be illustrated *before* he interacts with any of the Objective Characters. This is so basic that half the time it doesn't happen and the story suffers right from the start. (Keep in mind that an author can use storytelling to "fool" his audience into believing a character has a given nature, only to find out it made assumptions based on too little information in the wrong context.)

Introductions can be on-camera or off. They can be in conversation about a character, reading a letter that character wrote, seeing the way they decorate their apartment -- anything that describes their natures.

Dismissals

The Rule of Threes should be applied until all of the primary characters are played against each other to see what sparks are flying. Once we get the picture, it is time to dismiss the company. Dismissals can be as simple as a death or as complex as an open-ended indication of the future for a particular character. When all else fails, just before the ending crawl a series of cards can be shown: "Janey Schmird went on to become a New Age messiah while holding a day job as a screenplay writer."

The point is, the audience needs to say good-bye to their new friends or foes.

Hand-offs

Hand-offs and Missing Links

Often we may find that a particular point of view needs to be expressed in a given scene but the character that represents that view has gone off to Alaska. Why did we send him to Alaska? Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time. But now... Do we go back and rewrite the entire plot, have him take the next flight home or blow it off and let the lackluster scene languish in his absence? None of the above. We could do those things, but there are two other choices that often prove much more satisfying as well as less destructive to what has already been written. One method refers to characters in absentia, the other is the hand-off.

Characters in Absentia

The function of characters in a scene is not to establish their physical presence, but to represent their points of view on the topic at hand. As long as they fulfill that mandate and throw their two-cents into the mix, their actual presence is not required.

As authors, how can we represent a character's point of view in a scene without having to haul him in and place him there? Perhaps the easiest way is to have other characters talk about the missing character and relate the opinion that character would have expressed if he had been present. For example, one character might say, "You know, if Charlie were here he'd be pissed as hell about this!" The conversation might continue with another character taking a contrary position on what old Charlie's reaction might be until the two have argued the point to some conclusion much as if Charlie had been there in spirit.

Other techniques might use an answering machine message, a letter, diary or

video interview from the character in question that is examined in the course of a scene. Many current stories use a murder victim's videotaped will to include him in scenes involving his money-grubbing heirs. More subtle but potentially even more effective is for one character to examine the apartment, studio, or other habitat of a missing character and draw conclusions based on the personality expressed in the furnishings and artifacts there. Even the lingering effect of processes a character started before he left, or other characters' memories of the missing character can position him in the midst of intense dramatic interchanges without his actual attendance.

Still, for some storytelling purposes, a live body is needed to uphold and represent a point of view. If there is just no way to bring the character who contains those characteristics into the scene personally, an author can assign a proxy instead. This is accomplished by a temporary transfer of dramatic function from one character to another called a hand-off.

What is a Hand-off?

A hand-off occurs when one *player* temporarily takes on the story function of a missing *player*. This new player carries the dramatic flag for the scene in question, then hands it back to the original player upon his return.

Doesn't this violate the Dramatica guideline that every Objective Character is the sole representative of his unique characteristics? Not really. Having one character be the sole representative of a characteristics is a guideline, not a law. The essential part of that guideline is that a character does not change his internal inventory of characteristics during the course of the story. A *player*, however, is not bound by that restriction.

In a hand-off the player is not actually giving up a characteristic because he isn't around when another character is using it, so technically the first player is never seen without it. But due to this, he cannot share characteristics with other players *at the same time*. If he did, two characters might be trying to represent the same point of view in the same scene, making dramatic tension just go limp.

How to Do Hand-offs

When we employ the hand-off, we actually create two players to represent the same trait at different times. It is reminiscent of time-sharing a condo. In any given scene, a single point of view might be represented by character "A" or by character "B," but never by both in the same scene.

Most often, one of the players will be a *major* player and the other just a "plot device" player of convenience who appears for one scene and is never heard from again. Such players just fill in the gaps. Sometimes, both players prove intriguing to the author and each becomes a major player. The difficulty then

arises that at the climax of the story, both players might still be alive and kicking and therefore suddenly converge in an awkward moment. No matter what you do, it's going to be klunky. Still, if you must have both present, it's best to either make a statement in the story that they have the same characteristic(s), thereby binding them in the mind of the audience, or deal with them one after another.

A special case exists when (for whatever reason) an author decides to terminate a player from the story. This can be a result of sending the player to its death, to the Moon or just having it leave at some point and not return. Often, this technique is used to shock an audience or throw them a red herring. Unless the functions represented by the discontinued player reappear in another player, however, part of the story's argument will disappear at the point the original drops out. In the attempt to surprise an audience by killing off a major player, many an author has doomed an otherwise functional storyform.

There are two primary ways in which a discontinued player's functions can continue without him. Certainly the easiest is to bring in a new player who is dramatically identical to the first, although its personal attributes are usually quite different. Often the storytelling requirements of a plot deem one player more suited to part of a story and another player to be more in line with the rest. By killing off the first player but continuing its dramatic function through a new player, both purposes can be served to the best storytelling effect without a loss of dramatic continuity. The major caveat is that the audience must be made aware that this "dead hand-off" has occurred so it does not suddenly sense a vacuum in the story's argument. This may require a fair amount of introduction to solidly place the new player in the old role.

The second technique for replacing a player yet continuing the character's functions is to divide the functions among several new players, each representing only a portion of what had previously been contained in one. Naturally, these new players would be less complex than their predecessor, which may diminish nuance at certain levels of the story. On the plus side, this method scatters the functions into new bodies, allowing for external conflicts between functions that were previously blended into a single individual. Once again, informing the audience of who got what is essential to the smooth progression of this type of hand-off.

Chapter 36

The Art of Storytelling

Stage 4:
Story Reception

About the Audience

What do you have in mind?

Few authors write stories without at least considering what it will be like to read the story or see it on stage or screen. As soon as this becomes a concern, we have crossed the line into Reception theory. Suddenly, we have more to consider than what our story's message is; we now must try to anticipate how that message will be received.

One of the first questions then becomes, how do we *want* it to be received. And from this, we ask, what am I hoping to achieve with my audience. We may wish to educate our audience, or we may simply want to bias them. Perhaps we are out to persuade our audience to adopt a point of view, or simply to pander to an existing point of view. We might provoke our audience, forcing them to consider some topic or incite them to take action in regard to a topic. We could openly manipulate them with their informed consent, or surreptitiously propagandize them, changing their outlook without their knowledge.

No matter what our author's intent, it is shaped not only by who we are, but also by who the audience is that we are trying to reach.

Who are you talking to?

You are reading this book because you want to use the Dramatica theory and/or software to help you record something you are thinking about or feeling. For whatever reasons, you have decided you want to record something of yourself in a communicable form.

A primary question then becomes: to whom do you intend to communicate? You might simply wish to communicate to yourself. You may be documenting transient feelings that you wish to recall vividly in the future. Or you may want to capture the temporal ramblings of your chain of thought and then stand back to see what pattern it makes. Self-searching is often a primary objective of an author's endeavor.

Writing for Someone Else

What if you are writing not for yourself but to reach someone else? It might be that you hope to reach a single individual which can be done in a letter to a friend, parent, or child. You might be composing an anecdote or speech for a small or large group, or you could be creating an industrial film, designing a text book, or fashioning a timeless work for all humanity.

In each case, the scope of your audience becomes more varied as its size

increases. The opportunity to tailor your efforts to target your audience becomes less practical, and the symbols used to communicate your thoughts and feelings become more universal and simultaneously less specific.

The audience can thus range from writing for yourself to writing for the world. In addition, an author's labors are often geared toward a multiplicity of audiences, including both himself and others as well. Knowing one's intended audience is essential to determining form and format. It allows one to select a medium and embrace the kind of communication that is most appropriate -- perhaps even a story.

Dramatica and Communication Theory

Exploring all avenues of communication is far beyond the scope of this initial implementation of the Dramatica Theory. To be sure, Dramatica (as a model of the mind) has much to offer in many diverse areas. However, for the practical purposes of this software product, we cannot cover that much ground. Rather, we will briefly touch on major perspectives in the author/audience relationship that can also serve as templates for translation of the Grand Argument Story perspective into valuable tools for other forms of communication. In this manner, the usefulness of this specific software implementation can extend beyond its immediate purpose. (What does this say about OUR intended audience?)

Writing for Oneself

In the Great Practical World of the Almighty Dollar Sign, it might seem trite or tangential to discuss writing for oneself (unless one expects to pay oneself handsomely for the effort). In truth, the rewards of writing for oneself DO pay handsomely, and not just in personal satisfaction. By getting in touch with one's own feelings, by discovering and mapping out one's biases, an author can grow to appreciate his own impact on the work as being in addition to the structure of the work itself. An author can also become more objective about ways to approach his audience. (And yes, one can gain a lot of personal insight and satisfaction as well.)

The Author as Main Character

As an experiment, cast yourself in a story as the Main Character. Cast someone with whom you have a conflict as the Obstacle Character. Next, answer all the Dramatica questions and then go to the Story Points window. Fill in as many of the story points as seem appropriate to you. Print out the results and put them aside.

Now, go back and create the same story again -- this time with your "opponent" as the Main Character and YOU as the Obstacle Character. Once again, fill in the story points and print them out. Compare them to the first results. You will

likely find areas in which the story points are the same and other areas in which they are different.

These points of similarity and divergence will give you a whole new perspective on the conflicts between you and your adversary. Often, this is the purpose of an author when writing for himself. Thoughts and feelings can be looked at more objectively on paper than hidden inside your head. Just seeing them all jumbled up together rather than as a sequence goes a long way to uncovering meaning that was invisible by just trotting down the path. After all, how can we ever hope to understand the other person's point of view while trying to see it from our perspective?

A wise woman once said, "Don't tell me what you'd do if you were me. If you were me, you'd do the same thing because I AM ME and that's what I'm doing! Tell me what *you'd* do if you were in my situation."

Documenting Oneself

Another purpose in writing for oneself is simply to document what it was like to be in a particular state of mind. In a sense, we jot down the settings of our minds so that we can tune ourselves back into that state as needed at a later date. The images we use may have meaning for no one but ourselves, and therefore speak to us uniquely of all people. The ability to capture a mood is extremely useful when later trying to communicate that mood to others. To bring emotional realism to another requires being in the mood oneself. What better intuitive tool than emotional snapshots one can count on to regenerate just the feelings one wants to convey. To make an argument, *accept* the argument. To create a feeling, *experience* the feeling.

Who is "Me"?

A simple note is stuck to the refrigerator door: "Call me when you get home." Who is "me?" It depends on who you are asking. Ask the author of the note and he would say it was "myself." Ask the recipient of the note and they would say, "It's him." So the word "me" has different meanings depending upon who is looking at it. To the author, it means the same when they wrote it as when they read it as an audience. To the intended audience, however, it means something quite different.

In life, we assume one point of view at a time. In stories, however, we can juxtapose two points of view, much as we blend the images from two eyes. We can thus look AT a Main Character's actions and responses even as we look through his eyes. This creates an interference pattern that provides much more depth and meaning than either view has separately.

My "Me" is Not Your "Me"

When writing for others, if we *assume* they share our point of view, it is likely that we will miss making half of our own point. Far better are our chances of successful communication if we not only see things from our side but theirs as well. Overlaying the two views can define areas of potential misunderstanding before damage is done. Still, "Call me when you get home" is usually a relatively low-risk communication and we suggest you just write the note without too much soul-searching.

Writing for Groups

What Binds a Group?

Groups are not clumps. They are conglomerations of individuals, bound together (to various degrees) by an aspect of shared interests or traits. Sometimes the common theme can be an ideology, occupation, physical condition, or situation. Sometimes the only thread of similarity is that they all gathered together to be an audience.

Do readers of novels "group" as an audience? Certainly not in the physical sense, yet fans of a particular writer or genre or subject matter are bound by their common interest. Regular viewers of a television series start out as individuals and become a group through bonding of experience. They know the classic "bits" and the characters' idiosyncrasies. In fact, the series' audience becomes a group representing a fictional culture that ultimately becomes one more sub-cultural template in actual society. Works can indeed *create* groups as well as attract them.

What Binds Us All Together

What of the "captive" audience that has no sense of what they are about to experience, yet are gathered in a classroom or reception room or boardroom or theater? What of the audience attending the first telecast of a new series, knowing little of what to expect?

Underneath all the common threads binding an audience together is a group of individuals. Each one is responsive to the same essential mental processes as the next. It is this intrinsic sameness -- not of ideas but of the way in which ideas are formed -- that makes us all part of the group we call humans. At this most basic level, we are all part of the same group.

Symbolic Identification

Throughout this book we have stressed the difference between story*forming* and story*telling*. A clear communication requires succinct storyforming. Communicating clearly requires appropriate storytelling.

What makes storytelling appropriate? The fact that the symbols used to encode the storyform are both understood in denotation and connotation by the intended audience. If the audience misreads the symbols, the message will be weakened, lost, or polluted.

Identifying with one's audience is not enough: one must also *identify* one's audience. It is all well and good to feel part of the group. But it can be a real danger to assume that identification with a group leads to clear communication in appropriate symbols or clear reception by all audience members.

Chapter 37

Storytelling: Reception & Propaganda

A Quick Lesson in Propaganda

Propaganda**, n. 1. any organization or movement working for the propagation of particular ideas, doctrines, practices, etc. 2. the ideas, doctrines, practices, etc. spread in this way.* ***(Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary)

Propaganda:** 3. a storyforming/storytelling technique used to impact an audience in specific ways, often employed to instigate deliberation and/or action.* ***(Dramatica)

Propaganda is a wondrous and dangerous story device. Its primary usage in stories is as a method for an author to impact an audience long after they have experienced the story itself. Through the use of propaganda, an author can inspire an audience to think certain ways, think about certain things, behave certain ways, and take specific actions. Like fire and firearms, propaganda can be used constructively and destructively and does not contain an inherent morality. Any morality involved comes from the minds of the author and his audience.

This section is not about the morality of propaganda. It is designed as a primer

on how to create and employ propaganda in stories. With that in mind, let's get down to the nitty-gritty.

The Basics of Propaganda

The human mind seeks to understand itself and the world around it. It does this through various ways including organizing information into meaningful patterns. Depending on the quantity of the information and the accuracy of its interpretation, a mind will identify a pattern (or several potential patterns) and supply the apparently "missing" pieces to make the pattern, and therefore meaning, complete. This pattern matching and filling in of missing pieces is intrinsic to the processes that create the human "mind." By choosing which piece(s) of the storyform to omit, authors can manipulate the impact a story will have on the minds of their audiences.

In its most basic form, propaganda is a way for authors to have an audience share their point of view. Closed (or complete) stories allow authors to present their points of view in the form of an argument which the audience can then take or leave. Open (or incomplete) stories require their audiences to supply the missing pieces in order to get meaning from the story. Just creating an open story, however, does not create propaganda. There must be a pattern to what is missing.

The amount and nature of the missing pieces have a tremendous effect on the story's propagandistic impact. If you leave too much out of your story, an audience may not make the effort to "fill-in-the-blanks." The story may then be interpreted by the audience as meaningless. If, however, you selectively leave out specific pieces of the storyform, the audience may unknowingly fill in those holes with aspects of its personal experience. In this way, the story changes from an argument made by the author **to** the audience, to an argument made by the author **and** the audience. Unwittingly, the audience begins to share the author's point of view and perhaps even become coconspirators in its propagation: ergo, propaganda.

Since a propaganda story is based upon a tenuous relationship between an audience and an author, both perspectives should be considered to understand the techniques that can be used and the results that can be achieved.

The Audience

Knowing (or preparing) your audience can have a tremendous effect on how your propaganda will impact them. Here are some rules of thumb:

- The more specific the symbols you use to encode your story, the more limited an audience it will affect. The less specific the symbols, the greater potential audience.

- The more specific the symbols used to encode the story, the greater the likelihood it will have an impact on the portion of the audience that understands the symbols. The less specific the symbols, the less impact the story will have.

- The more familiar an audience is with the symbols used to encode a story, the more susceptible they are to propaganda. The less familiar, the less susceptible.

The Author

Here are the things an author should consider while creating a propaganda story:

1. Nature of Impact

How you want to impact your audience? Do you wish to play with your audience's:

- Motivations (what drives them)

- Methodologies (how they go about doing things)

- Purposes (what they are striving for)

- Means of evaluation (how they measure their progress - their personal yardsticks)?

Pick only one as the area of primary impact. This will become the area of the storyform that you purposefully omit when storytelling. The remaining three areas will be used to support your intent by drawing attention away from the missing piece(s).

2. Area of Impact

What part of your audience's world-view do you wish to impact?

- View of the world around them - "objective reality" (Objective Story)

View of relationships (Subjective Story)

View of themselves (Main Character)

View of others (Obstacle Character)

Choose one of the perspectives. This will be the domain in which to place the "hole" in the storyform. The area of impact determines which part of your audience's world-view the propaganda will "infect."

3. Type of Impact: Specific vs. General

Do you want the impact on your audience to be of a specific nature, or of a broader, more general nature?

The more specific you make the propaganda, the more specific and predictable its impact will be on an audience. The upside (from an author's point of view) is that specific behavior (mental or physical) can be promoted or modified. The downside is that specific propaganda is more easily identifiable and therefore contestable by the audience.

Specific propaganda is achieved by intentionally not encoding selected story appreciations, such as the Main Character's motivation or the story Outcome (Success or Failure). The audience will supply the missing piece from its own personal experiences (e.g. the Main Character's motivation in Thelma and Louise.; what happened to Louise in Texas that prevents her from ever going back is specifically *not* mentioned in the film - that blank is left for the audience to fill).

The more general you make the propaganda, the less specific but all-pervasive its impact will be on an audience. Instead of focusing impact on the audience's motivations, methodologies, purposes, or means of evaluation, generalized propaganda will tend to bias the audience's perspectives of their world. The upside (from an author's point of view) is that generalized propaganda is difficult for an audience to identify and therefore more difficult to combat than the specific form of propaganda. The downside is that it does not promote any specific type of behavior or thought process and its direct impact is less discernible.

General propaganda is achieved by intentionally not encoding entire areas of the story's structure or dynamics. For example, by leaving out almost all forms of the story's internal means of evaluation, Natural Born Killers forces its audience to focus on the methodologies involved and question its own (the members of the audience) means of evaluation.

4. Degree of Impact

To what degree do you wish to impact your audience? The degree to which you can impact an audience is dependent on many variables not the least of which are your storytelling skills and the nature of the audience itself. There are some basic guidelines, however, that can mitigate and sometimes supersede those variables when skillfully employed.

Shock as Propaganda

One tried-and-true method is to control what an audience knows about the story before experiencing the storytelling process so that you can shock them. Within the context of the story itself (as opposed to marketing or word-of-mouth), an author can prepare the audience by establishing certain *givens*, then purposefully break the storyform (destroy the givens) to shock or jar the audience. This hits the audience at a Preconscious level by soliciting an instantaneous, knee-jerk reaction. This type of propaganda is the most specific and immediately jarring on its audience. Two films that employed this technique to great effect are *Psycho* and *The Crying Game*.

Psycho broke the storyform to impact the audience's preconscious by killing the main character twenty minutes or so into the film (the "real" story about the Bates family then takes over). The *shock* value was enhanced through marketing by having the main character played by big box office draw Janet Leigh (a good storytelling choice at the time) and the marketing gimmick that no one would be allowed into the movie after the first five or ten minutes. This "gimmick" was actually essential for the propaganda to be effective. It takes time for an audience to identify on a personal level with a main character. Coming in late to the film would not allow enough time for the audience member to identify with Janet Leigh's character and her death would have little to no impact.

The Crying Game used a slightly different process to achieve a similar impact. The first twenty minutes or so of the film are used to establish a bias to the main character's (and audience's) view of reality. The "girlfriend" is clearly established except for one important fact. That "fact," because it is not explicitly denoted, is supplied by the mind of the main character (and the minds of the audience members). By taking such a long time to prep the audience, it comes as a shock when we (both main character and audience) find out that *she* is a *he*.

Awareness as Propaganda

Another method is to be up-front about the nature of the propaganda, letting your audience know what you are doing as you do it to them. This impacts an audience at a Conscious level where they must actively consider the pros and cons of the issues. The propaganda comes from controlling the givens on the

issues being discussed, while the audience focuses on which side of the issues they believe in.

A filmic example of this technique can be seen in *JFK*. By choosing a controversial topic (the assassination of President Kennedy) and making an overly specific argument as to what parties were involved in the conspiracy to execute and cover-up the assassination, Oliver Stone was able to focus his audience's attention on how "they" got away with it. The issue of who "they" were was suspiciously contentious as the resulting media bru-ha-ha over the film indicated. Who "they" were, however, is not the propaganda. The propaganda came in the form the story's *given* which is that Lee Harvey Oswald had help. By the end of the story, audiences found themselves arguing over *which* of the parties in the story were or were not participants in the conspiracy, accepting the possibility that people other than Oswald may have been involved.

Conditioning as Propaganda

Presenting an audience with an alternative life experience is yet another way to impact your audience. By ignoring (or catering to) an audience's cultural bias, you can present your story as an alternative reality. This impacts an audience by undermining or reinforcing their own personal Memories. By experiencing the story, the message/meaning of the story becomes part of the audience's memory base.

The nature of the propaganda, however, is that the story lacks context, which must be supplied by the audience. Thus personalized, the story memory is automatically triggered when an experience in the audience's real life summons similarly stored memories. Through repeated use, an audience's "sensibilities" become conditioned.

In Conditioning propaganda, audience attention is directed to causal relationships like *When A also B* (spatial), and *If C then D* (temporal). The mechanism of this propaganda is to leave out a part of the causal relationships in the story, such as *When A also B and If ?? then D*. By leaving out one part, the objective contextual meaning is then supplied automatically by the audience. The audience will replace ?? with something from its own experience base, not consciously considering that a piece is missing because it will have emotionally arrived at the contradiction: *When A also B and then D*.

This type of propaganda is closest to the *traditional* usage of the term with respect to stories, entertainment, and advertising. For example, look at much of the tobacco and alcohol print advertising. Frequently the Main Character (the type of person to whom the advertisement is supposed to appeal) is attractive, has someone attractive with them, and appears to be well situated in life. The *inference* is that when you smoke or drink, you are also cool, and if you are cool then you will be rich and attractive. The connection between "cool" and "rich and attractive" is not really in the advertisement but an audience often makes that connection for itself. In Conditioning propaganda, more than in the other

three forms of propaganda, the degree of impact on your audience is extremely dependent on your audience's life experience outside the story experience .

Crimes and Misdemeanors is a film example that employs this conditioning technique of propaganda. The unusual aspect of the film is that it has two completely separate stories in it. The "Crimes" story involves a self-interested man who gets away with murder and personally becomes completely OK with it (a Success/Good story). The "Misdemeanors" story involves a well meaning man who loses his job, his girl, and is left miserable (a Failure/Bad story). By supplying two competing stories instead of one, the audience need not supply its own experiences to arrive at a false context while viewing this work. Audiences will come to stories, however, with a particular cultural bias. In our culture, Failure/Bad stories which happen to nice people are regrettable, but familiar; Success/Good stories about murderers are uncommon and even "morally reprehensible."

The propaganda comes into effect when the audience experiences in its own life a Failure/Bad scenario that triggers a recollection of the Success/Good story about forgetting the grief of having murdered - an option that the audience would not normally have considered. Lacking an objective contextual meaning that sets one over the other, both stories are given equal consideration as viable solutions. Thus, what was once inconceivable due to a cultural or personal bias is now automatically seen as a possible avenue for problem-solving.

Misdirection as Propaganda

The most subtle and possibly most effective form of propaganda from a single exposure is the use of misdirection as a way to impact an audience's Subconscious. Like "smoke and mirrors" used by magicians, this form of propaganda requires focusing the audience's Conscious attention in one place while the real impact is made in the Subconscious. Fortunately for propagandistic minded authors, this is one of the easiest forms of propaganda to create.

This technique comes from omitting parts of the storyform from your storytelling. What you leave out becomes the audience's blind spot, and the dynamic partner to the omitted storyform piece becomes the audience's focus. The focus is where your audience's attention will be drawn (the smoke and mirrors). The blind spot is where your audience personalizes the story by "filling-in-the-blank." The story's argument is thus linked directly to the audience's subconscious, based on the context in which the story is presented.

Let's look at some dynamic pairs of partners that appear in a storyform. The following pairs concern the *nature* of the impact on your audience:

Motivation <p;> Purpose
Means of Evaluation <p;> Methodology

Should you wish to impact your audience's motivations, omit a particular motivation in the story . The audience, then, focused on the purpose they can see will automatically supply a motivation that seems viable to them (e.g.: *Thelma and Louise*).

Here are the storyform dynamic pairs that relate to story/audience *perspectives*:

Objective Perspective <p;> Subjective Perspective
Main Character Perspective <p;> Obstacle Character Perspective

Combining a *nature* with a *perspective* gives an author greater control over a story's propaganda. For example, if you wish to impact your audience in how they view the means of evaluation employed by the world around them, omit the Objective Story means of evaluation elements and the audience's attention will be distracted by focusing on the methodologies employed (e.g.: *Natural Born Killers*).

A Word Of Warning

Propaganda is powerful but using it involves risks. It is like a virus or engaging in germ warfare. Once an audience is exposed to a propagandistic message, the only way they can neutralize it is to balance it with an equal but opposite force. Audiences frequently don't like to think they are being manipulated. If the audience becomes aware of the nature of your propaganda, the equal but opposite force can take the form of a backlash against the author(s) and the propaganda itself. Look at the strong reaction against advertisers who "target" their advertising to specific demographic groups (e.g. African Americans, women, Generation X, etc.), particularly if they are trying to sell liquor, tobacco products, or other items considered "vices" in America.

Once released, propaganda is difficult to control and frequently becomes subject to real world influences. Sometimes propaganda can benefit from real world coincidences: The China Syndrome's mild propaganda about the dangers of nuclear power plants got a big boost in affecting its audience because of the Three Mile Island incident; the media coverage of the O.J. Simpson murder case may not have tainted potential jurors, but Natural Born Killers' propaganda against the media's sensationalization of violence got a little extra juice added to its punch. Often real life or the passage of time can undermine the effectiveness of propaganda: it is possible that Reefer Madness may have been effective when it first came out, but audiences today find its propaganda against drug use obvious, simplistic, risible and, more importantly, ineffective.

Chapter 38

Storytelling: Reception and Adaptation

A Word About Adaptation

"Read the book; see the movie!" "Now a major motion picture!" "A novelization..." "A new musical based on the stage play..." "...based on the book..." "...based on the hit movie!" "The timeless story of..." "...a classic tale..." "...updated for today's audience..." "...colorized..." "...reformatted to fit your screen..." "edited for television."

It's the same old story. Or is it? Is a story really the same when translated from one medium to another and if not, how is it different? What qualities *must* be changed to maintain a story's integrity? To adapt adeptly an author needs to know the answers to these questions.

Before we can investigate answers, it would be prudent to define some terms. First, what do we mean by "adaptation?" Simply, adaptation is the process of translating a story from one medium to another. What is a "medium?" A medium is a physical facility for storing information *and* the processes involved in retrieving it. Finally, what is "story?" For our purposes we shall define story as any information an author wishes to communicate to an audience (including considerations, experiences, and feelings).

So, putting it all together, *adaptation* is the process of translating information from one physical facility for storage and retrieval to another in such a way that it can be communicated to an audience. Sounds pretty cold, doesn't it. That's because this is simply the logistic description of adaptation.

A more organic description might be: Adaptation is the process of reproducing an audience experience in another medium. That has a better feel to it, but is much less precise. Also, we can clearly see a difference in the purpose of each approach, as indicated above when we spoke of the new story's identity versus its integrity. One seeks to maintain the parts, the other to be true to the whole. And that is the paradox at the heart of the adapter's dilemma: should authors strive to accurately recreate the structure or to faithfully reproduce the dynamics? More to the point, why can't we do both?

The answer lies with the media themselves. Every medium has its own strengths and weaknesses. Often what can be easily accomplished in one medium is either difficult or even impossible to achieve in another. Books are

not very good at directly communicating sounds or visual atmospheres. The motion picture, on the other hand, is a poor medium for directly communicating a characters' inner thoughts and feelings.

In each case, indirect means must be employed to accomplish what might be directly communicated in the other medium. To successfully adapt a work, an author must determine what to add or remove in order to achieve the same effect as the original medium.

It would seem that adaptations will always fail to capture some aspect of the original, either in substance or essence. That is true, but it does not have to be a fatal problem. An audience tends to regard certain aspects of a story as being essential. As long as an adaptation retains and/or recreates those essential elements, the audience will find the effort successful.

Beyond the essential, other elements may be more or less fully developed than in the original, providing something of the same flavor while allowing the latitude to tailor the piece for the new medium. The question then becomes how to determine which items are essential and how deeply they need to be developed, on a case by case basis.

The first step is to do a complete analysis of the original work. Just reading the book a hundred times or watching the movie until images are imbedded on your retina is not good enough. You don't want to know a work just from the inside out, but you want to know it from the outside in as well -- the way the audience sees it. To develop both an understanding and an empathy for the story, it helps to examine it in terms of the Four Stages of Communication.

The Four Stages of Communication describe the manner in which the author's original intent makes its way from his mind into the minds of his audience. Stage one is Story *forming*, in which the author first defines the message for himself. Stage two is Story *encoding*, where the author comes up with images and events to symbolize the message. Stage three is Story *weaving*, which is the process of arranging these images into scenes and acts. Stage four is Story *Reception*, which describes the relationship of the audience to the work. By analyzing how each of these stages functions in a story, an author can make sure that the adaptation will connect at *all* levels of appreciation.

Storyforming

A key concept of traditional narrative theory is that the narrative itself is transportable among media. The narrative is not the complete story, but simply the essential dramatics of the deep structure. In Dramatica, we call this the Storyform. Dramatica is very precise about what this underlying dramatic argument contains.

Each of the elements that must appear in a complete storyform is called an *appreciation*, because it is necessary for the audience to *appreciate* the story from that perspective to prevent a hole in the dramatic argument. Some

appreciations are structural in nature, such as the story's *goal*, or the Main Character's *unique ability*. Others are more dynamic, such as the Main Character's *mental sex*, or the story's *limit* through the imposition of a *timelock* or an *optionlock*.

When analyzing a work to be adapted, it is sometimes difficult to separate the storyform from the storytelling. A good rule of thumb is to think of the storyform as the author's logistic argument and the storytelling as the *emotional* argument.

A good example of this can be seen by comparing Romeo and Juliet to West Side Story, Cyrano de Bergerac to Roxanne, or Heart of Darkness to Apocalypse Now. In each pair, the storyform is very nearly the same, while the storytelling is quite different.

An example of a poor adaptation that failed at the storyforming level was the translation of A Christmas Carol into the motion picture Scrooged, starring Bill Murray.

In the original Dickens story, Scrooge is a character who must *start* doing something, rather than *stop* doing something. Scrooge is not best described as pro-actively hurting people but more as allowing suffering to continue due to his lack of action. He has a hole in his heart. The ghost of Christmas Present presents him with two children, *Want* and *Need*. They serve to illustrate the problems Scrooge perpetuates through his lack of generosity.

In the modern adaptation, Bill Murray's character is portrayed as someone who must *stop* doing something. He is show as pro-actively harmful to a number of people. But when the argument is made for him to change, he is still presented with those who want and are needy. That argument is simply not appropriate to a character who needs to stop. As a result, the attempt to make a more pro-active villain, updated for our time, failed because the supporting argument contained in the remainder of the storyform was not adjusted accordingly.

Use your Dramatica software to arrive at the single storyform that best describes the work you are adapting, and then make sure that if you decide to change anything, you run another storyform to learn what else must be changed as well. You may discover that only minor changes need to be accommodated, or you may find out that the storyform needs to be altered so heavily that the item you intended to change would scuttle any sense of familiarity with the original.

Storyencoding

If the storyform is the skeleton, the story encoding is the meat. Let's take a single storyforming appreciation and see how encoding can flavor its meaning. Suppose the goal of the original story is to obtain the stolen diamonds. Without changing the storyform, we might adapt that to obtaining the stolen gold. We could also change it to obtaining a diploma, obtaining someone's love, or obtaining the office of President of the United States. Each and every one of

these examples has a goal of obtaining, but each also has a different flavor depending solely upon the encoding.

Often, encoding is more important to an audience than anything else. Encoding determines the setting, the subject matter, the size and scope of the issues. Substituting stolen gold for stolen diamonds would probably be interchangeable to most audience members. Substituting obtaining a diploma would not.

Encoding is the first stage that is open to authors' interpretation. As such, it is important to fully illustrate the original story's storyform completely, so that all the specific symbols used by the original author can be documented. Then, the process is to sort through the list, see which are essential, which are peripheral but must be given lip-service, and which can or even should be cut, due to the specifics of the new medium.

It is important to note that when delving into this much detail, it is easy to miss the forest for the trees. For example, if we elected to change "stolen diamonds" to "stolen gold" but still had our Main Character working for De Beers, we might have created a problem.

This is not to say that every encoding appreciation must be consistent with all the others in flavor. In fact, many stories are appealing simply because the juxtapose contrasting symbols. The key is to make sure you maintain the same relationship *between* the flavors. Much like adapting a recipe for a culinary feast, you might substitute salt for sugar, but then you must also substitute vinegar for sour cream. The overall flavor would be completely different, but the relationship between flavors is maintained. That level of pattern-recognition is well within the grasp of most audiences. How many times has The Simpsons replicated famous scenes from famous movies in a completely different context? This works because the *internal* relationships remain consistent.

Storyweaving

Storyweaving is the process of unfolding the symbols of your story for the audience. It is where suspense, tension, mystery, and surprise are created. When adapting genres such as horror, thriller, and murder mystery, it should be noted that the experiential mood is almost storyform and storyencoding dependent. It is the weaving that takes center stage, and is therefore the most crucial aspect to maintain in an adaptation.

With murder mysteries particularly, the manner in which the cat is let out of the bag defines the audience experience. A great deal of the appeal of a Sherlock Holmes mystery, for example, is due to the steps through which the chase becomes afoot. Holmes has been successfully translated to virtually every time and place in human history changing both storyform and storyencoding until nothing remains of the original because the *feel* remains the same due to the way the case unravels. In many respects, the Holmes stories are identified by their exposition template, and that is why the audience comes to the work.

This is the same stage of communication that is emphasized in The Twilight Zone (the first series, the movie adaptation, and the adapted second series), The Outer Limits (first series and adapted series), and virtually every Stephen King book and movie. Did you ever wonder *why* some of King's best works don't translate well to the screen? The adaptations that don't work change the storyweaving, which is the identifying trademark of the King experience.

Make sure you examine the manner in which the audience is let in on the secrets of the story to be adapted. Is the story an Extrovert that lets it all hang out from scene one? Is it a Flirt that flaunts it but takes its time in delivering? Is your story an Introvert that must have its secrets coaxed out one at a time, or is it a Liar that fools us with red-herrings and mis-directions?

Unless you strive to maintain the original's personality, much of the charm may be lost in the translation. A recent example of this kind of mistake occurred in bringing The Beverly Hillbillies to the big screen. In the original series, the storyweaving personality was much like a British comedy of manners in which the cultured and proper are forced by circumstances to accommodate unsophisticated bumpkins. Enter Politically Correct storyweaving. Suddenly, the focus of comedy shifts from manners to physical comedy.

The slapstick gags are funny enough, but that is not what the audience expected. The Beverly Hillbillies the audience grew up with, was nowhere to be found in this movie. The personality associated with the title was not maintained. Interestingly, if there had been no original series, the motion picture would likely have been much funnier to an unbiased audience. When creating an original work, storyweaving considerations can be limited to exposition of the storyform. When adapting a work, storyweaving must also take into account the expectations of the audience, described in the fourth stage of communication, Story Reception.

Story Reception

We started in Storyforming with the message, encoded it into symbols, transmitted those symbols through storyweaving, and now that multi-plexed signal arrives at the receiver: your audience. Problem is, they all might be tuned to a different channel!

Some members of your audience will be familiar with the original work itself. Some may have experienced it many times. Others will have heard about it from a friend, but never actually saw or read the original. Many have only seen the advertisements, or the book review, or the trading cards, or the lunch box. A few have never heard of it at all and just stumbled upon your adaptation. You may want to play on in-jokes and setups that require prior knowledge. How about that scene in Superman: The Movie when Clark runs up to the phone booth to change and there's somebody using the phone? It would not be very funny to someone who does not recognize it as a twist on the expected pattern.

In addition, there is really no such thing as an audience, except when defined

as a collection of individuals who experience a work. They may have nothing else in common, so you can't expect them to respond as a single unit. What buzz words can you safely use? Which obscure buzz words do you want to use anyway because you expect they will catch on and become all the rage? How much biased, special-interested, politically correct, atheistic, agnostic, faithful, black, brown, white, red, yellow, young, old, middle-aged, female, male, gay, straight, bi, Republican, Democrat, Independent, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Buddhist, brilliant, stupid, insane, and emotionally-challenged baggage are audience members going to carry to your adaptation?

Part of the adapter's job is to identify the audience. An equally important job is to identify *with* the audience. This puts a burden on the author of an adaptation that the author of an original work usually does not share.

When creating an original story, one often has the luxury of writing whatever one wants, and then hoping the finished piece finds its audience. In contrast, the adept adapter must consider the full spectrum of the *new* audience. Usually, if a work is being considered for adaptation, it is because there is some following for the original. The adaptation is intended to not only appeal to that audience but exceed it and attract a wider crowd.

How do you adapt a work for the masses? Simple. Make sure the story works not only as an adaptation, but on its own merits as well. Never violate dramatic integrity solely for the sake of adaptive integrity. Better to disappoint a few diehard fans than to disappoint the potential legions of new fans.

Conversely, there are those projects where the size of the new audience is unimportant. The purpose of this kind of adaptation is to supply those few diehard fans with a new medium of enjoyment for their favorite story. In this case you must be faithful to every detail, even if it turns out a work that can't stand on its own merit.

Either approach is reason enough to shape the nature of the adaptation. Seldom can both be done at the same time. More than anything, Story Reception is where the author decides for whom they wish to write. Once you have identified that group, you must get into their heads, to get into their hearts.

In Summary

Adaptation is no simple task. It requires familiarity with both the logistics and passion of the original, from the inside out and the outside in. To achieve this familiarity, one must resonate with the original on many levels, best examined through the Four Stages of Communication.


Storyforming: Storyform the original and then create a new storyform to reflect any changes you make in the adaptation.


Storyencoding: Delineate the original encoding and determine what must

be lifted verbatim, what might be altered, and what could or should be eliminated.

- **Storyweaving:** Reproduce the storyweaving personality to faithfully reproduce the dramatic flavor.

- **Story Reception:** Determine the prior knowledge and expectations of your audience.

In conclusion, and above all, to your new audience be true, for then how canst thee be false to the original?