

The Second Segment of the 24 Story Spectrum

5. CONFUSED: The con-artist, liar and deceiver enacts the role of the *Puzzler*. This is who he is, whether others take him for who he is or not. Detectives solve riddles, balance the scales, and bring reality and appearance together--at least on stage. It is the role of the detective not to **remain** puzzled, as Columbo shows us over and over again.

The puzzled protagonist's psychodrama begins with a scene which shows how doubt arose, followed with the trial and error search into antagonist motives, and the imaginative reconstruction of the real sequence of events, exposing the deception and solving the mystery. See *The Lady and the Tiger, D.O.A., Chinatown, and The Maltese Falcon*.

This story reflects the burden psychoses or the irrational behavior of a significant other impose on the protagonist. Or we may also include how the protagonist's own symptoms may confuse and disorganize his life. Thus the psychotic person may be protagonist of his own psychodram, struggling with his disorder, or be represented as antagonist in a caretaker or caregiver's psychodrama. Coping with madness is a Call to Adventure. For some protagonists it may in fact be the 'Supreme Ordeal.' See *Lucia, The Snake Pit, King Lear, Bright Lights, Big City, Less than Zero, Lethal Weapon, The Exorcist, The Ninth Configuration, The Shining*.

6. ASK (appeal): This is a supplication theme, involving a protagonist in the role of victim, an antagonist persecutor, and an authority over them both. The protagonist approaches the power figure, pleading for justice, or to be hired, or to be accepted, or simply to be understood. A variation included under the appeal heading is the situation where the protagonist seeks something from an adversary who refuses. Negotiating and diplomacy are required. Patients want weekend passes, business persons want loans or easements, and sinners seek forgiveness. In apologizing to someone I've wronged I enact the supplicator role. Those to whom protagonists appeal enact bureaucrat, personnel chief, arbitrator, judge, district attorney, tough-love parent, or God's representative roles.

Scene sequence usually begins with

1. the impact of a goad or critic on the protagonist,
2. continues with the search for a vindicator, then
3. a scene giving the response to the appeal, and in the light of that response,
4. exploring where we go from there. This sounds like the hero's encounter with Tests, Allies, and Enemies in approaching the Inmost Cave. See *The Wizard of Oz, Idomeneo, An Officer and a Gentleman, Full Metal Jacket*.

7. WASTED: This tells us the sad tale of how the mighty have fallen, reminiscent of words Shakespeare attributed to King Richard III. The typical scene sequence includes:

1. How things were before the change,
2. the change process, and
3. options open to effect resolution.

The great difficulty is the tendency of some protagonists to idealize the past, as a kind of paradise lost, and melodramatize the present as hanging them over the abyss. Unrealistic perception dooms the protagonist to what S.S. Tomkins calls the *nuclear script*, in which the protagonist strives to restore the good old days which never were, the nuclear scene. No wonder people keep making the same mistakes over and over again, like the woman who marries a series of abusive alcoholic husbands. These psychodramas are intense, focus on inner states, and represent the protagonist as innocent victim, or hero with a tragic flaw. The protagonist says, *But for this or that, all would've been well. Can you help me? I'm desperate.*

Indeed she is, but not quite as helpless as she may think. Directors require full group participation to present to the protagonist the reality she's misperceiving, and provide enough support that she may be persuaded to accept it. This is not psychosis, but it's often more resistant to therapeutic influence. The challenge for directors is to replace Descend plots with positive plots. Otherwise, no happy ending. See *Heart of Darkness*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Raging Bull*, *Top Gun*.

These persons give the world a lot to talk about, but they are too self-absorbed to have done so deliberately. They act-out impulsively and suffer dramatically. We should not assume that the protagonist is invariably at fault, but once the wretched excesses are underway, he wallows in it, lacking the power to get to his feet. A *dissipator* may or may not have come down from a height. If addiction is a factor here, classify under indulge below, for addicts are less likely to intend self-destructiveness. Directors explore the compulsiveness, and attempt to relate the current catastrophe to some previously unrecognized character flaw. When at last the protagonist recognizes the pattern, the issue becomes whether to pull out of the pit or to sink deeper and deeper into the mire. If the protagonist believes all the suffering is well-deserved, she becomes even more reckless, and may succeed in an accidental suicide. Where suicide is intentional, look for unconscious fury against an internalized parental-figure, especially for neglect or abandonment.

The Ty psychodrama, reported in detail in my monograph "Changing the Past" which describes one who lives on the edge, at least in part because of identification with a mother who did the same, and also because in failing to take care of herself she exited this life before her son was ready to let her go. Ty's counterphobic behavior suggests he may belong to the plot situation below as much as here. ***Othello is the classic dissipator. See also The Great Gatsby, Scarface, Heart of Darkness, Leaving Las Vegas, Hustler, and Casino. Ty's Call is to flirt with disaster and still survive***

8. 'HOOKED' (addicted): The life of this protagonist is dominated by a single objective, particularly when it's in short supply. She cannot tolerate anxiety, but easily forgets this so long as the magical substance is there. The persons in reciprocal relationship with them suffer enormously, for the same antagonist may serve a multitude of roles, such as the *connection, the enabler, the caretaker, and the persecutor. Daredevils, overeaters and gamblers are Addicts* too. See *Easy Rider, Rush, The Lost Weekend, Arthur*.

9. BETRAYED (Deviated) I prefer the word *deviator* to deviate as the name for antagonist role behavior. Unless we work for corrections, where we regularly encounter perpetrators, child molesters and stalkers, our practice here is likely to be limited to the victims of sex abuse, incest, and child molestation. Persons who regularly practice some form of culturally forbidden love, such as sado-masochism, live out this plot. We do not blame the victim for reciprocal role behavior for they have almost always been victims of subtle or vicious coercion and betrayal. It is amazing how popular this theme is in literature and the movies. See *Pacific Heights, Cape Fear, Lolita, The Graduate, The Blue Angel, The Scarlet Letter, Heloise and Abelard, Harold and Maude.*

When the victim overcomes her reluctance to blow the whistle on the perpetrator, this is a 'Call to Adventure,' which takes her into the Special World, where allies are the people who believe her and the enemies are those who deny that there's anything amiss in the face of overwhelming evidence. A formal accusation, a confrontation, or a court trial, or leaving home may be thresholds or the Supreme Ordeal. Contrary to my first impression, these protagonists easily fall into the hero's journey pattern, but directors must beware three pitfalls:

- 1) the proven unreliability of unaided memory,
- 2) the questionable concept of repressed memory, and
- 3) the zeal that sucks one into witch hunts. Re-read *The Crucible* and *The Salem Witch Trials.*

10. EXCLUDED (abandoned) This features the loss of loved ones through death, divorce, estrangement, and separations due to circumstances external to the couple relationship, such as being drafted or sent away. This includes the loss of family members, friends, ideals, one's country, or abilities, a physical or mental faculty or a body part. To learn one has a terminal illness or is going blind or deaf or will never walk again. Under such stresses many religious people who have taken God's protection for granted come to feel God has deserted them. Because others can readily feel with the protagonist, and because protagonist reaction is less likely to have an unconscious component as in the case of the *Threatened* story, the prospect of resolution in a favorable environment is good for these protagonists. The sequence of scenes is likely to follow this pattern: the last time one was with the loved one, and then perhaps to redo the scene, this time with the conviction it will be the last opportunity, so that one may do it differently this time. See *Home Alone, Regarding Henry, Kitty Genovese, Summer of '42, and Casablanca.*

11. INVADED (afflicted) The protagonist has been included among the persecuted and oppressed, those discriminated against, or suffering chronic illness or permanent disability. Victims of cruelty, misfortune, natural disasters crime and war are all afflicted protagonists. The afflictor is one whose behavior, policies and practices hurt others. This may include zealous bureaucrats handling welfare or taxes, police who jump to unwarranted conclusions or allow themselves to be used, other authorities such as corporation officers, all given to the careless use of power. See *Schindler's List, Grapes of Wrath, Sudden Impact, Towering Inferno and Braveheart. Now is the time for all good men*

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