

HOW TO LOOK FOR INTERLOCKING TRIANGLES ACROSS GENERATIONS

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Roles may provide a key, because the same person plays many roles involving other persons.

Roles may be reciprocal, the one requiring the other, or complementary cooperating with the other. A few are antagonistic, seeking to obliterate the other. A few may bypass other roles, operating in a different sphere. Or some roles function elsewhere in time and space, apparently indifferent or at least distant from each other.

The protagonist's roles are of special interest when he participates in more than one triangle, and especially when at least one of the three persons of a particular triangle belong in a generation removed from the protagonist's family of origin and/or nuclear family.

Usually a triangle consists in two insiders and one outsider. Outsiders like to become insiders if the opportunity presents itself, even if it means that one of the former insiders thereby becomes an outsider in his stead.

When the insiders are of the same generation, this suggests that the third is functioning to protect their relationship. This is OK as far as it goes, but when this is done at the third's expense, interfering with differentiation, the price of peace for the third is too high.

As a matter of fact, this is the position of a couples therapist. When he lets himself get overinvolved with the couple, he becomes an enabler to their fusion, and the therapy is doomed. In some instances 'therapy' has gone on for years without progress for this very reason.

Not only therapists, but a child may well be the third, reaching to each parent individually, and minimizing the conflict or distance between the parents. But when the parents fight over the child, the child may develop a symptom. The conflict fades while they concentrate their energies on the welfare of the child. The more common symptoms are somatic or psychosomatic, or, particularly with teens, school or social maladjustment, even to the extent of delinquency.

Additions on someone's part mobilize another to join, becoming an enabler, protecting the addict from interventions, or to rescue the other from the addiction.

Triangles often contain an overfunctioning person and an underfunctioning person. The former is a caretaker and the latter a passive dependent person being cared for. Triangles may include an exploitive person, a perpetrator, with another the victim. A third may be on either side, or even a bystander, whose non-intervention implies consent.

Inasmuch as behavior takes both active and passive forms, this may be a way to identify the press of one person on another. A transitive verb may help us recognize what typical plot is underway.

To return to how another fits in with a person's goal direction: One may block the protagonist's way directly, or prop him up, making him feel more comfortable, staying just the way he is, as he offers alternative compensations.

I have produced charts showing approach/avoidance for all 28 plots. Also an active/passive chart. For the protagonist to turn inward on himself usually produces two sides of the protagonist, requiring negotiating between them.

There is an outcome chart, where we move into surplus reality, as we project ourselves into the future. This may show is where, in the protagonist's mind at least, the triangle is headed. He may see an option he likes better.

THE SURVIVAL MOTIVE

As is the approach/avoidance table recognizes, fear is a powerful motivator, frustrating our wishes. We fear realistic external threats, or we may fear the inevitable condemnation of our idealistic selves, which in turn may have been derived from a model in our families of origin. The loss from the family of origin may hasten the process of incorporation or identification. If the one lost abused the protagonist, identification with the aggressor may result. Loss is involved in illness, accidents, depression, and suicidal tendencies.

SURVIVAL IMPLICATIONS:

Religious people have often assumed the good prosper and the evil suffer. They have extrapolated from this to seeing one who prospers as deserving prosperity and one who suffers deserving the suffering. Presumably the later is guilty of some evil thought or deed bringing this on himself. Observers of the apparent process reinforce the selective perception.

Like Job, one who knows his innocence will protest the accusation of deserving punishment. Yet he knows that the evil and the good oft suffer or prosper together. Were someone to choose otherwise, another fate may follow.

Choices lead to outcomes. Survivor guilt arises from having escaped a tragic outcome, while another, whom one regards as superior to oneself nevertheless perished.

Where martyrdom occurs one may judge oneself adversely for having avoided the outcome others endured. In a military situation, we acclaim our fallen comrades as heroes, while we chide ourselves for our failure to take great risks.

Where people have not acknowledged their fury to themselves, but have buried it, depression, suicide and impulsive homicide may occur down the road.

Isolates are particularly at risk. They lack the social hedge which protects others from extreme measures. Being dumped, widowed, or divorced aggravates their isolation.

Religion enters in at least two levels, contributing to self-condemnation, or providing support to carry one through a crisis. The belief in a God who monitors us reduces the sense of being isolated. If the family of origin included persons who viewed God as loving, no matter what, it is easier for the protagonist to believe God cares, and he is special. The present situation may be devastating, but one may hope that in the long run, whether in this life or in the next, there may be compensation for life's tragedies.

One's membership in a caring group offers opportunities to serve others, doing for others what others have done for us or, lacking that, what we wish others had done for us.

Table 1: Twenty-eight Plot System Cell Definitions

1. LIBERATE To desire freedom emancipation, escape. Lets go rapid warm up Break-out	2. THREATENED Remorse, feel guilt self-reproachful "Had I but known" Bad wish=bad deed Deep grieving	3. TEMPTED I feel guilty if I yield, get caught or even relish what I desire. Tested, Brinkmanship	4. DISCOVER "Can this be me?" Identity, Loss of innocence. Adopted, Betrayed "Who am I?"
8. DESCEND Fallen from height, How to cope? Nuclear scenes and scripts	7. APPEAL Supplication plot, Seeking support from an authority who vindicates or not. Get me out!	6. CONFUSED Madness, mine or other's. Attempting to cope, Caretaking, burdened, split "It's too much"	5. PUZZLE Reality VS appearance Mysteries. "What's going on here?" Concealment,
9. DISSIPATE just too much, wretched excess, Acting-out impulsively, Extremes & effect of extremes, Flawed	10. ADDICTED Addictive; sedative scripts. Relief to be found in one way only. Gamblers, overeaters. Can't handle anxiety	11. DEVIATED Forbidden love, Sex abused. molested, stalked, sado-masochism, Incest, Raped, harassed libertine,	12. ABANDONED Loss of love through death, desertion, neglect, isolation, divorce, shunned, separated, estranged
16. JUDGED judgmental, enmity plot. Hatred toward one who should be loved, Critical, nagging, prejudiced	15. AVENGE Revenge. Hold grudge. Get even, Balance the scales. Eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.	14. RIVAL Compete. Well matched. One's loss, another's gain. 0 sum game. Role of expectations.	13. AFFLICTED Disaster plot. victim of nature or of man made catastrophycrime, Disabled. Cruelty, injustice.
17. CONTROL demanding, coercive aggressive take over manipulate, power-driven, Emotionally constricted	18. SACRIFICE Paying a high price to or for another with questionable gain for oneself. Self-denial	19. PURSUE Seek out other Courtship. Quest. Hide and seek, Tag. Ground rules? Stakes?	20. VENTURE Adventure story. Goes forth, overcomes obstacles Comes home. Not character focused.
24. TRANSFORM hero changes dramatically becomes new person Catharsis likely	23. NURTURE Normal growth process. Coping with usual obstacles. Passages. Transitions Lost illusions	22. TRANSCEND Underdog plot. 'Inferior' protagonist, superior antagonist. An upset "Against all odds"	21. ASCEND Making it. Succeed in attaining goals, achiever, Power-player, Initiates, steady > dramatic.
25. RESCUE caretakers protect others Heal, teach, save, counsel, Deliver from evil one	26. ASSOCIATE Get along at work school, church, clinic, neighborhood with peers. Include VS exclude. Cohesive.	27. CELEBRATE Thankful, blessed Holy days holidays. Commemorate Praise, festive, appreciate, Spiritual	28. LOVE Intimacy, affection. Cope with usual. Unrequited, Enduring, insecure, Misunderstandings.

Coordinating Plots, affects, and Roles

Table 2: plot, affects	and roles
1. LIBERATE: joy/ enjoyment, pride, surprise-	liberator, creator, liberated, freed,
2. THREATENED: distress/ anguish, sadness	mourner, mourned, culprit, victim, shamed, interrogator
3. TEMPTED: anxiety, distress/ anguish, envy	seduced, snared, temptor, seducer
4. DISCOVER: anxiety, distress/anguish, fear	discoverer, herald, inventor, discovered
5. PUZZLE: anxiety, envy distress/ anguish, anger, fear	deceived, detective, deceiver, puzzler, trickster, comic, liar
6. CONFUSED: anxiety, sadness, distress/ anguish	confused, overextended, confuser
7. APPEAL: anxiety, hope, distress/anguish, shame	supplicator, endangered, persecutor, wise mentor, decider, shaman, arbitrator, evaluator.
8. DESCEND: shame/humiliation, distress/anguish, guilt	descender, fallen, whiner, reactor
9. DISSIPATE: disgust, sadness, shame/ humiliation, distress/ anguish	squashed, dissipator, abdicator
10. ADDICTED: disgust, anger shame/ humiliation, distress/ anguish	addict, ACOA, enabler, connector
11. DEVIATED" shame/humiliation, distress/anguish, fear, guilt	betrayed, perpetrator, deviate
12. ABANDONED: guilt, envy, distress/anguish, shame/humiliation	deserted, deserter, beloved one who died, or the one left behind.
13. AFFLICTED: envy, sadness, shame/ humiliation, distress/ anguish	bereaved, neglected, shunned, persecuted, persecutor, afflictor, oppressor, persecuter
14. RIVAL: excitement, shame/ humiliation, distress/ anguish	loser, winner, competitor, topped, topper, pace setter

plot and affect	roles
15. AVENGE: anger/ rage, disgust envy, determined	avenged, avenger, bounty-hunter police
16. JUDGED: disgust, anger, determined	condemned, persecuted, criticized nagged, punished, persecutor, critic, nag, judge
17. CONTROL: anger, disgust, determined	controller, captor, dominator, bound, controlled, guardian
18. SACRIFICE: pride, anger/ rage, fear/ terror	self-denier, sacrificer, sacrificed, priest
19. PURSUE: interest/ excitement fear/ terror	pursuer, suitor, knight, pursued, fugitive
20. VENTURE: interest/ excitement, fear/ terror	adventurer, risk-taker, ventured, entrepreneur
21. ASCEND: pride, enjoyment/ joy, happiness, determined	achiever, manager, CEO, president
22. TRANSCEND: enjoyment/ joy, relief, pride, determined,happiness,	overcomer, underdog, transcended
23. NURTURE: pride, happiness, interest/ excitement	nurturer, nurtured, parent,child teen, mentor, teacher, coach
24. TRANSFORM: relief, happiness, surprise/ startle	healer, healed, shaman, shadow
25: RESCUE: compassion, pride, relief, determined, fear	rescuer, savior, rescued, saved
26. ASSOCIATE: enjoyment/ joy, pride, love, happiness	includer, included, colleague, friend, peer, buddy, pal
27. CELEBRATE: enjoyment/ joy, pride, happiness, love	celebrator, celebrated, exemplar, hero, cheer leader, advocate
28. LOVE: enjoyment/ joy, pride, compassion, happiness	lover, loved, suitor, cheater, betrayer, supporter, partner

APPENDIX showing the relationship of 28 Plot System with Teens Connect with Adults. Conventions: Usually, but not always, where p = plot number

- p/ = taking the initiative, being active
- /p = another initiates, passive stance
- p/p = coping in a positive way, self-control implied
- p\p = yielding under social conditions, negative effect
- \p = yielding without social provocation, loner
- Xp = abandoning oneself to the process, no return.

Chapter Two: Abandoned = Plot 12

- 12/ = deserter even if announced, run away, AWOL
- /12 = deserted, loss of relationship for any cause
- 12/12 = working through grief, open to new relationship
- 12\12 = numb, not working on the loss
- \12 = resisting attempts of others to relate
- X12 = utterly given up hope of replacement or living

Chapter Three: Afflicted = Plot 13

- 13/ = non violent oppressors and exploiters
- /13 = victim, conned, mugged, environmental disasters
- 13/13 = taking oneself and others out of harms way
- 13\13 = letting disaster roll over self and others
- \13 = no effort to save self, doesn't get in others' way
- X13 = believes there's no hope for anyone

Chapter Four: Addicted = Plot 10

Not restricted to alcohol and narcotics, but includes gambling, compulsive not-for-profit stealing, fire setting, male and female dependency, which may include promiscuity or perversions, or not. Alcohol abuse represent this category. Others are analogous.

- 10/ = heavy drinker in denial
"Take this, it's magic."
- /10 = knows there's a problem, not yet opposing it
"The magic works for me"
- 10/10 = working on recovery, or in recovery
"This is a trap. I'm getting out"
- 10\10 = slipped up, under social inducement
"I can quit whenever I want, but it's OK for now"
- \10 = slipped up when alone
"Go away. Don't bother me"
- X10 = has essential given up and given in
"This is all I'll ever need. Nothing else matters"

Chapters Five and Six = Plot 11, Deviated

- 11/ = coercive sex, perpetrators, may imply threat or not
"My excitement is yours too"
- /11 = victim, may or may not resist
"Should I resist? I'll go along with this for now"
- 11/11 = perpetrator or victim, has help against continuing
"I'm not going to do this anymore. I'll get help"
- 11\11 = continuing relationship, active perversions
"What the hell. What's the harm?"
- \11 = passive perversions, mostly alone, e.g voyeurism
"So what? Nobody else's business. I like it"
- X11 = OK with prostitution, targeter and targeted sex. Implies consent. This does not include rapists
"It's there to be used. Why get excited?"

Chapter Seven = Plot 14, RIVAL

- 14/ = out to win, destruction of opponent not implied
- /14 = accepting second place or lesser
- 14/14 = seeking to improve one's competitive position
- 14\14 = same, but without ethical constraints
- \14 = no longer even trying to do well or win
- X14 = drop out, not even enter contest where eligible

Chapters Eight and Nine = Plot 15, AVENGE

- 15/ = feeling angry, speaking angrily, may be violent or not
- /15 = target of another's anger
- 15/15 = coping with anger or tendency to violence
- 15\15 = suicidal, cutting oneself
- \15 = no self control, don't get out of the way of impulse or aggressor, for hasn't much hope
- X15 = accepts inevitability of destruction, no hope

Chapter Ten = Plots 17, Control; 16, Judge; 18, Sacrifice
Plot 17 will represent the other two as well in this book

- 17/ = I control you, judge you, dispense with you
- /17 = I am controlled, judged, sacrificed
- 17/17 = I control myself, have self-control, am responsible
- 16/16, 18/18 = I'm self-critical, expect a lot of me, deny myself
- 17\17 = I'm overcontrolled. 16\16 = destructively self-critical
- 18\18 = I'm into the pattern of throwing myself away
- \17, \16, \18 = Resigned to being controlled, judged, sacrificed
- X 17, X 16, X18 = Claims of self null and voice in fanatical pursuit