

SUMMARIZING AND CONCLUDING

Searching for triangles through the warmup

1. We start with one, the protagonist.
2. Who's currently your most significant other? This is your dyad.
3. Who is involved with at least one of you as a couple? If involved with only one and not the other, the third is by definition distantly related with the other member of the dyad. Otherwise the third becomes a competitor.
4. When the protagonist seeks to relate with two peers, at least on the surface, this is a one generation situation.
5. When the protagonist finds himself/herself divided within oneself, this is usually a contest between one's role in the family of origin, and the emerging role in the nuclear family. The self stands in relation to one person in one generation and to another person (appropriately) in the same generation.
6. A spouse (or current significant other) represents the nuclear family. He/she may be tainted by the protagonist's identifying the spouse with one from the family of origin. Protagonist growth requires one to let go and to opt for spouse realistically seen.
7. It matters who the one from the family of origin is. Same sex or opposite sex? If opposite we have a quasi oedipal situation. If same sex, is there conflict over being the same as vs quite different from that parental figure?
8. Domination is a factor, in which case the road to growth lies in the direction of breaking out, being independent. Not as attachment (in 7 above) but in controlling (plot 17).

9. The protagonist may simultaneously be at the corner of two overlapping triangles. When one involves others of another generation, we have a cross generation triangle.

10. We should reinforce boundaries between generations. This requires that once we have attained a certain age that we yield to our within generation attachments rather than those across the generation line, 'when push comes to shove.' One way to cope with this is to set up another cross-generation triangle with a therapist, to make the disturbing third move farther and farther away. This will allow the protagonist to let go of the inappropriate disturbing other in favor of a truly eligible relationship. As that grows the therapist fades into a distant third, and the newly aligned couple can produce, a child or some other mutual project. The therapist's work is done.

It is necessary for the therapist to be real, but not to cross boundaries. From seeing the therapist close, as in a positive transference, this progresses to seeing him as he really is, which allows her to be who she is. The therapy situation when done right, won't shape protagonists into being what they cannot (and should not) be. Protagonists must look to themselves rather than to therapists as a source of wish fulfillment or high praise.

11. The protagonist learns how to cut off, a version of letting-go. But cut off may be with or without unfinished business. Encounter may be necessary (inside or outside the session) if the significant other has a legitimate claim. When the other is unwilling or inaccessible, then the protagonist must deal with oneself. The dilemma is between holding on and letting go. Which option allows one to grow?

12. This is an intrapsychic situation. The protagonist should relate to a third whose being there increases self-awareness and allows one to make a decision consistent with growth. Directors are obvious choices, along with those who've shown talent in doubling.